

転生したら

剣でした

棚架三

Information

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Chapter 1: Where am I?

Chapter 1

Where am I?

I woke, and the first thing that came to my eyes was a beautiful sight. The gloomy sky stretched as far as the horizon. Light shines through the deep water like an halo. The sun is about to rise. The view of the sunrise from the top of a high mountain glittered like a rainbow, and I was thoroughly impressed.

The moon is setting on the other side of the horizon. A huge silver disk that I didn't see. It's top is disappearing on the other side of the horizon right now.

It's an overwhelming scene. I have lived for 30 years and I haven't seen such a beautiful scene. It's strange that I don't cry.

No wait. I lived for 30 years? Am I still alive? I mean, I'm dead?

The scene I saw last, was a bright red convertible that was in bad taste. The man in the driver seat had a smartphone in one hand, thinking about the day after tomorrow, and a laugh like a horse.

Yes, even while driving. He laughed happily. But I didn't have fun at all this fucking bastard!

And so, I remembered so much my heart cried... I should be dead. No, I'm dead?

『U-mu. What is that thing?』

『So. Are you finally awake?』

『Uo! Who is it?』

Suddenly a voice sounded. The figure isn't seen in the surrounding area.
No, doesn't it echo in my head?

『It's going to be hard, so hang in there.』

『Eh? EH?』

『Well, see you ar-』

Then, I couldn't hear the man's voice anymore.

『Eh? Hell-o?』

I called out, but there wasn't any answer. Just what was that? Auditory hallucination? But I heard it clearly... ..

Then, in order to look at the surrounding area, I tried to move.

My body doesn't move.

『Oof? But Why? Or rather, what was I?』

I thought I was tied up, but it doesn't seem that simple.

My body feels strange. First I don't have any feeling in my hands and feet.
No, in the first place, everything besides them feel strange.

『No eyelids. Eyes... .. If I can't feel my eyes, how can I see?』

I looked down at my body. I was a little uneasy, but I could move my gaze.

『... .. It's a sword.』

In my line of sight, lodged inside a pedestal, was a sword.

For some reason, my body is a sword, and I understand it is natural. The situation is beyond the scope of understanding. But even so, if a sword = myself, without a doubt, I understood it.

Eyes——ish thing, is in the sword's foundation.

『I died... ... and reincarnated as a sword?』

What second-rate light novel is this. I want to think that this is a dream, but I can't pinch my cheeks with this body.

『For the time being, a sense of skin? There's something like that.』

My body is a blade, that pierces the pedestal beneath it, is something I understood. It was different from the feeling of touching skin, but there was some feeling of touch.

『Another world?』

That much is certain.

Anyways, the sun and the moon are out at the same time. It isn't the huge silver moon that set a moment ago, it's a smaller moon. Besides, red, blue, green, purple and yellow, pink, there are six more moons that sparkle in the sky.

『Usually, when it's a light novel of a different world reincarnation thing, there's usually a cheat ability.』

Would I who reincarnated as a sword, in the first place be able to handle a skill?

『The classic reincarnation cheat is appraisal but... ... Oh, seriously? 』

Somehow there seems to have been a convenient development in our circumstances.

I was safely able to confirm my status.

Name: Unknown

Wielder Registrant: None

Race: Intelligent Weapon

Attack:132 Mana: 200/200 Durability:100/100

Skills

Appraisal: Lv6, Self-Repair, Self-Evolving, Self-Modifying, Telekinesis, Telepathy, Wielder Status Small Boost, Wielder Recovery Small Boost, Skill Sharing, Magician.

Something like that, seems amazing.

Appraisal: Lv6: Information on what I see, is displayed.

Self-Repair: It repairs damage done to the weapon automatically. Unless it's been completely destroyed, reconstruction is possible.

Self-Evolution: Despite being a weapon, it has various evolutions.

Self-Modification: Alters oneself, and optimizes it.

Telekinesis: Using magic, one can manipulate an object without using my body.

Telepathy: Using magic, one can speak to another person's mind. Bypassing language, mutual understanding is possible.

Wielder Status Small Boost: All states of the wielder are increased by 5.

Wielder Recovery Small Boost: HP, MP, Stamina, and Magical Power recovery rate is boosted by 20%.

Skill Share: With the registered wielder, it's possible to give them a skill.

Magician: Feel the flow of magic. Proof of a Magician.

I might be really amazing? At the least, I'm not an ordinary weapon. I might have the ability to be classified as a rare or unique weapon. However, why is my name unknown? Is appraisal too low leveled or is it not from the original?

Well, I don't understand it too well, but it's fine for now.

Next is to check my appearance. My blade is a mysterious white metal that shines, with a blue line, and even at a first look it's very beautiful.

The muted hues of the elegant golden guard has a carving of a brave wolf on it, and a red oriental ribbon. On the handle, in red and white braid, a lattice pattern has been woven.

But that's self praise, but no matter how you look at it, it's not a ordinary mass-produced item. I think the sword is of considerable value. But, I don't know how strong an attack power of 132 is. The possibility that the sword is just some very expensive ornament isn't zero. However, because of the skills, I don't think that's so.

If I was, that would be the worst. If I was just some rich sword, I would plunge myself into a hearth and probably die (?).

However, it is a gorgeous sword. If this was an RPG, it would be the equivalent of the appearance of a mysterious figure.

『But, it's only a sword.』

In my mind, I made a sigh.

It doesn't meant that I was good looking when I was alive. That being said, I wasn't ugly enough to stand out. I was a minor character that was everywhere. So, I don't have any lingering attraction my body when I was alive. Rather, even after reincarnating, I didn't have any complaints. Instead, it was my wish to change.

That said, I wouldn't be a sword. Sword.

Now, I can't eat food or play games either. I can't even get rid of my virginity.

Is, is that so. If it's me the fact that I'm a sage is decided! Another life where I must live carrying this burden.

『.....』

I despair. If I had arms and legs I would be throwing the down to the ground in sadness.

[T/N:Think o r z]

I mean, the magician skill, is it that sort of thing? Which reminds me. Only that skill is a different color than the others, but it feels different... .. Stop fucking with me! Don't laugh!

How long was I feeling depressed for, even I don't know. Was it 5 minutes or 1 hour? During the time that I was stunned, it seems it became something silly..

『Now because I'm a sword, do I need to worry about such a thing? Anyhow, I'm a sword.』

Besides, if I didn't reincarnate, I would have died on the spot. When thinking about it carefully, I might actually be quite lucky. Even though I died, I am still able to be conscious in this way.

That sounds right to me. Not everyone has the experience of becoming a sword. If I don't have fun, isn't that a failure?

If that's what I believe, I think I've made a breakthrough. Isn't that not escapism?

An unexpected second life. Well, a sword life. I might as well aim for the summit of sword. It might be better that way.

What's the top as a sword? Well, having someone use me is most important, I'm out of the question. For example. A hero? But the sword of a hero goes

through many hardships. I would fight against the demon lord. Depending on the situation I might get broken. That means in the end I would need the teacher of a legendary blacksmith to repair me. Also, the hero might be a fool spouting about justice with hot defined muscles. Probably a handsome guy. The exact opposite of me. To be honest, I don't think we would get along well.

I might as well be used by a woman. It's best if she's pretty, nor should she be clumsy. That's several levels better than a muscle-headed hero.

After that, her skill with a sword. A brilliant swordsman, using me to mow down enemies, and becoming a hero. And that beloved sword is recorded inside textbooks several hundred years later.

... .. Well, if it's just a dream it's easy if I'm just saying it. Do I need to make a major compromise? For now, let leave this plain.

I can't hear the man's voice at all, so I guess I'll leave.

[T/N: These are some of the notes the author had on his post.]

Content Correction

スキル共有: 自身の持つスキルを、装備登録者と共有し、付与することができる。

→スキル共有: 現在セットしているスキルを装備登録者と共有し、付与することができる。 Typo Fixes

趣味の悪い真っ赤なオープンカーだった。

→趣味の悪い真っ赤なオープンカーだった

何せ、太陽と月が当時に出ている。

→何せ、太陽と月が同時に出ている

Editing Deletions

眼球の感覚はなく、俯瞰で上から見下ろすような、不思議な視覚だった。

Chapter 2: I Can Fly

Now, first let's check the surrounding area first.

First, I'm in what appears look like an old ruin. Without a roof in the vast empty plain, I stand alone. If it's seen from a distance, it might be mistaken for a larger water fountain.

As for me, the pedestal was set in the center, with this treasured sword stuck into it. What about that? Is it legendary sword that is given to those that reach it? Since, the surroundings don't feel like a dungeon.

Because of the pedestal it's not possible to turn around, I can't see anything behind me. But, as far as the eye can see, there weren't any tall trees, just bushes and shrubs. If I look closely, there's an occasional shadow. I wonder if it's an animal.

『Not a single person to be found.』

I can't move myself?

Wait a second, if I'm not mistaken, there should be a telekinetic skill. Maybe, I can move with it?

『Mun.』

Concentrate. Telekinesis Telekinesis.

Suddenly, I think I felt my body get lighter. There's a feeling that the sword slightly separated from the pedestal. The most important thing, is to imagine the sword flying through the air.

『Ooo! I floated!』

If I can imagine it, it's easy. After I escaped the pedestal, I could move free through the air.

『I can fly!』

[T/N: This is said in English. Hence the title.]

There isn't much speed, but it's enough for now. I became clear that I could move on my own.

I tried moving around the area near the pedestal. As before, it looks like a ruin. I think the bricks are made of light brown blocks. Exposed to wind and rain for many years, the color has darkened, and moss covers patches here and there.

The area's diameter is 20 meters across.

『Who on Earth built this. I feel like it's the person who made me... ... 』

This is very worn out, I wonder if I was also left here for so long?

Even if I said sword reincarnation, a sword can't be made from nothing. It should be expected that somebody made my body. Well, if my body didn't transform into a sword, but.

The maker would be the first person to use me, unless the producer is dead then the possibility of that disappears.

But my body, the sword, is free of moss and dust. It's just like someone just put me here only yesterday.

I was thinking about various things while observing my surroundings, when a feeling of unease ran through my body.

『..... Huh?』

Somehow, tired... ... The sensation of losing all my strength attacks the sword.

And, I fell.

『Seriously?』

I try to use telekinesis desperately, but it doesn't react at all. Height, I estimated 10 meters.

『Float! Please float!』

But, struggling was useless as I hit the ground with all of my might.

Gaii~i~i~in! called a great resounding metal sound.

『Eee... .. Isn't it broken somewhere? Some cracks or』

I hurriedly looked at the status of my body, but everything seemed fine. Also, my body doesn't feel strange anywhere. To fall from that height and end up fine, this might be an amazing sword after all.

『But, why did I fall?』

A feeling like fatigue came to be, and I couldn't use telekinesis anymore.

In order to find the reason, I check my status.

I immediately understood the reason.

『You no longer possess any magic.』

It was Possessed Magic: 0/200. Probably, when using telekinesis, magic will be continually drained. The fatigue is probably caused by this. Even when the magic is cut off, my saving grace must be that we don't lose consciousness.

『I didn't fly for 5 minutes. It was probably around 3 minutes.』

For a moment I waited on the stone road. Then, my magic recovered slightly. It appears that it restores itself 1 per 1 minute. I restored it to 60 after waiting for an hour, and was able to use telekinesis once more.

『Alright, I float.』

I don't seem to have any problems. I checked my status as it is. My magic is decreasing rather intensely.

『While I use telekinesis, the consumption is 1 per 1 second? Then, after calculations it's about 200 for 3 minutes.』

Also it's unbearable to be slammed into the ground. I, before I lost all my magic, returned to the pedestal in a hurry. After I am embedded in the pedestal, it's strangely calming.

『Fuu. Would I be able to return to this.』

But, I was unskilled at movement and I understood that it would be dangerous. For a little while, I'll avoid leaving the pedestal's perimeter, and observe the plain.

When looking at the plain, a variety of creatures can be seen. Like the savannahs of Earth, contrary to my expectations it wasn't only mammals, there was something that looked exactly like a bug, and some guys without a definite shape.

For example, the ant-like thing I saw earlier had the shadow the size of a small dog.

The sword was fine. At least, it looks to me like there's no need to attack.

『Again, this isn't Earth.』

Moreover, if I look in the distance, there were shadows of even larger beasts. Although it's only a rough eye measurement, it looks to be around 10 meters. At least, I think it's that big.

『Is it the so-called evil beasts?』

I saw them, and there was 1 that worried me.

『With such a evil beast here, would it be possible for a human to reach here?』

Chapter 3: Encounter with goblins!

Will make some edits later!

—SEPERATOR—

Chapter 3 – Encounter with goblins!

(Author note: Thank you for the bookmarks!)

Day 2 of resurrection.

Something has come.

Footsteps are approaching from behind the pedestal.

It's sounds like more than one also.

「Gehegehahu」

「Agiyagiyo」

「Gegiya!」

Conversation? Are they talking? I don't know the meaning, but it seems they are communicating.

Judging from the voice, I get the feeling that they are monkeys.

The presence gets closer.

Already right behind.

Okay, come here a little bit more.

Then i will know its form.

zazza

A little more.

ZAZZAZZA

One meter more.

ZAZZA – -pita

Damn it.

It stopped right behind me.

「giyagiyu」

「giyarugaga」

「giyanga?」

「guruhaa-」

What is it? What the hell are you saying? It sounds like a discussion....
((Not 100% on the last part))

And, something, just touched my handle!

Clearly, the handle is grasped.

Although it is similar, I feel that it is too stiff to be the touch of a human hand.

It seems to be trying to remove me from the pedestal.

I felt a feeling of strange resistance as the form that did not understand who i was picked me up. ((*Needs to be checked later*))

How should i say it, the form should be confirmed... after it can be omitted separately... ((*Not 100%*))

Somehow, i resisted it using telekinesis.

The mystery partner puts more power in, after failing to remove me the first time.

But it is naive.

It is resisted with all my power.

Like hell i will let it pull me out.

「GYAGYA!」

「GYUGAGAGA....!」

「HAGAHAFU!」

In order to support their companion, the others begin shouting.

As i try to force myself in, the challenger beings to skirt around the pedestal to remove me .

「Giyaruga!」

「Gorugiyaru!」

Because of that, these guys worked their way perfecting into my sights.

Are you serious.

Green skin.

The brutal and more like a gorilla ugly face.

A head with short horns, wielding clubs and wearing furs. ((May just be furry))

So, the guy really was just a goblin.

Goblins tried to remove me.

Wait! wait, not Goblins! If i become a magic sword used by goblins it's over.

If it was a Goblin King at least, it was good. Even if its seen, how is it a Goblin Grunt?!

While resisting with telekinesis, i tried verifying the status of the two that entered my sight.

Race: Goblin: Evil: Demon Beast Lv5

Hp: 17 MP: 5 Physical Strength: 8 Endurance: 11 agility: 12 intelligence: 6
Magic: 3 dexterity: 7

Skills

Club technique: Lv1 , Digging: Lv2

Race: Goblin: Evil: Demon Beast Lv5

Hp: 20 MP: 2 Physical Strength: 9 Endurance: 12 agility: 10 intelligence: 5
Magic: 2 dexterity: 8

Skills

Swordplay: Lv1, Vigilance: Lv1, Poison resistance: Lv1

Ho-ho i see.

Even though the are from the same race they are subtly different.

Well, yea..

When the weapons are different, of course they will be different.

Another one gets impatient with me not coming out easily and has come around to the front so i appraised it.

Race: Goblin Leader: Evil: Demon Beast Lv2

Hp: 24 MP: 6 Physical Strength: 11 Endurance: 15 agility: 13 intelligence: 7 magic: 7 dexterity: 7

Skills

Swordplay :Lv1, Art of Survival :Lv1, Dismantling :Lv2, Leadership :Lv1

This guy is a Goblin Leader.

The level is low though, Is it a race effect or possibly evolution? It seems a little strong.

Although only a little bit really.

What to do.

There are no signs that they will leave.

In order to somehow remove me, this time it started hitting me.

Still when it finds that useless, it's time for a substitution.

Apparently, one was still in my blind spot and it grabbed onto me.

「Huuuuunnnnnnn」 I put power in desperately while making a painful voice!

Maximum power resistance.

When it realized it was impossible with its power the leader borrowed the goblin companions club and starts hitting more with that.

With its face dyed in anger it starts going wild with displeasure at not being able to remove me.

After all, it is a goblin.

It's behavior is too stupid.

While it was a struggle to the goblin, the pain and confusion caused it to kick the pedestal.

But the pedestal seems to be more solid than expected.

Holding onto its toe, it is jumping up and down comically.

Ku Ku Ku.

Serves him right.

The leader which was in my blind spot, in a state of anger hurled the club at one of the other goblins.

Hey wait a minute, aren't they friends?

What a thought, Goblin bastard. ((* Really hard line but i think its close*))

Surprisingly, it began to spit at me!

I can feel its dirty saliva on my blade.

Ah! Really -! I feel really bad! The humiliation.

Ok, i see, It's war.

I will do it!

The first target is this guy before my eyes.

I changed into a goblin leader, and i took aim at the goblin that knows swordplay.

I measure the timing and stop resisting with telekinesis.

SUPPON~ (Boing)

The sword which lost resistance suddenly is pulled up plainly by a goblin.

the goblin which used too much force lost its balance and fell on its backside.

A fool.

it's full of openings!

Using telekinesis, I casually move the blade.

The blade plainly cut the windpipe of the defenseless goblin

I faked an accident, and one was defeated.

Not being able to understand the situation, The ones who stayed rushed up to him.

There! , I exploded in action using a ram attack.

Well, it's a sword so the ram attack = Finisher.

As usual practice during a quarrel, I beat the strong guy first.

It is the goblin leader that was targeted.

Not expecting the sword to move automatically, of course he couldn't avoid my ram attack.

I look down at my sword blade which penetrated to the back through the stomach in utter amazement.

A sly trick.

I fall down to the ground just as is.

two more.

To my surprise , is it the first person? For murder, it didn't feel uncomfortable.

I wonder if its thanks to having the body of the sword.

The feel which stops a foe, tears it, and opens its interior also didn't feel unpleasant at all.

Rather the mood is in high spirits.

Hyahaha, It is meat! I can't help it.

However, About cutting down a partner, there was no feeling of evasion at all.

On the contrary, there is a strange sense of fulfilment.

It may be the feeling of satisfaction that came from being a sword.

I attacked one of them that turned his back and was going to start running, and buried it with a single blow.

The other one is scared and unable to stand up.

It was easy to bury it.

Race: Goblin: Evil: Demon beast Lv2

Hp: 12 MP: 9 Physical Strength: 7 Endurance: 11 agility: 10 intelligence: 6
magic: 3 dexterity: 8

Skills

Swordplay: Lv1 『Kobold Killer』

But, Good for me.

Despite being a surprise attack, they were all killed in a single blow.

Attack power 132 is not for show.

Well, I don't know whether it is strong, but with goblins as the standard it seems to be.

However, there is one thing I'm concerned about.

「Was i just sparkling?」

When i dealt the fatal blow to the third or fourth goblin, the sword blade emitted light for a moment.

To tell the truth, When i killed the second one i felt like the air around me shone also.

I think it was my imagination though.

Maybe it wasn't just my imagination?

But i think i didn't shine when i killed the first one.

Well, there don't seem to be any abnormalities, but lets check 『Status』 first of all.

Name: Unknown

Race: Intelligence Weapon

Attack power: 132 Magic power: 166/200 Durability : 100/100

Skills

Appraisal: Lv6 · Self-Recovery rank 1 · Demon stone value 3/100 · 「Grade 10」, Self-modification, Telekinesis, Telepathic communication, Small rise in owner status, Small rise in owner recovery, Skill sharing, Magician

Set skill

Unavailable

Memory skill

Digging: Lv1 〈New〉 , Dismantling: Lv1 〈New〉, Swordplay: Lv1 〈New〉 Club technique: Lv1 〈New〉 ,Leadership: Lv1 〈New〉 , Art of survival: Lv1 〈New〉 , Kobold Killer 〈New〉

What!? The items in my status increased.

The first thing i noticed is Self-Evolution.

Self-evolution ((*This needs added above accidentally wrote Self-recovery instead of evolution*))

Rank 1? will self-evolution include something like level?

And, there is a demon stone level.

With 3 / 100.

Ah! The sparkling three times.

Which is also the level on demon stone 3/100

Are they connected with each other? And Grade? I don't know what this means either.

Just, It was added after it, If I'm not mistaken it will be connected to the grade.

Did i get the skills when i flashed after killing the Goblins?

One of the beat goblins had it in the first place. Viligance is not visable so i think its certain. ((*Okay so this needs cleaned. He suddenly jumped to talking about the other skills and how he did not get the vigilance skill because the first goblin he killed had it and he didn't flash when it died.*))

Did i absorb the goblins skills?

When i select a skill, Something like information resounded.

The current remaining memory is 10. ((* Okay so i think i got it, when i used Grade 10 instead of grade it is supposed to possibly be memory so he can only maybe only have 10 skills at a time?*))

Set a skill? 『Yes/No』

Of course its 『Yes』 .

Then i entered into a skill choice screen.

I choose them from the top down.

Set Skill

Digging Lv1, Dismantling Lv1, Swordplay Lv1, Club Technique Lv1, Leadership Lv1, Art of Survival Lv1, Kobold Killer.

Memory Skills

None

It changed!

Could it be set? It isn't understood well.

When saying that it isn't understood well, it is a standard to shine.

Why didn't i shine after the first kill? There is a hint, The level of Demon stones 3/100.

Demon Stone.

It is a word often heard in the stories involving summonings to a different world.

It is a crystal filled with magic that is in the bodies of Demon beasts.

As i imagined, however.

When you refer to the different methods of killing the goblins one of them was cut in the throat while the others were pushed through.

Perhaps this is the difference.

「Hmm.

Try it out?」

I rushed over to the goblin i first deafeated.

I set the blade in the stiff who fell down to the fullest.

It is an act that degrades a corpse, but it is for the sake of inspection.

Forgive me.

The third time i seemed to get the desired reaction.

With a slight firm touch, the sword blade glittered.

When the demon stone is pierced as expected, it seems im able to absorb its magic or something.

The demon stone of a goblin seems to be in its stomach.

The demon stone levels increased to 4/100, in memory skill column, Vigilance and poison-resistance were added.

Paying attention , the skills level is different this time.

The Goblin leader had Dismantling Lv2 and one of the underlings had Digging Lv2

But the skill you can get seems to be Lv1

Somehow, it was like a level reset.

Is it possible to level up these skills?

Is it by using it? or should i take in a demon stone? Inspection was necessary in the future.

No matter how, I'll set the Vigilance and Poison-resistance skills.

Chapter 4: Skills, Magic Stones, and Me

(Demon stone = Magic stone) (I may flip flop them on accident but will try to keep it magic stone from now on) (Also i think i now understand the way the appraisal works Race, species, then if its a magic beast or an animal. So in the future i will try to make sure to use magic beast instead of demon beast as it usually ends up something like Goblin:Evil demon:Demon Beast when it would probably be more accurate to say Goblin:Demon:Magic Beast.)

I will work on these changes starting now. and i promise to try to start editing these after this post as this took forever. though it took about 2 hours less than chapter 3 and was 1300 more words or so. so i'm happy with that improvement in speed!

Um.

The goblin corpses are a nuisance.

Having fallen in front of the pedestal, they are now constantly in sight.

I went out of the ruins while dragging the corpses using telekinesis.

It left traces of their blood on the ground, but its better than their dead bodies.

Then dug a hole to bury the dead.

(Now to dig a hole to bury the dead) I hope that the hole digging skill i just got works.

Un.

I can dig it.

It can be dug noisily with a “zakuzaku” by the thin sword blade. (zakuzaku = crunching sound)

It seems like I’m even using a shovel.

However does the digging skill contribute to it, or is it simply thanks to telekinesis, could not be determined.

Probably, i want to think that there was some effect.

Well, it is good to have been able to collect skills while waiting for a suitable person to come.

Maybe that’s what i should aim to do while waiting. Become stronger as a magic sword.

And with that decided, i started to search immediately.

Using telekinesis, i jump around the ruins.

When my magic power decreases, i land and take a rest.

Because the surroundings are a plain, even if i go far away, I’m a little relieved to not lose sight of the pedestal.

The one found first was a little mouse with six legs.

『Promptly,

I appraised it.』

Name: Six-legged rat : animal Lv1

Hp:2

Mp: 0 Strength: 1 Endurance: 1 agility: 10 Int: 2 Magic: 0 Dexterity: 3.
Skills

None

Weak.

Too Weak.

There isn't even any skills too.

However, i am all right with just being able to absorb its magic stone.

The current magic stone level is 4/100

After gathering 96 more i expect that my rank will go up.

Please die for my growth.

I nose-dived at the mouse.

My attack easily hits the unsuspecting mouse.

The mouse split in two.

However, my body does not shine.

『Oh, why is that?』

Once again, the blade pierced the dead mouse.

But i still do not shine.

Was i not able to take in the magic stone by the present attack?

I opened up the body of the mouse carefully to investigate a cause.

It's quite a grotesque site, but i was saved thanks to being a sword.

It is gross, but i don't need to vomit.

I think whether I feel slightly sorry.

(Should i kill myself now.) As a result of the investigation, i could not find traces of a magic stone within the mouse's body.

Then, i noticed.

When i confirmed the status of this mouse, it was transcribed as an animal.

Isn't it that only demon's have a magic stone inside if them?

Even on earth, animals don't have such a thing inside themselves.

To inspect this theory, i have become the rats worst nightmare and attacked all that i could find.

The result, After killing three more, i could not find a magic stone.

Next i aim at Demon beasts.

Well, One was found already.

It's a large centipede approximately 50 centimeters long which has been eating the bodies of dead rats which i had killed.

Name: Giant Centipede : Demon bug: Demon Beast : Lv4

Hp : 18 MP : 7 Strength : 6 Endurance : 10 Agility : 14 Intelligence : 1
Magic : 6 Dexterity : 2

Skills

Vibration sensing : Lv1 , Climbing : Lv1 , Poison fang.

The family is a demon beast. *** (I feel dumb, sorry guys seems demon beast may have been magic beast, but I'm conflicted because they are still demons. so i might just keep calling them demon beasts)***

At first i pierced the head.

However, it struggles, it rampages.

A yellow liquid seeps out of its mouth, “BitanBitan” while thrashing around.

To put an end to it, i cut up the body this time.

Still the divided large centipede moves back and forth showing the vitality peculiar to an insect.

But soon its wriggling stopped. A~, Its disgusting.

However, he was defeated.

My sword blade glittered when i cut through the area around the centipedes heart which had stopped moving.

As expected, the demon beast seemed to have a magic stone.

Skills gained by the way, was the vibration sensing :Lv1 Climbing: Lv1 and poison fang.

But i don't have fangs....

When i set it and used it, my MP decreased by 5, and a liquid delicately seeped out from my blade.

This is probably poison.

Oh, If it can be used, that's fine!

Next i tried to set climbing and set vibration sensing, but wasn't able to do it.

(Beyond the upper limit of the set skill)

I seem not to be able to employ all the skills that i got somehow or other.

Status item, Self-evolution (rank 1 magic stone 5/100 memory 10) With what is said, memory 10 seems like the number of skills which can be equipped.

(/tn note ***Yay that means i got it wrong but then got it right. haha ***)

To be sure

Digging : Lv1, Dismantling: Lv1, Warning: Lv1 Swordplay : Lv1 Club technique: Lv1 Leader: Lv1 Art of survival : Lv1 Climbing :Lv 1 Poison resistance : Lv1 Poison fang.

Are the 10 skills which are set.

When i tried removing Club technique and set vibration sensing, i was able to do it.

Well, i don't really need 「club technique」 , so let's go as is until i get a new skill.

Leader, art of survival, poisonous resistance, and climbing obviously don't to seem to be necessary for me.

I want to get a transformation skill

With that said it is time to resume the search.

The next discovery was 2 shadows that were walking ahead.

By the silhouette it seems like a bowlegged chimpanzee walking on two legs, Green Skin, it is those ugly fellows.

『A Goblin.

Furthermore, it's holding something in its hand』

Race: Goblin : Evil demon: Demon Beast: Lv2

HP: 14 MP: 2 Strength : 6 Endurance: 9 Agility: 10 Int: 5 Magic: 3
Dexterity: 6

Skills

Club Technique: Lv1 Digging: Lv1

Race: Goblin : Evil demon: Demon beast Lv3

HP:16 MP:3 Strength :7 Endurance :10 Agility :10 Int :5 Magic :2
Dexterity : 7

Skills

Throwing technique : Lv1 Hunting : Lv1

Race: Poison fang rat : Demon: Demon Beast Lv1

Current status: Dead

HP:0 MP: 3 Strength : 4 Endurance : 7 Agility : 14 Int :1 Magic : 4
Dexterity : 4

Skills

Warning: Lv1

Without status i would not be able to tell that the goblin on the right is slightly a higher level than the other, it's a good skill.

Well, they are weaker than the other 3 i killed earlier.

It seems i'll manage somehow.

Moreover their prey the poison rat was being held up.

That will be mine!

Using the shadow of a bush so as to not be noticed i approached.

The distance is about 2 meters.

First, its the higher leveled one.

『HYUUHHHAA! Hand over the magic stone!』

Un, I'm not really that bloodthirsty, i just wanted to try saying that!

DOS

With a dull sound, i pierced the goblin from behind.

There was no resistance at all.

I pull out of the goblin body immediately while noticing that the sword blade glitters.

And attacked the other stunned goblin.

With this, 2.

I was able to get throwing technique and hunting skills without a problem.

And the new demon.

But i looked puzzled at a strange point.

It doesn't have a neck.

No matter what i think it's strange.

『Poison fang rat? Though, Is there only Warning for a skill?』

Even if i think how, its strange that it doesn't have a poison fang in its skills.

It doesn't match the name.

For now, i tried turning up the rats lips with telekinesis.

Long Canine teeth.

And yellow liquid comes out from the points of its teeth.

is it venom?

Fumu.

Why is it? There is a skill such as Poison fang in a centipede, and not the rat that has poison fangs.

Even if i worry, there are to few hints.

If i hunt more demon beasts i will slowly gather information.

The skills seemed to have reacted immediately.

Thanks to vibration sensing and hunting that is.

I could sense some existence while moving subtly across the grass.

It does not seem to be so big.

I sneak around to the other side of a bush slowly.

Race: Scavengers (Birds) : Demon Bird: Demon Beast Lv5

HP:13 MP:5 Strength : 9 Endurance :11 Agility :15 Int :6 Magic :3
Dexterity : 7

Skills

Poison resistance : Lv1 , Digestion reinforcement.

A bird?

The sensing ability seems wonderful!

Here we'll carefully.

I skimmed the ground while flying to not make any sounds, careful to avoid grass, and attacked.

I cut its neck and the scavenger is soon lying on the ground.

『Phew.. Because it would be troublesome if it flew away,

I'm glad i was able to defeat it first.

』 I stab into the Scavenger and absorb its magic stone.

I learned digestion reinforcement.

However, I don't need digestion reinforcement.

After all i have no digestive organs.

In the first place this skill could be remembered.

I admire the lack of constancy of self-evolution.

Well, is the next victim here?

A guy possessing the skills that i don't have is good if possible.

In that way i caught a strange shadow when looking for prey.

Something like a kite, floating at low altitude.

The movement speed isn't fast, but the movement is strange and irregular.

It looks like a flying green jellyfish.

Race: Air floater: Devil Plant: Demon Beast Lv5

HP: 14 MP:10 Strength : 6 Endurance : 11 Agility :4 Int :2 Magic :11
Dexterity : 5

Skills

Magic absorption : Lv1 Hawk eyes , Floatation.

I try getting closer, but it doesn't react.

Only, ten meters ahead of me, it still just floats.

Should i attack it? I decided to try to slash at it first!

I target is its core and the location with a design that looks like eyes, on its mushroom/jellyfish like body.

Whatever there is, i seem able to react, so i approach slowly.

And it was as soon as i approached about 2 meters away.

The air floater showed a movement more alert and agile than i could imagine.

『Ueee, I've got a bad feeling!』

About 10 tentacles have stretched towards me.

The red tentacles moves strangely reminding me of an angleworm or a snake.

Very creepy.

But, because i stopped for an instant to take in that horrible site, the tentacles wrapped around me.

『Ugh, Is my MP being absorbed?』

Via the tentacle, I understood that my MP was being siphoned off.

In addition to feeling terrible, it's dangerous.

I feverishly attempted to escape.

Fortunately, the strength of the tentacle was no bid deal, and it was possible to move just a little to cut myself out of its grasp.

『Hii～

That was close!』

When i checked my status, about 10 of my MP had been sucked away.

If i would have stayed being held, i wonder how it would have turned out.

That guy is dangerous.

I'm committed to kill it.

I decided to sneak over top of the air floater, when in place i charged with maximum velocity.

After all, as for the power and strength of the tentacles, they aren't that great.

I cut the tentacles that have come after me once again, skip and pierce its body.

With the feeling of having penetrated some hard object comes a shining sword blade.

The evidence that the magic stone which is a vital spot was destroyed.

With a “thud” the air floater deprived of the power fell to the ground.

Because it was floating by the power of a skill, that body which died lost buoyancy.

And a skill of Flotation and magic absorption is added to me.

They both seem like useful skills.

In particular, i tried floating and it was very compatible with telekinesis.

At any rate, even if nothing is done, it's a decent skill.

Of course it takes MP to use , but it takes far less than to float using only a telekinetic force.

When it's combined with telekinesis, I can fly 5 times longer.

If magic absorption is also combined, i could fly even longer.

In that way i noticed a certain thing when i inspected floating.

『Though an air floater had a skill like flotation if i remember right, there were no such skills of flight in the scavenger.

Though it is a demon beast of the bird type.』

It's the same as the poison fang rat.

The skills that should be there are not.

Is there a common point?

Poison fang and the flight skills to is there a reason?

Well, as for flight i don't know if i can obtain it since i don't have any wings.

Un? Wait a moment, If it's wingless, can't a flight skill be used? After all is flight not a skill?

For example there are no skills such as walking or breathing in a goblin.

And it's the same as it's natural for a bird to fly.

That's the proper function in which not magic, but a body has a skill.

The magic and the skills aren't related there.

So when i think so, as for the fang of the poison fang rat, couldn't it have simply been a mechanism of the body using something like a poison gland that gives venom to the fangs?

It's the same as the poisonous snakes which were also on earth.

On the contrary, the Poison Fang the giant centipede used was poison which was created by magic, it's probably a fantasy-like special ability.

『Because swordplay is an acquired one which was trained and obtained, can it also be absorbed as a skill? 』

There are still many things i do not understand about my body.

More inspections seem to be necessary.

The hawk eye skill was also considerably good.

It's a skill which gives the ability to see things in a bird's eye view. (T/N The author calls the skill Falcon/Hawk eye but it seems it is actually meant less literally such as being birds eye, so its really just a 3rd person POV skill.)

Fortunately, the whole environment could be seen now.

It's the feeling as if the camera is now affixed to a fan that can finally move freely, instead of before where it was as if i was looking through a camera fixed to a handle.

Well, it isn't possible to separate very far from the body.

【Alright! Time to hunt even more various kinds! 】

By the way, the status of the present sword is

Name: Unknown

Race: Intelligence weapon

Attack power : 132 Magic Power 200/200 Durability 100/100

Skills

Appraisal Lv6, Self- recovery, self- evolution, (Rank 1, Magic stone level 9/100, memory: 10) self modification, telekinesis, telepathy, small rise in owner status, small rise in owner recovery, skills sharing, magic

Set skills

Digging Lv1, Warning Lv1, Sword play Lv1, Hunting Lv1, Vibration sensing Lv1 , Throwing art Lv1, Magic absorption Lv1, Birds eye view, Poison fang, Floating.

Memory skill

Dismantling Lv1, Club Technique Lv1 , Leader lv1, art of Survival Lv1, poison resistance Lv1, Kobold Killer, Digestion reinforcement.

Modification point.

(These are the changes the author made.) I added “the eyes of the hawk” (Birds eye view as i called it) skill to the air floater and added the following parts to the sentence.

(T/N Copy paste cause its not important and im lazy) It was the thing which the effect of the eyes skill of the hawk which stayed was considerably good for. It's a skill that this skill be things to see in bird's eye view. You can now see almost all around. Was a point of view like a camera fixed to the hilt up to now, but now fans sense 0 Le like camera move freely, like looking at things.

END

Chapter 5: Rank up!

I have the next few days off so i may try to do another chapter since i wasn't able to on Friday, but if not just expect another one around this time next week!

Enjoy!

Chapter 5- Rank up!

『OraOra! What color is your magic stone!』

It is now the 5th day since i have been reincarnated as a sword.

It was just after i had slain the 12th demon beast since morning that this happened.

【Self-evolution has activated.

Self-evolution points acquired : 10】

Immediately i check my status.

Self-evolution 【rank 2, Magic stone value 102/300, Memory 12 points 10】

The magic stone value has exceeded 100

「Oh, isn't it early?」

When checking it this morning, the magic stone value should have only been at 80.

「Hmmm, The only difference since yesterday is that i moved to another hunting ground.」

Because i understood that i could fight without a problem, i moved my monster hunting grounds further from the ruins.

The enemies seem to become stronger as i leave the ruins, A 「Crash Boar」 with a hammer like nose, An 「Iron Ant」 which is a demon ant that can even crush rocks, Bigger and badder monsters appear frequently prowling the area.

They are also higher levels, possess more skills, and their magic stones are bigger.

『So, Size of the magic stone..... 』

『Perhaps, the magic stone from strong demons, has a value that isn't 1?』

Yeah maybe.

In the first place, the magic stone of 「Crash Boar」 of two meters, and the magic stone from the small fry goblin can't be worth the same value.

『Will i confirm it a little in detail?』

My status has also improved.

Moreover, it improved more than you can imagine.

Attack power : 162 Magic power : 300 Endurance: 200

『Oh! this fellow is happy, If i keep absorbing the magic stones, becoming the world's strongest sword is not just a dream! I'm also increasing the number of memories quietly. 』

Ok, Lets aim for the counter stop! *(TN counter stop is the highest level a skill can reach)*

『And... What is point 10 of the self-evolution?』

When leveling up, i seemed to get it.

I try to examine there in detail.

Oh? Some various items appeared.

Is it a list of skills?

A list of possible skill acquisition.

Attack power small rise, Durability value small rise, Telekinesis small rise, Sense talk small rise, Magic power small rise, Memory increase (small), skill level up, demon beast knowledge, plant knowledge, mineral knowledge.

Ooo? Though there are various kinds, is it that? Is it a bonus skill-like fellow?

I pick small increase in Magic Power, for the time being.

【Use 5 points, to acquire magic power small rise? Yes/No 】

Can i get it really? It's YES of course!

【You have acquired Magic Power small rise】

Then the self-evolution points decreased to 5, and magic power small rise was added to the skill list.

Furthermore, my MP went up by 100!

Self-evolution sensei is great~! What next? I want everything, but i don't have enough points.

This time, i try to choose the skill level up.

As for this, surprisingly it seemed to be able to make a memory skill i possessed at present increase in level.

But, i seem to have to choose a skill separately.

When i tried choosing fencing it required 2 points.

Everything was tried but in the end everything was 2 points to level up.

However, poison fang seemed to take 5 points.

Floating also required 5 points. What is the difference, i wonder if poison fang and floating are 5 points because they do not have a level.

Umu. i am at a loss in various ways, but I'll choose Attack power small rise here.

It would be the most effective against the demon animals.

And, after attack power small rise was added my Attack Power rose by 50.

Good.

With this, I came to look forward to increasing the magic stones value.

『”Yoshi!”, A motivation came! I'll hunt demons around here, hunt and hunt exhaustively! 』

So I've decided, let's take action at once!

I glide triumphantly, through the plains.

Looking for monsters from the sky and striking them down on discovery.

Chapter 6: Goblin? Immediately? Decapitated!

Chapter 6: Goblin · Immediately · Decapitated!

Ensig:

This is my first Translation of any kind. Please treat it well, and point out any mistakes I've made! I didn't write this, once again, I just translated it! Enjoy!

※ ※ ※

『Magic Stone getー!』

「shiyugiyagiyaー!」

『As expected, dens are delicious!』

Currently, I'm in a Goblin den.

But I wasn't able to find it on my own; I followed an underling Goblin and found it.

I just let it swim for a bit, and it led me to its den all on its own. With that, I got them all at once. What a great strategy.

I had followed the Goblin by flying at low altitude. My footwork was completely silent. Well, I don't have any feet, but that's how it was.

I must have been stalking him for... About an hour? The Goblin had started dancing abruptly at points, and became engrossed with the sight of ants

walking in procession, so most of my time was completely wasted.

I didn't even observe the Goblin for a long time, but its actions were quite irritating. Because it advanced so slowly, I had contemplated killing it many times.

『Beheading that Gob left a deep impression on me.』

I'd like to praise myself for enduring for as long as I did.

And so, I've continued to assassinate Goblins since then.

I should have gotten rid of more than 30 already, but an uproar has yet to occur. Have they really not noticed me yet?

『Oh, I arrived at quite the wide passage.』

I just continue advancing. Around the corner's a large room; it's about 20 meters in length, but the height is a little less than 10 meters.

Inside, crowded together, there're Goblins, Goblins, and more Goblins. There's gotta be more than 50 of them.

1 on 1, they're nothing but small fry, but in these numbers, they're a considerable threat. I can easily defeat even medium-sized monsters, but... That's the power of a group for you.

Later I learned that the Threat Level spikes when Monsters that can use group tactics make a horde.

The Threat Level that a single Goblin possesses is "G". However, it becomes "F" when there are 10, and it becomes "E" when there're more than 100.

By the way, Threat Level "E" is the equivalent of a Lesser Basilisk or an Ogre. It's at the level that entire villages are essentially doomed.

And, at the back of the room sat an eye-catching existence. Many wounds are engraved onto its face, and its build is close to twice that of the other

Goblins. Its appearance fits the word “Veteran” to a tee. It’s dressed in Iron Armor, with a huge Sword propped up to the side; both were likely taken from Adventurers.

『Ohh! Bingo!』

Race : Goblin King : Evil Beast : Demonic Beast Lv.21

HP : 87 MP : 26 STR : 47 END : 39 AGI : 26 INT : 17 MGC : 16
DEX : 29 [1]

Skills:

Coercion : Lv1, Sword Techniques : Lv2, Sword Arts : Lv4, Leadership : Lv4, Raise Morale : Lv3, Shield Arts : Lv2, Provocation : Lv1, Throwing : Lv1, Ambition : Lv1, Vigor Manipulation

Equipment:

Broken Crude-Iron Long Sword, Cracked Crude-Iron Armor, Leather Shield, Leather Loincloth [2]

Its Status is incomparable with the other Goblins. It truly is the Goblin King.

『Perhaps they’re aware of an intruder, but chose to defend the King?』

While looking at its Status, I trembled in delight. Excitement, like one you would get standing before an all-you-can-eat buffet, is welling up.

Moreover, I’ve confirmed that the other guys are the best of their kind. There’s a Soldier, Archer, and a Knight as well as a Mage, Thief, Warrior, Monk, Healer, and Shaman, whose existances were unconfirmed until now.

『I’ll do it!』

I thoroughly enhance my power. Telekinesis’ strength is capable of being changed depending on the mental image, and it’s possible to generate tremendous acceleration with Telekinesis via Magic.

Making use of these facts, I name it: The Telekenesis Catapult Attack!
Kukuku, the first to taste it is you, Goblin King!

Jumping around the corner, I aim at the Goblin King and release my power.
I went from 0 to max speed near instantly. In no time, I arrived at the King.

Telekinesis is completely silent. And so, the Goblin King wasn't able to react at all.

And so, I pierce right into the face of the Goblin King.

DOBON! [3]

I, who flew at the head of the Goblin King, became stuck in the wall.

My power is frightening even to myself. It's surpassed the level of a Catapult; it's already at the level of a cannon.

With a slight delay, the Goblin King's body slowly fell, and for an instant, silence dominates the room.

After that instant, shrieks and angry shouts resonate within the small space from the Goblins.

『GiyaoOOOoo!』

『GuRuuuAAaA!』

『GoRURUUuaaa!』

One guy panics and, flustered, runs up to the body of the King and roars.
There certainly are many reactions.

Then, besides the King, the guy who must be something like the King's Adjutant shouts out something amidst the chaos. After that, 5 Goblins turn towards the passage and start running.

The Goblins, which don't think that a sword moved of its own fruition, seem to think that somebody threw a sword from the depths of the passage.

All of the Goblins, together, turn their eyes to the passage.

Idiots! There'll be no one there even if you all look that way!

Smoothly, I slide out of the wall. With that momentum, I collided with the Adjutant. [4]

Or rather, it's no exaggeration to say I specifically targeted this guy.

『Give me your Magic Skills!』

As a tactical goal, I aimed at the King. But as far as Goblins are concerned, the Goblin I wanted to defeat the most would be this Goblin Mage. I was dying for this guy's Skills ever since I saw them.

Race : Goblin Mage : Evil Beast: Demonic Beast Lv.9

HP: 27 MP: 36 STR : 14 END: 15 AGI: 20 INT: 16 MGC: 19
DEX: 12

Skills:

Minerology : Lv1, Leadership : Lv1, Staff Arts : Lv2, Quarterstaff Arts : Lv1, Fire Magic : Lv3, MGC ↑ Low, Magic Manipulation.

Equipment:

Broken Oak Staff, Fur Robe

『Fuhahahahahaha! With this, I can use magic!』

It's magic in a different world! One of the yearnings of the otakus! By all means I wanted to use it!

And that very same magic has just fallen into my hands! There's no helping it if I'm a little excited!

『But before trying Magic, I'll finish up with guys!』

From there, it was a one sided slaughter.

The increased Morale brought about by the King disappeared alongside him, so the Goblins quickly started panicking and fell into disorder. The Mage, which had the ability to quell the confusion, had disappeared as well.

Top of their species or not, they're no match when they're no longer acting as a group. Normal Goblins can't even deal damage to me, so long as it isn't a critical.

And so, the Goblins lost the power of the group and became nothing but a disorderly crowd. Or rather, due to their close proximity, they're just obstructing each other's movement, so they might be even less of a threat than regular.

『Alright, this guy's the last Archer!』

As for the other guys who could attack over long distances, I cleared them all up moments earlier. Afterwards, to me who couldn't be attacked by staying close to the ceiling, the crowd of EXP Values could only look up.

I simply defeated Goblins while flying around the outskirts of the herd, taking precedence to the ones who try to run away, as keep them from escaping. A considerable amount of Goblins still escaped, but 30 of them were still hunted down in the end.

The improvement of my Skill Levels surprised me. When I absorbed the power of the Goblins' Magic Stones Sword Arts and Club Arts improved in succession.

It seems that when I have the same Skill as my enemy, absorbing their Magic Stone increases Skill Proficiency. Or perhaps I simply absorb the accumulated Level of the enemy's Skills? Well, either way, the fact that Skills can be improved is some pleasant information.

『Fuhahahahaha! Give me the experience!』

Today's Status!:

Name : Unknown

Race : Intelligent Weapon

ATK : 212 MP : 400/400 Durability : 200/200 [5]

Skills:

Appraisal : Lv6, Self-Repair, Self-Evolution 〈Rank 2 · Magic Stone Level : 185/300 · Memory : 12 · Points : 0〉, Self-Modification, Telekinesis, Telepathy, ATK ↑ Low, Owner ALL Stats ↑ Low, Owner HP Recovery ↑ Low, MP ↑ Low, Skill Sharing, Sorcery

Set Skills:

Stealth : Lv1, Evasion ↑ : Lv1, Vigilance : Lv1, Sword Arts : Lv1, Impact Resistance : Lv1, Vibration Sensing : LV1, Throwing : LV1, Magic Absorption : Lv1, Anesthetic Fang, Bird's Eye View, Poison Fang, Floating

Memory Skills:

Digging : Lv1, Dismantling : Lv1, Leg Strength ↑ : Lv1, Archery : Lv1, Club Arts : LV1, Harvesting : Lv1, Leadership : Lv1, Hunting : Lv1, Shield Arts : Lv1, Survival Arts : Lv1, Spear Arts : Lv1, Martial Arts : Lv1, Shortbow Arts : Lv1, Dagger Arts : Lv1, Weather Prediction : Lv1, Climbing : Lv1, Poison Resistance : Lv1, Disease Resistance : Lv1, Axe Arts : Lv1, Paralysis Resistance : Lv1, Trap Creation : Lv1, Smell Enhancement, Absorption Enhancement, Kobold Language, Digestion Enhancement, Pain Reduction, Taste Enhancement

N E W Skills:

Coercion : Lv1, Transportation : Lv1, Recovery Magic : Lv1, Singing : Lv1, Fear Resistance : Lv1, Sword Dancing : Lv1, Acrobatics : Lv1, Contract Magic : Lv1, Conceal Presence : Lv1, Sword Techniques : Lv1, Summon Kin : Lv1, Pugilist Arts : Lv1、Mineralogy : Lv1, Raise Morale : Lv1, Flexibility : Lv1, Instantaneous Movement : Lv1,

Purification Magic : Lv1, Staff Arts : Lv1, Small Axe Arts : Lv1,
Pickpocket : Lv1, Mental Resistance : Lv1, Oath Magic : Lv1, Medicine
Manufacturing : Lv1, Quarterstaff Arts : Lv1, Warhammer Arts : Lv1,
Longbow Arts : Lv1, Provocation : Lv1, Escape : Lv1, Engineering :
Lv1, Drowsiness Resistance : Lv1, Ambition : Lv1, Belly Crawl : Lv1,
Club Arts : Lv1, Support Magic : Lv1, Carpentry : Lv1, Herbalism :
Lv1, Cooking : Lv1, Night Vision, Vigor Manipulation, AGI ↑ Low, MGC
↑ Low, Magic Manipulation

[1] The previous translators used the literal translations of these Status values (excluding HP and MP, which were already using the English Alphabet), but I've put them into Game-like format for space conservation; for those who want to know what the literal translations SHOULD be: STR = Physical Strength, END = Physical Fitness, AGI = Agility, INT = Intelligence, MGC = Magic Power, DEX = Dexterity. I'll be using the shortened Game-like terms from now on when it's in terms of STATUS. I'll use their proper names if they fit better, but the two ways of saying them are synonymous.

[2] “Crude” in both the Sword and Armor are referring to the Iron itself, which is why I added the hyphen. It's doubtful that it's referring to the Equipment's condition, but here's the Raw if you want to take a look:

折れた粗鉄鋼の長剣、割れた粗鉄の鎧

[3] This is the sound of “Breaking”, for those who didn't know.

[4] This line mentions Wind, so it could be that the MC “Slid out like the Wind”. 自然に抜け落ちた風を装い、壁から抜け出る。その勢いのまま、副官を襲った。

[5] Once again, I'll be changing them to more game-like values. ATK = Attack Power, MP = “Held Magic Power”. Durability is Durability.

※ ※ ※

Ensig:

Some Notes regarding Skill Names:

War Staff Arts (戦杖術, translated as-is. It's literally one character from regular old Staff Arts (杖術), with 戦 being "War")

Changed to "Quarterstaff Arts" as per Faceman's suggestion~

Transportation (運搬, translated as-is, but it relates to Carriages. Yeah.)

Sword Dancing (曲剣術, it's actually "Music Fencing" or "Song Fencing", but seeing as the previous two TL's translated Fencing→Swordplay, I did the same. It's Sword Arts! That being said, when thinking of "Musical Sword Arts", "Sword Dancing" is the first thing that came to mind. So there.)

Contract Magic (契約魔術, just as it is. Not sure if this is supposed to be Summoning Magic, or if this is legitimately Magic for making Contracts. Clarified in C13, it's legitimately for Contracts!)

Summon Kin (眷属召喚, "Summon followers/family". It's not actually MAGIC Summoning, it's just calling them to you)

Instantaneous Movement (瞬発, "Instantaneous". There isn't anything but that one word. Breaking the characters down to しゅんぱつ results in the same thing, but two of my Machines mentioned Movement, so I'll go with that until proven otherwise.)

Mental Resistance (精神耐性, as-is, but Mental could also be "Soul". I'll keep it as Mental for now, but if someone who knew Japanese could clarify, that'd be great.)

Club Arts (棒術, "Stick-fighting Arts". It mentioned Cudgels, so I'm pretty sure that's where the other TL's got Club from. Because of that, I'm rolling with it. If it's wrong, tell me.)

Chapter 7: Night Flight

Chapter 7: Night Flight

I think I've gotten better at TL'ing, even though this is only my second time doing it now.

I take creative privileges during/after TL'ing (mainly grammatical stuff and making sentences flow better — no adding in random stuff, of course), but there are still some lines I'm not 100% sure on. I'd be thankful if anyone would add any suggestions to the areas I've footnoted.

Also, in regards to the previous chapter, I've changed "Intimidation" from the King's Skills to "Coercion", as I had thought it might be. *Next Line is a Spoiler!* This is because the real Intimidation Skill shows up in this chapter. *End of Spoiler!*. I also changed Narcotic Fang to Anesthetic Fang, as per the suggestion by Greed XVIII.

Ah, one last thing... The MC uses some pretty strong language, I've found. So if you don't like swears... ~~Avert thine eyes.~~

Now then, onto the Chapter!

※ ※ ※

Um... Which way is the Pedestal?

I eliminated the entire nest of Goblins and emerged triumphantly, but...

The darkness of night has already wrapped around the surrounding area, so I've lost my sense of direction.

『Well, there's the silver Moon over there, so...?』

I have no idea. I don't know what direction the Moon rises and, of course, I don't know I don't know which direction the Sun rises either. I'm already a completely lost child.

『Should I give up going home today...?』

To me, the Pedestal has been certified as my home, more or less. I'd like to return there every day, if possible. In addition, sitting inside of the Pedestal somehow gives me peace of mind.

However, it seems that it's impossible to return.

Well, it can't be helped, so let's treat ourselves to some late-night hunting. Until now, I had been hesitant to go out at night in the Plains, but I don't have a choice.

With that, I took to the air and searched for Demonic Beasts while maintaining a height where the ground is just barely in view. I'm not only at this height to search for Demonic Beasts, but also to easily reach the ground in case of a surprise attack from above.

『Flying high in the sky, I can see quite far into the distance; it's quite nice.』

I haven't seen one yet, but being attacked by some sort of transcendent Dragon would be the worst. So, not with just my eyes, I'm remaining vigilant with all five senses. Well, it's five sense-like things, because I don't have a body.

Anyways, it seems that the strength of Demonic Beasts doesn't spike up just because of the night. Rather, it seems that they've grown weaker under the cover of darkness.

Even if it takes time to find them, combat's settled in an instant.

『It's good, it's good! Using Echolocation to detect them! Convenient Skills are great!』 [1]

For Monsters of the night, exploration Skills are quite substantial.

Especially Echolocation. With this Skill, I can grasp the topography of the area as well as Demonic Beasts, so I'm able to search the surroundings with considerable detail.

『Amassing Demon Stones like this, I wonder if I'll be able to Rank up?』

Yeah, I was getting caught up in the moment. I was so successful in killing the nocturnal Demonic Beasts that, in my excitement, I didn't pay attention to my surroundings. I had single-mindedly focused only on chasing prey.

「GYarURUroOOOo!」

Suddenly, such a roar resounded within my ears. I look up to find the source, and find a Demonic Beast whose size far surpasses that of a Giant Bat approaching from above.

『Impossible! There was no reaction from Echolocation!』

Shortly before, I had used Echolocation, but there was absolutely no response.

「Gyagyaoo!」

『Ohtto!』 [2]

At extremely-high speed, the huge shadow passes by right beside me.

It's like a plane! [3]

『Nuah!』

A sound similar to a high-pitched metallic shriek comes from my blade with just a grazing touch. The impact is terrific, with all trees within about 10 meters being blown away. But that's not all. With just that slight contact, checking my Status, my Durability was shaved off by 30.

『Shit! What an unpleasant surprise!』 [4]

Are surprise attacks your main strategy? No thanks. [5] I'm just a sword. Aren't I a good sword? Even if I am, I'm just a sword! A sword! [6]

But I'll still feel offended when I'm struck! [7]

I was sent flying in surprise, but I managed to stabilize my posture in the air. I wasn't able to get a good look at my assailant, however.

Fast! That's all I can say.

And, I figured out why it wasn't caught with Echolocation.

Although it hasn't even been five seconds since it collided with this master of the shadows, it's already far off into the distance. He's way too fast.

I don't always use Echolocation, but when I do, it usually takes about a minute to examine the area. [8] If something has that much speed approaches from more than 30 meters away, then it takes about 5 seconds for the signal to reach me.

「Gyooooo!」

『Damn, here it comes again!』

I try using Appraisal at the last second while barely dodging him.

Race : Lesser Wyvern : Deteriorated Sub-Dragon : Demonic Beast Lv.21

HP: 223 MP: 95 STR: 95 END: 122 AGI: 98 INT: 142 MGC: 63
DEX: 37

Skills:

Intimidation: Lv2, Stealth: Lv2, Fire Resistance: Lv3, Airflow
Manipulation: Lv3, Poison Resistance: Lv3, Scale Hardening, Smell
Enhancement, Absorption Enhancement, Sight Enhancement

Strong! It's a Wyvern: a degradation of the dragon species — it's just a degradation, but it's still the strongest Demonic Beast I've seen so far! It's

got a lot of Skills, too!

I avoided a direct hit because I devoted myself to evasion, but with wind pressure alone my whole body was shaken as a fierce gust of wind assaults me.

I've made light of this world. I've never had a hard fight, and as for Dragons, isn't there no room for fighting half-heartedly? I think so.

『Damn it!』

My opponent might be able to move even faster than this.

Isn't this an impossible game? No, wait. If I give up, then it really will be the end. It's still too early to give up. When the time comes, I'll be able to escape to the ground somehow. Maybe. But before that, let's take on this challenge. Or rather, it's unlikely that I'll be able to get away if I don't do anything to it. I'll have to depend on counterattacks, even if all I can do is damage him a little.

So, let's try to counter his charge. I speed up a bit in reverse, as to make an attempt to run at the same time. Survival is my priority.

Like that, I wait for the rush of the Wyvern. It seems that because it's so fast, turning to charge once again takes a bit of time. While circling widely, it turns this way. The fact that I don't have to worry about being rushed consecutively is my only saving grace in this situation.

『It's coming!』

「Gurugyao!!!」

My aim is its Abdomen, which appears to be softer than the rest of its body. I'll barely dodge the dash by escaping below, and then raise my edge skywards to cut its stomach. I'm unsure whether it'll go well, but I'll try it anyways. If it's wounded, then I'll take that opportunity to escape.

Rapidly, its huge body approaches, but I was unexpectedly calm. Certainly, it's faster than things like Cars and Motorcycles, but there's no need to be

overwhelmed because it's simply coming at me in a straight line. My plan... Will it work?

『Sooi!』

「Guraa!」

Yeah. I failed. In the middle of a rush, this guy dodged the full brunt of my swing. But it left a deeper impression than I thought it would. Even though I intended to calm myself down, my subconscious seemed to find fear regardless. The edge that I raised only cut the Wyvern's stomach a little. To its huge body, I made a scratch. When I found that I had given it a wound, I was genuinely happy.

「GURUruRUwu!」

『Wait, didn't that make it super mad?!』

Even though I dealt so little damage, it seems that its anger is at its MAX! Didn't this tactic have a boomerang effect?! While making its turn, its vicious eyes were glaring, completely fixed on me.

『Isn't this slightly bad?』

And, it rushes once again. I had resolved myself — to dodge this guy.

『Guaa!』

「GYAGYAUUUOOOO!」

『Damn it! This damn lizard! — Even though it was only struck once!』

Because I understood the balance of defense and offense, I aimed to counter, but the Wyvern immediately performed a feat of acrobatics using its tail, manipulating its centrifugal force. With that, I received a direct hit from the talons on its hind leg.

But I didn't simply take the attack. When I was hit by its claw, I was bounced directly in front of the fellow's eye, so I made the split-second

decision to jab myself into it. Well, as a result, the tip of my blade has been broken. The fragments should still be within the Wyvern's right eye. Serves you right!

「GIIGIIIAAAAAAAA!」

It twists and writhes in agony while flying (although its flights seems quite disturbed).

『Apart from that, am I alright?』

Only about $\frac{2}{3}$ of my blade is left. The rest splendidly snapped off. Naturally, there's no pain, but am I really alright?

There doesn't seem to be any problem flying. To begin with, I fly using Telekinesis and Floating, so my flight has nothing to do with air resistance. And so, even with a change in shape, there's absolutely no change whatsoever.

Magical Power doesn't seem to be leaking out from the damage, either.

Surprisingly, I'm alright. How much will Self-Repair be able to regenerate, I wonder. It'd be unpleasant to remain in this state.

When I thought such, the broken part of my blade began to glow slightly. Then, although it's only a couple of millimeters, it starts to bulge. This is probably the start of restoration.

Phew. Self-Repair seems to be working properly.

『Shit, that damn Lizard! How dare it do this to me!』

Anger immediately boiled up after I confirmed my own safety. To put my beautiful white blade into this tragic state... Inexcusable.

It seems that the Wyvern doesn't plan on letting this slide either. With my mind distorted by hatred, I recklessly throw myself up at the Wyvern. My reason vanished completely, but I can only chase it endlessly. [9]

Its movements have become poor with its injury, but it's still faster than me.

『Even so, I'll do it!』

I'll cut him up until he's nothing but a pile of severed bones! If my body's a sword, then it's no longer restricted with the same limits that I'm used to! And, if so, then I must be able to do more! [10]

First, I slow down a little to change the course of the Wyvern. That way, it would be misled into thinking that I was going to escape. With that, the Lizard-bastard threw itself in a straight line.

What an idiot! It took the bait!

I change my route at once, accelerating towards the wing of the Wyvern. The Lizard-bastard was headed completely straight, so it can't dodge.

Then, with both of us accelerating with tremendous momentum, we collide. As a result, my blade almost completely disappears. The remaining amount would be about $\frac{1}{10}$. But it was worth it, as the Lesser Wyvern's left wing was cut at the base, causing it to fall to the ground.

Through my baiting, the altitude exceeds 30 meters. As one would expect, not even a Sub-Dragon could fall from this height without a scratch.

Upon approaching the Lesser Wyvern that fell to the ground, its neck is bent in a strange direction with a large quantity of blood, vomit, and excreta pouring from its mouth. [11] The body's still convulsing, but it's only a matter of time before it meets its end.

『Fu— Looks like I somehow won.』

That was dangerous. If I received just a little more damage, I would have been done for. My remaining Durability is 23. I really did just barely survive.

『Well, it's good that I defeated it..... But what should be done about the Magic Stone?』

The Magic Stone needs to be recovered, but retrieving it from the Lizard-bastard will be difficult for me who's lost most of my blade. There must be a way, right?

Watching the recovery of Self-Repair, it seems like it'll take quite some time to make a full recovery. It's possible that it won't be repaired overnight either.

Meanwhile, on this plain crawling with starved Demonic Beasts, I can't help but think that the Lesser Wyvern's corpse isn't exactly "safe".

『Well, I'll manage somehow.....』

As for recovery via Self-Repair, it seems that the ooze coming out is bound to the broken section.

『Nunununu...!』

I've got to put some fighting spirit into it! While doing so, didn't the speed of the ooze squeezing out increase!? — Yeah, what stupid things are you doing, me.

『Oh?』

I have the feeling that the brightness of my blade increased, somehow. Is this, by any chance..... Ohh. The restoration speed of the blade rose remarkably. Seriously?

Is it possible that the even the effects of auto-recovery Skills increase when it coincides with the user's intentions? Alongside that increase, my MP is decreasing at an amazing speed; 1 MP/sec. But it's worth it at this point, as my blade will be completely repaired at the expense of only ~200 MP.

『It was a struggle, but I gained some useful knowledge.』

Along with the Magic Stone. These are the fruits of struggling with all my strength. Its Magic Stone is comparable to being 20 combined into 1.

The Lesser Wyvern's Magic Stone was located at the base of its neck. I had attempted to aim at it in the middle of combat, too.

『Well, let's take a rest for today in the bushes.』

[1] Rather than “Convenient Skills are great!” it's actually “Convenient Skills are huge!” — huge as in quantity. I'm thinking he means that they play a huge part, thus the translation. 便利スキルが大量だ！

[2] It's actually “うおっと” — which is “uh-oh” or “oops” or even “sorry”. You've probably heard it in anime, as it's pronounced “Uotto”. Because it's more of a sound that escapes his lips (if he had any lips), I've kept it as a hyperbole.

[3] The literal translation is “galley”, as in a ship, but... That's not very fitting, I'd think. I'll change it if someone has a better suggestion. ギャリッ！

[4] Unpleasant is more “Unfair/cowardly/mean”, but unpleasant fits more.

[5] Machines are giving things like “The surprise attack was the main? I'm good.”, so I drew assumptions based on the context. お前も不意打ちがメインだって？ 俺はいいんだよ

[6] Yeah. It really does mention Sword four times in a row. だって、剣だし。何で剣なら良いのかって？ とにかく、剣なら許される！ なにせ剣だしね！

[7] I think the MC's making the joke that even though he's a sword, he doesn't like colliding with things (in case of a dual, in other words).

[8] The MC is referring to the time it takes for the Echolocation to “bounce back”, not that the skill takes a minute — just to be clear.

[9] The last sentence's hard, m8's. 俺を噛み砕くために延々と追ってくる

[10] Took a lot of creative privileges with this para. Someone should give me a second opinion. 肉を切らせて骨を断つ。刀身がかけた程度な

ら、活動に制限がかからないことは分かった。なら、もっとやりようはある。

[11] I didn't actually have to stray from the translation here, so no: this isn't me getting graphic with the aftermath like I do in my own story. I just wanted to say that while "excreta" usually covers things like feces, the Author chose to put it here, so I've added it in. 地面に落下したレッサー・ワイバーンに近寄ると、首が変な方に曲がり、口からは大量の血や吐しゃ物をまき散らしている。

※ ※ ※

Oh, I had almost forgotten to mention... But as some of you may have noticed in the Appraisal of the Lesser Wyvern, the section right next to it is "Deteriorated Sub-Dragon" — not "Evil" like the Goblins and such have been up until this point.

Because of this, I'm thinking the format is actually like the following:

Race: (Race Name) : (Racial Derivation) : (Racial Classification) Lv.##

Just to clear that up. Anyways, see you next chapter, and give my Story a read if you have time!

Chapter 8: My first time using Magic

It's the day after I killed the Lesser Wyvern.

I rose to the sky and looked for the Pedestal; because it's daytime, I could see farther, so I thought I'd have better luck finding it.

My suspicion turns out true, and I discover the pedestal a considerable distance away. It was terrible of me to leave it so far behind, so I planned to return to the pedestal immediately.

『Uryaa—!』

With that, I flew to the pedestal in great haste. I encountered Demonic Beasts along the way, but I pierced through all of their Magic Stones immediately; they were delicious. For me, who experienced heated combat with the Wyvern last night, lower leveled Demonic Beasts have stopped trying to confront me.

The farther away from the Pedestal, the stronger the Demonic Beasts seem to become. Conversely, the Demonic Beasts are weaker the more one approaches the Pedestal.

Surely, this is caused by the strange Magic which spreads out of the Pedestal. Perhaps it was set that way as a sort of Barrier. Because I had been using MP a lot recently, I was able to get that sort of feeling from the area. I don't know who made such a thing, though. I wonder if it was my creator?

I arrived before even 1 hour passed, thanks to charging straight with all my power. In the end, moving during the day is the most efficient.

Although I was only gone for one night, I missed this place. It feels comfortable to be in the presence of the Barrier.

『Uoo—! Pedestal! I've returned!』

With that, I dive into the pedestal.

Supo [1]

Mm, with this I can relax. It's very calming inside of the Pedestal. After all, this place is my home. This Pedestal is a space of healing.

『Fuu. At last I can take a breath～』

For a while, I spend time simply looking up at the clouds. Ahh, I feel at ease.

Taking breaks is quite enjoyable.

『Fufufufu..... A—hahahaha! At last! I'm no longer just a simple sword, Jo**!』 [2]

Yes, because I have Magic.

During yesterday's Goblin extermination, I obtained the Fire Magic Skill from a Goblin Mage. THE long-awaited Magic.

『Fire Magic set.』

Preparations complete.

I focus my consciousness. I've used Skills many times, so I should be able to use Magic one way or another. That's what I thought, but —

『Nothing's happening.』

I can't get the feeling of how to use Magic. I groaned and finished. That's all.

『Why? Is it a lack of Magic Power? No, that Goblin Mage didn't seem to have more than me..... For the time being, I'll try setting all the Mage's Skills.』

I set Minerology, Leadership, Staff Arts, Quarterstaff Arts, Fire Magic, MGC ↑ Low, and Magic Manipulation, and then prayed for success. With that, a number of images appeared.

Fire · Arrow and Fire · Shield? Then, I'll choose Fire · Arrow.

If it's going to be my first spell, it has to be Attack Magic!

『Ohh, the image of the incantation appeared.』

I try reading the incantation, which floated into my mind, out loud. As I did so, I could feel Magic Power flow from my blade.

『Fire · Arrow—!』

Shuon [3]

An arrow made out of flame is produced in the air in response to my shout.

『Oh, Ohhh?』

The finished flame arrow then flies like a genuine arrow into the distance. The Magic was a success.

『A—hahaha! Success!』

The Fire Arrow's power was only to the degree that it burnt some ground. It it's like that, then it would be 100 times better to just rush in myself — but it's different. The important thing is that I was able to use Magic all on my own.

『Then, onto the next! Fire · Shield!』

A small buckler of flame is produced.

『Hmm. But how strong is it?』

I use Telekinesis to throw a stone. I'll test it using power only to that degree. It's thrown at about 130km/hour? The Shield seems to prevent it. Then I throw the 2nd, and then the 3rd.

Well, it seems that it can only be used to that degree.

The Shield managed to prevent the third shot, then disappeared. It might be able to prevent arrows, but it's doubtful it would be effective against swords and axes.

After that, I played with magic for a short while. The MP consumption seems to be ~5 for both spells, so if I were to improve them, continuous use should be possible.

『Fire · Arrow! Fire · Arrow! Hyahhoー!』

I calmed down after ~30 minutes passed. A couple of shrubs may have caught on fire, but that might just be my imagination.

『Fuu. That reminds me, I still have to properly inspect these Skills.』

I'll be setting the Skills needed to use Magic, so first I remove any Skills that seem unrelated.

The ones remaining were: Staff Arts, Quarterstaff Arts, Fire Magic, MGC ↑ Low, and Magic Manipulation.

『These two don't seem that related.』

I removed Staff Arts and Quarterstaff Arts.

『Fire · Arrow!』

It seemed to activate without a problem. Next, I should exclude MGC ↑ Low.

Again, I could still use Magic. Next, Magic Manipulation. At that point, I only had it and Fire Magic set.

『It can't be used.』

I set Magic Manipulation once again.

『Fire · Arrow.』

Shuon

It seems that Magic Manipulation is required to use Magic. I'll have to leave it on from now on; that way, I won't have to be worried if I get another skill with a similar name to Fire Magic.

『Maybe I should also set Vigor Manipulation? Magic Manipulation is needed for Magic, so I wonder what Vigor Manipulation is used for?』

The Skills that I received from the previous owner of Vigor Manipulation — the Goblin King — are: Coercion, Sword Techniques, Sword Arts, Leadership, Raise Morale, Shield Arts, Provocation, Throwing, Ambition, and Vigor Manipulation.

Is it Sword Arts? No, there's no new techniques related to the Sword. — What's this?

After inspecting Sword Techniques, I found that it allowed usage of techniques with Vigor Manipulation. The techniques seem to be MP-consuming abilities for Warriors to use.

There's Double · Slash, which creates a twin attack, and Heavy · Slash, which is something like a certain-kill technique. These are also quite interesting.

『Shall I try them immediately?』

If I have stronger techniques, then I can fight against stronger Demonic Beasts. The benefits will also apply to regular hunting.

『Goblin hunting has already been completed, so perhaps I should try going on a little excursion?』

[1] Essentially the sound of sliding into something — in this case, it's Sword-bro sliding into the Pedestal.

[2] Reference to Dio from Jojo's Bizarre Adventure. Thanks to R1CK_D0M for pointing that out!

[3] The sound of something being generated, I think.

※ ※ ※

Just so you're all aware, I'll be moving to a new Apartment on Sunday, so the chance of me having time to translate that day is very low.

Chapter 9: Fierce Battle! The menace of Area 5

It's been 10 days since I started wielding Magic.

My day-to-day life hasn't changed; I spent my time striking fear into the hearts of Demonic Beasts by slaughtering them. Alongside that, I absorbed enough Magic Stones for Self-Evolution's rank to reach 5.

I've also gained a large number of Skills, as well as Skill Proficiency. The hideout of Gourmet Orcs, which is a subspecies of Orc, was especially delicious as they had a great number of Techniques and Magic Skills.

As for their racial characteristics, most of them had a high level of Cooking and Dismantling, both going up to about Lv5. It's laughable, but despite being a Skill that I've had no opportunity to use, now the only Skill with a level higher than those is Sword Arts.

80% of the Plains have been dominated, so now it's something akin to my personal garden.

『Alright, shall I go?』

The next thing to do would be to explore outside of the Plains. It's a place that I named "Area 5" without permission.

Somehow or another, the strength of the Demonic Beasts isn't distributed evenly around here. The farther away from the Pedestal's Barrier in the Plains, the stronger the Demonic Beasts. It seems that around the Pedestal, only small fish like Goblins appear — I've designated that area as Area 1.

As the number increases, so too does the strength of the surrounding Demonic Beasts.

And for now, Area 5 is set as the maximum difficulty.

Outside of Area 5 is completely uncharted territory. But from what I can see, the Plain suddenly becomes a Forest. Occasionally, I can catch a glimpse of Demonic Beasts that move between the trees, but they don't seem much different from the small fries from Areas 1 and 2. There certainly don't seem to be any that're stronger than the Demonic Beasts of Area 5.

Well, as for the question of why Demonic Beasts of Area 5 don't just go there, I might be able to understand once I've reached there.

『There're no small fries.』

As the Area increases on the Plains, the number of Demonic Beasts tend to decrease. Instead, the Area widens, and the number of large Demonic Beasts increases. In Area 4, which was my main battlefield until yesterday, I was only able to hunt about 20 of them per day. But, because the Magic Stones' values exceed 15 each, the gain is overwhelmingly more than simply hunting 100 Goblins.

Ah, by the way, this is my current Status:

Name: Unknown

Race: Intelligent Weapon

ATK: 314 MP: 1000/1000 Durability: 800/800

Skills:

Appraisal: Lv6, High-Speed Self-Repair, Self-Evolution 〈Rank 5 · Magic Stone Status: 1366/1500 · Memory: 34 · Points: 23〉, Self-Modification, Telekinesis, Telekinesis ↑ Low, Telepathy, ATK ↑ Low, Owner ALL Stats ↑ Low, Owner HP Recovery ↑ Low, MP ↑ Low, Memory ↑ Low, Demonic Beast Knowledge, Skill Sharing, Sorcery

With regards to Skills, I changed them a lot, so I honestly can't grasp all of them. Among them, there're a lot of Skills that can't even be used, too.

As for ones that I use all the time, Sword Arts has a Skill Lv. Up bonus, so its level is particularly high.

Initially, it didn't do much, but once its Level exceeded 3, it started showing overwhelming effects. As it increases one's ability to manipulate a sword, what do you think happens if you are a sword? I became able to attack my opponent's weak points with deadly accuracy.

In addition, my ability to elude the attacks of giant Demonic Beasts also increased. Because I have the body of a sword, it's no exaggeration to say that this Skill rose both my Offense and Defense.

『Oh, a Demonic Beast!』

Race : Goblin : Evil Beast : Demonic Beast Lv3

HP: 10 MP: 2 STR: 7 END: 9 AGI: 8 INT: 4 MGC: 2 DEX: 7

Skills:

Cooking: Lv1, Vigilance: Lv1, Poison Resistance: Lv1

Description: An evil being born of a fragment of the Evil God, which was destroyed 100,000 years ago. These beings are born with strong malice and hatred towards those not of their own Race, so it's impossible for it to them to live in harmony with others. They excel in Agility and Dexterity, and they're violent and cruel by nature. Upon discovery, it is recommended to exterminate these beings immediately. Threat Level: G

Magic Stone Position: Center of the body: Solar Plexus.

I discover a Goblin walking near the end of Area 2. The Goblins' nest was annihilated, but you can still see them occasionally.

As for the explanation provided under the rest of its Status, it's the effect of Demonic Beast Knowledge, which I gained using Self-Evolution Points. It's

capable of being used in tandem with Appraisal.

Thanks to that, battles have become much easier, as the weak point of Demonic Beasts, the Magic Stone, has become clear. With that, I'm able to turn my initial attack into a certain-kill.

『But seriously, remove on sight...? They're treated just like cockroaches.』

This is the first time I've met a Goblin after gaining Demonic Beast Knowledge, but I'm getting the feeling that they're more evil than I initially thought. Well, that could simply be because I'm human-like. I was originally a human, and so I've decided to side with the humans at least. I'll just turn these guys into EXP from now on.

In that way, I move while hunting Demonic Beasts and viewing their descriptions.

『Hyahoー!』

I had come up with a great movement method the other day.

- 1: Use Telekinesis at maximum firepower, and blast off.
- 2: Entrust my descent to free-falling.
- 3: Repeat.

I had thought of it while using the Telekinesis Catapult Attack. I name it: The Telekinesis Catapult Movement Method. Because the only expenditure occurs at the start, I can save MP.

Repeating the Telekinesis Catapult Movement Method, I arrived at Area 4 before noon. The Demonic Beasts in Area 4 are quite formidable. The amount of opponents I can defeat with one attack decreases, and a fair amount of Durability is decreased by attacks from the other side. Where my Durability doesn't decrease by the attacks of Goblins at all, attacks from the Demonic Beasts in this Area can decrease it by over 100 if I'm hit directly.

[1]

And finally, while hunting Demonic Beasts along the way, I reached Area 5.

『Well, what kind of Demonic Beasts will appear in this Area?』

I use multiple exploration Skills to look for the Demonic Beasts. Finding the other party and landing a preemptive strike is very important while hunting, after all. In some cases, they can be defeated while I sustain no damage.

『However, there don't seem to be any Demonic Beasts.』

I looked around for an hour, but I wasn't able to discover any Demonic Beasts at all.

Are there perhaps absolutely no Demonic Beasts here? I had named this place Area 5, but is it possible that Area 4 actually had the highest difficulty?

As I thought so, I got a little impatient, but I was able to discover one at the edge of the area. There was a giant reaction in terms of Magical Power. Undoubtedly, it's a Demonic Beast. Moreover, it's one of unprecedented strength.

『Uwaa—! What a strong magic power reaction!』

Until now, the Demonic Beast with the strongest Magic Power was a Flare Leopard which was in Area 4; it was a fire-attribute Demonic Beast with a length of ~7-8 meters. I could handle its Fire Magic, but its Magic Stone had a value of 47; it was a brutal fiend.

But this reaction exceeds it.

『Let's gain a bit of altitude.』

I fly upwards as to not be discovered on the ground. Using Skills, I can conceal my Magic Power as well. Even though the level of each individual Skill is low, when combined the effects of multiple similar Skills, the effect raises. It'd be difficult to detect me if the opponent's Perception Skills aren't strong.

『I found it! But... What is it? A puddle?』

On the Plains, a lone Puddle(?) can be seen. It'd be ~5 meters in diameter?

But, from that Puddle, I can sense a strong Magic Power. Hmm... Is there something inside of it?

Should I approach it?

At first glance, there doesn't seem to be anything inside of the Puddle.

『I should approach it a little more, and then Appraise it.』

As one would expect, Appraisal won't work with the current altitude difference. I have to get within ~20 meters.

And so, I approached the Puddle.

Burururn

The surface of the water shook.

The wind? No, the wind wouldn't be able to shake the entire thing. It seems like some form of gelatin?

Bururururururun

The Puddle shook even more, and then overflowed like a fountain, making it give off the illusion of it exploding. Looking closely, it's not water at all.

『Ugee! It's a huge Slime!』 [2]

It seems that what I thought was a puddle was actually an extremely consolidated Slime. And so, I reacted by taking a fighting stance.

The Slime's full length exceeds 15 meters. Its surface is Blue, but within its interior, it's mixed with Gold. As for its figure, it looks like a huge Steamed Bun made out of water.

This is the first time I've seen a Slime this big. Ordinary Slimes are, at best, about 1 meter long. Even the higher ranked ones don't exceed 2 meters.

And that body of over 15 meters contains transcendent-level Magic Power. It's... A bit overwhelming.

『Well, first I should use Appraisal.』

Race : Slime Lord : Viscous Spirit : Demonic Beast

HP: 620 MP: 822 STR: 539 END: 727 AGI: 308 INT: 54 MGC: 668 DEX: 266

Skills:

Evasion: Lv3, Evasion ↑: Lv4, Fire Resistance: Lv6, Mimicry: Lv6, Absorption: Lv8, Hardening: Lv8, Instant Recovery: Lv7, Abnormal Status Resistance: Lv7, Leap: Lv5, Softening: Lv8, Viscous Body Techniques: Lv7, Viscous Body Arts: Lv8, Physical Attack Resistance: Lv7, Predation: Lv9, Magic Perception: Lv7, Dimensional Storage, Vigor Manipulation, Absorption Enhancement, Strongly Acidic Viscous Body, Digestion Enhancement, Magic Manipulation

Description: The strongest of the Slime species. It preys on the surrounding Demonic Beasts and grows indefinitely; it also has the ability to use Space-Time Magic to keep its opponent in Dimensional Storage, as to use them as a long-term food source. Its minimum Threat Level is C, but it varies depending on the amount of food in its environment; the highest reported Threat Level is A. It is said that such beings have preyed upon even Dragons. A subjugation force should be dispatched immediately upon discovery.

Magic Stone Position: The Center of its body.

Uwa—. This is a pretty dangerous Demonic Beast, huh? Infinite growth..... This fellow before my eyes has a description that makes it seem that it's incredibly dangerous, but I had already expected that.

Physical Attack Resistance and a Strongly Acidic Viscous Body? If I charge in badly, I'll definitely be dissolved.

And Viscous Body Techniques is also a pretty nasty Skill. It's a general term for attacks using the body of a liquid-like body, but the other Slimes I've seen only had it at about Lv4. That level was also excellent, as it allowed them to make their body whip-like to attack — but this guy's is at Lv7.

『I'm getting the feeling that a direct hit is a death flag.』 [3]

So, what should I do? Magic? My most effective magic is Fire Magic, but because it has Flame Resistance, it'll be useless. As for other types of Magic, there don't seem to be any that'd be effective.

The Slime Lord grows its body, but it still can't reach me who's at a raised altitude. However, it seems to have identified me as food due to its high Magic Perception.

Perhaps I could steamroll it with Skills? So long as I whittle away at it, there'll eventually be a decline in its use of Instant Regeneration. With my battle experience against other Slimes, I know that their attacks using their acidic bodies will give subtle damage, even though I'm a sword. This fellow's body is incredibly acidic, so I don't want to have to attack it too many times.

『So, —Uo!』

The body of the Slime Lord bends slowly while its body quivers, and, like a gun, it shoots a piece of its own body like a bullet. A bullet made out of strong acid.

『Not good—!』

Using a Skill to get a grasp of its location, I dodge it somehow. [4] But, with that attack it seems that I can't remain passive. I don't have confidence that I can evade attacks more intense than that one.

『Alright, fine. I'll make this a brief battle. I'll come with a single certain-kill attack.』

I set Skills related to high-speed mobility and destructive offensive-power, and throw together a combination that'll allow the strongest Telekinesis Catapult Attack I can use.

But that's not all.

『I know your habits!』

Using a Skill called Phantom Body, I create an illusion that looks just like me. This guy's great, as it emits Magic Power similar to that of the main body, making it difficult to see through. [5] In addition, when it takes a physical attack, its internal Magic Power bursts, generating a light shock wave. Its power is only to the degree of an adult hitting with all their might, but it's effective as a surprise.

With this, my preparations are complete.

『Phantom, charge!』

Without a sound, the phantom rushes straight at the Slime. In response, the Slime Lord extends a tentacle. And with that, the Phantom is struck easily. But that's fine.

It surely felt the impact that the Phantom gave off. And so, the Slime Lord extends its tentacle once again for interception. That's important, as while it's defending, it transports its Magic Stone to the opposite side. Because its body is completely liquid-like, it can freely move the Magic Stone within its body.

But that's just what I was aiming for. After all, that means that the body covering the Demonic Stone is thin on its back.

『Even in evolution, habits don't change!』

I begin funneling MP like jet fuel, and rush forward.

In the end, it was nothing more than a simple dash. However, I put my heart and soul into this dash.

『For this attack alone, I intend to give it a name. I'll name it: The Heavenly Instant-Kill Technique!』 [6]

Because the tension was high I cried out my idea, but if I was calm, it would definitely be rejected. Maybe.

All sound disappeared for an instant. That's the evidence of moving above the speed of sound.

ZUDOOOOOoooooooo!!

A mighty roaring echoed throughout the Plains. If I wasn't a sword and had keen ears, I would have fainted in agony.

The Slime Lord couldn't react, and a large hole was opened within its body. Of course, its Magic Stone was annihilated as well.

BURuburuBURUBu

And with that, the Slime Lord stopped moving, and spread out along the ground. It resulted in the dubious spectacle of some mystery-mucous covering the ground.

『Fuu, it seems I won..... Still, that was quite dangerous.』

Nearly half of my blade was dissolved by the mixture. If I was taken into him, I would have disappeared in an instant. And so, it was the correct choice to deal with it in a single blow.

〈 The effects of Self-Evolution have been activated 〉

〈 Self-Evolution Points acquired: 30 〉

Surprisingly, it seems that the value of its Magic Stone was 150. As expected of an advanced Demonic Beast.

Name : Unknown

Race : Intelligent Weapon

ATK : 352 MP : 1300/1300 Durability : 1100/1100

Skills:

Appraisal: Lv6, High-Speed Self Repair, Self-Evolution 〈Rank 6 · Magic Stone Status: 1516/2100 · Memory: 40 · Points: 53〉, Self-Modification, Telekinesis, Telekinesis ↑ Low, Telepathy, ATK ↑ Low, Owner ALL Stats ↑ Low, Owner HP Recovery ↑ Low, MP ↑ Low, Memory ↑ Low, Demonic Beast Knowledge, Skill Sharing, Sorcery

Now then, shall I also inspect the Skills that I've obtained here? There're some Skills that seem considerably useful.

Here's the first jab. [7] I can save the main Skills for later, so first I'll use the Softening Skill which seems quite interesting.

『Ohh. I became soft.』

It doesn't seem to be strong because its level is low, but my blade definitely became soft. [8] When I shake my body, my blade resounds with a *myonmyon*. [9] Interesting.

As for Mimicry and Hardening, I can't see any effects. As for Instant Regeneration, because I have High-Speed Self-Repair, I wonder if it'll do anything.

Well, those Skills were only appetizers; now let's try the main Skills.

『Dimensional Storage: Activate』

It's the so-called Item Box Skill.

A stone disappears right before my eyes. When I use it again, a stone appears out of thin air.

When I put a bunch of stones and grass inside, a list of stored objects is displayed in my mind. How convenient.

『Now, to test its capacity.』

If the amount's extremely little, I'll be quite disappointed. First, I'll put a bunch of items in to look for the limit.

『Let's start with this guy.』

I try to store the corpse of the Slime Lord, which was left unattended. Its mass is quite substantial; I think it'd be able to fill about half of a 25 meter swimming pool.

However, I was able to store it in an instant. And yet, it seems that there's still space remaining.

『As expected of an advanced Demonic Beast's Skill.』

It doesn't mean much to me, but I think it'll be useful for whoever ends up equipping me. For transporting stuff like food, for example.

By the way, once Self-Evolution is activated, my MP and Durability immediately recovers. Thanks to that, I'm completely unhurt. Mental fatigue, however, isn't reduced.

『I'm tired, let's hunt in low Areas for the rest of the day.』

[1] There was actually “無傷なのに比べて、” in the middle of this — right after the bit about the goblins — but it's essentially just Sword-bro repeating himself and being redundant. Its translation is along the lines of “In comparison with being unhurt/flawless”

[2] “Ugee” is essentially “Yuck” うげえ！

[3] I don't have to explain what flags are, right?

[4] It mentioned a Skill that roughly provided a “Spatial grasp” of sorts, so I translated it like this. If anyone has a better suggestion, I'd love to hear it!

空間把握と、回避のスキルで、何とか躲す。

[5] See through as in discover it's a fake — not literally seeing through it.

[6] 瞬天殺法

Thanks to Randonperson for the naming suggestion!

[7] Sword-bro is meaning the boxing jab here, so I think he's making the point of “weakening the number of Skills he's obtained from the Slime Lord” here. まずはジャブ。

[8] Soft as in “limp”. It's 柔らかく

[9] I'm going to go out on a limb and guess that *myonmyon* is a hyperbole for the sound a metal sheet would make if you shook it. ミヨン
ミヨン

Chapter 10: Let's go to Area 5

Today, too, we'll be exploring Area 5.

Because I fought the Slime Lord in the South yesterday, I'll search a different direction today.

In the East area I discovered a huge Snake exceeding 20 meters in length: a Doppel Snake. [1] The thickness of its body was like that of a Drum.

As its name suggests, it had a Skill called Fission Creation; it allows the user to create a body double which can imitate their original Skills, abilities, and so on.

When I defeated the first Doppelgänger and it disappeared like a phantom, I was really surprised. However, because its tactics revolved around using its double from a safe distance, the main body wasn't actually that strong.

Its fighting power didn't really exceed that of a Demonic Beast from Area 4. Once I found the body lurking underground, the fight was finished in an instant.

I used the Fission Creation Skill immediately after obtaining it, but.....

「This isn't the body of a Sword.....」

『It's me from when I was living as a human.』

And so, the doppelgänger created by Fission Creation imitated a Human. At the same time, my thoughts were obtained simultaneously, so I was able to move my Sword and Doppelgänger body at the same time.

「Oh? If I do this, won't I not need someone to equip me?」

『Seriously? But what's the strength of my alter ego?』

Wouldn't equipping myself using my double be pretty good?

Or so I thought, but it didn't go very well.

First of all, Fission Creation has a time limit. Currently, the limit's 5 minutes. Second, the Doppelgänger is incredibly weak. With the exception of INT, its stats all had an average of 5 — weaker than even Goblins.

Moreover, its Skills were reduced. The Doppelgänger has the same Skills as my main body, but all of its Skill Levels were 1.

With that, the Skill can't be used. I don't know what would happen if I leveled up the Skill, but the Doppel Snake's Fission Creation Skill was Lv9, which made its Doppelgänger body stronger than the main body.

Other Skills obtained from the snake such as Molting, Heat Perception, and Scale Regeneration couldn't be used, so there was only one other Skill that would be usable. It's a Skill superior to Poison Fang called Sovereign Toxic Fang. [2] It also had the Deadly Poison Fang Skill, but this Skill's effects are above it.

For now, the Doppel Snake was placed into storage. Dimensional Storage still wasn't full after holding that giant snake. Its capacity is greater than expected.

In the afternoon, I headed towards the Northern area. Of course, I hunted down any Demonic Beasts along the way; after defeating them they were immediately stored.

After conquering the East, I understood that within the North, East, South and West there would only be one big Boss. I guess they would be Area Bosses? The only Demonic Beasts that I found strong were the Slime Lord and the Doppel Snake; anything else is probably just food for the Area Bosses.

So, the next area boss I would face was the one in the North.

『The Area Bosses always have strong Skills, so I'm looking forward to it.』

What was there was the smallest of the Area Bosses. A Turtle Demonic Beast; its Magic Power wasn't at all inferior to that of the other Area Bosses.

Its overall length was only around 5 meters. From its shining black shell, 10 tubes stick out, with a thick gun-barrel protruding in the center.

『Blast Tortoise.』 [3]

As a matter of fact, I've defeated a lower ranked version of this tortoise. It was a Demonic Beast called a Cannon Tortoise, which absorbed the surrounding air from tubes and shot it from its compressed barrel.

「GOOOooooOooo!」

It's a form of Demonic Beast whose chosen form of combat is long-range bombardment; its detection range seems quite wide as well. Already, its eyes have become fixed upon me.

「Goo!」

BOBOBOU!

Compressed air bullets are shot consecutively. I didn't think that it would be possible to release those continuously. For Canon Tortoises, it could only shoot once, and left no shots in reserve. Indeed, this is a superior race.

『Whoa there!』 [4]

Air bullets continue to come flying at high speed. I took a trajectory to evade, but.....

BOBON!

『Nua!』

An air bullet unexpectedly bursts, and I'm crushed by the exploding air bullets from all directions. It dealt almost 100% damage. Is this due to the aftermath? [5] Or, more importantly, being able to remotely explode them remotely... What an amazing power!

Bonn!

『Gu! Dangerous, dangerous!』

While my escape routes were sealed, there's also the threat of air bullets in pursuit. With a direct hit, 400 durability is shaved off. In addition, I can see more being fired.

By the way, thanks to Airflow Vision, I can see the incoming colorless and transparent air bullets. If I didn't have that, it would have been difficult to avoid anything.

For the time being, I need to break through. I descended using Telekinesis Catapult to avoid an air bullet, and zigzag at maximum speed while continuing to dodge the barrage of air bullets.

『Don't get cocky!』

I occasionally receive damage, but I gradually approach the Tortoise.

『I've got you!』

If I get this close, it's my win. My blade plunges into the exposed neck of the turtle — not.

『Ah?! Don't run away!』

With a speed impossible to imagine from the slow movements of a Tortoise, it retracts its neck and legs. I attack the shell out of vexation, but it's only cut a little. If I attack multiple times, I might be able to break through but.....

『As if I'd permit such a thing!』

BOBOboBOboboBO!

The Tortoise who had retracted its neck began to rotate at high-speed. Really, it's just like Ga**ra. [6] And, like that, it scatters air bullets indiscriminately.

Precisely because it's not directly aimed at me, it's difficult to read, and thus difficult to avoid.

All around me air rends the ground, but even if I take distance there would still be air bullets in the sky.

I try to move to the blind spot directly above it, but because of the perception Skills that the tortoise possesses it simply distributes the air bullets above.

『Ohtto! Dangerous!』

If the top is hopeless, then perhaps the bottom would be a better choice. It might not be able to attack on its underside, after all.

I play with my Status a bit while dodging the air bullets fired off by the Tortoise.

I managed to avoid the bullets while changing my Status without a problem due to the Thought Division Skill.

Using my left over Self-Evolution Points, I achieve Soil Magic Lv4; that's when it becomes legitimately usable.

This fellow will be on the receiving end of this Skill, as I've become able to tunnel using the abilities I've obtained.

『—Dig dug!』 [7]

I dive into the hole dug with magic; the ending of the tunnel is directly below the Tortoise.

『Dig dug! Dig dug!』

But that's not all. Casting the magic consecutively, I hollow out holes at the feet of the Tortoise. The ground, which couldn't tolerate the weight of the Tortoise, sinks in, causing its big body to be swallowed into the ground.

『All according to plan!』

Furthermore, because I had dug the holes at an angle, the Tortoise does one rotation and falls upside down.

The Tortoise struggles to get up, but I sandwich it in place using Soil Magic.

Kukuku. It won't be able to escape in this state.

Then, The Tortoise takes its neck and legs out, only to attempt to return back inside. But didn't miss that chance.

The fastest blow that struck down even the Slime Lord resulted in an explosion of the head of the Tortoise.

After all, it's nothing more than a Tortoise. It wasn't a match against me. [8]

『Victory!』

However, that was quite dangerous. Again, Area 5 is to be reckoned with.

Piercing into the Tortoise's shell through the head-portion's opening, the Magic Stone on the side of its heart was acquired one way or another.

Of course, I also store the Blast Tortoise; the storage still isn't filled.

『Now there's one less Magic Skill remaining. Let's head back for now.』

The search of Area 5's Western region will be put off until tomorrow.

I still want to inspect the Skills I got from the Tortoise for now.

After returning to the Pedestal, I try out the Skills; compressing the air as well as firing two air bullets seems possible. It went well, because the two

Skills seem useful.

Air Bullet Discharge strengthens the surrounding air, thus “casting” the bullet. It seemed that through sucking air into the inside of its shell, the Blast Tortoise gained the ability to fire continuously.

As for me, if I use Airflow Manipulation in conjunction with Wind Magic, repeated shots also seems possible.

Air Compression can be used to compress air; at first it looks plain, but it’s actually quite interesting.

For example, I can add strength to the bullet fired from Air Bullet Discharge, or can make a compressed wall of air around myself as a shield. It could be said that alone it’s weak, but when used with multiple Skills it becomes quite strong.

『I’m happy that there’re a bunch of good Skills, but～ in order to utilize them, more training is required.』

Strong Skills are pretty hard to master.

[1] Doppel as in “doppelgänger”. In Japanese it’s literally “Dopper” though.
ドッペル・スネイクだ

[2] The name of the Skill is actually “King/Sovereign” “Poison Fang” — but because it was a bit too similar I changed it to “Toxic” — because that seems superior to “Poison”. The Author didn’t elaborate on the effects of Sovereign Toxic Fang, so it’s best to assume it’s just a stronger version of other Poison Fang derivations.

[3] What is this, Blastoise’s cousin? ブラスト・トータスね

[4] Literally あらよっと！ (“Ara” “yotto”), like an exclamation of exertion. Because it’s such an exclamation, I translated as you can see.

[5] There’s a joke here that doesn’t come through in translation, but “aftermath” can also be read as “waves that remain after the wind has subsided” 余波でこの威力かよ

[6] Reference to Gamera, a japanese-turtle-alien-thing that can suck its limbs in and fly around like a UFO. Google it.

[7] Yeah. It really is just as it appears. デイグダグ

[8] This line is something along the lines of “It didn’t match up to my expectations”, or more accurately “it couldn’t rival my flash”. The line I gave it fits the same intentions, so I’ll use it. 俺様の閃きには叶わなかったな。

Chapter 11: Departure for Lunch

『I won～!』

Raising my edge towards the sky, I raise my shout of victory.

I'm laying down on the ground after fighting the strongest boss of Area 5.

The Tyrant Saber. [1] To be honest, I thought I was going to lose.

With a build exceeding 10 meters, it moved like the wind and could use three-dimensional movement combined with aerial jumps. Its magic-enhanced fangs and claws were completely brutal, shaving off only a little less than 500 Durability just by being grazed.

Moreover, its fur was coated in Magic Power — but even without that, its muscles were hard enough to resist my blade anyways.

In the end, I used up 15 Self-Evolution Points on Sovereign Toxic Fang, so my victory was decided at the end of a long war. With Appraisal, I had found out that its Poison Resistance was low, which is why I used it. If that wasn't the case, I would have had no choice but to escape.

But, somehow the Saber's movements had dulled due to the poison, so I continued to attack. When I finally defeated it, 4 hours had passed since the fight began.

However, the outcome was worth the risk. To start with: its Skills.

I obtained Vibration Impact, as well as a Skill called Vibration Fang Skill, both of which are frighteningly amazing.

The vibration from Vibration Impact is transmitted to the target when they're struck, which results in a strike that's capable of destroying your opponent from the inside.

Vibration Fang allows its user to amplify the sharpness of their fangs via ultra-high vibration; it's the so-called Super-Vibration Blade Skill. Because both Skills had great compatibility with me, my offensive ability jumped up explosively.

But that's not all. Combining Air Bullet Discharge with Vibration Impact resulted in a new Skill called Vibrating Bullet Discharge. It's a fiendish attack which allows the same vibration effects to occur at long distance.

Another boon from the fight was that my Self-Evolution Skill was raised by a rank. Using Magic Stones from the Area Bosses granted values more than 150 each; that, combined with hunting in Area 4, resulted in enough to rank up.

Name : Unknown

Race : Intelligent Weapon

ATK : 392 MP : 1650/1650 Durability : 1450/1450

Skills:

Appraisal: Lv6, High-Speed Self-Repair, Self-Evolution 〈Rank 7 · Magic Stone Status: 2109/2800 · Memory: 47 · Points: 68〉, Self-Modification, Telekinesis, Telekinesis ↑ Low, Telepathy, ATK ↑ Low, Owner ALL Stats ↑ Low, Owner HP Recovery ↑ Low, MP ↑ Low, Memory ↑ Low, Demonic Beast Knowledge, Skill-Sharing, Sorcery

Also, thanks to the rank up, I made a complete recovery.

『I still have time tonight.』

In front of me stood the mysterious forest.

It's the forest-area which opens up to surround Area 5. The plan was to survey it earlier, but.....

『So, what should I do?』

I've sustained no damage, and I have time, too. Shall I go?

『I've already come this far, and I could return without doing anything, too.』 [2]

And so, I decided to explore the area outside.

—Just in case, I didn't immediately rush in, and instead decided to watch for any inhabitants by making full use of Night Vision and Heat Detection.

『M—mm, there's nothing.....?』

There seem to be a ton of wild animals, but there're almost no Demonic Beasts — other than Goblins, of course. But it would be excessive to forcibly chase them around and kill those.

『Are the only Demonic Beasts around here small fry?』

For Area 6, I was prepared to enjoy victories over Divine level Demonic Beasts.

But this place is comparable to Area 1. To be honest, it's quite a letdown.

『Ah—, as expected, I feel that my hopes have been shattered～.』

In spite of carefully taking a stance which was set to flee at any time, it seems that choosing to observe the woods from the outside is making me out to be nothing more than a fool.

『That's enough. I'll go in at once.』

I jump into the forest using Telekinesis Catapult with a *babyun*[3].

With that, I enjoy a panoramic view of the woods from above. There're still no signs of any big Demonic Beasts.

『Ah, discovered a clearing.』

In the middle of the forest, there's an open field where the trees don't grow. I change direction with Telekinesis and drop towards that space.

And stuck into the ground.

『All right, landing success!』

When using the Telekinesis Catapult Movement Method my body's at an angle, so making a landing sometimes ends up with me crashing onto the ground on the side of my blade. Such a landing deals hardly any damage to me, but I'd still count it as a failure.

A “success” would be piercing the ground with my blade, like this time. Somehow, it makes me feel better.

It's easy to make a proper landing if I use Telekinesis just before landing, but generally I entrust it to gravity and drop down to make a game out of the success/failure count from landing. It's one of my few pleasantries other than hunting.

With the ground conveying its texture through my blade, I get the feeling that this land is something like a swamp. The feel is wet and sticky like clay.

『Then, another jump..... Hm?』

My body doesn't move. Is the quality of the clay-like soil higher than I thought? I invoke Telekinesis a bit stronger this time.

『I-Impossible..... Telekinesis isn't working?』

Or, to be exact, the moment I activate it, it's forcibly terminated. The best solution in times like these is to put my all into it. I accumulate Magic Power, and load it all into Telekinesis.

pos[4]

A light sound seems to escape. And then, nothing happens.

『Impossible.』

The Magic which I used was absorbed into the ground. All the MP I had poured into it had been lost in an instant.

『Well, if that's how it is...』

I try to use a Skill. My strategy is to use Vibration Fang to make a gap between my blade and the ground. But, it seems that Vibration Fang doesn't work either.

Then, perhaps an Air Bullet couple provide enough lift? Once again, it doesn't trigger.

Using Fire Magic, I can blow myself away! —But that also doesn't work.

『Eh—..... What to do~』

Taking a break from my escape attempts, I observe the surroundings. It's nothing more than a forest; really nothing more but... It seems that the reason why Demonic Beasts of the Plain don't go into the Forest is due to this Magic Power absorption phenomenon.

To higher leveled Demonic Beasts, Magic is important, so if they wander into the forest haphazardly they could get bogged down. Just like me.

『The only consolation is that I don't feel hungry.....』

For a little while, I try to invoke other Magic Skills, but it seems that they're completely nullified.

Because my MP isn't absorbed from my blade, if I don't continuously fire off random Skills, escape might be possible.

About my sight, because it seemed to be controlled by Magic Power within my blade, there doesn't seem to be a problem.

After several hours passed, I noticed something.

『My MP isn't recovering.』

It might be because the atmosphere in the area is lacking any Magic Power, but it seems that MP wasn't being restored automatically. I still have more than half remaining, but I don't want to waste it.

This is bad; as it stands, I won't be able to get out by myself.

Ah—, how could such a thing.....

◇◆◇ [5]

3 days have passed since then. There's still no change. On the first day, I tried to find ways to escape using Skills, but I've come to the conclusion that it's completely impossible.

I can't use any Magic, not to mention attack Skills; even Telepathy isn't possible.

All I can do is hope for a other creatures passing by and accidentally pulling me out by chance.

Or perhaps a natural disaster miraculously occurring and blowing me away.

A Human coming along and pulling me out would be the best result, but...

◇◆◇

10 days have now passed since I've been stuck. [6]

Please forgive me.

I hadn't paid attention to the reality of the situation. It doesn't need to be a Human. I'll sincerely apologize to all of the Goblins I've killed, because

I'm no longer able to call them EXP anymore. So please, someone release me.

After you release me, I'll follow you for life. Anything would be fine. Even a Zombie Kobold.

Please.



One month has passed. [7]

Because I'm a good sword, please pick me up. Please!

I'm of excellent quality, you know? I'm something of a Magic Sword. I'm not sure, but I don't think there're many like me, you know?

I can even cook.

I have a bunch of Skills, too.

If I use Points, I can even level them up if you'd like.

Look, look! Cooking Lv10!

〈 Cooking has reached LvMax 〉

〈 Bonus Stats will be attached to the Cooking Skill 〉

〈 A new item has been added to the Self-Evolution Bonuses 〉

Would Dismantling be useful too? Wouldn't it be convenient? I can level this up too. Hey look, another Lv10!

〈 Dismantling has reached LvMax 〉

〈 Bonus Stats will be awarded to the Dismantling Skill 〉

I also have Appraisal. It can be improved too, you know? Hey, I raised it by 1 Level.

Aren't I amazing?

My combat capabilities are even higher, you know?

Both Sword Arts and Sword Techniques are Lv7.

If you'd like, I could also grant Magic Skills, you know? Look, Fire Magic Lv10! How is it?

〈 Fire Magic has reached LvMax 〉

〈 Flame Magic[8] Lv1 had been learnt 〉

! Well well, there was even more on top of that! How about it? There's nothing to lose through picking me up, you know?

This Skill, too —



「—……!」

Ah. I was too eager to see people and had an auditory hallucination. It seems that I've already gone terminal.

「—! …… T-t wa—!」

Eh? Could this auditory hallucination be real?

Gatagatatagata!

A slight vibration is transmitted through the ground. What is it?

「Sti- Ch-i-g—」

「!…… I'- ca-y -u! Wha—」

It's a Human's voice!

A human came! Thank you, God!

Hey, I'm over here! I'm stuck! Don't I seem like a legendary sword? That being the case, pull me out! Please!

Gatagatagatagata!

The real identity of the noise was the wheel of a carriage. The covered wagon appears from out of the forest.

But isn't it going too fast? If you turn with such a speed—

Just like that, the carriage overturned in front of me.

Gashan—!

Uwaah—! Are the people inside alright? But why were they in such a rush? They seem to have been chased by something.

For now I can't talk, so I can only watch over them. A person crawls out from the carriage while I anxiously worried over the safety of its riders.

Ohh, it looks like they're safe. He had the cliché appearance of a Merchant from a fantasy game. Speaking of appearances that use a similar overcoat, would it be easier to understand if I described his appearance as similar to that of a merchant from Dr**n Qu**t 3? [9]

In addition, a small subordinate-like small man comes out. After the small man called out, several men and women also came out.

But..... Their appearance is terrible.

Wearing tattered clothing which clearly wasn't washed, their clothes are hardly clothing at all, because they're only tied to their bodies with a single string each. Their hair is dirty as well, and big collars are fitted around their necks.

『Slaves... There's slavery in this world?』

Well, I'm slightly disappointed. My precious feelings of a different world have been tainted. — Slaves aren't particularly bad, of course. I just thought that the Humans of this world would have been a little different from my former one.

「Have the Slaves carry the luggage!」

「Come on, do it now! Hey, you, hurry up! Take the luggage!」

「Uuu...」

「Do it quickly you half-wit!」

Uwa～ what scum. It's Human waste. The little man beats a slave burdened with heavy baggage with a whip. Just looking at that, I start to feel sick.

「It's coming!」

「Hiii! Come on!」

And, the cause of their panic appeared.

「Gurururu」

It was a Demonic Beast: A Bear with two heads.

[1] As in Saber-Tooth Tiger — not a sword. The actual translation is “Tyrant Saber Tiger”, which I would have changed to “Tyrant Saber-Toothed Tiger” but that's kind of a mouthful. Thus the translation. タイラント・サーベルタイガー。

[2] In the second half of the sentence (after the comma) I'm pretty sure sword-bro is just saying that he can leave without any trouble, but I'm not sure. 何もせずに引き返してもな

[3] Babyun = Whoosh; should I continue using the Japanese pronunciation? Or perhaps change it to the western norm? バビュン

[4] Literally “POS” — “no result but empty air” as said by Mystletainn. ポス

[5] The Author actually just used a double-space to represent the time change. I’ve changed it to three asterisks marks used by the Author in later chapters to make the time change more visible.

[6] All of these lines were supposed to be in one paragraph — probably to display Sword-bro’s growing desperation — but because it just makes it look like a wall of text instead, I’ve separated the lines to create partial pauses with the same effect.

[7] See 6.

[8] “Flame Magic” is different from Fire Magic. Flame = 火炎, Fire = 火

[9] Reference to a Merchant from Dragon Quest 3. I think. ドラゴンクエスト3

Chapter 12: Can a Sword mofu a Kemonomimi?

Author's Note:

Cruel Descriptions? [1]

Panic reaches the Slaves and Merchants who are faced with the 2-headed Bear running out of the bush.

“The Horse-drawn carriage was being attacked by Demonic Beasts of the forest.” That would probably be an appropriate way to describe this situation.

The Merchant was in a hurry to put part of the load on the slaves, but then a different order was commanded of them.

「Slaves, hold it back!」

The Merchant would take that chance to run away.

The slaves don't even have any weapons. The only reason they'd be sent out is to be eaten and buy some time. Even the Slaves should understand that much. But they obeyed the words of the Merchant and headed towards the Bear.

Why? The thought had crossed my mind when I first saw them, but perhaps they're bound by Magic or something? The Magic Power absorption of this land doesn't act on the body, so it doesn't seem to interfere with whatever Magic was used to make the contract.

A tree's trunk was cut down, and a male Slave was blown away. With only one shot, the lower half of his body bid farewell to his upper half. Despite being a low-class Demonic Beast with only a Threat Level of F, it isn't an opponent that can be confronted without decent equipment. These Slaves are simply too powerless in the face of the Demonic Beast, which is the personification of violence.

If this keeps up, it'll only take a couple of minutes for the Slaves to be completely annihilated.

I'm sorry, but I can't do anything about it since even my voice has been taken. The only one capable of getting away from this situation unscathed is the piece of trash formerly known as the Merchant.

Damn it! If only someone pulled me out!

While I aimlessly thought so, a figure stood before me.

A Slave girl. But even though the girl was dirty, her hair wasn't unkempt; it was done up and fastened in place.

And her ears... They're cat ears. On the top of her head, she had the mark of an animal! — It's a Beastman[2]! It's a Mofumimi[3]!

I forgot the terrible scene unfolding in the area and was momentarily impressed. Well, Cat Ears are a treasure of the world, right? It's hard not to be moved.

Ahh, come on already! The inability to let out my voice is so irritating!

And the Girl... Pulls on me. — Please, I want to immediately mofu this Nekomimi! No, wait. How could I mofu with the body of a sword? Telekinesis? No, no. Since I have a sense of touch, if I can gently do it with the side of my blade—

The girl continued to cling to me with all her strength.

She was told to die, but is still adamant about living. She's one that doesn't give up. This girl. I want this girl to use me.

『.....』

The girl puts more force into her grip. Come on! Pull me out!

However, it seems that I was more firmly stuck into the ground than I imagined. Judging by appearances, she's only about 12, give or take 3 years? It's to my understanding that she wasn't given enough food, so she's quite skinny. With the powerless arm of such a girl, it mustn't be easy to pull me out.

Hang in there! Do your best! Or rather, look behind you!

Just like that, the Bear was approaching behind the girl. As for the other Slaves... It was hopeless.

Only the girl remains.

『Pull me out!』

「...? A voice?」

『You, can you hear my voice?!』

「Who...?」

『The sword! I'm the sword which you'll pull out.』

「..... Surprising.」

『You don't seem surprised...』

「I am.」

『Enough of this, the Bear is coming! Pull me out quickly, girl!』

Talking seems possible under the condition that we're touching, it seems. The girl seems to be the expressionless & taciturn type of person. Good! Please, say “idiot” with an embarrassed face!

The girl groans and puts more power into her arms.

Zuzu

『I moved a little!』

「Uu—n…」

『Do your best!』

Zuzuzu

『Just a little more!』

「Nunu...!」

Zubo!

『I'm out!』

「Beautiful sword.」

『Thank you, but that's not the case!』

「It is.」

『Can you fight?』

「A little.」

I confirm the status of the girl.

Name : None Age : 12

Race : Black Cat Beastman

Job : None

State : Enslaved

Status:

Level : 4

HP : 29 MP : 17 STR : 13 END : 10 AGI : 16 INT : 8 MGC : 7
DEX : 15

Skills:

Sword Arts : Lv1, Night Eyes, Skinning Expert[4], Directional Sense

Titles:

None

Equipment:

Old Rags

There're really few! She has Sword Arts, but... Ah, but that's alright!

『Equip me!』

「Already equipped.」

『You need to go further! Properly imagine equipping me!』

「? Alright.」

〈 Nameless has been registered as equipped 〉

Alright, this'll be the first time I've used Skill-Sharing.

〈 Nameless has received multiple Titles 〉

『Oh? What's this all of a sudden?』

Attempting to use Appraisal on them..... Seems possible.

The girl had received the Titles: Master of Fire, King of Cooking, King of Dismantling, and Skill Collector; those four. When Skills become LvMax, that seems to occur. Their respective Skills have their effects increased, and in the case of Skill Collector, proficiency acquisition seems to become more efficient.

Well, I'll leave it for now. Such information isn't exactly helpful right now.

『Fight. You should be able to.』

「Nn.」

『Defeat that guy. [5] Believe in yourself, and wield me!』

The Sword Arts Skill should be able to deal with the situation somehow. The opponent's a lower-rank Demonic Beast, anyways. With Sword Arts Lv7, losing is impossible. There're other Status ↑ effects in place as well.

「..... Yes. I understand.」

『Alright, good girl.』

「..... Yaa!」

The poise of the girl was absolutely beautiful. With movements befitting an expert swordsman, she moved closer to the Bear and, with a single strike, she pierced it right through the heart. It was as if I had hit tofu, as I was met with absolutely no resistance.

「Eh?」

『You were able to do it. How was it?』

「..... Yes. Thanks to you?」

『Indeed. Won't you thank me?』

「Thank you.」

After saying so, the girl prepared to put me back into the ground, so I stopper her in a hurry.

『Wait! Don't put me back into the ground!』

「？」

『Because of the ground here, I can't do anything. Therefore, take me with you for a while.』

「Uu—n?」

『What's wrong?』

「You would be taken, probably.」

『By the Slave Traders?』

「Yes.」

That would be unpleasant. Even though I had found a Mofumimi girl with much effort... I want this girl to use me! Even if I'm taken away by a Merchant and sold to a connoisseur, to be sealed once again would be a much worse result!

『Why not escape?』

「Impossible. Can't defy: collar.」

『Is it some form of Magic Tool?』

「Yes. Tried to kill multiple times, impossible.』

『You've tried to kill the Slave Traders?』

「Yes. I've tried to kill them and escape.」

I see. This girl was more bloodthirsty than I thought. But it's not like I dislike that.

『So, it was impossible because of the collar.』

「Yes.」

While talking with the girl, I saw a man running from the other side of the forest. It's the Slave Trader. By the way, the little man had already passed away. His corpse is sprawled out just a little ways away.

「Only one's alive?! I'm ruined! Such a heavy loss — shit!」

There's no sign of the man mourning over the deaths of the Slaves, or even his subordinate. Rather, he was lamenting his broken cargo. He's so shitty that it's refreshing.

「.....」

「Did you defeat the Twin-Headed Bear?」

「Yes.」

「How did you..... What is that sword?」

「Picked up.」

「Give it to me.」

「..... Un.」

「Hey, what's with those eyes, huh?!」

「I'm sorry, I'll do it.」

「Tch. Damn beasts with their gloomy eyes.」

「Ah...!」

Suddenly, the man strikes the girl. Seriously? It's a feeling that I'm used to, but... From the girl who was now crouching on the ground, the man forcefully took me away.

「Hoo... Isn't this sword beautiful? Won't this be able to make up my losses?」

While ignoring the groans of pain coming from the girl, the man began appraising me.

「Hey, beast. Load the goods that're still salvageable. Then, we'll depart for town.」

Because of the Slave Contract, the girl can't go against the will of the man. She stood up aimlessly while dragging her body, which much have been aching.

Disgusting. Absolutely disgusting. With just that, my killing intent is at its peak. Damn it! If not for the Magic Absorption in this place, I would have killed this guy already!

「-Kupe?」

When I thought of using Telekinesis, it was possible. Teehee.

No, for some reason, it seems that the Magic Power absorption was weakened after leaving the ground. When I was stuck into the ground the absorption was instant, but now there's a postponement of about one second until it's absorbed.

And so, while thinking that I wanted to kill the Slave Trader, I used Telekinesis with all my power and swung vigorously. As a result, I completely pierced the face of the Slave Trader, splitting his skull hard enough for his brain fluid to burst out.

Ah. I did it?

Uu—m. Maybe because he was a piece of shit? Or, perhaps it's because I'm a sword? Either way, the feeling of guilt doesn't come out at all. When I killed a Goblin for the first time there was a slight aching in my conscience, though.

『Well, what should we do now?』

「？」

[1] This is essentially the Author making it known that there's Gore. 'Nuff said. 残酷描写？

[2] Essentially, it's "Beast/Animal Person/Man". I took my pick and combined them as a Race. 獣人だ

[3] Yeah. This was a pain to translate. It was the same with the title — in fact, at first, I thought it was a name of some sort. It turns out that Sword-bro is referring to Kemonomimis (essentially people with animal ears/tails) for the Title, and here he's subbing out "Kemono" with "Mofu" as a sort of slang-thing.

Mofu is essentially "rub" or "cuddle" or other such things. モフミミ様や！

What a pain~

[4] I'm not entirely sure about Skinning Expert. It's 剥ぎ取り上手 which can be separated into 剥ぎ取り ("Stripping/Tearing Off/Skinning") and 上手 ("Skillful/Expert/etc."). It could be "Stripping Expert" because she's a Slave, and that sort of stuff... It happens. And, in fact, that's the most probable translation, because there's a legitimate Deconstruction Skill which has been mentioned before — making "Skinning" sort of like a double. But I'm not sure. I'll keep it as-is until told otherwise via recommendations/mentions in the Story beyond this point.

[5] There's supposed to be a "そう意識しろ。" here in the middle, but it translates to "Be conscious/aware" — which doesn't fit well in English. I've transmitted the feeling of the sentence as best as I could in the next sentence, though.

Chapter 13: Teacher & Fran

Author's Note:

It seems that it's almost been 20 chapters since I've started updating every day.

『Calm down. First, let's confirm the situation.』

「I am calm.」

『You're too calm.』

This girl is more self-paced than I thought. I have a premonition she'll be very successful.

『You have now become my wielder.』

「Yes.」

『—Anyways, I'm a Magic Sword more or less. I should be quite strong..... Or so I believe.』

「Yes.」

『That's why, I want you to use me as your sword. Even if you want to stow me away, it's alright. But you... Do you intend to use me? In other words, will you use me to slay Demonic Beasts?』

Indeed, a girl shouldn't simply be forced to live such a life.

Because I've been equipped for the first time, I have the feeling of wanting this girl to use me, but if she says she doesn't want to, I'll give up.

「I want to use you. Definitely want to use you.」

An immediate response. That figure which grasped onto my hilt tightly was as dignified as they come.

「I will become stronger. Absolutely.」

What circumstances would motivate her to this extent?

『What is your goal?』

「Break through the wall.」

『The wall? What's that?』

While listening to her story, I discover that Beastmen seem to be a species that evolves, much like Demonic Beasts. There're various conditions depending on the Race, but all evolved Beastmen receive respect from their people.

However, the vast majority of Beastmen die without being able to evolve. There seems to be a great difference between Beastmen who have evolved, and those who have not too.

The Black Cats, which is the Race of the girl, have had no one who has evolved throughout all of history. Because of this, they're treated like underlings among the Beastmen. Her parents also pursued evolution, but ran out of strength in the middle of their adventure. The girl caught the eyes of Slave Traders, and was captured.

The girl has inherited the will of her deceased parents, thus her drive for achieving evolution.

『Mh, mh! What a story! A worthy reason! I'll make certain that you'll evolve!』

「Really?」

『Of course! I'll forge you without holding back, right from the start; then, we'll go into a Dungeon to level up! And then, evolution!』

「Thank you very much.」

『It's fine! I wouldn't pick just anyone to equip me! —Er... That reminds me, what about your name?』

I still haven't heard her name yet, even though she's my important wielder. But the answer that the girl gave was unexpected.

「Don't have one.」

『Eh? You don't have a name?』

「No.」

Certainly, she had no name in Appraisal, but to really have no name...

『Why?』

「Name disappears once you enter a Slave contract.」

『Hmm? What do you mean?』

「New masters usually want to decide on a name, so your name is erased.」

I see; so perhaps after using Contract Magic it's forbidden to use their name? It's like they're Chihiro who had their name stolen by Yu**ba[1].

「My name was erased when I was 8.」

That means that she's lived 4 years as a Slave without losing the determination to achieve her goal. It was surely a life wrought with troubles. She's gained a little of my respect.

『Is that so..... Then, what was your original name?』

「Fran.」

It's the same name as a dog which I kept a long time ago, but oh well. It's easy to say, at least.

『Hm—m. Then your name is Fran.』

「Is that alright?」

『Is that no good?』

「No, it's not no good. I'm Fran.」

She seems to be happy. She nods her head again and again. With this, it's become easier to call out to her. But, from the words given from Fran next, I became perplexed.

「Your name?」

『Eh? Me?』

「Yes.」

In the past month I never talked to anyone, so I didn't have to worry about it, but... I've never had a name, huh. How foolish, to have never noticed.

I have the name that I used during my last life, so I could claim that as my name. But that would be a person's name, so it would be quite an odd name for a Sword.

But... Looking at my Status, my name is Unknown. Shit! If I had thought about it earlier, I would have been able to think of a cool name!

Something like “Cursed Sword Ch**s” or “Derfl**ger”! [2]

『Well.....』

「No name?」

『That's correct.』

「Then, I'll name you.」

Well, that's fine too. She is my wielder, after all. If Fran gives me a name she likes, then I will receive that affection. Besides, I'm apathetic towards what name I'm given, so she should call me what she'd like.

「Uu—n……」

『*Dokidoki*』 [3]

「Fu—mu……?」

『*Wakuwaku*』 [4]

「Mumu—…… I've decided.」

『Oh! I see! So? What is it?』

「Teacher.」 [5]

『Ha?』

「Teacher.」

『Why?』

「You've said that you'll train me. Therefore: Teacher.」

『Ah—. There're no other contenders? Just that one?』

「There isn't. Best regards, Teacher.」

〈 Name has been temporarily set to Teacher 〉

Uwaah—! An announcement came?! It's a lie, right? My name isn't seriously Teacher, right?

「Disliked?」

She's as expressionless as before, but there's a subtle anxiety showing on her face. Just a little. I can't say that I hate it if you look at me like that!

『It's not bad! It's a good name—!』

「Yes.」

And so, Teacher was decided as my name. I can't help but think that it's not a proper name for a sword, but it's fine so long as Fran likes it. Or so I persuaded myself.

『So, what shall we do from now on? Seeing as the Slave Trader is dead, what happened to the contract? Was it dispelled?』

「It's not. Collar didn't fall off.」

Fran points towards her collar.

「The Contract should be at a Slave Firm.」

『So even if a Slave Trader dies, there's no meaning so long as the contract remains?』

「Go to town: get caught.」

It seems I'll have to deal with this collar somehow.

『Is breaking it no good?』

「Mn. If broken: I die.」

『Eh? Seriously?』

「Seriously.」

Ohh. Dangerous. I was thinking of just cutting it off.

『How should I deal with it.....?』

Perhaps a Skill of some sort? When I thought so, I found some Skills I wanted to try.

However, because I can't use Skills in this place, I have to leave the Magic Power absorption zone.

「Then, leaving the forest should be fine.」

I receive something valuable from the carriage, and we start moving. Of course, the Bear was also collected.

I have my blade wrapped in the carriage's cover as a makeshift sheath, using the small man's belt to fasten it to Fran's back. Because she's quite small I almost drag against the ground, but I don't really mind.

Just by equipping me, her physical abilities are considerably strengthened. Fran seems quite surprised from that.

In less than 30 minutes we were able to pass through the forest, it was surprising indeed. Incidentally, because of Conceal Presence, we didn't encounter any Demonic Beasts.

「Amazing. Teacher is amazing.」

『Ahahaha, you think so?』

「Yes.」

『Now then, I'll try out a Skill.』

First, Recovery Magic. I used Magic to try and cure her abnormal condition. There was no effect.

『Then, next is this.』

Next would be using Purification Magic, treating her status as a curse.

『Lv2 should be enough.』

It, too, was no good. I have hope in the next one, however.

Contract Magic. As its name might have suggested, my aim is to override the Slave Contract with my own contract.

Contract Magic allows its user to make a contract between the user and the target via Magic. Depending on its Level and the amount of MP used, I can choose from several contract contents. However... I cannot make a contract if the target doesn't consent. I can only make a contract with one target at a time; attempting to making multiple contracts at the same time will result in failure.

So are the details of Contract Magic.

If the Slave Contract is using Contract Magic, I think it's possible to overwrite it.

And so, I used Contract Magic with the image of dispelling prior Magic while making sure to also call the Magic within the collar out.

pachi

A small snapping sound resounded. I certainly felt that the Contract Magics had interfered with one another. However, my Contract Magic is too low, so it's been repelled.

『Alright, this means that it's possible to overwrite it.』

One by one, I use Self-Evolution Points to level up Contract Magic. Finally, at Lv7, I was able to overwrite the contract. As for the amount of Points used: it was 12.

For the contents of the Contract, it was 『Range : None · Bestow Name : Fran』 [6]. It seems giving other false names would also be possible using this method.

pakin

The Slave collar comes off naturally, due to the overwrite.

『Is your body alright?』

「It's alright. No problems.」

I watch the flow of Magic Power inside of Fran, but as she said, there're no problems. Also, the Magic Power from the Contract Magic that bound Fran until recently was mainly based in the collar, so it it completely disperses within a couple of seconds.

「Thank you.」

Mmh. The sight of a cat-eared girl being bashful! Beautiful things are beautiful! It was really cute! When you look carefully, it's easy to see that she's quite beautiful. When she grows up, others won't be able to leave her alone.

That's no good. I won't allow it. You'll have to defeat me if you want to go out with Fran!

「This.」

While my passion burnt by myself, Fran removed something from her waist. It' the wallet that the Slave Trader had.

『What's inside?』

I peer inside, only to find it having numerous contents.

There're several pieces of money. Well, I don't understand this world's currency, so I don't really know how much these're worth. There're Silver, Copper, and other such things, so it's likely not a huge amount at least.

Besides that, there're a couple of tools. They seem to be Magic Tools. Fran demonstrated each.

There's a Torch which can be lit using Magic, a small pitcher which produces drinking water, and a Bracelet which has the effect of STR +1.

It's not all that great, but it's interesting in its own way. The Bracelet with STR +1, that is.

『Alright, what shall we do now? Other than your main objective, are there any prospects for right now?』

「Hm—m. A town.」

『Around here?』

「Over there.」

『Over there, you say..... About how far?』

「Don't know.」

Apparently, she had heard the Slave Trader speaking of a city to the East by chance. Because the Sense Of Direction Skill that Fran possesses, we'll be able to advance in that direction somehow or another. As a result, her response wouldn't go beyond a carefree 「There.」 .

『Well, let's head there then.』

And so, that marked the start of our journey.

This is roughly the current Status:

Name : Teacher

Equipment Registration : Fran

Race : Intelligent Weapon

ATK : 392 MP : 1650/1650 Durability : 1450/1450

Magic Power Conductivity · A

Skills:

Appraisal : Lv7, Appraisal Concealment, High-Speed Self-Repair, Self-Evolution 〈 Rank : 7 · Magic Stone Status : 2109/2800 · Memory : 62 · Points : 18 〉 , Self-Modification, Telekinesis, Telekinesis ↑ Low, Telepathy, ATK ↑ Low, Owner ALL Stats ↑, Owner HP Recovery ↑ Low, MP ↑ Low, Memory ↑, Demonic Beast Knowledge, Skill Sharing, Sorcery

Set Skills:

Sword Arts : Lv7, Pugilist Arts : Lv3

Sword Techniques: Lv7, Pugilist Techniques : Lv1

HP Recovery Rate ↑ : Lv1, Evasion : Lv2, Evasion ↑ : Lv1, Leg Strength ↑ : Lv2, Instant Recovery : Lv1

Recovery Magic : Lv1, Flame Magic : Lv1, Purification Magic : Lv3, Soil Magic : Lv4, Fire Magic : LvMax, Support Magic : Lv3

Danger Perception : Lv1, Vigilance : Lv4, Presence Perception : Lv2, Harvesting : Lv2, Echolocation : Lv1, Magic Perception : Lv3

Stealth : Lv3, Conceal Presence : Lv3, Escape : Lv1

Intimidation : Lv2, Ambition : Lv1

Fire Resistance : Lv1, Fear Resistance : Lv1, Impact Resistance : Lv1, Abnormal Status Resistance : Lv1, Mental Resistance : Lv1, Poison Resistance : Lv3, Drowsiness Resistance : Lv1, Disease Resistance : Lv3, Physical Attack Resistance : Lv1, Paralysis Resistance : Lv2

Dismantling : LvMax, Throwing : LV3, Cooking : LvMax

Aerial Jump : Lv2

Mineralogy : Lv1, Medicine Manufacturing : Lv1, Herbalism : Lv3

Poison Breath : Lv1, Fission Creation : Lv1

Vigor Manipulation, Dimensional Storage, Vibration Fang, Floating, Parallel Thought, Magic Manipulation

Night Vision, Absorption Enhancement, Sight Enhancement, Digestion Enhancement, Bird's Eye View, Hearing Enhancement, Vitals Enhancement, AGI ↑ Low, MGC ↑ Low, Taste Enhancement, STR ↑ Low

Memory Skills:

Weapon Skills:

Archery : Lv1, Sword Dancing : Lv1, Sword Arts : Lv7, Pugilist Arts : Lv3, Club Arts : Lv3, Shield Arts : Lv3, Staff Arts : Lv1, Small Axe Arts : Lv1, Quarterstaff Arts : Lv1, Warhammer Arts : Lv1, Dual Sword Arts : Lv2, Spear Arts : Lv4, Halberd Arts : L2, Greatsword Arts : Lv1, Martial Arts : Lv3, Shortbow Arts : Lv1, Dagger Arts : Lv3, Longbow Arts : Lv1, Katana Arts : Lv1, Claw Arts : Lv1, Viscous Body Arts : Lv1, Axe Arts : Lv3, Whip Arts : Lv1, Stick Arts : Lv1, Pike Arts : Lv1

Technique Skills:

Sword Techniques : Lv7, Pugilist Techniques : Lv1, Shield Techniques : Lv1, Warhammer Techniques : Lv1, Spear Techniques : Lv2, Halberd Techniques : L1, Viscous Body Techniques : Lv1

Physical Skills:

HP Recovery Rate ↑ : Lv1, Evasion : Lv2, Evasion ↑ : Lv1, Leg Strength ↑ : Lv2, Hardening : Lv1, Acidic Saliva : Lv1, Flexibility : Lv1, Instant Recovery : Lv1, Instantaneous Movement : Lv1, Molting : Lv1, Softening : Lv1

Magic Skills:

Recovery Magic : Lv1, Flame Magic : Lv1, Wind Magic : Lv1, Contract Magic : Lv7, Summon Kin : Lv1, Purification Magic : Lv3, Oath Magic

: Lv1, Soil Magic : Lv4, Fire Magic : LvMax, Support Magic : Lv3,
Water Magic : Lv2

Detection Skills

Footstep Perception : Lv1, Danger Perception : Lv1, Airflow Vision :
Lv1, Vigilance : Lv4, Presence Perception : Lv2, Harvesting : Lv2,
Hunting : Lv1, Vibration Perception : Lv1, Electromagnetic Perception
: Lv1, Heat Perception : Lv1, Echolocation : Lv1, Magic Perception :
Lv3

Concealment Skills:

Stealth : Lv3, Mimicry : Lv1, Conceal Presence : Lv3, Silent Flight :
Lv1, Survival Arts : Lv1, Escape : Lv1, Tunneling : Lv1, Night Cover
: Lv1

Influence Skills:

Coercion : Lv1, Intimidation : Lv2, Leadership : Lv1, Raise Morale :
Lv1, Ambition : Lv1, Roar : Lv1

Resistance Skills:

Fire Resistance : Lv1, Fear Resistance : Lv1, Impact Resistance : Lv1,
Abnormal Status Resistance : Lv1, Mental Resistance : Lv1, Poison
Resistance : Lv3, Drowsiness Resistance : Lv1, Disease Resistance :
Lv3, Physical Attack Resistance : Lv1, Paralysis Resistance : Lv2

Technical Skills:

Digging : Lv3, Transportation : Lv4, Dismantling : LvMax,
Blacksmithing : Lv1, Singing : Lv1, Acrobatics : Lv1, Craftsmanship :
Lv1, Sewing : Lv1, Pickpocket : Lv1, Leap : Lv1, Throwing Arts :
Lv3, Climbing : Lv1, Engineering : Lv1, Belly Crawl : Lv1, Carpentry
: Lv1, Cooking : LvMax, Trap Creation : Lv1

Art/Science Skills:

Mineralogy : Lv1, Medicine Manufacturing : Lv1, Herbalism : Lv3

Magical Ability Skills

Absorption : Lv1, Airflow Manipulation : Lv1, Air Compression : Lv1, Air Bullet Discharge : Lv1, Aerial Jump : Lv2, Vibration Impact : Lv1, Chastisement Thread: Lv1, Provocation : Lv1, Weather Prediction : Lv1, Ultrasonic Impact : Lv1, Poison Breath : Lv1, Fission Creation : Lv1, Magic Absorption : Lv1

Special Ability Skills

Scale Regeneration, Orc Slayer, Vigor Manipulation, Phantom Body, Goblin Slayer, Kobold Slayer, Narcotic Fang, Dimensional Storage, Vibration Fang, Floating, Parallel Thought, Magic Manipulation, Demonic Thread Creation, Demonic Poison Fang

Passive Skills:

Night Vision, Scale Hardening, Smell Enhancement, Absorption Enhancement, Strongly Acidic Viscous Body, Shell Enhancement, Shell Weight Lightening, Sight Enhancement, Digestion Enhancement, Hair Enhancement, Hair Hardening, Bird's Eye View, Hearing Enhancement, Pain Reduction, Vitals Enhancement, AGI ↑ Low, Predation, MGC ↑ Low, Taste Enhancement, Eggshell Camouflage, STR ↑ Low

Synthesized Skills:

Vibration Bullet Discharge

[1] Reference to Yubaba from Spirited Away.

[2] Both are references to swords of some sort. The first is a reference to Demonic Sword Chaos — or, Kaosu (魔剣カオス = 魔剣カオス) — from the Rance Series. Thanks to Mesaphrom for pointing that out!

The second is a reference to Derflinger — or Derufuringa (デルフリンガー = デルフリンガー) — from the Zero no Tsukaima Series. Thanks to Mystletainn for pointing that out!

[3] The sound of Sword-bro's (nonexistent) heart palpitating.

[4] The sound of Sword-bro's excitement building.

[5] It's "Shisho" (師匠), so technically it could also be "Master". Not the 'Goshujin-sama~' type, though.

[6] The contents are actually 不都合のない範囲で、フランと名乗ること, but I essentially compounded the information. The bit pre-comma is saying "A range with no inconvenience" which, when separated into compounded characters = No Range — thus the translation. The second half is just as it appears; declaring Fran's name.

※ ※ ※

Ensig:

As for why I didn't end up updating today/yesterday (depending on your time), I actually ended up remodeling a lot of Skills. Airflow Manipulation from the Wyvern, for example, I had translated into "Air Manipulation" by mistake when Sword-shisho had mentioned it alongside Air Bullet Discharge and such.

In other words, I went through Chapters and made sure everything matched up. I think.

I also made a .txt containing all of the Skills that have been mentioned, so that I don't end up translating ones that've been encountered before all weird. It sounds simple, but I had to match them up with what they looked like in Japanese, so it actually took a while to complete.

As for other changes, I changed Boxing Arts to Pugilist Arts — because my definition of "Pugilism" is just "fighting". I searched up the proper definition and, lo and behold, it was "The profession/hobby of boxing". So Pugilist is more appropriate.

Also on that note, it turns out that what I've been translating as "Arts" are different from Skills related to "Techniques".

So, there's Sword Arts and Sword Technique skills — both of which are different. In fact, “Swordsmanship” should actually be “Sword Arts”, and what I've been translating as “Sword Arts” already should be “Sword Techniques”. Yeah. I had the sneaking suspicion that it was like that when Sword-shisho Appraised the Slime Lord (because it had V.B. Techniques and Arts), and now my suspicions have been proven accurate.

What separates Arts and Techniques is a single character. 術 = Arts, 技 = Technique. Both can actually be synonymous depending on the context, and in English they are essentially synonymous, so that's a pain~

Thankfully, the only weapon types that Sword-shisho has both Arts and Techniques for thus far has been the Sword, so changing that was pretty simple. It's impossible to tell the difference between the two unless you look at those single characters at the end of the word, so I could have easily missed one or two if I didn't catch it early on!

If I missed a “Swordplay”, let me know, and I'll change it to “Sword Arts”!

—Ah, also, the previous Translators translated 投擲 as Throwing Technique(s)... But it's just “Throwing”, so I've changed it to be so in all previous chapters. I had used Techniques as well, 'cause it made sense, but now there's a legitimate Throwing Arts Skill (投擲術), so having “Technique” there would be misleading.

And, as the cherry on top, I found that Willpower Manipulation isn't as accurate as it could be, so I did some searching. 気力 = Willpower/Energy/Vitality, so I swapped in “Vigor” upon learning an interesting fact. What is that fact, you ask?

気力 in games is Stamina.

The more you know~

Chapter 14: The Walk to Town

Chapter 14: The Walk to Town

Through the improvement in Appraisal, there were some changes in the Status display. The first change was the mysterious “Magical Power Conductivity”. Fran didn’t seem to know what it was either. Is it the efficiency in conducting Magic? Really, I have no clue.

The next changes related to the display format of Skills. Different types of Skills became sorted, so it’s become somewhat easier to look at.

Oh, I also came to understand Self-Modification, which I didn’t understand thus far. Apparently, thanks to it new effects are gained once I reach a counter stop. [1]

✧It can grant Superior Skills, which are simply be better versions of the Skill they’re derived from. To Skills that have reached LvMax, modifying it into a Superior Skill is a great bonus. However, these Skills are excluded from the Set Skills that I can share with Fran, and are usable only to me. This is, of course, because my own Skills cannot become Set Skills. Putting it into two categories for Skill Sharing seems to be impossible.

However, because it uses up 10 Self-Evolution Points, I’ll need to give serious thought to the Skills I want to modify. Why it uses Self-Evolution Points is quite mysterious, but because they’re primarily based in Self-Evolution itself, Self-Modification could be something akin to a support of Self-Evolution.

Along the way to the Town I teach Fran about myself, too. There’s nothing to hide, after all. We also need to know the proper truth beforehand in order

to arrange an alibi of some sort for one another; that way we won't be found out by others.

I taught her about my ability to absorb Magic Stones, Skill Sharing, my ability to increase the Stats of my wielder, etc.

「Magic Stones.....」

『Mhm. However, I just leveled up recently, so there's a long way to go.』

「Un.」

『Ah, hey. What are you doing?』

「Un.」

Gangan

My blade was pressed down into the middle of a Fang Rat, piercing the Magic Stone along the way. Usually, I would try to absorb it but she was a little unreasonable.

『Wait, wait! It's no good if it's just cut! It has to remain in contact with my blade!』

「Like this?」

『Yeah, like that.』

「Really absorbed...」

『I can become stronger through doing this. We can also sell any materials we gain, so we should hunt Demonic Beasts proactively.』

「Un. Roger.」

The journey up until this point has gone on without any problems. It seems that the Plains were quite special after all, as the Demonic Beasts which

appeared outside of the forest weren't very strong either. At best, they'd be equivalent to ones found in Area 2.

In regards to meals, it's left to me.

When my sanity had been depleted, Cooking was one of the Skills that was elevated, after all. The ingredients are the Demonic Beasts stored within Dimensional Storage. Thanks to Cooking, I found out whether Demonic Beasts were edible or not.

Because Fran has the same Cooking Skill as me, she should be able to cook, but I'll be taking charge in this area. This is the duty of a guardian, after all.

Furthermore, I also made absolutely sure that my Resistance Skills were set, alongside Absorption Enhancement, Digestion Enhancement, Predation, and other such Skills while meals took place.

Predation allows the user to absorb the power of what the user eats. I don't know how much of a difference it'll make, but there's no problem with setting it anyways.

At present, Fran's status looks like this:

Name : Fran Age : 12

Race : Black Cat Tribe

Job : None

State : Contracted

Status:

Level : 5

HP : 73 MP : 65 STR : 41 END : 32 AGI : 43 INT : 28 MGC : 32
DEX : 45

Skills:

Night Eyes [2], Skinning Expert, Directional Sense

Set Skills:

Sword Arts : Lv7, Pugilist Arts : Lv3

Sword Techniques : Lv7, Pugilist Techniques : Lv1

HP Recovery Rate ↑ : Lv1, Evasion : Lv2, Evasion ↑ : Lv1, Leg Strength ↑ : Lv2, Instant Recovery : Lv1

Recovery Magic : Lv1, Flame Magic : Lv1, Purification Magic : Lv3, Ground Magic : Lv4, Fire Magic : LvMax, Support Magic : Lv3

Danger Perception : Lv1, Vigilance : Lv4, Presence Perception : Lv2, Harvesting : Lv2, Echolocation : Lv1, Magic Perception : Lv3

Stealth : Lv3, Conceal Presence : Lv3, Escape : Lv1

Intimidation : Lv2, Ambition : Lv1

Fire Resistance : Lv1, Fear Resistance : Lv1, Impact Resistance : Lv1, Abnormal Status Resistance : Lv1, Mental Resistance : Lv1, Poison Resistance : Lv3, Drowsiness Resistance : Lv1, Disease Resistance : Lv3, Physical Attack Resistance : Lv1, Paralysis Resistance : Lv2

Dismantling : LvMax, Throwing : Lv3, Cooking : LvMax

Aerial Jump : Lv2

Mineralogy : Lv1, Medicine Manufacturing : Lv1, Herbalism : Lv3

Poison Breath : Lv1, Fission Creation : Lv1

Vigor Manipulation, Dimensional Storage, Vibration Fang, Floating, Parallel Thought, Magic Manipulation

Night Vision, Absorption Enhancement, Sight Enhancement, Digestion Enhancement, Bird's Eye View, Hearing Enhancement, Vitals

Enhancement, AGI ↑ Low, MGC ↑ Low, Taste Enhancement, STR ↑ Low

Titles:

King of Dismantling, Skill Collector, Master of Fire, King of Cooking

Equipment:

Regular Clothing, Bracelet of Strength +1

For her Status, she's overwhelmingly stronger than Goblins. In fact, she's stronger than a Goblin King. She would be about equal to the Demonic Beasts and the top of the Orc Race in Area 3. She's also changed from her previously shabby clothing into ones from the horse-drawn carriage.

Each of her equipments' Stats have also been improved by ~20 per piece; this is due to the effects of Skills like Owner ALL Stats ↑ and STR ↑ Low. They're quite the cheats. Like this, there'll be no problem in a fight against lower-leveled Demonic Beasts.

As for her Skills, these are the basic ones, but they'll change often because I modify them depending on the situation.

The only problem at hand is money. The currency unit of this world seems to be "Gorudo" [3]. From the Slave Trader we received 2 Silver Coins, and 24 Copper Coins. That's a total of 224 Gorudo. It seems that's along the fine line of having lodging at a hotel for one night.

The reason why I said "it seems" is because Fran isn't an expert on the market of the world. It's just general knowledge.

And so, the first order of business is getting money. Preparing Armor and such will be essential, after all.

Just in case, I have a certain prospect that we can use. That is, the corpses of the Demonic Beasts which have been stowed away in Dimensional Storage. Because they seem to be the main source of income for Adventurers, selling them as materials would be worth a little at least.

So, before arrival, we'll dismantle the material and sort out the ones that'll most likely sell.

Because the materials gained from high-ranking Demonic Beasts might attract unnecessary attention to Fran, we'll have to sell materials from lesser ranked Demonic Beasts for now.

Well, that's an issue for when we arrive at town though.

『Alright, it's done.』

We're in the middle of camping at the moment. Fran is in the process of dismantling the materials. Apparently, so long as I'm registered as Equipment, even if she's not holding me Skill Sharing will still be in effect. The Status raises will also remain. So Fran can use Dismantling even if she's a little bit away.

In one hand Fran held a knife, dismantling the corpse of a Demonic Beast lying on the ground. Deodorization from Purification Magic is also being used in order to keep Demonic Beasts from approaching due to the smell of blood. Fran set that up all on her own.

Currently, I'm preparing a meal . It's a stew using the meat of Demonic Beasts inside of a pot taken from the Slave Traders' carriage. I'm also making use of medicinal herbs harvested using Herbalism, so the nutrition'll be perfect.

As a sword, it's easy for me to cut up ingredients, and mixing isn't a problem using Telekinesis. The taste should be absolutely flawless —— Cooking is LvMax, after all. It's quite regrettable that I can't taste it for myself.

This division of labor will be the default in the future. I'll be in charge of Cooking and lookout, and Fran will be responsible for Dismantling. I'll take the Magic Stones, and everything will be either sold or eaten.

『Fran, it's finished.』

「Un.」

『Rinse your hands with water.』

「Aqua ・ Create」

Fran washes her hands with a *pachapacha* sound using water I created via Water Magic, with me as the source of MP. There're no problems in regards to consumption. Because Fran is the one using me, my Magic can be freely used, so we'll be able to generate as much water as necessary.

『Is the Dismantling finished?』

「Almost. One is impossible.」

『Ahh, the Tortoise?』

For the Blast Tortoise, even at LvMax it seems impossible to dismantle with just a knife. Well, it can't be helped. It's a high-ranking Demonic Beast, after all.

The Tyrant Saber couldn't be dismantled yesterday either. It's an issue with the tools.

『Is it my turn today as well?』

「Please.」

『Mmh. Leave it to me. As for you, have a good meal.』

「Un. Thank you.」

Now, I should dismantle it quickly before Fran's finished eating.

“Correction”

It's a Skill that could be said to be one of a kind; an amazing Skill resultant from reaching a counter stop: a Superior Skill.

And it's worthy of the title "Superior". [4]

[1] Counter Stop is Japanese gaming lingo for "When something reaches max value", in this case, it's when a Skill become LvMax.

[2] Previously translated as "Night Vision" — which it technically is. It's spelt like this "夜目" whereas the Night Vision Sword-shisho has is "暗視". To be honest, I knew that it was a bit different, but the Skills were practically synonymous. Now that Fran has both Skills however, I need to change it. Originally I would have made it "Cat Eyes", but there's a possibility that other Races will have the same Skill, so "Night Eyes" is the middle ground I settled with. As always, if you have a better recommendation let me know

[3] It's ゴルド. That could also be changed to plain old "Gold" — but in the end it would just be a guess based off of the onomatopoeia, so I kept it as Gorudo. Tell me what you guys think.

[4] The Author makes a "→" here, which is essentially them referring back to a previous part of the chapter. For which part they're referring to, it's the part related to Self-Modification's ability to elevate LvMax Skills to "Superior Skills" — I've marked it with a "◇" for easy finding if anyone wants to read it again.

Chapter 15: Randell the Merchant

Author's Note:

I'm surprised about the fact that the number of unique weekly viewers has suddenly increased.

Thank you!

It's the third day since I met Fran.

We're still walking towards the town. To others, I would be invisible due to the wrappings put in place while being carried on Fran's back. If someone spots a loosened portion and sees me, then I have no excuse.

『Hey, will I be able to enter the town easily?』

「Nn?」

『There're no toll fees or identification cards needed?』

「I don't know.」

furufuru Fran shakes her head back and forth. Cute.

No, no, rather than that!

Fran was a Slave, so of course she wouldn't have done any entrance procedures. But, because of that, I have no information to go off of.

『So long as anyone else is present, information should be obtainable.』

But even if I say that, throughout these three days not a single trace of people has been seen.

There're no Peddlers nor Travelers — there's not even any bandits. Why? If there were any thieves, I'd be able to beat information out of them at least.

「It's not a highway.」

The Slave Trader seemed to move through a dangerous area for the sake of time. As a result, it was attacked by a Demonic Beast and wiped out. My condolences. Not towards the Trader, of course. He should have died alone without involving the Slaves.

『Hm? There're highways, huh.』

It seems that the purpose of highways are to avoid areas where Demonic Beasts appear frequently — to skirt areas where Humans shouldn't be, essentially.

『Where is the highway?』

「It'll appear if we keep walking.」

『I hope.』

「It'll be alright. Probably.」

Four hours have passed after she said that. We advanced leisurely while hunting Demonic Beasts as we walked.

Then, we discovered the long-awaited highway.

『Alright! The road!』

The road is far better than the animal trails we had used thus far; even the grass is removed. Instead, the ground is worn through its long history of people coming and going; traces of wheels can be seen clearly, too. Without a doubt, it's a highway.

Fran continues towards the town with her Sense of Direction.

「Mu, reaction of living creatures.」

『They don't seem to be people. Perhaps Goblins?』

「Hunt?」

『Just in case. We might be able to sell their materials, and their Magic Stones can be absorbed.』

「Roger.」

When I nodded using my body in consent, Fran deviated from the highway and began to run. She's already gained the ability to run between the trees like the wind using Skills like Leg Strength ↑ and such.

「There.」

It seems that their plan was to ambush anyone passing through, because Goblins had hidden themselves in bushes on the side of the highway. There're 3 total. Fran erases her presence and goes around to the Goblin at the back of their formation. Without a sound, it's struck from behind.

「Fuu.」

「Gi?」

Its body is cut down from behind, and it crumbles to the ground with a *gurari* [1]

「Haa!」

Because my Skill level has rose, the Sword Technique Double · Slash could be activated with reduced movements, thus cutting through the remaining two bodies. The Goblins didn't even know what happened.

The entire battle had finished before the first body had even fallen to the ground.

「Teacher, please.」

『Mhm. Leave it to me.』

After absorbing the Magic Stone, I cut off the horns of the Goblins, which can supposedly be used as materials. The remaining bodies were thrown into Dimensional Storage. It would be bad if I had left them unattended near the highway and a large Demonic Beast followed their scent, after all.

「Teacher, another Goblin.」

『There was still one left, huh.』

「What should we do?」

『It's running in a straight line, shall we take it?』

「Nn.」

Once again, Fran starts to run. However, an unexpected development unfolded because of that decision.

「Shit! Get away from me, damn Goblins!」

「Giigigi!」

「GuruRUA!」

A lone carriage was being attacked by Goblins. The Goblins numbered 6, while there was only one person on the side of the carriage.

『Perhaps the Goblins from before were on lookout?』

While their fiends attacked the carriage, they would watch for Adventurers; such was real plan, perhaps.

「Help?」

『Yeah. In the meantime, do your best old man!』

After erasing her presence once again, a surprise attack from behind is launched. Three bodies were cut down using the shortened movement of Triple · Thrust. The power of three consecutive thrusts is weak, but against Goblins there're no problems.

「I-I'm saved!」

「Giii!」

「Noisy.」

Fran, who suddenly appears her opponents, chops down the Goblins which raise cries of intimidation with a *zashuzashu*

The final Goblin turns heel in order to escape, but Fran throws me and deals a decisive blow. Thanks to the Throwing Skill, its stomach is accurately penetrated. I intended to make adjustments mid-flight in secret if I went astray, but it wasn't necessary.

「T-thank you, young lady. You saved me.」

「Nn.」

「You're... Quite strong. Are you traveling alone?」

「Nn?」

「Well, you don't have to tell me if you don't want to.」

Fran is reticent, but it seems that the man misunderstood based off of her attitude. Well, I don't want to transfer our poor information, so I'm grateful for that. Mentally, I directed Fran to keep the misunderstanding as-is.

「If you'd like, would you like to hitch a ride on my carriage? I'm headed towards Aressa.」

The name of the town we were headed to seems to be Aressa. The man of gentle manners in front of us seems quite determined, however. [2]

His aim seems to be obtaining an escort while simultaneously offsetting the favor we earned by fending off the Goblins.

However, because we wanted information, we decided to take up his offer. But shouldn't the debt of having one's life saved not be so light?

I use Fran as a middleman to relay my thoughts.

「Hire as an escort?」

「Ah, yes. Of course.」

Fufun. Don't force a smile.

「Information in exchange. That's good enough as a fee.」

「Hahahaha, interesting! I like it! Get on!」

「Nn.」

「The name's Randell. You?」

「Fran.」

「Then, best regards on the journey, Lady Fran.」

I don't forget to strip off the horns of the Goblins before getting into the carriage. I then proceeded to immediately ask him a question. Through Fran, that is.

「Do Goblin horns sell?」

「Goblin horns huh~, they do, but they're terribly cheap. As a catalyst for Magic, its quality is the worst.」

Is that so? I suppose stripping all of those off was just a waste of time, then. Randell continues, however.

「But even if that's the case, if you take it to the Adventurers Guild, you should be able to get a reward seeing as they're pegged to be exterminated upon discovery.」

The description from Appraisal said the same thing, Thinking about it, that description is quite arbitrary...

The description clearly explained that Goblins were hostile to essentially everything, but in the first place, who wrote that description? God? If we assume that, then it would probably be God's side who destroyed the Evil God, so the description depicting "Evil" would be biased.

Looking at it from a Goblin's perspective, they might feel that justice is on their side, and Humans are evil.

Well, even if that's the case I'm not complaining or anything. I just killed a bunch of Goblins, after all. Only good-natured people would feel conflicted in the face of that explanation. As soon as it was discovered, they would have a feeling of guilt. As for me, because it was written that they were "Evil", I could simply use that as my excuse. Or rather, I should say that my desire to hunt only grew because of that fact.

That might have been the purpose that whoever wrote the description was aiming for. It could have been to kindle people like me to hunt those of the "Evil" faction.

As expected, could the one who wrote the explanation really be God? Come to think of it, when I was reincarnated into this world I had heard a powerful voice, so perhaps that was God. Then it's fine if they're a good natured person, right? Yeah, that's how it is. Even if they tried to manipulate me, I wouldn't know of it at least. Or perhaps that's their strategy? No, no but.....

Stop, stop. If I start doubting everything randomly without information, I'll just be stuck in an endless cycle. There's no harm at the moment, so I'll just stop thinking so deeply.

「But really, I'd have never expected a group of Goblins to attack on this route.」

「Is that so?」

「Yeah. This is a road which is visited by Adventurers regularly, after all.」

Adventurers. They even have a Guild, this really is a fantasy, huh. [3] I'm looking forward to going to the Guild later.

「Personally, I can only fend off one or two Goblins at a time.」

By the way, Randell's Status looks like this:

Name : Randell Age : 39

Race : Human

Job : Merchant

State : Normal

Status:

Level : 20

HP : 62 MP : 85 STR : 30 END : 31 AGI : 34 INT : 45 MGC : 40
DEX : 41

Skills:

Transportation : Lv3, Coachmanship : Lv2, Negotiation : Lv2,
Arithmetic : Lv5, Commerce : Lv6, Spear Arts : Lv3, Speech[4] : Lv2

Titles:

None

Equipment:

Inferior Iron Spear, Leather Breastplate, Spider Silk Overcoat

Well, one-on-one against a Goblin he wouldn't lose, but being surrounded would be pretty harsh. There's only a difference of four levels, but the status of Randell compared to the cheat-like Fran is terrible.

「For some reason, the Demonic Beasts have become a bit more active than a month ago.」

A month ago, huh. About the time I captured Area 5, then.

「Why?」

「Not sure. Well, it might have to do with something to do with Maokami[5] Plains, though.」

「Maokami Plains?」

「You don't know? It's classified as a Rank A Haunt that's located to the East of here.」

「Famous?」

「Of course. Although it's inferior to the sizes of another 10 Haunts, it's still Rank A.」

“Haunts” seem to refer to areas under the control of Demonic Beasts, Dungeons included. The Ranks have a range of G ~ S, with A being second from the top.

It's not at the level of the 10 Haunts classified as Rank S, but Rank A is dangerous enough despite that.

In such a place, I hunted frequently. So, if you were to talk about the Bosses, they were universally recognized as Strong.

But that's not what concerned me. I try to ask a question through Fran.

「Why is it called Maokami Plains?」

((See [5] to understand the stuff Sword-shisho thinks about below.))

In that Plain there were a few Demonic Beasts of the wolf type, but rather than one of them being an Area Boss, there was a feline instead. And so, I don't understand why it would be called Maokami Plains.

「Legend has it that long ago, a Demonic Beast of Rank S called a Fenrir passed away in those Plains. In the center of the Plain, the Magic Power of the Fenrir still seems to persist, so the Plains seem to have the interesting characteristic of having weaker Demonic Beasts the closer you get to the center.」

So rather than some sort of barrier, it was actually the Magic Power of Fenrir? Moreover, it was a dead one? Without those boundaries I would have lived quite a harsh life, so I'd like to genuinely show my gratitude to that Fenrir.

Still, for what reason was I stuck in such a place? It's quite worrying.

「I had heard that there's some sort of altar in the center of the Plains, but I don't know of its origins. It seems that various people checked it, but it remained unclear.」

『Eh? What about me? Is there no information regarding the sword stuck in the middle?』

「In the altar, was there a sword?」

「A sword? Not that I know of.」

『Hm—m. I thought that I would have been able to understand my origin, but I guess it won't be that easy.』

Randell didn't have any more information regarding the Plains. How regrettable.

「Maokami Plains is also surrounded by a special forest which has the special property of depleting Magic, too.」

I had quite the trouble with that already. I don't want to enter that place ever again.

「Thanks to that, the Demonic Beasts of Maokami Plains don't wander outside, but it's not like it doesn't have an impact on the outside either. You see, every few years there's a sort of territorial dispute in the Plains, and a battle between Large Demonic Beasts occurs.」

I suppose that would be something like an alteration of generations for the Area Bosses?

「At that time, Demonic Beasts from the forest are sometimes scared off, and become quite aggressive. Being frightened by the signs of stronger Demonic Beasts, some appear around the highway. That's why, it's possible that the cause for the Goblins this time could have been another territorial dispute, see?」

That... Is definitely my fault. I hunted all of the Area Bosses, so the aftermath of the battle likely resulted in a turf war. Tehepero.

Randell was at a loss as to whether he would be able to retrace his path back to the highway, but in the end he seems to advance by force because he has to meet a deadline.

Hahaha... Sorry Randell. I won't charge any additional fees for acting as your escort as an apology. So, seriously. Sorry.

[1] Sound effect for shaking violently. "Thump" would have been similar, but wouldn't have the same effect.

[2] To get them on the Carriage, I think. しかしこの男、優男に見えて結構強かだな。

[3] I won't ask why Sword-shisho didn't mention how Adventurers were fantasy-like until now, seeing as the word was thrown around quite a bit. It's probably just that the Author couldn't find a good place to mention it, though.

[4] Speech actually uses “術” — which is “Arts” in all of the combat stuff, so I felt a little like making this “Speaking Arts”, but “Speech” is good enough, right?

[5] “Maokami” is a combination of “魔” (Demon/Devil/Evil Spirit/etc.) and “狼” (Wolf). They’re pronounced “Ma” and “Ookami” respectively. Because it’s a name, I stuck with an onomatopoeia.

Chapter 16: Arrival at the Town of Aressa

We continued to be tossed about in Randell's carriage for two hours.

「Oh, I can see Aressa!」

Atop a hill, I saw what appeared to be walls. Although, even if I say that I saw them, it was still quite distant. It's a distance that seems like it'd take another two hours to reach.

Still, it's quite large. According to Randell, it seems to be the biggest town in this area, with a population of around 10,000. The only Adventurer's Guild in the area also seems to be in Aressa.

That reminds me, I forgot to ask about something important.

「How much is the entrance fee of the town?」

「Ah, it's 300 Gorudo.」

Crap, I don't have enough. What should we do? Goblin Horns seem to be too cheap if they're sold to anyone other than the Adventurer's Guild...

That being the case, I should also ask about the prices of other things as well. That way, I can calculate the necessary expenses, and plan for the future.

「How much per night at an inn? Cheap ones are OK.」

「An inn, huh... The lowest rank inn would be about 200 Gorudo. Of course, rooms like that would come without meals.」

I also asked about prices of other things. The average meal is 50 Gorudo, a loaf of bread is 10 Gorudo, a cheap knife is 300 Gorudo, and using a bathhouse is 20 Gorudo per visit.

Those seem to be the rough values, at least. 1 Gorudo is about 10 yen, it seems.

As for money... The coin rankings are: Copper Coins → Large Copper Coins → Silver Coins → Large Silver Coins → Gold Coins → Large Gold Coins. It takes 10 coins of the same kind to go up a rank. Even though Randell's a merchant, it seems that he's never seen a Large Gold Coin.

「How much for Goblin Horns at the Guild?」

「One pair would be 20 Gorudo. Merchants would buy them for about 5 Gorudo per pair, though.」

Cheap! Goblins are really cheap! If you didn't hunt 10 a day you'd be unable to pay the inn's charges.....

But what should we do? Even if we sold the 8 pairs of horns to Randell, we still wouldn't reach 300 Gorudo.

While being troubled, my Presence Detection showed a reaction. It belongs to something further ahead on the highway.

I tell Randell to slow down, and then proceed to scout ahead. Regular old Goblins were hiding in the bushes, it seems. As always, we'll counter using an ambush of our own.

The battle is finished in an instant with Fran's swordplay and my Magic. While collecting the horns of the five Goblins, I catch sight of a sword one of them were carrying. Wooden Clubs wouldn't be worth anything because they're nothing more than large branches, but I'm sure that a sword would be worth something, at least.

『Lucky. If we sell this to Randell, we just might reach 300 Gorudo.』

When we return to the carriage, Randell buys the sword for 200 Gorudo. Its price was higher than expected.

「That much?」

「It's made out of Bronze, but it's in good condition. Adventurers would surely buy it if it were put for sale.」

That really was lucky. With this, we'll be able to enter the town. Of course, the horns will be sold to the Guild, too.

As we continued along the highway, we hunted another Demonic Beast, which Randell bought. It was a black bug known as the Black Beetle. Its length was about 50cm long. It seems that its exoskeleton is used to make protective gear for beginners, so he bought it for 20 Gorudo.

Still, Demonic Beasts are quite cheap. Its materials could be used to make protective gear, yet it's only priced at 20 Gorudo? Well, I suppose being a lower ranked Demonic Beast would also contribute to that, though. Aiming for weapons carried by Goblins would likely be more effective. As expected, it's the fate of Goblins to be hunted by me.



「So, Randell, were you able to return safely?」

「While traveling, there were a number of times it became quite dangerous.」

「Ahh. Who's the young lady?」

「I picked her up along the way. I'll be taking care of her Admission Procedures as well.」

「Alright. Your luck must have been good for coming across Randell's carriage. Randell's quite strong, so having him around would be quite reassuring, right?」

Towards the words of the middle-aged Gatekeeper, Randell smiles wryly. In actuality, it was Fran who protected and escorted Randell, after all.

However, because revealing that fact would have been unnecessarily conspicuous, we decided upon the scenario of Randell picking up and escorting a young girl along his trip.

「Alright, that'll be 300 Gorudo. Here's your temporary entrance certificate. It's valid for 3 days. Because re-entry costs money again once it wears off, be careful!」

Alongside that information, I had already learned that if one has an official identification as the town's inhabitant, or an Adventurer card, entering the town seems to be free. Because of that fact, I wanted to hurry and obtain an Adventurer card.

「Welcome to the town of Aressa!」

Joining the Adventurer's Guild doesn't seem to have an age restriction. There is, however, an aptitude test that needs to be taken before the card is issued.

「Well, I'll be heading back to the shop. I suppose Fran will be going to the Adventurer's Guild?」

「Unn.」

「My store's along the West side of main street, so if you have time please pay me a visit.」

After saying so, Randell went on his way.

Even as he left, he didn't say anything else. Even though it could only be seen as naïve, he let a young girl that was walking along the road alone accompany him without even knowing her circumstances. Even until the end, he didn't ask of anything but her name. He was a genuinely good natured person.

After we've collected some money, we should pay him a visit. A visit to the man who was our first companion on our journey.

『Well, let's get going.』

「Nn.」

Chapter 17: My Insignificant Doubts

We walk over to the Adventurer's Guild through the road that Randell had taught us.

H—mm. It's quite a beautiful town. It looks like a European-like town from the middle ages. It's got a good feeling of "fantasy" floating about.

Also, this is the first time since I've come to this world that I've seen so many Humans. That alone would be enough to raise my spirits.

I only became more excited, because we ended up walking within a large group of people, each of different races. There was an old Kemonomimi with a fluffy tail, a big-breasted woman who ruined my image of Erofus — er, Elves.[1] There're also a wide variety of other races walking about, like bearded Dwarves.

Mixed among the crowd, I was able to see the figures of Adventurer-like people here and there, too.

After confirming a couple of their statuses, I find that there doesn't seem to be anyone that can match Fran. I'd like it if we can find someone with a close status.

In addition: Fran's sheer number of Skills as well as the levels of said Skills are overwhelmingly higher than most. The highest Skill Level I saw was from a guy with Lv5 Sword Arts. I know the difference between that level and Lv7 well.

It's possible that if they utilized Skills or Status values, they might be able to win... Because I've fought on the Plain, I understand this fact.

Or rather, the difference of Status makes little difference in the face of Skills. But it's just because of this that I don't think Fran will have a problem fitting in with adventurers.

But still, I couldn't help being a bit depressed for a different reason.

The reason is the performance of the other Adventurers' weapons.

Name : High-Quality Steel Longsword

ATK : 398 MP : 5 Durability : 600

Magic Power Conductivity · F

Skills:

None

My form is equivalent to that Longsword, and yet... Its ATK is superior to mine. I have a feeling of loss as a sword.

To add insult to injury, there's its material: Good-Quality Steel. In other words, Mithril and Orichalcum — the so-called legendary metals — lost to simple Steel. That... That's depressing.

After that, weapons, all boasting higher attack power than me, jump into my eyes. 1 in 5 people would have one better than me.

And, hung at the waist of the man who was walking before me, was this:

Name : Mithril Alloy Dagger

ATK : 423 MP : 20 Durability: 700

Magical Power Conductivity · D+

Skills:

None

『Ha... Hahahaha.....』

I can't do anything but laugh. Aah. I was weak. I defeated Demonic Beasts, thinking that I was so clever. But in reality, I was simply a sword with an excess of decorations.

「What's wrong?」

『Aah, Fran. I'm already useless.』

「 ? 」

I explained the situation to Fran; about how I was an inferior Sword if you look past the Skills — more inferior to any random weapon, at that. Surely, it was some upstart nouveau riche who made me.

pat pat

Fran pats me after I finished the explanation.

『Fran.....』

「Nn.」

『Are you comforting me?』

「Teacher has Skills.」

Hm...? Wait... Wait, that's right, girl! I may be inferior to the average sword in attack power, but I can support with Skills! Or rather, that's my only worth! Then it's decided! I'll become the king of Skills!

However, it would be best to buy a proper sword, as opposed to an inferior one like me, right? You'll have no choice but to use me for now, but I'll buy a strong sword for you eventually!

Therefore, we should register with the Adventurer's Guild, and earn money energetically!

『Alright! I'm sorry to have worried you. I'm fine now, so let's go to the Adventurer's Guild!』

「Nn.」

An excessive amount of time was taken because of my moping, but we've finally arrived at the Adventurer's Guild.

『It's large...』

It was considerable size compared to the surrounding buildings. The size was likely due to the amount of Adventurers which come here.

『I have a request!』

I'm all fired up! — Ah, but no one heard me.

The inside is cleaner than I thought it would be. I expected its interior to look like some form of dingy pub, with an overpowering impression and cluttered interior, but... The front desk seems like it belongs to an expensive hotel.

Well, if it looked terrible, I suppose that would stain the reputation of the Guild.

However, when a 12-year-old girl walked in, a considerable amount of attention was drawn. While we walk up to the counter, the eyes of the surrounding Adventurers are following us.

「Register.」

「Ah, yes. Are you alone?」

「Alone.」

「Erm... This is the Adventurer's Guild, so.....」

「I know.」

It seems that in this world, a 12-year-old girl coming alone to register to be an Adventurer is rare. Their weapons and protective gear are perfect, and so despite her only being 12 years old and giving off an atmosphere that shows discipline from a young age, the mumbling continues to increase. [2] Even when I was a child I acted better than them.

Fran doesn't have any armor, either. Rather, her appearance is quite shabby, which would only be common for runaway slaves.

We're too out-of-place.

I recovered from my thoughts once the Receptionist starts to explain.

「Anyone can register, but there'll be a test.」

「Nn.」

「It'll be a test of fighting forms, but is that alright?」

「Good.」

「Are you really sure? You could get injured...」

「Unconcerned.」

「Well... If anything happens, the Guild takes no responsibility.」

「Alright.」

「So, you still wish to do it.....? I understand. Just a moment, please.」

She probably understood that Fran genuinely wanted to take the test. The Adventurers become a bit noisy.

There wasn't anyone who started a quarrel, but the atmosphere is nowhere near welcoming. A child taking on an Adventurer's test... It likely rubbed them the wrong way.

That would be natural. If I was in their position, I would likely feel the same way.

『Are you alright, Fran?』

「 ? 」

『Well, it's fine even if you don't understand.』

After a few moments, the Receptionist returns.

「Sorry to have kept you waiting. This way, please.」

「Nn.」

At the back of the Guild was a spacious area surrounded by walls on all sides. It seems that this is the Guild's training ground, or at least something similar.

A rugged man is standing in the middle of the grounds. His height would be about 2 meters. He's wearing rough black body armor, which looks like it would be sharp to the touch; he looks just like a High King ruling at the end of a century[7]. A huge Battleaxe is leaning against his side, which doubles his overpowering impression. From behind him, I can practically see the *gogogogo*[3] sound effects.

If it was a regular child, they would cry as soon as they laid eyes upon him. Even I, who was used to the pressure of Demonic Beasts, was slightly surprised.

「Are you the registration applicant?」

Uo—o. Through his glare alone, that powerful of intimidation increases.

「Nn.」

However, Fran doesn't seem to be frightened at all. It's the same attitude as always. My girl is a big shot! [4]

「I'm your testing examiner, Donnadorondo[5]」

There're way too many "do"s... It's difficult to say. He doesn't look like a Donna either.

「The contents of the examination are easy. You have to fight me. If you're defeated too easily, you don't pass!」

「Understood.」

「Just so you're aware, I'm not good at holding back. When I fight, I do it seriously. If you don't want to fight, now's the time to leave!」

The moment Donnadorondo shouted that, a terrible pressure fell over us. Isn't this obviously the Coercion Skill [6]? Doesn't that mean that the fight has already begun?

『Alright, let's do it!』

「Nn!」

[1] Once again: Kemonomimi = Human + Animal Traits — just like Fran.

You could see Erofu is a combination of "Erotic" and "Elf". Essentially Elves from hentai/porn/eroge. If you don't know what those three things are, you're untainted, so run away while you still can.

[2] So, it mentions a *buibui* here, which could be a Pig sound effect, or essentially slang for "complaining", so I simply changed it into "mumbling". It also mentioned 狩人 (Hunter), but I'm pretty sure that's just referring to all the Adventurers watching. Still, because I'm unsure, advice is welcome! 狩人としてブイブイ言わせてますけど何か

[3] Used usually in the background of scenes with a lot of tension. Like facing down a powerful opponent in a manga. Each "go" looks like this: ゴ

[4] Just so you're aware, every time he said "girl" after he was equipped, it could have also meant "daughter". 娘

[5] It sounds pretty weird, but it's supposed to. You should put it into Google's audio translator or something. ドナドロンド

[6] It's not Intimidation (威嚇), but rather Coercion (威圧). I'm just mentioning that because I had to double check to make sure. 明らかに威圧のスキルを使ってるよな？

[7] Reference to Raoh from Hokuto no Ken. Thanks to midoyashii for pointing that out!

Chapter 18: V S Donnadorondo

Standing in the Adventurer Guild's training grounds, we stand face to face against our examiner. There's a fierce sense of intimidation in the air.

If I was still a human, I have the feeling that I'd kneel on the ground and beg for my life. But as a sword, so I'm fine.

Well, let's see what he's made of.

Name : Donnadorondo Age : 46

Race : Kijin[1]

Job : Great Warrior

State : Normal

Status:

Level : 38

HP : 346 MP : 173 STR : 178 END : 163 AGI : 101 INT : 90 MGC : 81 DEX : 116

Skills:

Coercion : Lv4, Transportation : Lv3, HP Recovery Rate ↑ : Lv5, Danger Perception : Lv4, Instruction : Lv4, Presence Perception : Lv3, Playback : Lv4, Blink Step : Lv3, Soil Magic : Lv2, Throwing : Lv5, Poison Resistance : Lv7, Lumbering : Lv4, Axe Techniques : Lv7, Axe Arts : Lv8, Roar : Lv3, Revival, Vigor Manipulation, Steel Body, Automatic HP Recovery, STR ↑ Low [2]

Titles:

Guild Instructor

Equipment:

Greataxe of Heavy Wrought Steel, Sovereign Black Iron Turtle Armor, Cloak of the Violent Fang Tiger, Stone Dragon Shoes, Substitute Bracelet[3]

Uge—e! Strong! In terms of Status it's our complete defeat! This old man... His physical abilities exceed that of the Lesser Wyvern! In addition to that, he has a variety of Skills at high levels. His equipment is also at a whole other level.

Name : Greataxe of Heavy Wrought Steel

ATK : 650 MP : 3 Durability : 650

Magical Power Conductivity · E+

Skills:

None

650 ATK? You've got to be fucking kidding me! [4] That's absolutely mortifying!

He's also a member of the cool-named Race called the Kijin. [5]

The title of the Instructor is no joke, either. All the Adventurers we've seen thus far don't hold a candle to this man.

This fellow is coming at us full-force? Seriously? This is a Beginner test, right? If it was a normal beginner, I can't think that they'd be able to do anything but lose outright.....

Ah well, let's give it a try. Even if we don't win, we should show off our abilities at least.

『Fran, are you ready?』

「O—K.」

「Let's begin!」

The figure of Donnadorondo becomes hazy.

And Fran jumps to the side immediately.

Go!

「One, avoided!」

『Not good —!』

When I noticed, there was already an Axe right beside us in mid-swing. It was at a speed that would be unimaginable from someone with such a large body. Moreover, looking at how the ground is becoming hollow, his power is also immense.

「Muun!」

In addition to the already present swing, he strikes the Axe to increase its speed further.

DOGOON!

The ground was gouged, and stones became nothing but gravel, scattering across the ground. Fran's bangs shift due to the wind pressure.

Hey, wasn't that first strike just now incredibly dangerous? Even though it was only a grazing blow... I've already taken a serious amount of damage. This is too much, right?! How could you pass this exam with thus guy?!

『It'd be dangerous to run away... In that case, let's attack!』

I refuse to wait-and-see. Before receiving another dangerous attack like that, I'll go at him at maximum force. I won't worry about killing him; the

other side is overwhelmingly strong, and even if his HP became 0 his bracelet would simply become a sacrifice.

「Haa!」

「Ho? This one's quick!」

The blow was easily caught with the axe. Even when secretly supported by AGI and STR raising Skills, this person still overcomes it.

However, his win isn't certain.

To prevent any continuous attacks against Fran, Donna's lower body is bound by tentacles.

「Nuu?! Aria Destruction!」

Fufun. Don't be so surprised. Fran didn't emit any Spells — she didn't even chant.

To tell you the truth, I alone am capable of invoking Magic without any trace. And so, Donnadorondo, who needs to deal with Fran, wasn't able to avoid any Magic aimed at his feet. Contrary to his situation, Fran nimbly jumped backwards and released an attack.

Donna was confined, and only capable of moving his upper body, so he's at the mercy of Fran's assault. All he can do is receive it. Eat it.

「——Tri · Explosion!」

「NuoOOhh!」

Donnadorondo was engulfed by the Lv10 Fire Magic. It's an attack that's difficult to prevent, as explosions come from three directions simultaneously. Of course, Fran had only pretended to invoke it; in truth, I had used that Technique.

Doing it this way, while I chant, Fran can hold a Sword Technique in reserve.

「Fuuuu... Dragon · Fang!」

This is a thrusting Sword Technique of Lv7. Moreover, Vibration Fang is used alongside it. The small figure of Fran rushes over to the large body of Donna, who can't move due to the explosion.

I wonder if he noticed the real nature of the Skills that Fran was using? Donnadorondo opens his eyes wide as his face makes an expression of surprise.

「This girl is.....!」

However, even if he notices it, avoidance is impossible.

「The end.」

「Guggaaaah!」

The attack pierced through to Donna's flank, sending his gigantic build flying.

Doon!

His body, which likely exceeded 200 kilos., was blown 10 meters away and embedded into the wall of the training grounds.

I had only used this technique against Demonic Beasts, so I suppose this would be what happens when it's used against a humanoid opponent.

But... Perhaps we overdid it? I don't think he's dead, but...

「..... *Gofu*.....」

Excellent, he's alive. While vomiting large quantities of blood, Donnadorondo seemed to remain conscious.

Fran approaches slowly. Will you be using Recovery Magic? While I considered what she'd do, I was thrust before the eyes of Donna.

「Pass?」

Mhh, that was a composed decision. As for me, I had already completely forgotten about the exam.

「..... You... Pass.」

「Understood.」

This fellow... He can still move? What a sturdy guy. Even though he was pierced through the flank, to my surprise, Donnadorondo steps out of the wall and begins to laugh. Taking a quick look at his Status, his HP has already recovered to about 300, and his wound is closing, too.

「Hahahahaha! You're the first rookie to have ever given me damage!」

His toughness is already monster-class, seriously. Does someone who can kill this man even exist?

「Donnadorondo!」

I hear a deafening roar, followed by the receptionist rushing over.

「I told you not to do anything unreasonable, so what was — Eh?」

Ahh. I see.

This old man... He's sent out to repel any unhatched beginners, isn't he? If that's the case, I suppose it would be unexpected that Fran was the one who sent the other side flying.

「Eh? Ehh?」

It seems that the receptionist is quite surprised to see Donna seriously injured.

[1] It's essentially “Oni/Ogre Person” — but I wasn't sure whether I should just make it “Oni/Ogre” or not, seeing as there'll likely be a Demonic Beast

of that exact Race... So, onomatopoeia! If anyone has a better suggestion, feel free! 鬼人

[2] Both “Playback” and “Revival” have to do with coming back from the dead. 再生 and 起死回生

[3] The bracelet is 身代りの腕輪, which could also be “Sacrificial Bracelet” — so essentially another thing related to revival. It’d take his place if he died, essentially.

[4] Just TRY to translate ふざけんな without cussing while staying true to the writing. I dare you.

[5] No, this isn’t me praising my naming sense. It’s really there. 種族も鬼人とかいう、カッコいい種族だし。

※ ※ ※

Ensig:

Even though I’ve gotta do something early tomorrow (today?) morning...
Translating this was 100% worth it~!

Chapter 19: We Joined the Guild

「Ahahaha! Well—, I lost!」

「Donna, this is no laughing matter.」

After the examination, Fran and I were brought by Donnadorondo to the top floor of the Adventurer's Guild.

Waiting for us was a thin, blond, fair-skinned man. If one looked at his ears, they would discover he was an Elf. At first glance he seems weak, but.....

Name : Klimt[1] Age : 136

Race : Wood Elf

Job : Greater Spirit User

State : Normal

Status

Level: 67

HP: 180 MP: 616 STR: 87 END: 89 AGI: 138 INT: 259 MGC: 333
DEX: 98

Skills

Chant Shortening : Lv7, Appraisal : Lv5, Archery : Lv3, Harvesting :
Lv5, Nature Magic : Lv6, Spirit Magic : Lv7, Ground Magic : Lv6,
Compounding : Lv5, Soil Magic : LvMax, Poison Resistance : Lv3,
Paralysis Resistance : Lv4, Water Magic : Lv5, Medicinal Herb

Knowledge : Lv7, Cooking : Lv4, Magic Manipulation, Child of the Forest [2]

Unique Skills

Favor of the Spirits

Titles

Guild Master, Guardian Deity of Aressa, Master of Nature, Master of Soil [3]

Equipment

Staff of the Old God's Cherry Tree, Scale Clothing of the Fission Snake, Cloak of the Young Wind Dragon's wings, Shoes of the Moon Rabbit, Substitute Bracelet

It was a man who exceeded Donna. Those Magic Skills are just too dangerous. Spirit Magic also seems to be quite rare. As expected of a Guild Master.

「First, let me hear your name.」

「Fran.」

「Age?」

「12.」

Donna howled at the words of Fran.

「What? You really are as old as you look!」

Ahh, I suppose it would be like that. Looking at Fran's abilities, it would be easy to think that she was actually a member of a long-lived race. Otherwise, it would be quite bizarre, given her appearance.

「Donna...」

「Ah—, excuse me.」

Donna, who was rebuked by the Guild Master, shrugged his shoulders. Not cute at all. However, his manners are completely different than the one before the examination. At the time he the embodiment of Fun'nu [4], but now he has the feel of of a good-natured uncle.

「However... I understand how you feel. Only 12 years old, and yet capable of using Sword Techniques directly after firing off Lv10 Fire Magic — without a chant, even? Is that some kind of joke?」

The Guild Master furrows his brow. His eyes become sharp, as if peering deep into Fran.

「Moreover... You have a Appraisal blocking Skills?」

That reminds me, this person has Appraisal, doesn't he? He likely tried to find out whether the story told by Fran was a lie using it. However, it was intercepted.

At times like these, my Self-Evolution Points were well-used. The nice thing about this Skill is that it effects Fran as well as me, unlike some Skills.

Appraisal Concealment : A Skill used to inhibit the use of Appraisal on the user. When equipped with this ability, Appraisal of the user's equipment is also blocked.

However, because of this Skill doubt has surfaced.

「So, according to you, you're 12. But where did you come from?」

「Secret.」

「..... Is there a reason for that?」

「Secret.」

「..... Haa... How troublesome.」

We—ll, I’ve become slightly anxious. He’s trying to probe Fran.

「Pass? Fail?」

「I won’t turn away someone strong enough to take on Donna.」

「Then, Guild Card.」

「... I understand. I’ll prepare it now, so please fill in the necessary information on this form. If you cannot write, then perhaps I could do it on your behalf?」

「Unconcerned.」

On top of Fran’s parents giving a good education, she was also taught how to read and write in order to increase her value as a Slave.

「Any skilled Adventurers are welcome! Right, Guild Master—?」

「Haa... That’s right. The Spirits aren’t being noisy either.」

「Spirits?」

「Even if you look around, only Spirit Users can see them.」

「What do they tell you?」

「Well, Spirits are sensitive to emotions. Therefore, depending on their behavior I’m able to determine those with malicious intent, and those with a wicked heart.」

Spirits sure are convenient. I’d also like to use them by all means. The problem is whether there’s a Demonic Beast that’s capable of using Spirit Magic.

「Is there a Demonic Beast that can use Spirit Magic?」

「There’re Spirits which feed on the malice of others, but even so they rarely devour such things from Demonic Beasts. Regrettably.」

I see. That's good news. That just means that there're some worth looking for.

「Guild Master, we're ready.」

「I see. Then, let's go.」

The Guild Master personally guides us to a small room adjacent to the front counter. There's something like an altar within the room, and a crystal ball is enshrined there.

「Please touch this. It will finish immediately.」

「Nn.」

Just as the Guild Master said, it finishes in an instant. It seemed to register Fran's Magical Power one way or another. Next to the crystal ball, the receptionist tinkers with the crystal ball. Pressing the card against it, the process seems to be completed.

「Now, to select a Job.」

「Job?」

「Yes. There're various benefits depending on the Job itself, but each person has their own aptitudes.」

Speaking of Jobs, Randell had been a “Merchant”. Donna is a “Great Warrior” and the Guild Master is a “Greater Spirit User”.

「For Jobs, Fran can choose..... Eh?」

「What's wrong, Nell?」 [5]

「Her Job aptitude is a bit... Strange.」

「Hoh?」

I look at the screen from behind the Guild Master.

Warrior, Swordsman, Pugilist, Magic Swordsman, Blink Swordsman, Magician, Flame Magician, White Magician, Summoning Magician, Tamer, Spy, Doctor, Butcher[6], Cook

There're a lot. Job aptitude seems to depend on the Skills that Fran has equipped. There're also Spear Arts and Spear Techniques equipped, but it seems that there's no Job for them. Even though there're Jobs called Cook and Butcher...

「This is.....」

Even the Guild Master is at a loss for words. Is this perhaps bad?

「Haa... Well, Magic Swordsman and Magician were to be expected after hearing of the battle with Donna.」

Ah, it seems to be alright. He's probably getting used to being surprised.

「Then, what will you choose?」

『Ask about his recommendation.』

「Suggestion?」

「Hmm. Because Magic Swordsman, Blink Swordsman, and Flame Magician are all intermediate Jobs, they're quite rare. The benefits gained from them will also be quite strong. If you wish to use both the sword and Magic, I recommend the Magic Swordsman. If it's just swords, then the Blink Swordsman. If you wish to focus on Magic, then perhaps the Flame Magician.」

I see. What to do.....

『Which one would you like, Fran?』

(Magic Swordsman: cool.)

『Then, perhaps the Magic Swordsman?』

However, there's still one piece of information needed before the final choice.

「Change Jobs?」

「Yes. You may do so at the Guild at any time, however, only one Job's effects can be set at a time. So, if a high leveled Magic Swordsman changed to a Lv1 Blink Swordsman, their status would fall.」

Well, I don't mind because that's what I expected. If it can be changed anyways, then perhaps Magic Swordsman would be alright for now?

「Then, Magic Swordsman.」

「With this, the Guild Card has been completed.」

It looks like a regular bronze card. Fran's name, place of registration (Aressa), Job, and the Adventurer Rank of G are all listed.

「The Guild Card can be used as an identification card, and having it re-issued will cost 5,000 Gorudo. Because it's been registered via the Magic Power of the individual, it's only usable by that person alone. Be careful not to lose it.」

Other points, such as other cautions and its application in the Guild were then explained by the Guild Master. Usually this would be work of a receptionist, but in this case the Guild Master took care of it all personally.

Collecting all of the information together, it can be summarized as the following:

Regarding Guild requests:

An Adventurer can only take requests in accordance to their Adventurer Rank. Specifically, they're only able to take requests one Rank above and below their own.

Under certain conditions, a Rank-up test can be requested.

For the color of the cards:

G and F are Copper, E and D are Black, C and B are Silver, A is Gold, and S is Platinum. Purchasing the materials required for the card isn't necessary.

There aren't any annual membership fees, but there is the possibility of being demoted or expulsion if an Adventurer doesn't take on a request for a certain period of time.

Betrayal against the Adventurer's Guild will result in a complete purge of rank, so it's best to be careful. In addition, it's best to be careful of trouble between Adventurers, because the Guild takes no responsibility.

That last piece of information was likely advice specifically for Fran. Didn't doing so just raise a flag, though?

「With this, you've become an Adventurer.」

「Nn.」

「Is there anything else you'd like to ask about?」

I've inquired about what I'd like to hear, but there's still one thing left to ask.

「Examination content, published?」

「No. Because it involves the ability of the Adventurer themselves, doing so would be reckless.」

「Alright.」

「Do you not wish to attract attention?」

「Don't want to.」

「Then I'll make you a promise. We three people: Donna, Nell from reception, and I will not reveal information regarding the examination. Well, doing so would be convenient for us as well. Donna stands at the front

of the Adventurers in case of emergencies, so it would be better to not reveal his loss.」

「I'll give my assent. If the little lady wants to keep it a secret, I understand.」

「I think that, given your abilities, you'll attract attention immediately regardless, but.....」

U—mu. I can't refute that. Well, I guess it's fine that it's peaceful for now, at least?

[1] Easiest name to translate so far. It only has the option of being the name Klimt. クリムト

[2] A couple of notes regarding some of this guy's Skills.

First: I had previously translated 土魔術 as “Ground Magic”; now, however, it is “Soil Magic” — because 大地魔術 (which this guy has) is the ACTUAL Ground Magic. My best guess is that Ground is the LvMax Magic type gained through Soil Magic, like how Flame was to Fire. I've made the changes to C10 and C13 — but I can't remember if it was mentioned elsewhere, so if it was, tell me!

Second: Compounding is like the medicine compounding. It could also be “mixing” 調合

[3] Regarding the titles:

“Guardian Deity” can't just be “Guardian” because it's 守護神 (literally Guardian Deity).

Not sure why this guy has the Master of Nature title despite Nature Magic only being Lv6 but... *shrug* It's there. 樹木術師

For those who actually translate that on their own, it'll be “Tree/shrub Technique/Magic Practitioner/Master/Teacher” — but all the “Master” titles are like that. I made that change because it fit with the fact that the Skill

needed to be maxed out, but... Perhaps I need to reconsider now that this one's arrived?

[4] This might just be a reference to a noise or something. “He was all *Fuu—nuuu!* for example. But I have no clue. When I did a search, it brought me Duel-Master pages and this image, so this is just my best guess.

The image is fitting, after all. フンヌー

[5] Receptionist's name = Flannel Nell (ネル) apparently. -kun was also used, so I'm unsure of their gender at this point. In the previous chapter I had used “Ms. Receptionist” at the end, but it turns out that was just my machines being sexist. (受付嬢 = Receptionist or Reception Woman)

Because it's possible that the Guild Master simply uses -kun because Nell is likely way, way younger than him, and not directly equivalent to any sexual orientation. Not that that matters, right?

[6] “Butcher” is related to the Deconstruction Skill, but “Deconstructor” just doesn't sound right as a Job among the other ones, and “Demolitionist” brings the image of someone standing a couple hundred feet away and blowing stuff up, so... Yeah. Butcher was listed as an applicable translation, so I went with it.

※ ※ ※

Ensig:

If you haven't read about the status of the other works here yet, then please do so. Well, if you read other things here, that is. Seeing as I finished this chapter, you can ignore the info on Sword-shisho though.

Chapter 20: Selling Materials

Author's Note:

My physical condition is a little poor.

Whether I update tomorrow or not is unknown.

「Would you like to take a request immediately?」

This was asked by Nell the receptionist. I was reminded by those words; after getting the Guild Card, there was so much to do that I forgot about it. And “it” was that we won’t be able to stay at an inn if we don’t sell our materials to the Guild.

「I have Goblin horns.」

「Ahh, in that case, I’ll accept them at the request report counter. This way, please.」

Because Fran’s a new Adventurer, Nell politely leads the way after his response. As one would expect from a receptionist of the Adventurers Guild. They’re very thorough in educating their members.

「Also materials.」

「Ah, you can sell those at the material purchase counter. First, however, comes the payment for the Goblin Horns.」

「Nn.」

「8 sets, so that’ll be 160 Gorudo total. Please confirm it.」

The amount needed to book a room at an inn hasn't been reached yet. The worst inn was supposedly 200 Gorudo, so we'll need just a bit more if we want to stay overnight.

We move over to the material purchasing counter after the transaction is verified.

「Have the materials already been dismantled? If not, they usually take up a lot of space, so it can be brought to the space beside the counter. If it's too large for that as well, we'll use a special room instead.」

Nell carefully explains. So, what should we do... Lower ranked Demonic Beasts are cheap, judging by the advice we were given in regards to the Goblins and Insects earlier. So, I suppose the minimum we should give should be intermediate or above? I have a couple of slightly larger ones, so perhaps those?

「Slightly big.」

「Then, I would like for it to be placed in the purchasing space. Are they currently stored at an inn? Materials should be managed carefully if they're expensive, so –」

Ahh, at first glance we don't look like we've brought anything, so I suppose his question is natural. However, when I was Appraising people earlier, I found many individuals with the Dimensional Storage Skill, so it shouldn't be unheard of. It should be fine if I take it out here and now because of that.

「Taking out.」

Of course, the materials are actually being taken out by me. This is one of the slight drawbacks of this Skill and Skill Sharing. Fran can use the Dimensional Storage Skill as well, but the storage is exclusive to Fran. Similarly, I can't share the contents of my storage with Fran, so she obviously can't retrieve anything I've stored.

Fran assumes a stance that makes it seem as though she takes out the materials, and I place the materials where she directs.

At first, I take out beginner-class materials exclusively.

Among them is Fran's commemorative first prey, the Twin-Headed Bear's fur and claws. Because its innards can be used to make good medicine, they remain within the storage. I also leave them because it would make a disturbing scene if they were brought out. I bring out two sets of Poison Fang Rat pelts and fangs, and figure it would be best to stop there for now.

「When did you...?」

「While coming to town.」

「Did you also dismantle these yourself?」

「Yes.」

Some curious Adventurers became a little noisy in the surrounding area. Oi, don't laugh after glancing over here. Hmm... Could it be that the materials are worth even less than expected?

Then... Next I'll place one a bit better.

From Area 2 in the Plains, I take materials from 3 Demonic Beasts.

First are the sinister-looking wing membranes and resonating bones [1] of Giant Bats. Next are the fangs, fur, and skulls of Crashing Boars. Finally, I take out the shells and horns of Rock Bison.

Although they aren't strong Monsters [2], they should be enough to buy a few days worth of lodging at an inn, alongside cheap protective gear.

We could gain even more if I took out the materials from the Tyrant Saber or the Doppel Snake... But I refrained. Not only would doing so attract too much attention, but the materials might be able to be used to make Fran weapons as well.

The Guild Master's scale clothing makes use of something similar to the scales of the Doppel Snake, and the cloak used by Donna made use of a Demonic Beast's fur similar to that of the Tyrant Saber. In other words,

those materials would be ones which only high-ranking adventurers would be able to use in their equipment. It would definitely make a commotion if we sold such materials here.

Nell is making a slightly difficult face. As expected, it would be difficult to comprehend the fact that the young-aged Fran could take down strong Demonic Beasts — Demonic Beasts that even an adult male would have trouble defeating.

Nevertheless, the materials from low-grade Demonic Beasts wouldn't grant much income, so this is for the sake of getting funds. Even if it's a bit conspicuous, it would be better to finish it all at once.

That being the case, perhaps it would be better to sell off all of the lower and intermediate ranked Demonic beasts here and now...?

『Hey, what do you think?』

(One time is better.)

『Indeed! Then, I'll take out the rest!』

I take out several pouches worth of thread from Stone Spiders, as well as their carapaces and poisonous fangs. Next, I take out Burrowing Moles claws and fur, followed by the pelts and claws of the Paralysis Nailed Cat are then placed into the purchasing space.

Because I can use most of the meats to make meals for Fran, I leave them within the storage.

「All this.」

「..... Y-Yes. I see. I'll now use Appraisal, so please wait a moment.」

Nell uses Appraisal on each of the materials. That skill is incredibly versatile. Other receptionists are also called over, so in the end three people check over the materials.

Everything had gone through Appraisal after about 10 minutes.

「Sorry to have kept you waiting.」

「Nn.」

「Altogether, we'll purchase them all for 195,000 Gorudo total. Is that acceptable?」 [3]

Ha? 195,000?! Seriously?! Isn't that way too high? I had thought that ~30,000 would have been satisfactory...

「Very high?」

「No, that's a reasonable price. Even though they're materials from Demonic Beasts with Threat Degrees of F and E, due to the fact that the state of the materials was extremely good, the price was increased.」

I didn't think of the material's state. But... Thinking about it, that would be correct. It would be outrageous to think that the price of a pelt covered with scratches would have the same price as a beautifully preserved one.

「For example: usually, the fur of a Twin-Headed Bear is purchased for 6,000 Gorudo. The fur you've brought, however, doesn't have any scratches. The deconstruction is perfect, and on top of that, the whole body was prepared. Because of that, its price was raised to 18,000 Gorudo.」

It tripled. Unbelievable... Since the other materials are also in such a state, the price would be reasonable... Right? Well, I'll accept it regardless.

「This is the reward. Please confirm it.」

「Nn.」

Fran tucks the money away in Dimensional Storage immediately.

「Then.」

With that, Fran turned her back to the counter.

「Goraa! Wait just a second!」

[1] It's 共鳴骨. I'm not sure what "resonating bones" are — but it could also be "sympathy/sympathetic". Those're the only two options, so I went with "resonating" because it might related to the Bats' echolocation.

[2] The Author used 魔物 (Monster) here as opposed to 魔獸 (Demonic Beast). *gasp*

[3] There's no mistake, because it's in legitimate numbers (195000) in the raw.

Chapter 21: Cliché

Author's Note:

I was right on time.

「Goraa! Wait just a second!」

After receiving payment for the materials, we've been stopped by a single Adventurer right before leaving the Guild.

「Nn.」

「Hey, wait brat!」

Fran, who ignored the man, attempts to pass by through moving to the side. Because he blocked the way in such a flashy manner, he likely wasn't expecting to be completely ignored. Hurriedly, he moves to block Fran's route.

But Fran continues walking.

「Nn.」

「Didn't I say to wait?! Hey, are you listening?!」

「In the way.」

「Listen up and stop!」

Incredible. We really did experience such a refreshing template[1] development. I'm slightly interested in this mob-like Adventurer.

『Fran, let's listen to him a little.』

「Nn? Understood.」

「It's fine if you understand.」

Looking at the man's appearance, he's a mob character no matter how you look at it. He has slightly-damaged Iron Shoulder Pads with spikes facing outward, the spikes seem to have design as a priority. For armor he's wearing pitch black Leather Armor with a smell I'd like to avoid experiencing no matter what, and a Battleaxe strapped to his back. Finally, he has a bald head that could only be seen by people cosplaying as a Bandit.

Ahh—, my reincarnation is worthwhile meeting this classic Fantasy element: The King · of · Mob character.

If his cheeks had scratches, he'd be perfect... Truly regrettable!

Moreover, 4 similar fellows came out in a stream behind him. It's a mob character festival! Woohoo~!

「Hey!」

「What?」

Mr. Mob raises his voice, and turns towards the astonished Nell.

「This is favoritism!」

「Ha? Favoritism?」

「Yeah! When I sold the pelt of a Twin-Headed Bear earlier, it wasn't bought for even 2,000 Gorudo!」

Listening to those words, Nell makes a deep sigh.

「Ahh, I remember. You're the party who brought the corpse of a Twin-Headed Bear that had scarring all over, one of its heads missing, and a badly bruised body, then demanded it be dismantled and sold, right?」

「That's right! We gave the same thing: a Twin-Headed Bear, so shouldn't we have gotten the same amount of cash?!」

「It's not the same at all. The materials that you brought in all had the lowest ratings possible.」

「Haa? Rating?」

「Good grief, this is why I hate muscle-brained mercenaries like you... Because your fighting power is alright, you act all high and mighty despite being a beginner. You don't understand even a fragment of what it means to be an Adventurer. Just drop dead.」

W-Woah. Nell had said it in a low voice, but I heard it. If possible, let's try not to oppose Nell from now on.

「Your group had surrounded the Twin-Headed Bear, and recklessly stabbed it from all sides, correct?」

「Yeah. We lured it in with bait, and then all 5 of us attacked it. Because it had a Threat Level of F, it was advised for beginners to take care, but it was an easy win! Saying that it would be a hard fight, I guess other Adventurers are just cowards!」

Ah—. I get it.

He likely confused the reason for that difficulty rating. There's a difference between “difficult to defeat” and “difficult to defeat cleanly”. The simplistic Mr. Mob and his buddies probably thought that so long as it was defeated they could cash in regardless of the corpse's state.

They made too lightly of the cheat Skill known as Dismantling! Skinning it neatly, and polishing every material is difficult! It's hard labor! Even Fran and I only managed to dismantle these materials through considerable hardships. We thought we would be hated if we brought them in without dismantling them first, after all.

「Is that so?」

The Fur was completely worn out, and wouldn't be usable for decorations. If it was used for equipment, the product would no doubt be lower grade.

The heads are usually processed and stuffed as trophies, but one was missing and the remaining one was badly damaged.

The nails were missing as well, giving it the minimum value.

Organs that could be used for medicine were wounded too badly to be usable, and the meat had already spoiled by the time it was brought in, so it couldn't even be used for food.

In other words, the Twin-Headed Bear you brought in was almost as good as garbage. You brought a bulky piece of rubbish in, so wouldn't it be impossible for us to make any money off of it?

Ahh, also, because it wasn't dismantled, I had to dismantle it myself didn't I? The dismantling rate for disposing of things like the rotten internal organs should have been taken into consideration when it was assessed. The total should have been 1,600 Gorudo, right? In retrospect, even that was too much.」

The man can't interrupt Nell as she continues to talk about his evaluation. Stunned, all he could do is listen to Nell talking like a machine gun in utter amazement.

I would too if he was directing those words at me. However, it seems that he still couldn't understand. No, he wasn't capable of understanding. He seems to be the type who refuses to back down.

「So noisy, stop nagging already! [2] Talking about things that seem suitable in order to make a smokescreen, don't fuck with me! The amount you gave us was unfair, so cough the rest up right now!」

「That's right! That's right!」 [3]

I was amused at first but... This is just pitiful. He's the type that believes that his reasons are absolute, and refuses to listen to others. He'll make

noise until his opinion is accepted.

It's becoming more irritating by the second.

「It isn't unfair.」

「It is unfair! It was decided unfairly!」

「Haa... Instead of complaining, why not improve your ability to hunt? Unlike Mercenaries which just cut down their enemies, being an adventurer is difficult in a lot of ways. Although, judging by your appearance, it seems impossible for you to become a proper Adventurer.」

「Haa?! You talk so highly about Adventurers, but on the battlefield they'd be seen as nothing but cowards! If we took 'em on, they wouldn't stand a chance!」

We're likely not the only ones feeling offended by this guy. The eyes of the neighboring Adventurers seem to certify that suspicion. To make a fool out of Adventurers here...

Furthermore, he directed such words towards the beautiful[4] receptionist Nell, who is no doubt popular. Because he picked a fight with Nell as well as Adventurers in general, it's natural that the anger in the surrounding is building up.

These guys... Do they have some kind of death wish? Their status is inferior to the other Adventurers in the lobby.

Name: Damun[5] Age: 27

Race: Red Dog Beastman [6]

Job: Warrior

State: Enraged

Status:

Level: 15

HP: 78 MP: 40 STR: 37 END: 36 AGI: 33 INT: 20 MGC: 19
DEX: 18

Skills:

Transportation: Lv1, Sword Arts : Lv1, Theft : Lv2, Threatening : Lv1,
Poison Resistance : Lv1, Axe Arts : Lv3

Titles:

Failure of the Battlefield

Equipment:

Crude Iron Battleaxe, Crude Iron Breastplate, Torn Deer-Leather Armor,
Bracelet of Strength (Fake)

He's a small fry. This is the status of the strongest of them. If it was me, I could beat him in less than 5 seconds.

While being troubled over what to do, the supposed leader of the group turns this way. I suppose he thought that arguing to Nell would be useless; that's what I can read from his foolish appearance, at least.

「Besides, how the hell could a brat like this bring in such a large amount of Demonic Beasts?!」

「What?」

「The exchange must have been fixed!」

「And so? What could that have to do with this? Suddenly claiming that this girl got the materials through illegal means has nothing to do with you, right?」

「..... It is! It is related! Because that money should have been ours to begin with, we have the right to take it back!」

Uwa—a. There's no longer any sense remaining in this guy's argument. What kind of thought process led him to that conclusion? Kichi ○ i[7] is over here—!

「She gathered those materials with her own hands. Her abilities are enough to kill a Twin-Headed Bear and beautifully dismantle it at minimum.」

「Hah! You really think so?! Hey, you're a member of the Black Cat tribe, right?」

「Nn.」

「The Black Cat tribe are particularly famous for their people being complete weaklings. For a member of that tribe to kill a Demonic Beast like that one is impossible! As expected, there's definitely something more to it!」

「Yeah! Yeah!」

「Damn brat. I'll overlook your crime this time if you pay some consolation money. Take out the money you received a minute ago.」

「Hehehe... The Guild doesn't stick their neck into a fight between Adventurers, so you won't be intervening, right?」

「Tch.....」

To their behavior, Nell becomes stiff. What they said was correct. The Guild doesn't interfere with the quarrels of the Adventurers. In other words... Whatever happens, the Adventurer's Guild will turn a blind eye. Even if that quarrel becomes a crime. That should be natural.

If these guys are really thinking that, then something must be wrong with their heads. It's not even at the level of a fool anymore. Could it be that inside of their heads, there's a Slime trapped inside?

「Hey, what's with that look?」

「.....」

Fran looks up at the man. Her face is expressionless as always. But a clear anger is evident within her eyes.

「Ah? Does a weak member of the Black Cat tribe intend to go against someone from the Red Dog tribe?」

「Yeah, yeah! Damn cat, don't get carried away!」

「You put us Beastmen to shame! But hey, I just might forgive you if you hand over the money, you know?」

To call her the lowest of the low, is that what you intend to say? If Fran wasn't angrier than I was, I would have cut them down long ago.

Buti

The sound of one running out of patience. I surely heard such a thing.

Fran's goal is to raise the position of the Black Cat tribe, to succeed the will of her deceased parents. With these guys' abuse, she probably can't endure any longer.

「Shut up.」

「What?」

「Your barking is noisy, dog[8].」

She said it! You said it, Fran! You did well! I'll treat you to something delicious later!

「You bastard! I'll kill you!」

I'm tired of hearing template-like lines already.

「Impossible, weakling.」

「Ah? Did you just call me a weakling?」

「Even though you're just a weakling of the Black Cat tribe!」

「Disappear in 5 seconds, or bark 1,000 times. I'll overlook you, dog.」

「You—! After I have my way with you, I'll sell you off to the Slave Traders! No more mercy!」 [9]

Extortion, assaulting a little girl, and human trafficking. These guys are finished. If the police were around, they'd immediately be arrested. There're already some Adventurers walking out of the Guild.

Well, shall we put an end to this?

「Bad breath. Stop talking.」

「Fucking brat!」

He put his hands on his weapon! Yes, justifiable defense has been established!

「Die, brat!」

Out of the question. You can't even move anymore, after all.

「Ah? I-Iaa, AHHHhhhhhhhhh! My foot is—! Hiiaaaa!」

The man's body, losing its support, falls to the side. Both of his legs have been severed from the knee.

Fran didn't pull me out, either. She had used the Lv6 Sword Technique: Aura · Blade. It's a technique which develops a blade made purely out of magic power, just for an instant. Its power is low, but it can be combined with Vibrating Fang, and depending on the user's MGC, it can become invisible. It could be seen as an ideal technique for assassination.

And she's already learnt how to use it! Fran, my frightening girl!

The man squirms about like a caterpillar in the pool of blood which continues to grow from his legs' wounds.

「AHiiiII, Ahiiiiiii」

Disgusting! Absolutely revolting.

「Y-you..... B-B-But, Aahh?」

「!!....!... I-It hur-!」

Two more people fall to the ground due to Vibration Bullets fired by Fran breaking and tossing their legs aside. In addition, as a follow-up attack, more Vibration Bullets are fired at their faces. Their power is held back, but their noses are destroyed and their frontal teeth are completely lost. Their eyes might be done for as well.

The two remaining can't understand the situation. For the time being, they back away from Fran, so they likely understand that she's dangerous at this point at least. However, it's not like Fran's disdain has disappeared. They should have run away.

『Slow judgement is fatal.』

Cleanup would have been troublesome, but Fran would have been fully capable of killing them if she intended to.

Fran kicks the floor, and in the next moment, she's right before one of them. And with me, who's still covered in cloth, she strikes their face with all her might.

Gan! Gan!

More or less, it was equivalent to striking with the back of one's sword. No, because they were hit with the side of the sword, perhaps it would qualify as a side strike? [10] Well, regardless, their legs and faces now have comminuted fractures[11]. Most likely, low-leveled potions won't be able to heal them completely.

Turning around, the first technique from Pugilism: Aura · Kick is used against the last one remaining. With vibration applied, of course. He was about to draw his weapon, but it was too late. His knee was broken, and the muscles inside were shredded. To finish with, he's struck in the face with a vibrating elbow strike.

End scene. Noise from the surrounding Adventurers has disappeared entirely, and only the screams for help from the other men resounded in the Guild.

「Hey?」

「Y-Yes!」

「May I go?」

「Ah..... Yeah. Thank you very much. We hope to see you again.」

Ohh, Nell has a good smile. How refreshing. Secretly, I make a mental thumbs up for “Good Job”.

「Well, as for you guys, I'll hand you over to the soldiers.」

「Ahh— Ahh, you don't plan on catching that damn brat?! W-We were suddenly attacked, so—!」

「Haa? What nonsense are you saying? Damn scum, all that child did was act in self-defense, isn't that right?」

「R-right. That's right! That's how it is!」

「It was completely self-defense!」

Hooray~ I can be at ease if Nell and the other Adventurers have to give testimony.

「It hur—! It hurts! Please, heal me!」

「Ahh, before that, I need to receive the bill for the floor you defiled. Blood is hard to remove, you know? You suffered a great loss, so I'll leave it at 10,000 Gorudo. If you pay it, I might just heal you.」

You didn't say that you'd heal them for sure! Nell!

After listening to Nell's remarks, we leave the guild.

A considerable amount of time was taken up. The sun is already starting to set.

『Shall we look for an inn for the time being? Since we're in town, I'd hate to camp out.』

「Nn.」

[1] For those who don't know, “Template” is essentially equivalent to cliché — it's just that it's a bit slang-ish.

[2] It was Gocha Gocha Uruse in the flesh. Better strike that off the bingo card.

I may or may not have spent over an hour watching Vocaloid music and ending up at this when I linked that.

[3] This is from the follower-mobs, just so that's clear.

[4] “Beautiful Person (F)” (美人) is used here. Nell is confirmed to be a girl — and a beautiful one at that. Add another template to the list, m8's.

[5] ダムン. The first two characters could actually be “dumb”. Well played, Author.

[6] Changed Fran's Race to “Black Cat Beastman” because adding Beastman in is actually more accurate. The exact translation would be “Beastman · {Type} Tribe”, but instead of adding in “Tribe” I'll just have it as a bit of invisible logic. For example: You can understand that Black Cat Beastmen in general are being talked about if I say “Black Cat Tribe”, right?

[7] Unknown reference, I have literally no clue as to what it could be for/from. Based off the context, I suppose it's some sort of insane character? Or perhaps a nonsensical one? キチ○イ

[8] 犬 is “Dog” — but it can also be the derogatory “loser/asshole” — essentially the same as calling them lower beings. Just know that as the conversation progresses.

[9] He uses 犯し which is, so we're clear, essentially “rape”. When “assault” is used in the line above, it can also be rape.

[10] I think this was a joke, but translation killed it. It's essentially a reflection on how, as a “broadsword” type of sword, rather than a “back” he used his “abdomen” (side) to strike a non-lethal blow.

[11] The type of fracture one would get from car crashes. It's literally 粉碎骨折 — so “comminuted fracture” is the only translation.

※ ※ ※

Ensig:

You may have noticed, but I used italics a lot in this chapter. It's not because I'm in love with them or anything, it's just because the bandi— I mean Mob guys use “—” a lot.

Just so you're aware, “—” isn't a dash (-) — it's a sort of Japanese character used for elongating vowels. For example: Uwaaaaa = Uwa—a. Screams and such are excluded, but they can be used in comple—teley regular sentences, you kno—w? It just lo—ks awkward if they're u—sed a lot. Ri—ght?

Thus, italics.

Anyways, time to sleep~

If there're any mistakes, make sure to comment 'em, 'cause it's 3:12 AM currently, and I have neither the desire nor consciousness remaining to edit

'em all out!

Chapter 22: Nell's Side

Author's Note:

100 bookmarks have been achieved.

Thank you!

My name is Nell. I work as a receptionist for the Adventurer's Guild in the town of Aressa.

Today, I was quite astonished.

I'll start at the beginning, when a young girl whose appearance wasn't clean by any means came to the reception desk at the Guild.

Unintentionally, I had asked a question.

「Ah, yes. Are you alone?」

「Alone.」

「Erm... This is the Adventurer's Guild, so...」

「I know.」

It seemed as though she really intended to become an Adventurer. She even seemed to carry a sword on her back.....

If one thinks of making money, Adventurers are one of the things that naturally come to mind. And so, I thought that this girl was aiming to get rich, much like many others. But a lot of such people die. Especially for

children, it can be said that most people who become Adventurers don't survive.

And so, I informed the Guild Master of the young girl. Sure enough, Donnadorondo was to take charge of the exam.

The Adventurer's Guild doesn't have any particular conditions for recruiting, as to attain a wider range of talented people. However, the Guild Master of Aressa secretly imposes a limit. That limit is to protect those younger than 15 years old by inhibiting their registration. Of course, it's not explicitly stated.

When a child comes to register, Donnadorondo is put in charge of the exam, thus forcing the participant to fail. At first, he'd give verbal threats as a show of force, and then makes them submit by force if they don't give up at that point.

Without exception, children could not win against Donnadorondo. So, it could be said that the chances of success for Donnadorondo's exam was "0%".

Even though it leaves a bad taste in the mouth, it's for the sake of the child. Children have usually no training to be qualified as an Adventurer, and so they're bound to die almost immediately. If one did survive, then they would be lucky just to scrape by financially. There's no way that they'd be able to make a lot of money, after all.

They aren't just sent away afterwards, however. When the child fails, I can enroll them in the Beginner Training conducted by the Guild without a participation fee. If they accept and complete the training, they can take the exam once again.

That day, however... There was an exception. I didn't watch over the test, so when I rushed to the training grounds in response to a large noise, finding the girl standing unhurt, and the figure of Donnadorondo sunk into the wall vomiting blood... I was surprised to say the least.

But the surprises happened one after another afterwards.

First would be the number of possible Jobs. Where there was usually only 2, maybe 3 to choose from, the girl had 15. Furthermore, they included intermediate Jobs like the Magic Swordsman, Flame Magician, and Blink Swordsman. At the time, I couldn't even let out my voice.....

After making the Guild Card, the girl— Fran was her name — wanted to sell some materials. Because they didn't seem to be carrying anything, I had thought that they stored the materials in an Inn.....

But instead, they took the materials out of nowhere.

Talking about storage, Item Box comes to mind, but that wasn't the case in that situation. The materials were taken out of the hole which appeared out of thin air. It was a Technique from a super rare attribute: the Spatial-Temporal attribute. I've worked at the Guild for a long time, and among the people I've seen capable of using Spatial-Temporal attributes this girl was the 3rd.

The next surprise was when the fur of a Twin-Headed Bear was taken out. Its threat level was only F, so it wasn't a very strong Demonic Beast — but I had never seen one in a state like that one.

The fur didn't have a single cut, and had absolutely no blood stains. The dismantling was perfect, and the two heads remained close to one another. Moreover, it was a large individual, so its fur weighed in at about 1.3 times the normal amount.

Aristocrats would want this material without a doubt. It could be made into a coat, or even a carpet... Otherwise, it could be used as a material for a piece of high-quality equipment.

The cleanly dismantled Poison Fang Rat pelts could also be used for a wide range of applications. Its materials can be used to make poison-resistant gear, so despite being a lower ranked Demonic Beast, its value is high.

To that 12-year-old girl who brought out perfectly dismantled materials, the surrounding Adventurers could only raise voices of surprise. Some looked back at their own dismantled furs and give a dry laugh.

But that wasn't all. What she did next stole their voices entirely, rendering the Guild quiet.

She took out materials from the Giant Bat, then the Crashing Boar, then the Rock Bison, the Stone Spider, the Burrowing Mole, and finally she stopped at the Paralysis Nailed Cat. F and E threat level Demonic Beasts came out one after another.

A Demonic Beast of threat level E is said to be capable of leveling a village. It's equivalent to an average Adventurer at rank D if it's one-on-one. In other words, those who hunt them would have to be people who have ascended the ranks of beginner adventurers, or a party of said "beginners".

And this girl hunted them alone? Moreover, she dismantled them perfectly? For dismantling of that caliber, a Dismantling Skill level 5 or 6 would be necessary at least... But having a Skill of such a high level at only 12 years old was abnormal.

By any chance... Did she have a form of blessing? But even with that, I thought that she was a little too strong..... The results of the mock battle with Donnadorondo weren't a lie, it seemed.

But what was the true identity of the Adventurer who asked that her personal information remained a secret? There're many people who have done the same, but...

I strongly endured it, and assessed the materials properly. It was the most materials brought in by any copper ranked[1] Adventurer recently. Naturally, it was a record high for the amount of materials brought in by a G rank.

If it had ended there, I would have finished while thinking 「A Promising Rookie has arrived.」

Instead, a certain situation developed. It was one that I expected, but it happened earlier than I thought it would.

Who would have thought that fools would cause a fuss within the Guild's walls? Doing so would allow me to take away their Guild Cards. At worst, they could have even been turned into crime slaves.

Thinking back, they were a rookie party that caused trouble regularly. The leader was a Mercenary who crossed over and became an Adventurer because he didn't make enough to eat.

But seriously, a useless Mercenary has no place picking a fight with an Adventurer! Unlike Adventurers who require a great deal of talent, Mercenaries abilities only include battling and decreasing the size of their brains.

There's no end to these guys who convert to Adventurers thinking that it'll be easy simply because they have some war experience. Such people have high pride, and low ability. I wouldn't mind if they were more skillful, but...

Well, anyways. This group of idiots was of that category. They were primitive people who carried in a Demonic Beast that they hunted because they lacked the Dismantling Skill.

They also misunderstood the Guild's rule not to get involved in fights between fellow Adventurers. The rule means that we'll overlook mere squabbles. If we overlooked criminals, however, the Guild would be dissolved by the country. I'm really tired of idiots like them who can't understand that much.

And so, while the group of idiots continued to add groundless arguments to their foolish reasoning, Fran snapped. Because she was the expressionless type, I didn't recognize her at all.

Nevertheless, a quiet child becoming angry is amazing. I'll make sure to avoid angering Fran. I vowed so in my heart. At the end, I was called out to. Inevitably, it gave me a bit of a start.

The Adventurers who had spectated the event were also stunned. Without a doubt, they came to the understanding that she was stronger than them.

Even though she had stained the ground with the blood of fools, I didn't particularly mind. Rather, I thought that she did well.

Screaming to be healed, were they idiots? Ah, right, they were.

They likely carried other crimes, so the death penalty was almost certain. At minimum, they would become Mining Slaves. They had threatened with illegal trafficking and attempted extortion, after all. In this Kingdom, such things are categorized as capital offenses.

While watching Fran leave the Guild, I had a simple thought.

「Before they're delivered, could you extort the consolation money?」

[1] Remember: Copper = G & F Rank. The Author wrote "Copper Rank" (銅ランク) explicitly, so Nell is talking about both. There're references to rank via the types of Adventurer Cards later on as well, which is why I'm mentioning this.

Chapter 23: Old man Gallus

『I didn't think we'd be refused.』

「Nn.」

『"Even if you have a Guild Card, we don't give shelter to children"?』

When we had arrived at an inn, that's what the proprietress had said.....

Clearly, she was paying attention to Fran's appearance. Fran's wearing tattered clothing and sandals, so she must have thought that Fran was either poor or a runaway slave. She doesn't smell bad, however.

I can clean us using Purification Magic, so we're completely sanitary.

『I suppose we should fix your appearance by buying Equipment first, then.』

「 ? 」

But I don't know where we can. Well, because I'll be choosing the equipment just leave it to me!

We head towards the town's plaza, located near the Adventurer's Guild. Around here, there're shops with Adventurers lining up in large numbers.

There're lots of shops and stalls, so there're enough Adventurers to match. There're smithies for Weapons and Armor, Tailors, Apothecaries, Accessory Makers, Taverns, Restaurants, etc. There's Really quite the variety.

This is also a good place to study the prices of things.

An Iron Knife is 2,000 Gorudo, a Grade 5 Life Potion is 10,000 Gorudo, a Grade 4 Antidote Potion is 20,000 Gorudo.

Grade 5 seems to be the lowest rank, but the price is quite reasonable. Even deep wounds seem to be cured in an instant, after all. If there was a medicine with the same effect in Japan its price would be far higher, which is why I think that the price is alright.

Such products are lined up next to one another, so I'm getting strangely excited.

『How interesting—』

「Un.」

『Oh! Fran thinks so as well?』

「Lots of rare things. Amazing.」

『I see, I see.』

Looking at Fran's eyes, they're shining bright. Her expressions don't change much, but it's good that Fran's also enjoying this.

Now then, where's the shop we're looking for? As a matter of fact, while we were browsing I had heard an encouraging bit of information.

That is, about a famous Blacksmith who was staying in Aressa. They seem to have rented a store to open their smithy, too.

I want that Blacksmith to make Fran some armor. It might be impossible given our current funds, but we may as well ask.

『Well, I wonder where it is.』

Looking around, there're many smithies and Armor shops, but none of them seem all that great. If it was a shop with an amazing Blacksmith, I figured there would be a large crowd, but I suppose not.

『Perhaps they've already closed for the day?』

It could be so if their goods were popular enough.

「You there, young lady. Like what you see?」

「Un?」

「Yes, yes, you my lady.」

Good heavens, did someone make a pass?! I put my guard up, but the voice belonged to an old Dwarf. It's possible that he's just an Erojiji[1] using the disguise of a wrinkly old hermit, however, so it's not safe yet.

If he plans to do anything strange, I'll pretend to fall and pierce his foot to scare him off.

「You seem to be looking for some armor, so how is it?」

「How did you know?」

「Well, I could understand with a look at you.」

「.....」

「Ahh, so cautious. Wha—t, it's pretty simple. Looking at your footwork, I can see that you're quite skilled. And yet... Your armor is quite poor. You'd turned your eyes to many Armor Shops and Blacksmiths, so wouldn't the only conclusion be that you're looking for some armor?」

This guy's not just your run-of-the-mille old man! Just who on earth is he?

Name: Gallus Age: 82

Race: Dwarf

Job: Magic Blacksmith

State: Normal

Status:

Level: 33

HP: 260 MP: 273 STR: 152 END: 100 AGI: 56 INT: 120 MGC:
148 DEX: 95

Skills:

Dismantling : Lv2, Fire Resistance : Lv7, Blacksmithing : LvMax,
Smithing Magic : Lv9, Appraisal : Lv7, Mining : Lv3, Sewing : Lv5,
Hammer Techniques : Lv2, Hammer Arts : Lv7, Poison Resistance :
Lv2, Leatherworking : Lv4, Fire Magic: Lv9, Dedication : Lv6, Magic
Blacksmithing : Lv7, Discernment : Lv9, Blessing of the God of Fire,
Vigor Manipulation [2]

Extra Skills:

God's Eye

Titles:

Wandering Master Smith, Honorary Blacksmith of the Kuranzeru[3]
Kingdom, King of Blacksmithing

Equipment:

Magic Steel Blacksmithing Hammer, Leather Clothes of the Fire Lizard,
Sandals of the Phoenix Tree, Stamina Recovery Bracelet

This old man was the great Blacksmith from the rumors, it seems. I suppose
that would also explain his keen observation from a moment ago?

Well, it's convenient at least. He ended up finding us, so I'll consider
myself lucky.

「Amazing.」

「Wahahahaha! Even though I look this old, I've still got a long way to go! So, why don't you take a look at my shop?」

「Mhm.」

「Well then, this way.」

Guided by Gallus, we're led to a store at the corner of the plaza. In the meantime, the gazes of innumerable people are turning their eyes to us in the surrounding area. Their stares stick, so it's pretty uncomfortable.

『Eh? Isn't everyone around looking here?』

「Enemies?」

『No, they're not but.....』

The gazes from merchant-like men are particularly terrifying. Fran, who misunderstands those stares as intimidating glares from enemies returns sharp glances around the area.

What on earth is going on?

「Ahh, don't worry about it; it's just pressure from greedy Armor merchants. I've driven them away in the past, but since then they've started persistently approaching people who've purchased items from my shop in order to sell them second-hand.」

No, no, isn't that troubling in itself?

「We—ll, we'll be going around back to get in, so be at ease. More importantly, what're you looking for exactly?」

There's no way I can feel relieved with just that... But there's no helping it even if I worry about it. Rather than that, it was good luck to find a skilled Blacksmith, so we should take this chance no matter what.

「Why to me?」

「I only sell to Adventurers who'll actually use my wares. You, my dear, are one such person.」

What a stubborn craftsman. I don't hate that, though.

『First, have him show you a sword.』

「First, a Sword.」

「Haa? Aren't you already carrying a fine sword? This is the first time I've seen an Intelligent Weapon, you know?」

W-What?! How did he know? Appraisal? No, I have Appraisal Concealment. It's impossible for it to have been exposed!

「..... Intelligent Weapon?」

Good performance, Fran! Keep up that deceit!

「Ahh, well... It doesn't make a difference—. I was just making sure. My eye is a little special you see, so even if you have Appraisal blocking Skills, I can still see a bit of information. Especially in regards to Equipment.」

There was such an ability?! Now that he mentions it, on top of having Appraisal and Discernment, he also had the God's Eye Skill, didn't he...? Is that its effect?

「Well, only an Intelligent Weapon would have its Attack Power and Magic Power Conductivity. Is that enough of an explanation, Sword?」

『Well, I can understand in that case. This girl... I want Fran to be able to use a proper sword.』

「Oohh? You really can talk? You really are intelligent! Incredible— incredible—!」

『You look like a kid...』

「Teacher also, sometimes.」

『Eh, seriously?』

「Really.」

『A—hh, well. I suppose in the face of something interesting, anyone would revert to the mind of a child.』

「Nn.」

I look over to old man Gallus who's still frolicking around.

『... I'm the same as that?』

I'll try to be a bit more prudent in the future.

「Oops, sorry—. I was just a bit excited. Anyways, looking at your performance, a different sword doesn't seem like it'd be necessary.」

『No, no. Did you look at it right? Old man, your swords are stronger. Like that sword over there.』

The High-Quality Steel Longsword that I had seen in town earlier was made by this old man, no doubt about it. And in this shop similar weapons are all over the place. All of them were at least as strong as me, if not more.

Watching such weapons, I hold back feelings that seem like they'd make me cough up blood. How would a blunt weapon like me compare to them?

「Well, only in terms of simple attack power. Ahh, I see. By any chance, do you know of Magic Power Conductivity?」

『Magic Power Conductivity? I know of it, but...』

「But do you know what it is, hm—? It's pretty importa—nt.」

『How is it important?』

「It's really important, you know! It's especially important when evaluating a sword!」

How! Enlighten me, already!

「It's quite the wonder—.」

『Explain in detail, please.』

「Mmh. Magic Power Conductivity refers to the efficiency in which a piece of equipment can be clad in Magic Power. When it's made use of, the weapon's performance varies greatly.」

『Hmmm.』

「For example, this weapon:」

Gallus picks up a Dagger which was hung on the wall. Appraising it, I find that it's made of Steel. Its Magic Power Conductivity is E.

「Its Magic Power Conductivity is E, which means the conduction efficiency is around 5%. And so, using 100 Magic Power, its attack power rises by 5.」

Gallus explains further by taking out a Dagger made out of Mithril. Its Magic Conductivity is C-, with a conduction efficiency of about 70%. In other words, pouring 100 MP into it results in an ATK increase of 70. With this, conductivity is definitely important. It allows the difference in performance to be overturned easily.

「Furthermore, efficiency isn't the only thing that increases with conductivity ratings. The amount of time magic can be contained within the weapon also increases. In other words, effects imbued upon the weapon last longer.」

『So, is Mithril's conductivity of C- quite high?』

「That's right. Mithril is particularly superior when it comes to conduction efficiency. It's no exaggeration to say that weapons exceeding C- exist on the market as well, but by giving priority to increased conductivity, their basic attack power is low. In most cases, at least.」

「Then, A is amazing.」

「Mmh. Swords with a conductivity of A are pure Magic Swords; they have a conduction efficiency of 200%. Frankly, regular weapons pale in comparison.」

200%... So if 100 magic power is put in, ATK raises by 200? That's absurdly strong, isn't it?! I suppose that means my time has come?

『Is there a limit to the amount of magic power put into the weapon?』

「That depends on the materials. As for your material..... I don't understand it very well. Halmolium[4] seems to be the base, but there seem to be a mix of magic metals as well.....」

Fran hands me over to Gallus, and he taps me with a hammer with a *concon* as if to be certain.

「You don't seem to be inferior to Orichalcum, so about 1,000 magic power wouldn't be a problem I think. Well... Normally most people wouldn't possess such an enormous amount of magic power in the first place — even the Court Magician in the Royal Capital can barely reach 800 MP, after all!」

Disregarding Gallus who's laughing with a *Gahahaha!*, I internally break out into a cold sweat. For me... I can supply 1,000. In other words, I can increase my ATK by 2,000...? I had always found it a little strange up until this point. I could defeat seemingly-difficult opponents in one shot. Aiming at their vitals combined with acceleration via Telekinesis probably contributed as well, but..... I had probably wrapped myself in Magic Power unconsciously.

「Lasts how long?」

「Well, that depends on the material. For E, it's 5 minutes. Each successive rank increases that by about 2 minutes.」

『Then, for A.....』

「It'd be 29-30 minutes.」

「Long.」

『That's more than enough for a short-term battle.』

「Nn.」

『Then I'm not a dull sword?』

「If you're dull, then most of this world's swords are dull as well.」

『I see, so that's how it is..... Uo—h! I'm glad—!』

I'm really, really glad! If I had eyes, tears would be pouring out from my happiness. I've become a sword in both body and mind. Finding out I was stronger than other swords, I didn't think I'd become this pleased. Well... It isn't an unpleasant feeling.

「You're at the pinnacle of strength for a Magic Sword. You might even reach the feet of Divine Swords.」

「Divine Sword?」 [5]

「Ou. Were you made by a Divine-class Blacksmith?」

『Well... I don't know. I have no memories of my creator.』

「Is that so.....」

『Do you know something about it? If you do, please tell me.』

It feels quite bad not knowing my roots. And so, I want to know one way or another.

「You see, Blacksmiths have a ranking system.

There's the regular Blacksmith, Advanced Blacksmith, Magic Blacksmith, and finally Divine Blacksmith. There're other Jobs derived from those as

well, but the Job that reigns above them all is the Divine Blacksmith without a doubt. There've been no more than 5 people who have reached that level in the past. Truly, Blacksmiths of legend.」

「5 Legendary people. Cool.」

「For Blacksmiths like myself, they're existences to admire. Divine Swords can only be forged by Blacksmiths of the Divine class.」

『And you think a Divine Blacksmith made me?』

「I think so, but I can't be sure..... You're quite weak compared to other Divine Swords, but you're too strong to be a regular Magic Sword. You're right in the middle.」

『What's with that... Then it could have just been a skilled Magic Blacksmith who made me?』

「Well, that's also a possibility.」

『How much stronger are Divine Swords?』

I asked so purely out of curiosity. “How much stronger could such a sword be stronger than myself?” It was with such a thought.

「Divine Swords are said to be transcendent weapons that divide the sky and rend the land. In fact, there are records depicting such a sword taking the lives of over 10,000 people in only a matter of hours in a war of the past.」

『Are they all swords?』

「So long as it's a weapon forged by a Divine Blacksmith, it's referred to as a Divine Sword. It seems that there have been ones that don't take the shape of swords, though.」

「Seems?」

「I've seen one such weapon. The Flame Sword: Ignis.」

『I see. How much stronger was Ignis?』

「When I had seen it my Appraisal Skill was low, so I couldn't see it all, but...」

Name: Flame Sword · Ignis

ATK: 1800

Magical Power Conductivity · SS

Skills:

Flame Magic Bestowal, God Flame Bestowal, Unknown

「That's about it.」

『Ahh, so it's like that. I'm sorry for holding any form of rivalry in my heart... There's no way that I could match up to a Divine Sword.』

「Don't be like that... As a sword, aren't you plenty strong enough?」

『Consoling an inferior sword? What a nice old man you are...!』

「You're a good sword. I'm happy to have met such an interesting weapon!」

『Old man Gallus!』

「Sword!」

Disregarding us, Fran who lost interest in us started browsing the rest of the shop.

「Nn. This Breastplate is good.」

[1] Like Erofu — just with “old man”. In other words, a perverted old man.

[2] Regarding some of the Skill names:

Dedication (不眠不休) is actually “Without sleep or rest”.

Smithing Magic (or more accurately Blacksmithing Magic — 鍛冶魔術) and Magic Blacksmithing (魔法鍛冶) are extremely similar, but are different things. I’m not sure what Smithing Magic would look like, but... Well, there it is.

Discernment (目利き) is not Appraisal (鑑定).

[3] クランゼル = Kuranzeru, unless someone has a better suggestion

[4] ハルモリウム = Halmolium — it seems to be an ingot-type from the Atelier series that’s composed entirely out of pure Orichalcum.

[5] Fran actually says “Magic Sword? Divine Sword?” probably as a “What’s the difference” question, but in English just asking for what one article is would be enough to understand the difference. 「魔剣? 神剣? 」

Chapter 24: Equipment Acquisition

「Gahahaha! Sorry for leaving you alone, miss!」

「Un.」

『I'm enough in terms of weaponry. I'd like you to make me a sheath instead, is that fine?』

「Ou! I'll make the best sheath you've ever seen!」

『We can't pay you too much, though..... We want other equipment as well, after all.』

「Is that so~? How much is your budget?」

『Leaving some for lodging and medicine, about 150,000 Gorudo.』

We'll be buying cheap protective gear, but Gallus is a renowned Magic Blacksmith. 150,000 might be a bit low.

「Really. Alright, because I like you guys, I'll sell you one set of equipment and a sheath for that much.」

『Is that really alright? I'm saved.』

「This much is fine! Then, what kind of armor would you like? I may be a Blacksmith, but I can also work with leather. I don't mind whatever you choose.」

『Hmm. Well, what do you think?』

「Lighter is good.」

「Leather then. My recommendation is to use steel to strengthen the areas that cover your vitals.」

「I see.」

「What about headgear?」

「Better with none. Bad visibility.」

「Then, perhaps an earring for Beastmen? There're types that don't need a piercing, if you'd like.」

「Nn.」

「Just a moment, then.」

Old man Gallus takes multiple pieces of equipment out from a storehouse of some sort. There're various kinds.

「Try out whichever one catches your eye.」

Name : Remodeled Breastplate of the Flame Bull

DEF : 88 Durability : 330/330

Effect : Fire Resistance ↑ Low

Name : Remodeled Gauntlet of the Paralysis Clawed Cat

DEF : 39 Durability : 160/160

Effect : Impact Resistance ↑ Low, Paralysis Resistance ↑ Low

Name : Boots of the Poison Wyrms[1]

DEF : 52 Durability : 200/200

Effect : Poison Resistance ↑ Low

Name : Mithril Earring of the Cat Tribe

DEF: 10 Durability: 100/100

Effect : Magic Resistance ↑ Low

As a set, the DEF adds up to 189.

It's weaker than the Guild Master's equipment, but compared to most Adventurers around town it's a bit strong. It's better equipment than I had expected to receive.

The main color of the equipment is black, which suits Fran better than I had anticipated. In addition, two pieces of clothing without any defensive properties were also tailored for her.

『Is it alright giving us such strong equipment?』

「It's fine. Strong Adventurers should be equipped with strong equipment. Above all, this equipment is inferior compared to yourself, so it's quite vexing. Well, anyways, I won't go into the red or anything, so don't worry about it.」

『Well, Fran?』

「Thank you.」

「Come again in the future. It's not every day I get an opportunity to analyze an Intelligent Weapon, after all.」

『Isn't that reason a bit strange?』

「Don't mind it. It's for Appraisal and Discernment.」

『Well, if that's how it is...』

「Bringing in materials is also welcome, you know? If you bring them in, I'll lower the price of the equipment made out of it.」

At his words I remembered the strong Demonic Beasts' materials I had stored. Since I won't be selling them to the Guild, wouldn't passing them to old man Gallus for the sake of better equipment be as inconspicuous as it gets?

「Materials.」

『That's right. I'd like you to make some protective gear out of them to dispose of them without attracting attention, old man.』

「Hou. Putting it like that, their quality must be quite substantial.」

『They're not from small-fry Demonic Beasts. They're from beings with threat levels of D and C.』

It wouldn't be strange for an entire Country to take action for Demonic Beasts of Threat Level C. If one such creature appears near a town, the armed forces appearing soon after would be expected.

Even for Adventurers, they're dangerous to the degree that you'd need at least 3 parties — more than 15 people — of Silver ranks.

『Are there any vacant rooms we can use?』

「Yeah, there's an empty room over there. Did you bring them with you?」

「We did.」

「You have an item bag, then? But where.....」

No item bags can be seen from the figure of Fran. She only has clothes, sandals, and me equipped currently.

『It's an ability of mine.』

「I see. Interesting... For a Sword to have an item box ability..... I had no idea...」

While the old man murmurs and mumbles to himself, I was moved to the vacant room. It was likely a warehouse of some sort originally. It has a dirt floor, a high ceiling, and a sizeable area. I have no complaints.

『Then, I'll take them out.』

I take out the fur, fangs, and claws of the Tyrant Saber. Next are the poisonous fangs and scales of the Doppel Snake, and following that is the shell and skin of the Blast Tortoise. With just that, the room was filled with materials.

For the materials of the large Slime Lord, I left them stored and simply conveyed their existence verbally. The whole room would be covered with its slimy liquid if I took it out, after all.

「What the.....?! D-Did you kill these? Despite them being materials of high-level C and D ranks?」

『Well...』

「Alone?」

『To be precise, it was just me. I had used Telekinesis to soar around at that time.』

「Hahahahahaha! How fierce! You must have quite the variety in abilities.」

『If one's basic abilities are low, versatility is key.』

「If it's this, then... Equipment of considerable quality can be made. It'll be gear at a level that would be out of reach to a bronze rank.」

That should be expected, it's material of only strong Demonic Beasts after all.

「However, these are all leather materials. I can't handle it all alone. I'll have to cooperate with someone. After that, that guy'll —」

『Um, old man?』

「Oops, excuse me. Because there's such interesting work after a long time, I've grown a tad excited. I wonder how many times you'll surprise me before you're satisfied!」

While saying so, a big smile floats on his face.

「Then, will you?」

「Of course!」

『However, it'll be a custom-made set provided by a skilled artisan. How much would be sufficient old man?』

「That's right..... Even with materials provided, the price usually wouldn't dip below 2,000,000 Gorudo.」

『Seriously? That's absolutely impossible.』

「This material... Is it fine if I take it all?」

『Aah, yeah that's fine.』

「Then, the negotiations'll be simple. There're far too many materials for the equipment of the young lady alone, so I'll buy the surplus materials. For the price, how about we settle with a complete offset of the crafting cost?」

『That'd be a great help.』

「Alright, deal.」

「How long?」

「It'll take one month.」

『It'll take longer than expected,』

「What are you saying? That time is already pushing it! Well, that's just because of the material, of course. It's an odd job, for sure, but thankfully there're enough raw materials to work with, so it'll work out one way or another.」

『It can't be helped. What do you think, Fran?』

「Nn. Looking forward.」

「Ou! Leave it to me!」

Old man Gallus then proceeds to prepare several iron barrels to load the body of the Slime Lord into. The slime seems to have multiple uses.

「I've looked already, but... Are there no Magic Stones in these?」

「None.」

「Really. That's too bad.」

『Can Magic Stones be used in equipment as well?』

「Ou. During creation, I can mix them in. For example, using the fang of this Doppel Snake assures a Poison Resistance effect for armor; for weapons, toxic effects would be expected. However, those effects could increase with the addition of the Doppel Snake's Magic Stone. Using other stones would also apply an effect, but the materials have a natural affinity with the Magic Stone of the same kind.」

To think that Magic Stones had such a use... Unfortunately, their Magic Stones have already been absorbed by me. Perhaps I should leave Magic Stones that have Skills I have already in the future. They can be absorbed from storage at any time if they turn out useless.

『I'll be careful in the future.』

「Ou, that's good then.」

『Then I suppose we'll take our leave for today.』

「Bye bye.」

『I'm sorry for troubling you in various ways.』

「Hahaha! Just look forward to the finished products! Make sure to come back for the sheath in 3 days, too.」

『Understood.』

Because we had processed the materials, strong armors could be ordered. Really, it was quite a good encounter.

『You look good, Fran. You match the look of a fledgling Adventurer to a tee.』

「Thank you.」

『Next is..... Do you need underwear?』

「 ? Not really.」

『I-Is that so?』

Because she said so, it's alright, right?

No, that won't do. Certainly the hurdle is high when it comes to lingerie and undergarments, but if I back away now, I'll end up running away forever! If I do so, Fran will lose quality as a lady!

Here and now, I must take the offensive!

『That's no good. We're going to buy some underwear!』

[1] “Wyrm” should actually be “Sub/Inferior Flying Dragon”, but “Boots of the Poison Sub-Dragon” sounds kinda... Well... Weird. Especially because the Wyvern way back when was a sub-dragon of sorts, making the identity

of the boots' materials quite vague compared to other gear. If you have a better recommendation, lay it on me. 劣飛竜.

Chapter 25: *Dokidoki* — I'm a guy, after all

It's been 10 minutes since we left old man Gallus' shop.

『Here it is.』

「Frilly.」

As Fran said, looking through the store window a lot of frilly women's clothing are displayed.

『Because it's a shop specializing in women's clothing.』

「Buying what?」

『What do you mean, what?』

「?」

『Well, it's fine. Let's enter.』

My heart isn't pounding just a little, currently. Well, I don't have a heart to begin with but... Any man would react like this. In addition, this is the first time I've entered such a shop — I hadn't done so even in my past life.

「Welcome!」

「Nn.」

「An? An Adventurer?」

Coming out from the back of the shop is a vulgar delinquent-like young woman. She has deep blue short-cut hair, and is wearing impressive cyberpunk-looking clothing, exceeding my expectations of a fantasy.

「And? What do you want? We've got underwear, lingerie, casual clothing, formal attire, pretty much everything. What're you looking for?」

(What are we getting?)

『Just say as I say.』

(Understood.)

We'll give the general idea, and then push rest onto the saleswoman.

「Underwear for 5 days. Easily washable: good.」

「Uh-huh.」

「Also, clothing and underclothes for under armor.」

「5 days worth of those as well?」

「Nn.」

「For underwear, I'll assume the lowest size would fit. Got any preferences?」

「Appropriate.」

「That's no good for a cute girl like you!」

This lady was once an Adventurer. She had conceded on getting sturdy underwear for the sake of adventuring, but she was dissatisfied with there being few cute ones to choose from, so she took action. Uniting with the storekeeper of this store, she had developed various articles for female Adventurers.

「For a fair-skinned, black-haired, black eared beauty like yourself, this one might be good.」

What? Black panties!? Moreover, one with a fascinating tail hole? Outrageous. Truly, outrageous!

「This series has a hole in it specifically for Beastmen. How is it?」

Well... Isn't it a bit too mature for Fran? It's still a bit too early. Cuter ones would be more suitable. While thinking such, the young lady introduces other goods.

「Or perhaps something like this?」

— T-Those are striped panties, no doubt about it. Moreover, they're ones with stripes of light blue and white!

「These, too.」

Kuh — S-Stop! Don't make me look at the modest-shaped cream colored underwear decorated with small ruffles and bows...!

More enchanting types of underwear are unleashed in sequence, all of which are strong yet elastic.

「We also offer a service to open tail holes in articles which don't already have them, you know?」

「Then, these.」

「Ok, Ok. Anything else?」

Is there anything else needed? Girl stuff..... Cleansing foam? No, I suppose a face-washing tool?

「Facial-wash tools? If you have them.」

「We do. The ones at the side suppress dirt really well.」

「Then, please.」

「Got it.」

Apparently, there don't seem to be any bras. Perhaps this country's civilization isn't advanced to the point where they exist yet?

Fran is small — perhaps similar to a cliff. Well, because she has that tsurupeta[1] attribute bras aren't necessary for the time being.

「So: 5 days worth of underwear and underclothes, along with shirts and short pants made with materials permitting good airflow. Would you like any of those with longer lengths?」

「Yeah. Two long ones.」

「Alright. After that is facial soap and towels.」

There's soap? Is it the same as the soap on Earth?

「I made the soap exclusively for the face with Alchemy. It'll cleanse the skin and make it smooth; it's also odorless for the sake of female Adventurers, you know?」

Really? That's pretty good. You'd be discovered by a Demonic Beast in no time if you smelled of flowers while on the hunt, so it's quite helpful if it's odorless.

「Thank you for your patronage!」

I'll have to teach Fran how to wash her clothes later. If I do a bad job, she might not have any spare clothing left over... I should do it? No way, that's dangerous in various ways. She'll have to do it for herself. I'd feel like dying if Fran saw my work and judged it as garbage, after all.



30 minutes after everything was sorted out, we're standing in front of an inn. The lady from the clothing store had recommended it when we asked.

A lot of female Adventurers use it, it seems.

Its appearance is neat, so it doesn't seem to be that bad.

Upon entering... Its interior is also clean, and there're even flowerpots placed around. I use Telekinesis to scrub a small corner of the entrance, but there's no dust. Mmh, it's a good inn.

「Teacher: worrywart[2].」

『Wha—!』

I'm only like this for your sake! Fran!

「Welcome.」

At the counter is a young lady. She seems to be a bit over 20 years old.

「Rooms available?」

「Would it be a room for one?」

「Nn, alone.」

「Are there any people to serve as your guardians?」

As expected, is it no use for a child to go in all alone?

『Fran, take out your Guild Card.』

「Nn. This.」

「Eh? Is this real?」

「Nn.」

The woman stares at the Guild Card for a little while, and finally comes to the understanding that it's the genuine article.

「Well, with this your identity has been cleared. It's 300 Gorudo for a room without meals. 400 Gorudo will cover the room and two meals. Each room within the inn is private. So, what would you like?」

『A stay for one day, meals provided.』

「One night with meals.」

「Understood. Here's the key to your room, please be careful with any valuables in your possession.」

「Nn.」

After that, she went through an explanation about the prices of commodities and such, like how Lanterns and hot water are provided through the use of Magic Tools. I was surprised when she mentioned toothbrushes, but it seems that they simply make use of Purification Magic somehow.

「You can exchange this tag at the dining room for a meal. The dining room is always open, so it can be exchanged at any time.」

While saying so, she passed us two exchange tags. They must have a good system in place to allow their guests to dine at any time.

Well, because I have a plentiful supply Demonic Beast meat, I could probably go without the meals anyways. From now on, perhaps it would be best to simply prepare our own meals instead... Any number of dishes can be placed in Dimensional Storage, so hot foods could be eaten at any time.

The only problem would be where to make the food. Roasted meals and soup would become boorish after a while, so order to prepare for various meals proper kitchen utensils will be required.

「Here?」

『This room isn't that bad.』

There's a bed, a desk, and a chest set to the side; the room is completely spotless. Furthermore, dancing clothes are provided, likely in order to spend

time comfortably. Finally, there's a spot on the wall in order to hang one's armor. This inn has a service to be reckoned with.

「Teacher, alright here?」

『 ? 』

「Such a great room?」

Ahh, so that's it. Fran has lived as a slave for more than four years, so this room of this level would probably seem incredibly luxurious.

This poor child! I will absolutely make her happy! But first, I should relieve her!

『This is our room.』

「Very luxurious...」

『No, it's not that amazing. This is common.』

「Really?」

『Really. From now on, you can stay in rooms like this without reserve.』

「Uo—!」

Fran pushes both fists to the sky in a manly way and lets out a roar.

「It was good to follow Teacher.」

『Is that so?』

「Already: winners at life.」

『It's to that extent?!』

「It's my time.」

She's already happy at an unreasonable level, and her spirits have risen. It's hard to see from her facial expressions...

But it's good so long as she likes it.

[1] “tsurupeta” (ツルペタ) is essentially Flat-chested. Otaku lingo is hard to translate.

[2] Fran calls Sword-shisho “sister-in-law” (小姑) or, separated: “little mother in-law”. It probably has a meaning in Japanese that isn't present in English, so I changed it to this. It should be about equivalent... Probably.

Chapter 26: Sa—ber Tige—r

Author's Note:

My cold hasn't been cured just yet, so it's a little short.

We relaxed a bit at the inn, but we're not finished with shopping just yet.

『Hey, let's go shopping before sunset, alright?』

「Buying?」

『Seasoning and cooking utensils. It'd be nice to eat delicious things when we're camping out, right?』

「Nn.」

『Then we'll need seasoning.』

「Important. Top priority.」

『Then let's head out to a general store. If we ask someone from the inn, they'll likely be able to tell us about one.』

「Understood.」

『Just in case, remember to lock up. We haven't left anything, but...』

「Nn.」

We were recommended to a shop by one of the ladies at the inn. Its location was apparently just across the street.

『Here it is.』

The sign out front reads 「General Shop Sa—ber Tige—r」.

「Sa—be—r?」

『It doesn't look like a general store at all.』

「No choice but here.」

As Fran said, this is the only general shop nearby. A bit reluctantly, we enter.

curran curran [1]

「Welcome—!」

It'd be a fairly normal looking general store on the inside... If there wasn't a macho man as the owner. He had only said 「Welcome—」, but a transcendent throaty sound reverberated throughout the store. Without the consonant mark, his speech would have been a whole other level of manly.

「General store?」

「That's right. Although it's often misunderstood, this is indeed a general store.」

Of course it would be misunderstood. It's called Sa—ber Tige—r. Furthermore, a macho man who wouldn't look out of place prowling a dungeon is the clerk. You can understand just through his movement that his appearance isn't just for show, either. Shall I Appraise him?

Name : Rufus Age : 41

Race : Human

Job : Merchant

State : Normal

Status:

Level : 30

HP : 238 MP : 153 STR : 120 END : 107 AGI : 77 INT : 74 MGC
: 69 DEX : 74

Skills:

Transportation : Lv3, Dismantling : Lv4, Harvesting : Lv2, Arithmetic
: Lv1, Commerce : Lv2, Warhammer Techniques : Lv4, Warhammer
Arts : Lv6, Tracking : Lv2, Ice Resistance : Lv2, Cooking : Lv1, Vigor
Manipulation, Giant Killer

Titles:

Giant Slayer

Equipment:

Merchant's Apron, Arithmetic Earrings

That's not the status of a Merchant. That's the status of an intermediate Adventurer — one with the Skills and constitution of a Vanguard, too! His Arithmetic and Commerce Skills are the ones that seem out of place instead!

「Adventurer?」

「Originally, yeah. I had always dreamed of opening up a store of my own, so I worked to accumulate the funds needed. I retired from the life of an Adventurer 3 years ago and finally fulfilled my dream.」

「Why the name? Not cute.」

Ms. Fran, please be a bit less direct!

「Haha, that's asked often. I wonder why... To tell you the truth, when I was opening my shop I wanted something to attract attention. In the end, I

decided to display that.」

The shopkeeper points to the wall at the back of the store, where a stuffed Saber head is displayed. It has a forceful expression that makes it seem like it could roar at any moment.

「Cool.」

「Right? It's a bit unpopular around women, though. Even though it's so cool.」

Is this store really alright? If it wasn't referred to by the lady at the inn, I'd run away as quickly as possible.

However, while Fran was making conversation I had looked around the store. The selection is actually quite good. Not just seasonings, convenient goods are all over the place.

「Ah, but I'm getting in the way of your shopping. Please, take your time.」

『Well, let's get what we came for then.』

「Nn.」

Naturally we're buying salt and an assortment of herbs, but I'd also like expensive things like sugar and spices. We'll also be buying dishes and utensils afterward.

But isn't the security around here a bit careless? This world is different from Japan; it's a dangerous place. Undoubtedly robberies happen. And yet, this shop exhibits its products just like Japan, making use of a system that allows the customer to choose their products directly. Couldn't shoplifters act as much as they'd like.....? No, maybe not. The owner's a former Adventurer, so he wouldn't overlook amateur shoplifting. It's likely that he's able to use this style of showing his products because he's confident in his abilities.

In the end, we purchased about 3,000 Gorudos worth of items and left the shop. It seems that we were thought of as good customers. In addition to being told to come again, the shopkeeper passionately saw us off personally.

『As for our remaining funds... There's a little over 40,000 Gorudo, huh.』

「What next?」

『I'd like to buy Potions, but.....』

We won't be able to buy any expensive Potions.

「Recovery Magic.」

『At its level it's only the degree of soothing.』

「Raise level?」

『I considered that.』

I have 18 Self-Evolution Points remaining. 2 Points are necessary to raise the Skill's level, so I could increase its level 9 times. In other words, I have enough Points to get a Skill from Lv1 to the Max.

『There are still some Skills that I'd like to raise.』

「Which ones?」

Sword Techniques for example. After the examination at the Adventurer's Guild, the Guild Master had called Dragon · Fang a medium-grade Sword Technique. A Sword Technique of Lv7 is medium-grade. And so, just like Magic Skills, if I get Sword Techniques to LvMax something'll happen, right? That's what I think, anyways.

「Un. I think, too.」

『Right?』

Also, because the power of Sword Techniques depends on the level of Sword Arts, in order to make full use of them Sword Arts needs to have its level raised as well.

After that would be Fission Creation. It's pretty useless right now, but if I raise its level... Wouldn't it be possible to use it in combat just like the Doppel Snake did? It would also save a lot of trouble if I could use a doppel body as Fran's guardian when she goes out shopping.

「Good.」

『Right?』

After that would be Skills for the sake of life preservation, like Instant Recovery, Abnormal Status Resistance, and Physical Attack Resistance. They're simple, but they'll be overwhelmingly reliable in a predicament. Moreover, those three Skills seem to have severe acquisition conditions: the so-called Top Skills.

Fran's still a low level, so taking a single attack from an a Demonic Beast above intermediate rank would be the end. It can't hurt to be too careful until she becomes a high level.

「Forgot.」

『I'll be keeping Instant Recovery active, so it shouldn't be too bad for the time being.』

And then there's Recovery Magic. Instant Recovery is a good skill, but it'd be great to be able to heal other people.

I want to raise its level intensively, rather than leave it incomplete.

『Well, any Skills are good enough.』

In the end, after more consultation at the inn, I ended up raising Recovery Magic to the counter stop. It now allows Abnormal State recovery, so it's convenient. Even if Fran sustains a major injury it can be healed, too.

Furthermore, Healing Magic Lv1 was obtained. Just like how Flame Magic was obtained from Fire Magic, it was obtained after Recovery Magic reached its peak.

『With this, our means of recovery are secured.』

「Nn.」

『Now then, what shall we do tomorrow? Perhaps we should take a request from the Adventurer's Guild? There's still money left over, so we could relax for several days if you'd like.』

「Take request.」

『Is that alright? We'll probably end up going out of the town.』

「Ready.」

『Then, let's go to the Guild tomorrow.』

「Un. Looking forward to Adventurer work.」

『Ou. We'll have to take some time to raise your level, too.』

「After that?」

『What would you like to do? We can do anything you'd like.』

「Anything.....」

『Ou. Is there anything you'd like to do?』

「Un.....?」

『Hahahaha! You should think long and hard about it. We have plenty of time.』

「Un. I will.」

[1] Shop-entrance bell-noise thing. Yep. カランカラン

Chapter 27: These Guys Again

This is the first morning that I've woken up at an inn.

Murmuring 『I don't know this ceiling...』 was simply a matter of course. Well, I didn't lie down because I don't sleep, but...

I move Fran who seems like she's weak to mornings, and proceed to change her clothes. I clean her with Purification Magic and wash her face using water — also created by magic. Fran's hair is shortcut with curls swaying often move at the ends, so I don't forget to fix her terrifically disheveled morning hair with water as well.

After I've finished, Fran finally awakes.

「Good morning.」

『Did you sleep well?』

「Very.」

Next, we head out to the dining room for breakfast.

「Got it. Please look forward to our morning special!」

A wooden plate is placed in front of Fran with a *don*. The meal consists of an omelet atop a firm piece of brown bread, 2 sausages, and a serving of boiled carrots. There's also a soup with a couple of other ingredients within.

『How is it?』

「Delicious.」

To Fran who was formerly a slave, this meal must be incredibly delicious — or so I think such while watching her eat with gusto. There, there. Eat a lot to grow big and strong.

(However, Teacher's cooking: more delicious.)

During yesterday's dinner she said the same thing.

『Haha, what a nice thing to say.』

(It's true. I want Teacher's Cooking.)

Well, my Cooking Skill has reached the counter stop. Because of that, we're now in the mysterious situation of a sword being the best chef in town. In fact, even though Fran has the same Cooking level as me, I'm a better cook — likely due to my memories of my past life. Even with the King of Cooking Title and the best abilities, it's impossible to match up to food that's never been seen on this world it seems.

It might really become necessary to give thought to preserving large quantities of food created through my Cooking Skill...

『If we get a request that requires us to leave the town, I'll cook some lunch.』

「Looking forward. Must go immediately.」

『Then you'll have to look for a request.』

「Nn.」

We left for the Adventurer's Guild after the meal.

「Hello.」

「Good morning. Have you come to find a request?」

「Nn.」

「The request board is that one over there. Make sure to remember that G Rank Adventurers can only receive G and F Rank requests.」

First, we take a look at the G Rank requests.

There're few G Rank Adventurers here early in the morning it seems, so there's no one in front of the board.

『Harvest Medical Herbs, Hunt Wild Boars, Pluck Weeds from around an Estate, and Pick Garbage off the Road...?』

「Dull.」

『Yeah. The compensation is low, too.』

Next we look at the F Rank requests.

『They're better, but.....』

Subjugate 5 Goblins, Exterminate Fang Rats, and Gather Mushrooms from the Forest.

The fact that they're all dull hasn't changed.

Well, it can't really be helped that only requests of this level are present. Besides, Fran's level is low, so it would be best to raise Fran's level by hunting small fry.

「Then, this.」

『Medical herb harvesting. It's our first request, so that would be for the best, right?』

In more detail, the request consists of gathering medicinal herbs used for fifth grade Potions: Heal Grass. There're a lot of them grown in the forest, apparently.

「This.」

「Yes. This request, then. I've confirmed it.」

「Nn.」

「Do you know what Heal Grass looks like? There're documents you can look at if you'd like.」

「I'm OK.」

「I see. You'll need to complete 5 requests in order to rank up, so do your best.」

「Nn. Thank you.」

「Yes.」

We made a big commotion yesterday, but it seems that the Adventurers' favorability towards Nell was high enough to cover for it. Good, good.

『Alright. Let's go!』

「Nn.」

After arriving at the gate, we showed our Guild Card and easily passed through. The gatekeeper seemed to remember Fran and was surprised to see that she was an Adventurer.

『So, which way shall we go?』

「Nn..... That way.」

『Following your heart?』

「Intuition.」

That's a good answer. There's no hurry to complete the request, so it's fine to behave like this.

『We should pick up medical herbs other than Heal Grass along the way. Then, if another request comes out for different herbs we can complete it immediately.』

「Teacher: genius.」

『Hahaha! Praise me more!』

「Teacher: amazing genius.」



We continue advance through the forest at a leisurely pace. We've already harvested enough Heal Grass at this point to complete the request, alongside other herbs, mushrooms, and nuts in large quantities.

Using the Harvesting, Herbalism, and Cooking Skills I can distinguish whether any of the herbs will be useful. Danger Perception also helps in the, because it allows me to sense dangerous mushrooms and herbs even without knowing their name or effects. In other words, it allows me to distinguish materials that can be used for poisons.

Everything's stored in Dimensional Storage, so the only thing that could be considered a problem is the fact that we have to harvest them one by one. Fran seems to be satisfied with the meal that I cooked, so she's walking in high spirits.

「Teacher.」

『Ou.』

Abruptly, Fran stops. But I'm not surprised. I noticed too, after all.

『Goblins. There're no more than 10 of them.』

「Nn.」

『There really are a lot of Goblins around here, huh.』

Fran's hand is already gripping my handle in preparation for a fight, and I don't stop her. Goblins can be hunted safely, and grant decent EXP, so they're fine.

I wouldn't recommend fighting off these numbers for common beginners, though.

『Is an Adventurer surrounded?』

「There.」

『3 Adventurers, huh. As for the Goblins.....』

「13.」

『They're high quality ones, too.』

A Soldier, Thief, and Archer seem to be leading the flock of Goblins.

Their opponents seem to be only novice Adventurers. Standing against the flock of Goblins dressed in cheap armor, they can only scowl with pale faces.

『A Soldier, a Ranger, and a Magician. The party's balance is alright, but if the rearguard is approached too closely things would easily take a turn for the worst.』

All of the party's members have received damage to some degree; the Magician in particular seems to have suffered a serious injury.

「I'll rescue.」

『Understood.』

「Shave off with Magic, then break through.」

We both chant spells from Soil Magic in unison. My chant was for the spell Stone · Barrett, which fires off a small stones like a buckshot. Because my MGC is about 5 times higher than the average person, my stones have

roughly the same power as bullets. If enemies are grouped up, it's possible to hit multiple bodies at once.

My ability to guide the Skills also seems to be due to Sorcery, but because I can't share it with Fran, she'll have to use magic the normal way.

As for the reason we didn't use Fire Magic, it's because of our location. Forest fires are dangerous.

「Stone・Arrow.」

『Stone・Barrett!』

Fran's magic defeats one, and mine takes out five, so a total of 6 were defeated — one of which was the Goblin Thief.

〈Fran's Level has risen to 6〉

Level Up has come! Well, we have no choice but to ignore it for now.

While both sides are confused about what happened, Fran rapidly approaches the Goblins.

「Hah.」

She slides between the Adventurers and Goblins and cuts down two Goblins as she passes by. Of course, I'm also participating in the battle. I take care of the Goblin Archer that would provide the most difficulty for the Adventurers with Stone・Arrow.

「Eh? A child?」

「S-Strong!」

The Adventurers are surprised. The Goblins were as well, but recovered and attempted to strike back with the Soldier Goblin as the lead.

「GyaGYAOU!」

Hou. Understanding that their opponent was strong, they attacked with all of their members without hesitation. In spite of being a Goblin, it has good judgment.

『But it's futile! Stone · Barrett!』

I've continued chanting throughout the entire battle. I don't even need to breathe to do so, after all. Because of that, the chant for Stone · Barrett was already complete.

Two Goblins to the right are impaled with stones, causing them to lose their lives after vomiting up blood.

As for two on the left, they aren't even close to a match for Fran.

「Slow.」

Double · Slash is released, and the final two are cut down in an instant.

The situation had been turned on its head within just 20 seconds, so the Adventurers can only watch with befuddled expressions on their faces. I feel like continuing to stare at their goofy faces for a while longer, but it would be bad to leave the injured person as-is.

『Recovery Magic is already making itself useful.』

I check over the Magician's status and find that his HP is simply decreased. There're no physical defects or abnormal states.

『Just a regular Heal will do just fine.』

「——Curing light, Group · Heal」

That spell is the wide-range Lv7 Recovery Magic: Group · Heal. Because the other two were more or less damaged, they were recovered with it as well. What a kind girl, using such a spell for their sake!

「Group · Heal? From such a small child?」

「Uah! This isn't some second-grade Magic!」

Astonished, the male Warrior and female Ranger let out words with wide eyes.

「Moreover, is that a Magic Sword...?」

Ah, I've been noticed. Well, there's a clear difference between my appearance and regular swords, so my identity would be revealed to anyone who sees me. Ahh—, how troubling.

「That aside, Eustace, are you alright?!」

「Huh? My injury was healed?」

The Magician doesn't seem to have any problems. If he tries to coax Fran to buddy up with their group due to this situation, I might get angry, you know?

「Alright?」

「Y-Yeah. I'm saved.」

「Thank you very much. Hey, you too!」

「Eh? T-Thank you?」

Bowing should come first, that's just the basics. The fools from the other day seemed to have thought differently, however.

「You are..... An Adventurer?」

「Nn.」

「Um, may I ask your name?」

「Fran.」

After that word was spoken, the Adventurers turn to each other and start whispering to one another.

(Do you know that name?)

(I don't. But it'd be impossible not to know of such an outstanding child...)

(Yeah.)

(I don't know either.)

Their conversation was probably along those lines.

「I'm Kral. She's Lily, and he's Eustace.」

The Warrior gives a polite introduction, but Fran seems to have already lost interest in them.

「I see. Then.」

It seems that she wants to confirm her Status as soon as possible.

『Is that alright? We might get a reward, you know?』

(Compassionate. Want to see Status.)

Is that so. These guys look visibly inexperienced, so we couldn't really expect a big reward from them anyways. However, while Fran was about to leave, the Warrior leader Kral quickly speaks up.

「Ah, please wait.」

「 ? 」

「These Goblins were the ones that you defeated.」

「Eh? This girl took down all of these Goblins? What are you talking about?」

「Just be quiet!」

「You've already saved our lives, we can't possibly accept anything more than that.」

He has good intentions, so a bad impression might be left if we decline him here.

『Perhaps just taking the materials from higher quality Goblins would be fine?』

「Understood. I'll take high quality.」

「Eh? Highbreeds[1] were mixed in?!」

Hey, hey, you didn't even know that? It might be hard to tell looking at their basic appearance, but they've got bigger physiques and have larger horns.

「Nn.」

Fran ignores the surprise of the three people, and proceeds to strip the Highbreeds of any usable materials at her own pace. The faces of the Adventurers become a bit odd as we do so.

Fran takes the horns and Magic Stones into the bag hanging at her waist. It's a dummy bag, of course. It's simply used as a cover for the items to be put into Dimensional Storage.

「There were three of them?」

「Isn't that a bit dangerous? We should notify the Guild.....」

「No, no, wait. Are those really higher kinds?」

「Probably. Their bodies are obviously a bit bigger than the rest.」

We seem to have made them more flustered than expected. A problem of some sort seems to have arisen.

「What?」

「Well, three Highbreeds appeared at the same time, so it has to be reported to the Guild!」

「Why?」

「Huh? You don't know?」

「 ? 」

「If Highbreeds are present, there's a high chance a King has been born.」

「Nn.」

The Adventurers describe in detail, but here's a rough summary:

When a Goblin King rises to leadership, the combat power of all of the Goblins increases significantly. I knew about this fact as well.

Becoming able to hunt more Demonic Beasts as a group, individual Goblins don't die as often and more Highbreeds can come into existence. In turn, this increases the combat power of the horde and a terrible cycle is born.

In fact, once the horde grows big enough a Queen is born. A Queen was once born in the Plains, too. I suspect that the reason for its existence is to help unify the outskirts of the group when it's grown really big.

Most importantly: children born to the King and Queen Goblins are all Hobgoblins. If the Hobgoblins breed with normal Goblins, their children are Hobgoblins as well.

A single Hobgoblin has a Threat Level of F. A group of them led by a King seems to surpass Threat Level D.

「Things get out of hand if it gets like that. It would become a disaster due to an outbreak of Demonic Beasts.」

「I can't even imagine how many villages would disappear...」

Indeed, for the local Adventurers this would be a matter of life and death. I can only look at it as a clump of delicious EXP, but for the present Fran the situation would pose quite a threat. That being the case, we should nip it at the bud.

「We're going to immediately report it to the Adventurer's Guild.」

Saying so, they each pick up a corpse of a Highbreed. Without the bodies, there would be no material serving as evidence after all.

「Nn.」

「Then, please excuse us.」

「Thank you for your help, really.」

「It seems like I was saved by you, so thank you very much!」

And so, we helped some young people and ended up getting the rest of the materials from the Goblins for ourselves. It's not a bad result.

『Now to absorb the Magic Stones.』

After moving away from the novice Party, I take out the Magic Stones and absorb them. I already have all of their Skills, but the accumulation of small things add up eventually. I received them gratefully.

「Hey, Status, look?」

『Yes, yes. I'll look now.』

「Nn.」

Name : Fran Age : 12

Race : Black Cat Beastman

Job : Magic Swordsman

State : Contracted

Status:

Level : 6

HP : 80 MP : 71 STR : 45 END : 34 AGI : 46 INT : 30 MGC : 36
DEX : 47

The Status values are raising steadily. In particular, STR and MGC both rose by 4. That's most likely an effect from being a Magic Swordsman.

Actually, the effects of being a Magic Swordsman are like this:

Magic Swordsman : Intermediate Job

Requires Sword series Techniques & one Magic type at Lv6 or higher to acquire.

Effects:

When leveling up, STR and MGC will be more likely to raise. Acquisition efficiency for Sword and Magic Skills will increase. The power of Sword and Magic techniques will increase.

It's a very well-balanced Job. I'll tell Fran about the rises in her Status values.

「Good feeling.」

『That's right. Do your best, and it'll keep increasing like this.』

「Oo—!」

The expressionless Fran punching her fists into the air is too cute~ Alright! Let's put in some fighting spirit and look for more prey!

((There's an Author's note regarding a change made to the Receptionist confirming Fran's request. Seeing as the change is already implemented,

I've omitted it.))

[1] 上位種 keeps appearing, and has done so ever since C10 when talking about the Goblins with Jobs, so I've been translating it based off of the context (into things like Higher Species, Higher Quality, etc.), but now I'm just going to use "Highbreeds" as the official title — seeing as that's what they are. Higher (as in superior) members of their species. As for whether I'll change all of the past stuff: Nope. Just consider "Highbreeds" an official title that wasn't declared until now (because Sword-shisho didn't know the official title 'till now). Convenient, amiright?

Other suggestions are welcome, so leave a comment!

Chapter 28: Resolution and Growth

It's been one hour since we parted with the beginner party.

「Double · Slash!」

「GYAGAGE!」

「ShuGYOGAー!」

〈Fran's Level has risen to 9〉

「It rose.」

『Yes, yes. We'll confirm the changes later.』

We're currently at war with a crowd of Goblins.

I didn't particularly intend to find their den, but we eventually became surrounded by Goblins after hunting them for EXP for a while. There're ~100, probably. Furthermore, multiple Highbreeds are leading them.

『Middle · Heal!』

「Saved.」

『Here they come again!』

hyuh hyuh hyuhyun hyun!

A myriad of stones are thrown towards Fran through the gaps of trees. It seems that it's not just stones, however. Wood chips and such are mixed within.

The Goblins in the surroundings are all throwing such things in unison. Because the attack is from all sides, avoiding would be impossible.

「Teacher!」

『Aah, leave it to me. Fire · Wall!』

A dome of fire covers Fran's body, protecting her from the projectiles. But their attack wasn't over.

『They're approaching!』

「Nn!」

Fran takes a stance with me in her hands, and when the wall of flames disappears —

「GORURAA!」

「GyoGYOga!」

「GiyARU—!」

Ten Goblins attack Fran simultaneously. Two of them jumped too early, and crashed into Fire · Wall, causing them to be engulfed in flames and writhe along the ground.

「Heavy · Slash!」

We pass through the crowd exchange blows with the Goblins. Doing so, 5 Goblins were immediately defeated.

「Gyaha!」

「KU.....」

「GushIHAA!」

「AU!」

Striking the Goblins, Fran's small body dances while being colored bright red. Swords tear at her shoulders and Spears bore into her back,

but Fran bears the pain and continues to hold me in her hands. I wanted to suggest setting Pain Reduction, but losing ones' sense of pain might adversely lead to even more damage.

「KAAH!」

The usually quiet Fran lets out a war cry and attacks the Goblins. With that, 10 more are defeated.

This battle of offense and defense has repeated several times, leading to the corpses of a little less than 40 fallen Goblins laying around Fran. Still, the number of Goblins surrounding Fran don't seem to have decreased.

『Middle · Heal!』

「Fuu... Haa...」

『Oi, Fran! Are you alright?』

「..... Alright.」

『We should escape soon. There're other methods of gaining EXP, ones even more efficient than this.』

We made light of their numbers... The numbers that the Goblins would put to war.

My body feels neither pain nor fatigue, and is repaired as soon as I sustain damage. For better or worse, I'm able to fight without struggling against strong Demonic Beasts.

But as a result... My sense of danger had been dulled. Things like it's too dangerous, or that Fran wasn't ready yet hadn't even come to mind. I had thought from the bottom of my heart that we'd manage somehow with my power.

And yet, we're now in a hard fight against the Goblins... But it's too late to regret now.

In Recovery Magic is an auto-recovery spell that resurrects the target when their HP becomes 0 — although the Spell is only works once per chant. It's difficult to die when one has this technique, and it makes victory only a matter of time.

But... How much pain would need to be endured, and how much blood would need to be shed until then? Fran still isn't ready to endure such things. Remembering this fight might breed a trauma, so we should withdraw before that occurs.

『They're coming again! We can still escape!』

If it's through Floating and Aerial Jump, making our escape through ascent would be possible. The wall of Goblins would be easy to break through, too.

「Not running.」

『W-What are you saying?! Getting hurt any more than this is pointless! If we go hunt larger Demonic Beasts we'll gain even more EXP!』

「Not pointless.」

Muttering so, Fran takes a stance with me once again. A look of strong determination appears on her face as she does so.

「With Teacher: I won't die. Without dying: pain can be known. Can be used for battle. Then, experience is accumulated.」

『 ! 』

「Fighting to the limit: necessary to be strong, I think. This is... The perfect battleground.」

Saying so, Fran has a ferocious smile.

Ah, I made light of Fran. She had resolved herself long ago. It was only me who wasn't prepared.

My resolution to see Fran hurt wasn't strong enough. Aren't I too naïve? Certainly, if she's led by me her level will rise. But would that really make her 『strong』 ?

Experience and strength of will. Enduring pain can only happen in battle, so isn't there no meaning in just having one's level raised?

Fran understood that firmly.

「Teacher: guardian.」

Amazing. Unlike living snugly in Japan, readiness is different from being overprotected here.

Alright. I'll also show my resolve. I'm prepared! No more hesitating! Let's abandon my easy-going protective spirit! Even without my protection, she isn't a weak kitten. She's a fierce child — a predator sharpening her fangs!

『Leave the recovery to me!』

「Nn! I'm going!」

With that, Fran sprints. She plunges into the crowd of Goblins and swinging me to her heart's content. And as for me, I put my heart and soul into supporting Fran as she accumulates combat experience.

In that way I noticed a change in Fran.

「Ha! Rah!」

Haven't her movements become a bit amazing? Even though she isn't using Sword Techniques, her thrusts almost match the speed of Triple · Thrust. Even now, with Double · Slash — no, its movement exceeds Double · Slash.

I had thought Fran was utilizing Sword Arts, but..... That doesn't seem to be the case.

No, wouldn't that be natural? Suddenly getting Sword Arts at a high level one day, it would be impossible for her body and mind to so easily adapt. So far we had been finishing off small fries and concluding out battles in an instant, so it wasn't a problem... But now, fighting to her limit, her Skills and body have begun working in unison.

Until now only the sharpness of my blade could be admired, but that was only then. Now, things are different. Sword and Body are one. As the number of Goblins increase, the accuracy and ferocity of her attacks does as well.



Two hours have passed.

「Ha..... Ha.....」

『Fran, you've done well!』

「Nn.....!」

The corpses, blood, and bodily fluids of the Goblins are littered across the ground; it was a disastrous scene that seemed to have come straight from hell. At the center, using me as a cane, Fran barely stands. There're no wounds thanks to Recovery Magic, but her endurance has been stretched to the limit, as can be seen as her shoulders raise and fall intensely.

She's covered in blood, dust, and mud to the extent that not a single surface of her skin is clean. Even the newly bought protective gear was dyed dark

red. The damage of the armor in particular is quite terrible, so repairs will be necessary.

If I had attacked more proactively we probably wouldn't have had such a hard fight... But it was necessary for it to be difficult.

Only 6 levels were gained, but the growth that Fran has shown exceeds such things. During the middle of the fight Goblins were defeated exclusively through smashing their Magic Stones — in other words, during the melee her skill had reached the point where I would pierce into the exact area of the opponents' vital areas.

『—Stamina · Heal』

I cast a Magic used to recover one's endurance, but mental fatigue won't be cured through it.

『Rest a bit. I'll remain vigilant of the surroundings.』

While I do so, I suppose I could secure any usable materials and absorb any remaining Magic Stones...

「I'll help.」

『O-Oi. Are you really alright?』

「Finish quickly: leave quickly.」

『I see..... The King didn't show up in the end, so we should finish before reinforcements come, then.』

「Nn.」

『Alright. Take care of their equipment and horns. As for me, I'll focus on the absorption of Magic Stones.』

「Understood.」

Chapter 29: Spoils from the Goblins

Author's Note:

I placed an entry into a ReadNovelFull.competition for the chance to attract more readers!

I've also revised the HP part of the status display to show the numerical value of the previous level.

『Most of it's been collected.』

「Lots.」

『Ou. My Magic Stone Status reached almost 200 in one go.』

Even though there were a bunch of Highbreeds, there were surely more than 100 small fries.

『However, it seems that no Demonic Beasts are approaching.』

「Nn. Pleasant.」

I had thought that the surrounding Demonic Beasts would be attracted to the smell of so much blood, but... They change direction suddenly as soon as they come near. Perhaps even with low intelligence they can still learn to fear the sight of such a disastrous scene. Well, collecting materials was easy because of that as Fran said.

『I obtained some new Skills, too. Moreover, it seems to only be interesting ones.』

Of the spoils obtained from the war against the Goblins, the largest is of course Fran's growth. She's improved in a variety of ways physically.

Also, with the exception of those that were broken or rusted, we've obtained 50 weapons made of Iron and Bronze. There were a couple of forageable suits of Armor as well, but... Well... Because they smelt terrible, most of them had to be discarded. We found a couple of Magic Items as well, which is a good harvest. I'll have to examine them in detail later.

As for the new Skills:

I received Chant Shortening, Balancing Act[6], Retainer's Contract, Kicking Techniques, Kicking Arts, Ghost Magic, Poison Absorption, Poison Magic, Axe Techniques, and Imperturbability.

These Skills came from a Hobgoblin Dark Mage, a Hobgoblin Necromancer, a Hobgoblin Grappler, and Hobgoblin Gladiator.

But that brings about a problem.

『There were Hobgoblins among them, huh.』

「Nn.」

The Four individuals which offered new Skills came from Hobgoblins — which have statuses exceeding the Goblin King from a while back. That can only mean that the Goblin Queen was already born, and breeding has already begun.

『Are the Goblins quick to grow?』

「Un. 10 days: becomes adult.」

『They're seriously on the same level as insects... Anyways, in that case this could be quite dangerous, couldn't it?』

There's the possibility of Hobgoblins being bred in large numbers as we speak.

『It would be best to report back to the Adventurers Guild. I would have liked to hunt them all down with just us, but leaving the situation alone could lead to heavy damage.』

「Nn.」

For now, we should collect the Hobgoblin corpses —

『Fran!』

「Nn.」

I snap up and rush towards Fran, and she calmly catches me with a firm grasp.

「Over there!」

「Oi, are these all Goblins?」

「What is this devastation.....?!」

『It seems like we were spared the trouble.』

The new arrivals are Adventurers. Among them are the figures of the novices we had helped a couple of hours ago, so they seem to have completed their report of the Goblins and successfully got the Guild to send a dispatch.

Dangerous, dangerous. I was almost seen moving about freely.

「Lass, are you alright?!」

「Are you injured?」

「Alright.」

「This..... Was this all done by you?」

「Nn.」

The 10 Adventurers have looks of surprise as Fran nods her head.

「This many..... With just one person?」

「If that's true, Rank E..... No, Rank D. A Rank D Adventurer could take care of an army of this size. It doesn't seem like a small den, though... No, it's far, far larger.」

「Eh?! Rank D?!」

「Seriously...?」

They seem to have come to that conclusion at their own convenience. Certainly an Adventurer's Rank is associated with monsters' Threat Levels, but...

The same Rank as the Demonic Beast is usually only given if a well-prepared party can face off without suffering any fatalities. At the same time, the power of an Adventurer fighting alone would be lower than a Demonic Beast of the same Rank.

In other words, if Adventurers of Rank E create a party of ~4-6 people, their combat potential will allow them to hunt a single Demonic Beast of Threat Level E. At the same time, every member of the party would be able to fight equally with Demonic Beasts of Rank F.

『Hmm~, one Goblin is G, 10 is F, and 100 is E, so...』

To Fran who defeated 100 Goblins singlehandedly, Rank D would be a bit low, wouldn't it? Moreover, the Goblins had the environmental advantage of the forest, and even had a large number of Highbreeds mixed within their numbers. That should also raise the evaluation, even if only a little.

A Dwarven man who seems like the leader of the dispatch explains that to the group. Mh, mhh! It's nice hearing Fran be praised! Praise her more!

However, it seems that Fran doesn't care much for their evaluation. Interrupting the Dwarf, she places the body of a Hobgoblin in front of the group with a *thud*[1].

「This.」

「This is... A Hobgoblin?」

「There.」

「Moreover, four of them?」

「They're already at stage where Hobgoblins are leaving the den...?!」

This situation seems to quite last-minute. If left alone, chances are a Goblin invasion will occur in less than 10 days.

「Oops, sorry. I've forgotten self-introductions. The name's Hellbent[2]. I'm a D Rank Adventurer from Aressa. What's your name, lass?」

「Fran.」

「Are you on a journey? Thanks for stopping the Goblins here.」

「? Adventurer from Aressa too.」

「Muh? No, I've been in Aressa for over 10 years, but I have no memory of seeing you, lass.....」

It would be hard to miss the expressionless Fran who's small, beautiful, and strong besides. The 3 men who seem to be party members of Hellbent nod as well. Another party, this one consisting of Beastmen, show a similar reaction.

「Registered yesterday.」

「Ha?」

「No way! What Rank are you, then?」

「G.」

「Haaa? You're this strong yet you're Rank G? What kind of joke is that?!」

「No, strength and Rank don't always match up. For example, Elves can train for many years in the woods. If they come out to the rest of the world and register as an Adventurer, they'd be Rank G even though their power would match Rank D.」

「I-I see.」

「That's right, isn't it~」

「Ahh, we were in the wrong for doubting you, Fran!」

Aah, it ended up like this after all. For long-lived races, young aged appearances mean nothing. The setting of having several years of experience would be far easier to understand than the truth.

『These guys are making a big misunderstanding all on their own, is it alright not to correct them? Surely they're thinking that Fran looks young but is actually a middle-aged woman.』

(Doesn't matter.)

She seems so uninterested in their evaluation that it's refreshing. Regrettable. I wanted to see these guys' surprised faces when the truth was revealed. Well, it would be troublesome to explain, so it's fine.

「A-Anyways, we have to find the Queen's Den before the situation gets out of hand. We should return to the Guild at once!」

「Yeah. It's selfish, but I'd like the young lass to come with us as well.」

「Understood.」

「That takes a load off our shoulders. Alright, let's head back! It's a race against time!」

「Ou!」

Name : Fran Age : 12

Race : Black Cat Beastman

Job : Magic Swordsman

State : Contracted

Status:

Level : 6 → 12

HP : 80 → 189 MP : 71 → 115

STR : 45 → 92 END : 34 → 74 AGI : 46 → 82

INT : 30 → 50 MGC : 36 → 62 DEX : 47 → 63

Titles[4]:

King of Dismantling, Master of Recovery, Skill Collector, Master of Fire,
King of Cooking

〈New〉 Match for a Thousand, Goblin Slayer, One who Slaughters[5]

Fran's Status looks like this. The increase in Status is extremely good.
Furthermore, she gained three more Titles!

Match for a Thousand:

A Title awarded to individuals who stood their ground against 100 or more
opponents on equal footing alone, and lived to tell the tale.

Effects:

HP +20, STR +20, END + 20

The Skill: Indomitable Resolve will be acquired.

Goblin Slayer:

A Title awarded to individuals who fell 100 or more Goblins on the same battlefield.

Effect:

The Skill: Goblin Slayer will be acquired.

One who Slaughters:

A Title awarded to individuals who harvested the lives of 100 individuals on the same battlefield.

Effects:

AGI +10

The Skill: Mental Stability will be acquired.

For the Skills:

Indomitable Resolve:

In adverse circumstances:

Fear is invalidated

Recovery Speed ↑ High

Goblin Slayer:

Damage against Goblins ↑

Mental Stability:

Mental hurdle against bloodshed ↓

Stabilizing effect on the user's mind

They're good Titles. I want them too, but because I'm a sword, I don't seem to be able to obtain any Titles. Anyways, Match for a Thousand is amazing. The conditions for acquiring it are difficult, but isn't it a slight cheat? Its Effects, that is.

I noticed something important, too. The Skills that Fran obtained independently aren't included with my Set Skills.

Because of this, if Fran obtains useful Skills on her own, I can change my Set Skills in more useful ways.

While we head towards town with the Adventurers, I tell Fran about her Status.

(Match for a Thousand? Rare.)

『Is that so?』

(Hero's Titles!)

Fran shows slight excitement. I'm glad.

「Hey, have you not joined a Party yet, lass?」

「Party?」

「Ou. If you haven't, why not join ours?」

Hellbent is soliciting us into his party, huh. Moreover, his eyes show that he's completely serious. Hearing what he said, the other two parties also raised their voices.

「– Wait just a minute, you're not the only one aiming for that!」

「Don't try to steal the lead. Any Party would want such an excellent Adventurer among them.」

This is somewhat pleasant, hearing that Fran was accepted by the Adventurers

『Well? What shall you do?』

(My Party: Teacher)

『It's possible to hide my identity even if you join other parties, you know?』

(It's alright. Teacher: here.)

『Is that so...』

Well, we can't afford for my abilities to be seen, so it would be difficult to join a party.

For now, at least.

[1] Rather than an actual sound, an expression was used here. It's ドサッと — literally “with a thud”

[2] This guy's name is really weird. It's this: エレベント. “エレ” = Helle/Here, “ベント” = Bent/Vent/Wendt. As per the suggestion of Mach and mllhild, his name shall be Hellbent. Putting it into a text → voice machine also makes it sounds like “Hellbent”, so there it is.

[4] Regarding the titles, I decided to change the way the “King” Titles were worded for the sake of partial-uniformity with the “Master of” Titles.

[5] 殺戮者. If they sounded alright/were grammatically correct, I would have used Slaughterer or Massacrer... But “One who Slaughters” works just as well, I think.

[6] (Note from the future) Balancing Act (軽業) is extremely similar to Acrobatics (曲芸) when translated. Search up the Japanese characters and you'll find that the former is usually involving public acrobatics/balancing acts, and the latter refers to a certain Moogles class from Final Fantasy, specifically one of its skills: Acrobatics.

Chapter 30: Ranking Up

Author's Note:

We're at 30 chapters now. This is all thanks to the support of everyone; it's my main motivation!

In addition, I changed the Status view in Chapter 29 because it was difficult to see the improvements. I also revised her HP, because a value of 20 is Low, so it now looks like the following:

Status Level: 6 → 12

HP: 80 → 189 MP: 71 → 115

STR: 45 → 92 END: 34 → 74 AGI: 46 → 82

INT: 30 → 50 MGC: 36 → 62 DEX: 47 → 63

After the incident with the Goblins, we rushed back to Aressa and finally arrived. I had wanted to repair Fran's protective gear, but it seems like it'll have to wait until after we finish business at the Guild.

I removed dirt and stains from the gear with Purification Magic as an act of etiquette, but its severely damaged appearance hasn't changed. None of the Adventurers nearby seem to mind it, however.

「Hellbent, how was it?」

「Ou. We need to report to the Guild Master.」

「I'll notify him, please wait a moment.」

Seeing the serious face of Hellbent, the fact that the situation is dire was clear. Nell rushes towards the back in a hurry.

Several minutes later, Nell comes back and calls for Fran and the dispatch.

「The Guild Master sent for you. This way.」

When we entered the Guild Master's office, both he and Donna were present.

「Let's hear the report.」

「Aah. We headed to the scene with Kral, which is where we met Fran.」

「At that point the battle was already over.」

「I see. Then I'd like request that Fran.....」

The Guild Master sighs lightly — likely because he understands Fran's taciturn nature. 『How should I have her talk?』 is the face he's making. Well, should I lend my support here? It seems to be quite the urgent situation, after all.

「Can you report what happened?」

『Fran, take out the Horns.』

「Nn. This.」

Fran takes a Hobgoblin Horn out of Dimensional Storage, and brings it out of dummy bag.

「This is..... A Hobgoblin Horn?」

When the Guild Master understands what it is through Appraisal, he makes a stern expression.

「Mixed among the Goblins there were Hobgoblins?! How many Goblins were there? And how many Hobgoblins as well?」

Donna picks up the horn and becomes astonished as well.

「A lot.」

「Er... In a bit more detail, please.」

『There were around 130 of them.』

「Around 130.」

『Within them were 4 Hobgoblins, and around 20 Highbreeds.』

「Hobgoblins: 4, Highbreeds: around 20.」

「Impossible!」

Donna stands up unintentionally.

「This is definitely a sign that a Goblin stampede is coming!」

「Calm down Donna.」

「E-Excuse me.」

「Now then, Fran, a question. What happened to the Goblins? Did you withdraw?」

「Defeated them.」

「So you didn't withdraw, then.」

「Nn. Fought to the end.」

「This is bad.」

What's bad?

The Guild Master explains that the Goblins Fran defeated were most likely the ones kicked out of the den when there were too many mouths to feed.

As breeding was continually ordered by the King, the low-class Goblins would no longer be able to match up to their children, so they were sent to battle Fran with the resolution to die.

Furthermore, the fact that there were Hobgoblins and Highbreeds mixed among them could only mean that the den already consists of purely Hobgoblins.

「The scale of the Goblin stampede will be large.」

「We should put an emergency summon out to the Adventurers immediately.」

「We'll prepare today and tomorrow, and attempt to exterminate the den the day after. Will it be that sort of plan?」

「Yeah. The first step would be getting Adventurers with Thief-like Jobs locate the den. That should be made into a special request.」

「I'll secure some Potions.」

It's become quite busy. Receptionists (excluding Nell who was already present) were called in and given various instructions.

「Now then, Hellbent. I'd like to assign more work to you, is that alright?」

「Is it guidance to the battleground?」

「It is. I'd like you to return there with Thief Adventurers.」

「Got it. This situation is serious for all of Aressa, so I'll do everything I can.」

At the words of Hellbent, the other Adventurers nod vigorously a well. They seem like they want to stick with Fran as well, but I won't permit it.

We have to repair her protective gear, and after that she needs time to rest. I won't concede on that.

「Fran..... Please take a rest for today. Asking you to work with your protective gear would be unreasonable.」

「..... Nn.」

Fran nods regretfully. Guild Master, good job!

Hellbert gives his affirmation, too.

「Then.」

「Aah, wait a minute. Before you leave, go by the Receptionists and apply to rank up to F.」

「? Haven't completed 5 requests.」

「There's no reason for an Adventurer who could take out an army of Goblins alone to do that. There's also the fact that G Ranks won't be able to join this subjugation, so the timing'll be convenient.」

「Gahahaha! Even just one more strong Adventurer'd be better at this point!」

「It's a pretty last-minute request, so we don't know how many Adventurers will be participating. Considering that, anyone with combat potential is valuable.」

「The request to participate in the subjugation should be posted tomorrow, so be sure to accept it!」

「Nn. Make sure.」

「We're saved.」

「Then...」

Following the words of the Guild Master, we do the Rank Up procedure at the reception desk. It was simple, so there weren't any particular problems.

The time taken would be less than a minute, too. After completing it, the letter F appeared on our Guild Card.

「Went up!」

She seems happy. The evaluations of others doesn't matter, but when the Rank actually raises visibly she takes interest, it seems. It's just like Levels. Well, it's a measure of her strength, after all.

『Alright, our participation is assured. Now, we should go repair your gear. Will the money we have on-hand suffice, I wonder?』

「Sell weapons.」

『To the Guild?』

When we inquired about it, we received the reply that the Guild didn't purchase anything other than Materials and things like Herbs.

『Well, let's take them to Gallus then.』

The problem is whether a skilled Blacksmith like Gallus would be willing to take in such bad weapons or not...

『No, wait. There's still one other person, a Merchant we're acquainted with!』

「 ? 」

『Oi, oi... Well, his presence was thin, so I suppose it can't be helped. It's Randell.』

「Aah.」

Stop with the 「There was a person like that, wasn't there...」 reaction... Well, I don't really know him that well either.

『He had said that he's located along the Western side of main street, I think.』

「Search.」



I was worried about whether we'd be able to find Randell's shop in a big town like Aressa, but it was found quite quickly; it was right near the entrance to the street. Randell can be seen standing out front.

「Oh, if it isn't Fran! By any chance, were you looking for my shop?」

「Nn. Came to sell.」

「Wonderful! Come, come, right this way.」

And so Randell invites us into his shop.

『It's very disorderly, isn't it...』

In the small shop, the shelves are crammed with products. Honey and poison are lined side by side, weapons are neighbors to miscellaneous goods... But it's not consistently like that.

「Dirty.」

『Oou... Even though I was going out of my way to be silent about, you went right out and said it!』

When I look over to Randell, I see a wry smile plastered across his face.

「Haha... You said it well. Even though I just organize them by what seems to sell...」

Even so, aren't there a bit too many products? Well, it's not my place to say so, so I keep that to myself. For the average person, this place would be hard to approach, however.

「This: buy.」

「Uwa... You had an Item Bag, huh!」

「More or less.」

Equipment is taken out one after another, some of which draw Randell's attention.

「Still, this is.....! What an amazing amount!」

「Still more. About the same.」

「Ehh? Wait a minute. I'm sorry about this, but could you display them on the floor?」

「Understood.」

「It must be pretty high-quality to store so much... Mine's pretty small and hard to use, so I'm a bit envious.」

Just like a pro, he makes small talk while assessing the arms. His eyes are sharp; it's the face of a merchant.

「Hmm, most of them aren't in good condition.」

「From Goblins.」

「Aah, so that's where you got them. Some are made from Steel, so they'd be worth a little more..... It'd be about 13,000 Gorudo total, I suppose?」

(Alright?)

『They're worth about 200 Gorudo on average, huh..... Looking at their state, it seems like it'd be a good price?』

「Understood. That's fine.」

Randell takes out some coins from what must be is Item Bag.

「Here you go then.」

「Nn.」

All of the money was tucked away in Dimensional Storage. Because they're easy to take out, it makes a good substitute for a wallet.

「Thank you very much. And please, come again.」

There're a lot of interesting products, so we'll probably come again. At that time, let's buy something.

With money in hand, we head to old man Gallus' shop. Merchants are assembled around the square as always, so we enter from the back door we used the other day.

「Hello—.」

「Ooh, it's you! What happened? The Sheath isn't done yet.」

「Nn, different.」

『I'd like you to repair the Equipment you sold earlier.....』

Showing him the protective gear 「W-What the hell-?!」 was his reaction.

「Wait a minute, it's only been a day..... What in the world happened?」

「Fought Goblins.」

「Goblins?」

『To be exact: a large army of Goblins numbering over 100.』

「Hobgoblins, too.」

「Haa? Isn't that really serious?! A stampede's going to occur!」

『It's already been reported to the Adventurer's Guild.』

「Ah, is that so. Well, that's fine then.」

「Teacher: benevolent.」

「Teacher?」

『That would be my name.』

That reminds me, I didn't tell Gallus my name, did I? But I have a bad premonition...

「Haa? Why such a strange –」

『Isn't it such a good name? Fran thought of it!』

Notice, Gallus!

「O-Ooh. It's... A good name. Really.」

『Right? Isn't that right?』

「It's the best name! It's an excellent name for a sword!」

Phe—w... That was close. Gallus continues praising my name while looking over at Fran frequently. ... It's unnatural.

「T-That reminds me, you came to get your gear fixed, right?」

『That's right! Can it be fixed? We have to go assist in the Goblin subjugation the day after tomorrow.』

「No problem. Repairs can be finished immediately.」

「Cost?」

「Right..... 10,000 Gorudo.」

『That's quite cheap.』

「Well, that's the price of the Magic Crystal.」

『Magic Crystal?』

「Yeah, unlike Magic Stones, Magic Crystals are mined from the ground. After storing enough magic power they can be used as catalysts.」

『This is the first time I've heard of it.』

「It's not needed for regular repairs, but it's necessary to use one for Smithing Magic.」

『Then you'll be repairing the gear through Magic?』

「Ou. Want to watch?」

『Is that alright?』

In the end I decide to take up old man Gallus' offer, and watch him repair Fran's gear.

First he places the gear on top of a workbench with a Magic formation drawn on it, then he puts a yellow Magic Crystal onto a what seems to be a pedestal.

After that, he proceeds to cast a spell with a long chant.

「— Repair!」

With the sound of Gallus' voice, the magic formation shines bright. Once the light is completely settled, protective gear that seems as though it's brand new is all that's left on the workbench.

「Amazing.」

『Aah. They're as good as new.』

「It's pretty convenient for stuff like this, but its effect falls when it's used on gear too many times. I got off with a small Magic Crystal this time, but next time I'll have to use one a bit bigger. The fee'll be 30,000 when that happens.」

If that's the case, it might be cheaper to buy a new set later... I'll make sure to consider that when the time comes.

「Thank you.」

「No problem. I've got to do well so that you can do your best fighting against Hobgoblins!」

「Leave it to me.」

『We'll defeat both the King and the Queen!』

「Nn. Our prey.」

「Hahahaha! How reliable!」

Chapter 31: Organization and Verification

It's now the night of the day we exterminated the army of Goblins.

We're at an inn.

『Now then, shall I review my new Skills?』

Fran already left to take a bath, so I figure I should confirm my Skills to kill some time.

By the way, this inn isn't the same one we stayed at yesterday. We moved to a slightly better inn recommended by the Guild. It has the expensive fee of 600 Gorudo per night, but there's a large Bathhouse and the food they offer is of higher quality and quantity.

I mentioned it before, but the new Skills are like this:

Chant Shortening, Balancing Act, Retainer's Contract, Kicking Techniques, Kicking Arts, Ghost Magic, Poison Absorption, Poison Magic, Axe Techniques, Imperturbability

Because I unfortunately can't use Kicking Techniques, Kicking Arts, and Axe Techniques, I'll exclude them. Also, because Imperturbability seems to have the effect of calming its user down in battle, I can't try it here.

And so, first is Balancing Act. It grants a bonus to both jumping and balancing, it seems. I tested it out by flying about in the room, but it doesn't have much of an effect on me. Regrettable. I think it'd be a suitable Skill for Fran.

Now for a show-stopper. It's time for the inspection of new Magic.

First: Poison Magic. For the spells I can use, they're Poison · Arrow and Create · Poison. Well, because it's only Lv1 they only have the effects of a weak poison, so they don't seem like they'll have much of an effect against strong opponents. Even if it was used on ordinary people its effect would only be to the extent of loosening their bowels[1].

I test out Poison Absorption by sucking in some poison I created with magic, but I don't understand it very well. It seems that it'd restore HP and MP, but because I have neither there's no effect. Poison Absorption would be useful in environments with poisonous fogs, however. I could play an active part as a sword with air purification capabilities.

Next is Chant Shortening. Its effects are hardly visible at Lv1 — it probably shortens the chant by ~1 second, I think? Even in a drawn out battle its impact would be low. Furthermore, I have the feeling that its effect won't be that amazing even if I raise its Skill Level.

Out of the remaining Skills, my favorite is Ghost Magic, so I'll save it for last.

The other remaining Skill is Retainer's Contract. It seems to make a specialized contract with Contract Magic in order to summon individuals with Summon Kin, but... Because the level of Summon Kin is low I can't summon anything strong even if they're contracted. I could summon weak ones, but if they're weak then there's no point in using it in the first place.

『Now for Ghost Magic.』

Incidentally, despite being called Ghost Magic spells at Lv1 are Create · Lesser Zombie and Locate · Undead, these two.

For the time being, I take out a Goblin's corpse. Making a barrier using Purification Magic, blood doesn't dirty the floor. My forethought is flawless.

『— Create · Lesser Zombie!』

「Aaaooouaaa...」

『Uwaa.....』

Even though I'm the one who made it, it's still unpleasant! Does its decomposition advance before it becomes a Zombie or something? It's good that I don't have a nose... I understand the feelings of Kri**in[2] well.

『Wait there.』

「Auu...」

『Did you hear my command?』

I have to pay careful attention here. All it's doing is swaying in place, but still.

Next, I use Locate · Undead. Similar to Presence Perception, I was able to feel the presence of the Zombie.

Well, now I've tried out both spells, but..... What do I do with this guy, exactly?

Ah, speaking of which, what's the status of Summon Kin? Uwa... Lesser Goblin Zombie is listed. Can't I delete this?

『..... I'm sorry.』

「Aa-」

I gave a brief apology and cut down the Zombie. I don't know if Zombies from Dungeons are the same, but this Zombie doesn't have a Magic Stone.

To the Zombie who's no longer moving, I use Purification Magic's Turn · Undead, causing it to disappear. The Zombie also disappeared from the list of contracted beings in Summon Kin.

『Un, rest in peace.』

From now on, let's not use Ghost Magic recklessly. I'll make sure your death wasn't in vain, Goblin Zombie! Ah, wait, it was already dead.

『..... Let's pull ourselves together and move on.』

Next I'll check the Magic Items we looted from the Goblins.

『There're 7. I wonder what effects they'll have...』

Two of the items are weapons. Specifically, they're a Knife and a Hammer, both made of steel. Neither have things like ATK ↑ Low, but the Knife looks like it'd be useful for skinning. As for the Hammer, I'll let it sit in Dimensional Storage for a while.

One of the Magic Items is an accessory. It has the subtle effect of lowering INT while raising STR.

『STR+5, INT-8..... This is the sort of item a musclebrain would use, isn't it?』

Fran won't be needing it. She uses Magic, so it would really only be considered if the increase and decrease were equal.

The next three are defensive gear. There's Iron Armor with rust prevention, Leather Armor with size adjustment, and a Helmet made out of materials from a Magic Tree with Impact Resistance.

Because their DEF attributes are so low, aren't they simply unneeded? The gear we received from old man Gallus offers much higher performance.

The last one is an Item Bag... But it can't be used.

『Wasn't there something like a User Registration for these?』

I suppose it'd be similar to Equipment Registration. The Goblins had used it as an accessory case for storing stones and nuts to use Throwing with.

『Perhaps I can override the registration..... Maybe Contract Magic'll work?』

Might as well try it out.

『-Contract!』

It was no good. It was the same feeling as when I tried to override Fran's Slave Contract. Overwriting is possible, but Lv7 is just too low to do so.

『Hmm... To find out what's in the bag, let's raise the Skill~』

Such a thing will be put on hold for a while.

『The remaining money is.....』

Today's earnings come to 109 Goblin Horns, and 20 Highbreed Horns. By the way, one Highbreed Horn is 100 Gorudo.

The completion of the Herb Harvesting request also granted 100 Gorudo.

Because I handed 10,000 Gorudo to Fran, I have exactly 36,884 Gorudo stored up.

『Should I buy Mana Potions for the day after tomorrow? It doesn't seem like it'd be a waste to do so.』

Rather, will that be enough?

『There're still a lot of enigmatic materials stored away from Harvesting, too...』

I should sort this stuff out.

10 Poisonous Grasses, 10 Light Mushrooms, 10 Paralysis-Cure Grass, 10 Highly Poisonous Grasses, and 10 Heal Grasses. Because each Harvesting Request requires 5 of each, we can complete 10 requests. However, because we ranked up to Rank F faster than expected, we won't be able to improve our Rank with G Rank requests anymore.

The only Harvesting request of Rank F is for 5 Highly Poisonous Grasses, so if we hand in the ones we have we'll still need to complete the request

another 18 times.

Because Dungeons are restricted by Rank, I want to raise our Rank just a bit more.

Anyways, there're still 30 mysteriously hazardous substances. Most of them seem harmless enough, but there're 2 Mushrooms that're quite dangerous. They set off a large reaction to Danger Perception, and even their appearance spells danger. They're blue umbrella-like mushrooms with white and red spots — no matter how you look at them, they're Toadstools.

『Only these mushrooms will be kept in reserve. We should take them[3] over to Randell's shop later.』

I'd like to collect information on Hobgoblins in advance, so tomorrow will be quite busy.

[1] 腹を下す. I thought that it might be “Upset stomach”, but it really is just as I translated it.

In my opinion, poisons like this one are still pretty convenient in certain situations.

[2] Reference to Krillin from DBZ. クリオン = クリリン

[3] Not sure if this is referring to the two Mushrooms, or the other ones. あとは、ランデルの店にでも持って行ってみるか

My guess is that it's the Toadstools that'll be sold to Randell, with the other things going to the Guild/wherever.

Chapter 32: Fran's Side

「Fu..... Ha.....」

Baths are the best. When I told teacher that I loved them, he was somewhat surprised. 『You're a cat, though?』 he said.

Do cats dislike baths? I'm from the Black Cat tribe, but I've never seen a cat before. Nobles in the capital seem to keep them. Mother had said that they live better lives than us.

I want to see one with Teacher sometime.

Teacher is a very wonderful sword. He's the first sword I've talked to, but if he's judged by his voice, he'd be similar to a Human I suppose.

He's very strong. He made me strong, too. I won't be outdone by a Demonic Beast. But as I am now is no good. I can't constantly be managed by Teacher. I'll become a burden to him.

Even for the Goblins we fought today, if Teacher fought alone not only would the fight have been easier, it would have ended quicker as well.

Mastering the powers I got from Teacher should be my first priority. After that, I'll become even stronger. Training like that, I think I'll surely be able to break through the Wall.

And so, today I spoke a bit selfishly and fought against the Goblins. Teacher scolded me at first, but then he forgave and even praised me.

I was very glad. I'll be fighting the day after tomorrow, too. It's another chance to become stronger.

「Oh, Fran?」

「Nn?」

「We met at noon. Because the Guild is allied with this Inn, all members of the Guild staff can use the bathhouse.」

Aah, this person is one of the receptionists.

「Are you staying here?」

「Nn.」

「A—ah, still cute as ever, huh~」

「 ? 」

「Kya— your head tilt rally is the best!」

When she was working, she was giving off a much quieter feeling. Was she hiding her true nature?[1]

「Hey, is calling you Fran-chan[2] no good?」

「Don't mind.」

「Thank you very much! Fran-chan!」

All of a sudden she clung to me. I don't mind, but it was a bit surprising. Her chest made a slight *funii* and it's comfortable, so I'll permit it.

「The big subjugation war will be happening tomorrow, huh.」

「Nn.」

「Did you hear the announcement?」

「 ? 」

「It seems that you haven't. Apparently the Goblins seem to be overflowing from a dungeon of some sort.」

「Dungeon nearby?」

Dungeons are naturally famous once they're discovered, but I've never heard of one being near Aressa.

「It seems to have appeared only recently... Up until now there was only a cave there.」

「Dungeons can be built that quickly?」

「Mhm. That's right.」

「 ? 」

「Ahh, you don't know? As a trial of sorts against mankind, the God of Chaos makes them appear in various places every so often.」

「Didn't know. God of Chaos and Evil God: different?」

「My, you don't know that either, huh. Your elder sister here'll explain it all to you.」

And so, the receptionist explained the legends.

「To put it simply, this world has 88 Gods. Among them, there were 10 that were especially strong.」

[3]First, the God of the Sun, the God of the Moon, the God of the Sea, the God of the Land, the God of Flames, the God of Storms, the God of Forests, and the God of Beasts created the world and all its inhabitants.

The God of Hades created the Ring of Samsara[4], and the laws of the world were made.

The 78 Children Gods made various materials, and brought them to the world the Parent Gods had made, thus making the world larger.

「Children Gods?」

「That's right. The God of Blacksmithing, God of Swords, God of Darkness and God of Cooking are good examples of those.」

Finally, the God of Chaos did as its name suggested, and spread chaos into the world. But it was a necessary evil to prevent the stagnation of the world... Or so the receptionist says. Its job seems like quite the challenge.

I understood it well. Surpassing adversity leads to growth. Fighting against the Goblins, I was able to grow.

「And the Evil God?」

「Originally, the Evil God was the God of War. But after indulging itself too much in its power and attempting to rule the world, the other Gods struck it down. It's said that evil beings are born due to its excessive grudge — through a curse that it scattered across the lands.」

「I see.」

So, in the end, the God of Chaos is good. The Evil God is bad. He's like the Slave Traders that kidnapped me.

「Anyways, as I said: Dungeons are one of the trials that the God of Chaos created. Dungeon Masters are followers of the God of Chaos, and actively create chaos because of it.」

Dungeon Master... Would they have any Magic Stones for Teacher to eat? They're sure to have a lot of great Skills.

「It's still being researched, but it seems that the first thing done in creating a dungeon is the creation of its core. The creature that is closest to the Core when it's created becomes the Dungeon Master.」

「Weak and strong ones, then.」

「Yep. The difficulty of the Dungeon depends on the strength of the Dungeon Master, so when an animal ends up being the Dungeon Master its

difficulty tends to be lower.」

「Strange Dungeon Masters too?」

「Dragons, Orcs, Wolves, Cockatrices... So long as they emit a life force, they can be a Dungeon Master.」

「People?」

「Of course. Human Dungeon Masters have popped up several times in the past.」

Man-made Dungeons... Interesting.

「Well... Even if it's called a trial from God, it isn't any less troublesome.」

Because people will end up dying, that can't be helped. The people looking for a fight like me are the minority.

「In the case of rare Demonic Beasts inhabiting a Dungeon, however, it can be used to make a living as an Adventurer.」

Dungeons aren't purely bad things. There are people who can become rich because of them.

「There're Treasure Chests, strong weapons, and magical items too.」

There's a legend of a Hero who defeated an Evil Dragon with a weapon found in a dungeon; he later went on to found a country. But because I have Teacher, things like that aren't necessary.

「But in the end, some items from Dungeons are too strong～ They can be used in wars to cause just as much harm as good, don't you think～?」

In the end, the conversation shifted to the complaints of the receptionist.

I don't hate the God of Chaos for letting me get stronger in Dungeons.

「Day after tomorrow: looking forward to it.」

[1] Fran made a pun here. Essentially, she used “Neko” as the start of what would have essentially translated to “Wolf in sheep’s clothing/hiding one’s true self” — or in this case, the closest would be “hiding one’s true cat”. She then followed up with “She’s a human, though.” It doesn’t translate over very well (as in at all), so I edited the line. The pun disappeared, but that can’t be helped.

[2] The receptionist (and many other people, such as the Adventurer parties up until this point) have used -san up until this point. -chan is more familiar, if you didn’t know.

[3] Regarding the Gods’ names:

“God of the Silver Moon” (銀月の神) was kept as just “Moon”, but I’ll change it if it turns out there’s more than just a single moon (and other Gods of other moons, respectively).

“God of Storms” = “God of wind and rain” (風雨の神)

“God of Beasts” = “God of animals and insects” (獣蟲の神が)

“God of Hades” = Literally “God of Hades” or “God of the realm of the dead” (冥界の神が).

[4] Samsara = Endless cycle of death and rebirth. Buddhism, I think.

Chapter 33: Arrangements before the Departure

Author's Note:

We've reached 59th place of the daily rankings before I knew it!

Getting within the top 300 was my original goal.....

So this is thanks to everyone's support!

Let's aim for the top 50s next!

Or rather, I'll do my best to keep the story from suddenly becoming dull!

It's the day of the Hobgoblin subjugation.

We ended up going over to old man Gallus' smithy in order to receive the sheath we ordered.

「Hey, I've been waiting. Come and take a look!」

『Ooh, this is my sheath, huh!』

Handed over from old man Gallus was a stylish black leather scabbard. It's a bit plain, but because the tailoring is good it doesn't look too shabby.

「Nn, Teacher.」

『Mhm. Then, right away.....』

I'm excitedly sheathed into the scabbard as Fran raises the scabbard up to just below my eye-level.

supo

『O—h……』

It's very calming. It's roughly the same feeling I got when I fit into the pedestal. Rather, it might have been that the pedestal was designed to be sheath-like to give me peace of mind.

『A—hh……』

I let out a voice as if I'm in paradise — the kind that one would let out when they take a dip in a hot bath. This really is good... I didn't know that swords would have such a strong desire to be sheathed, even though I am one.

Moreover, thanks to the skill of old man Gallus it's a perfect fit. It's like I'm tucked into my own personal futon, giving me peace of mind. If it's like this, then I want to be in a sheath all the time... It's just that relaxing.

『Old man Gallus. You're the best. Seriously.』

「Gahaha! It's good that you like it!」

「Teacher, happy.」

『Yeah, this is a great sheath~』

「It's not just a regular sheath, you know?」

Gallus had an impish smile on his face as he took the sheath in his hand.

「Rather than just making some dull old scabbard, I installed a couple of tricks, you see.」

『What?! Is that true, Lon**rk[1]?!』

「Lon**rk? Who's that?」

『Ah, excuse me. I was a bit too excited.』

Still, there're tricks in the sheath? Looking at it, I don't see anything...

「See these metal fittings here?」

「Mhm.」

「Well, when you remove them like this –」

paka

「Opens lengthwise.」

「Ou. Even without using the young miss' hands, you'll easily be able to get out of the sheath by using Telekinesis.」

『Hmm? That's pretty good. It'd also make it easy to get back into the sheath.』

Controlling the metal fittings using Telekinesis, moving in and out of the sheath can be accomplished in no time.

「Convenient.」

「Right? It was a bit tough to find a good way to implement it while keeping its strength, you know?」

Even though he's a Blacksmith, his leatherworking is first class. As expected from someone with Blacksmithing at the highest level possible.

『Then, may I gratefully accept?』

「Ou. Go for it.」

「Nn.」

Now to go to the meeting place. It seems that everyone who'll be participating in the subjugation will be gathered in front of the gate. Because the Goblins haven't started pouring out of the Dungeon just yet, it seems like it'll be possible to exterminate them without causing any damage to the surroundings.

『I wonder how much damage we'll be able to do with this many Adventurers...』

There're about 50 people gathered.

「Not very strong.」

『Donna is the strongest, it seems.』

Donna is Rank C, and is famous as an instructor who trains beginners. There're other Adventurers of Rank C gathered, but there didn't seem to be any objections with Donna being the leader.

「Oi, what's a child doing here?!」

For Fran, however, there seems to be an objection. Well, to a group of Adventurers with their tension rising by the second, having a young girl mix in would undoubtedly thin out the energy in the air, so of course there would be fellows who become irritated.

「What're you even doing, carrying a sword around like that?」

The source of the voice in this case is — Aren't you a child as well?! Well, that's what I'm led to believe judging by the slender youth's appearance. He's wearing tidy, fully intact armor, so there's a clear air of inexperience.

Because G Rank Adventurers shouldn't be able to participate, he should be F Rank or above..... But he has the appearance of someone who wouldn't even be able to beat a Goblin. His Status is a little higher than a Goblin's, but it's only a slight difference.

Maybe, rather than ranking up through combat, he did things like delivery quests and such, and was allowed to Rank up after doing nothing but

baggage-carrying requests. With Sword Arts Lv1, he's by far the weakest Adventurer I've seen so far. To call upon even people like this... There really must not be enough people.

「Exterminating Goblins.」

「Hey, this is an important fight to defend Aressa. Children like you will only get in the way! Only Adventurers with ranks above F can participate anyways, so kids should just go home!」

He makes an unpleasant face as he says so. In response: Fran, who works at her own pace, casually ignores the young man and simply stands absentmindedly.

「Hey, did you hear me?」

「 ? 」

「Tsk. Come on, this isn't a playground for children. Go play Adventurer over there.」

Most likely, this young man is feeling anxious about the upcoming fight against the Hobgoblins. Well, there statuses will be far superior to his, no doubt. And so, after getting all worked up, his mind is in a strange place. Because of this, he's started to quarrel with someone who should be his ally.

The reactions of the Adventurers around us vary. To the scene of young people making noise, some are amused, and some are indifferent and ignore the scene. From the side, the scene of children making noise must be quite out of place.

「Nn.」

「Damn it, stop moving out of the way!」

Fran casually avoids the arms of the young man who lets out an irritated shout. Because he only seems to be getting angrier, shouldn't someone stop him? So I thought, but the surrounding Adventurers don't look like they'll step in.

No, there were some who were going to intervene with a shout, but they were stopped by the other Adventurers.

「Oi, leave it alone!」

「Why should I—」

「That one is—」

「The rumor is—」

「Seriously—」

It seems that the tale of the Goblin subjugation from earlier spread throughout the Adventurers in the Guild. However, a guy who turns a deaf ear to the information circulating in the surroundings comes out. It's here, an Adventurer that will scold the young lad is here!

「Oi, brats! You've been noisy for a while now, get it?! Because you're in the way, get out of here! You can carry our luggage later!」

「I-I'm not a baggage carrier! I'm a fully fledged F Rank Adventurer!」

「As if! At best, you're an F Rank Adventurer who's fresh out of Rank G!」

「Regardless, I'm Rank F; therefor, I have the qualifications to participate!」

「Also Rank F.」

「 ? 」

The youth, who looked down on Fran, shows a surprised look. It seems that the fact she's an official Adventurer caught him off guard.

「Gyahahahahaha! You? An F Rank? If a small fry like you is F Rank, then I'm an A Rank!」

It seems that this guy knows his limits enough not to say S Rank.

「Oi, oi. Are those guys seriously F Rank? Adventurers Ranks sure are easy to advance, huh...」

「Well, they're just scavengers in the end.」

「I registered just to link my experience in my last job, but it seems like I'll have an easier time advancing than I thought!」

Are these guys former mercenaries? According to what I've heard, there was a war in a neighboring country that ended earlier than expected. Because of that, mercenaries sprung up in vast quantities.

Although, looking at their Status, they don't amount to much. Even though it's like that, how can they brag so much?

「Heheheh. You, don't you have something good there?」

「Ohh? That's a pretty good sword...」

「Hand it over for a little.」

They have sharp eyes to hone in on me. Well, any points they gained were lost when they put their hand forward, though. The deduction mainly came from their lack of risk management abilities.

The young man who was involved with Fran only a moment ago felt a sudden chill and jumped back with goosebumps. It was a wise reaction. He must have sensed the bloodlust that Fran's giving off. In comparison, the mercenaries continue to reach their arms towards me with vulgar faces.

「Nn-」

「You guys, that's enough!」

Right before Fran makes her move, Donna steps in between her and the mercenaries... And scolds them.

「Seriously, you damn fools! Don't cause an unnecessary uproar right before we head out!」

「No, we weren't.....」

As expected, they're still able to sense the overpowering sense of intimidation given off by Donna. Their faces became stiff.

「No excuses; I saw all of it. Sill, we need to be at our best to exterminate the Goblins! That's why, I'll overlook it this time.」

In the meantime, Fran loses interest in the men and withdraws her bloodlust before walking away. I judged that it would be better not to stand out any more than this, so I instructed her to do so. The Adventurer from before, however, makes a complaint about Fran behind us.

「You — Instructor Donnadorondo just came and helped you, aren't you going to give your thanks?!」

「Gahahaha! That's only natural, seeing that the young lady isn't the one I helped!」

「Ha?」

「I couldn't have our fighting potential decreased right before we left, after all.」

「 ??? 」

Only Donna knows just how dangerous Fran is. Still, even Fran knows how bad it would be to reduce our forces right before the battle in the heat of the moment. Probably. Well, even if she went overboard, we'd be able to work it out with recovery magic one way or another.

『There might be a couple of aftereffects, though...』

「?」

『It's nothing. Let's do our best exterminating Goblins as usual.』

「Nn. Of course.」

[1] Definitely a reference to Lonberk from Dragon Quest. I know, because the censor moves in the next line, revealing the previously-missing character to finish off the name. (ロンベ○ク & ロン○ルク = ロンベルク)

Chapter 34: Goblin Subjugation – Outbreak of war

Author's Note:

Ranked 6 in the daily ranking?

When I looked a second time, I found that it was 5th.

Yesterday I said to have my aim at around the 50th, but it seems that it was already achieved.

Furthermore, Bookmarks have exceeded 1,000.

I don't even know what's going on...

I'm tearing up, seriously!

Thank you!

「It's a Goblin!」

The lookout raised a shout.

Using the materials we brought, we should have been in the middle of building a rudimentary base in front of the dungeon right now.

However, from the entrance of the dungeon a Goblin seemed to appear. We had taken out the Goblin patrols in the vicinity to prevent a sudden rush, but it seems we fell behind schedule because of it.

「Teacher, there.」

『Oi, construction of the base isn't even finished yet. Ah... It's turned into a complete melee, huh...』

The Adventures and Hobgoblins were fighting all jumbled together. In such a state, throwing large area fire spells into the mix was out of the question. The Adventurers on the other side seemed to be fighting with Donna as their center.

「I'm going.」

『Ok. But before storming the dungeon, we should thin out the ones outside. If the Adventures got annihilated I wouldn't be able to sleep easy.』

「Teacher doesn't sleep.」

『It's a metaphor, a metaphor!』

Fran unsheathed me and started running. First, she headed to the ones fallen into crisis: the novices. Without stopping her run, she mowed down her opponents happily. As for surprise attacks from the rear, they only numbered 1.

「Weak.」

『Even if it's a Hobgoblin, by itself, it isn't that strong.』

For now, the status of the specimens that we defeated were like this:

Race : Hobgoblin Swordsman : Evil Beast : Demonic Beast Lv.8

HP: 69 MP: 38 STR: 34 END: 33 AGI: 25 DEX: 23 INT: 19 WIS: 19

Skills:

Coercion : Lv1, Evasion : Lv1, Sword Techniques : Lv1, Sword Arts : Lv3, Leadership : Lv1, Instantaneous Movement : Lv2, Cooperation : Lv2, Vigor Manipulation

They're almost the same as a Goblin King, but with a slightly weaker status. As for skills, the experience-rich Kings have more versatile ones, but these Hobgoblins have the Cooperation skill. Fighting a large group would be troublesome indeed.

The rubbish mercenaries that picked a quarrel with Fran before the departure were already lying dead on the ground as proof of this. Being eager for achievements, they seem have gone too far ahead, granting themselves wounds that cover their entire bodies. Even at a glance, it's obvious that they can't be saved. Against foes with Cooperation, even if they're small fry, plunging into them head-first would obviously end like that.

Fran doesn't seem to have noticed, or, if they were truly unfortunate, she may have simply forgotten about them already.

「Ha—!」

『It's an all you can eat!』

While Fran swung me, I fired invisible attacks like Aura · Blade into the surroundings, cutting down Hobgoblins while trying not to attract attention to myself.

「T-Thank you!」

「Seriously, this cute little girl is ——」

「Eh? Who ——」

「No way ——!」

Oh, the lad from before is still here. Without overdoing it, he's been fighting steadily. Now, while being too surprised at Fran's figure, he fell for a moment and got himself into a pinch. He was saved by a senior, though.

The other C and D rank Adventurers are frantically holding the entrance of the cave, so Adventurers with insufficient strength are closer to the base.

Therefore, the Hobgoblins attention was naturally directed at the peerless being: Fran.

「Big catch.」

『They keep on coming from the sides, huh. It's good that we're alleviating the strain on the other Adventurers, but...』

As for myself, I have to restrain from absorbing magic stones here. If it becomes known that the magic stones from the Hobgoblins that Fran defeated are all missing, various troubles might occur.

Therefore, I'm verifying their Skills one by one with Appraisal, and only absorbing the magic stones from Hobgoblins that have Skills I absolutely want.

『Now it should be fine, right? Quickly, let's break into the dungeon.』

「Nn.」

If it's inside the dungeon, then I can absorb magic stones without minding the people around us; I can just hide the evidence by stowing away the enemies' corpses.

Fran moves towards the dungeon. At the entrance, people and Goblins are fighting, all tightly packed together.

「According to reports: Cave Type.」

Dungeons have various categories, including Labyrinth Type, Cave Type and Nature Type. Cave Type is often seen in recently-created dungeons. Traps are almost nonexistent, but in exchange there seem to be many that have complex structures — almost resembling an ant nest.

According to the Conjurers who used disposable Familiars to scout, there were nothing resembling traps on the inside. For the large amounts of goblins coming and going traps would be a hindrance after all.

There was no talk about any kind of special rooms, either. About these ‘special rooms’, they’re essentially areas with peculiar effects such as sealing Transfer, sealing Recovery, or absorbing Magical Power. If they’re entered without noticing the difference between them and normal rooms, there’s a high risk of total annihilation. The ones that seemed to have ways to detect the difference concluded that there weren’t any such places here.

For us, this was good news. Without having to mind traps of any sort, being able to focus purely on battle is great.

『Forward!』

「Nn.」

『Yahooー!』

Fran crossed over the wall established at the cave entrance by the Adventurers by running through the air. Donna, who saw the spectacle, was astonished. With round eyes he looked up to her. Oioi, if Fran had a skirt on then he’d be guilty, right?

「That was... Aerial Jump?! Isn’t that supposed to be a Sky Knight’s unique skill?!」

Ha? Is this... Slightly bad?

『Sky Knights? Judging from the name, it gives the impression of a fairly high ranked job...』

Sky Knight, huh... How highly ranked is that occupation, I wonder. Depending on the answer, the use of Aerial Jump might be barred in front of others. At any rate, it’s related to the “sky[1]”. Seems strong.

「Teacher, too late.」

『Mu..... Is that so?』

Well, Fran has a point there... Or rather, from now on such things will happen from time to time, so hiding everything might be meaningless in the

end. If that's the case, maybe it's better to have accidentally used it while becoming serious.

「Aside from that: Goblins.」

『Oops, that's right.』

「Teacher uses magic. After landing, I'll finish them.」

『Understood.』

Fran uses Floating, ascending even higher. Matching that, I invoked Tri · Explosion.

DOdoDOon!

The crowd of Hobgoblins in the vicinity of the entrance were blown away all at once. The explosion ended up creating a smoke screen in front of Donna, but even with that, with Hobgoblins as his opponents, he has the power to kill them with a single strike. Fran landed and without a moment's delay attacked the routed enemies.

「Sonic · Wave!」

Lv5 Sword Art: Sonic Wave. It's an art that releases a shockwave, so it was a good choice for knocking down the clustered group of Hobgoblins.

「Chance.」

With the number of Goblins at the cave entrance diminished, Fran rushed in with a *woosh*.

「W-wait! Only Rank D Adventurers and above should be entering the dungeon!」

We knew that, of course. However, in order to have no one hinder us from entering despite that, we went and acted before they could give out any orders. Donna and the others were still fighting against the Hobgoblins, after all.

「Shit—! Go, chase after the little miss!」

「Ah yer right. Normally it's 'ye reap what ya sow', but lettin' such a tiny girl die just don't sit right.」

「You idiot! It's got nothing to do with that!」

「Ha?」

「If left alone, that little miss will take all the sweet spots!」

「No way, that little girl will?」

「That Aerial Jump from before, and even the Magic she just cast...! When you're thinking about that little miss, ignore her outward appearance — think of her as a remarkably skilled Adventurer wearing the skin of a child[2]!」

In regards to the raw materials after the fight's been all mopped up, the Guild splits them equally among all of the Adventurers involved (after taking a cut for itself, of course). However, you're permitted to keep the loot for yourself if you defeat something alone, and place the corpse inside of your item bag.

In other words, the more you defeat, the more you earn. That seems to be a measure put in place to increase the motivation of the Adventurers, but depending on the situation I'd think that it could cause quarrels and reckless delving... Like how we delved into the Dungeon at our own convenience.

「Teacher.」

『This is..... A clump of experience points!』

Within the dungeon, the Hobgoblins are packed like sardines.

「Please.」

『Ou! Flare · Blast!』

Lv1 Blaze Magic: Flare · Blast. It's a magic where a wave of heat is formed by converging flames. Its range isn't particularly wide, but it's far more powerful than Fire Magic.

KyUUUin——BoBoOn!

The heat ray pierced the goblins, and the shock wave mowed down any of the remaining ones. When firing this magic in a narrow space like a cave, its power is tremendous.

Once again, Fran plunged forward.

『We bought a Transfer Feather using the money we had on-hand, so let's go as far as we can!』

[1] 'Sky' can also mean 'Heaven'. (天)

[2] This is essentially the expression 'a wolf in sheep's clothing' with 'child' instead of 'wolf'. In Japanese 'clothing' is usually subbed out with 'skin', too.

Chapter 35: Goblin Subjugation – Storming in

Author's Note:

No way, ranked 1st in the daily ranking?

Every time I said it, it has a certain feeling to it, but this is also thanks to the help of everyone!

For the second consecutive day, I cried.

Also thanks for the many impressions/thoughts.

Steadily, it's getting harder and harder to reply. Therefore, I'm incredibly sorry, but I'll have put a stop to answering questions and such. Please consider that if I did, it would cut into the time I have to write. I'm still looking over all of the comments, so please rest assured that I'm paying attention.

Next, thank you very much for pointing out the misspellings/typos.

I was shocked at how insufficient my own check had been.

The fact is that I thought I had decreased the errors as much as possible, and yet...

From here on also, please point out and I will revise every such part, so please, if you could not abandon me I would be happy.

「Haaa!」

「Gukya—!」

『Fire · Javelin!』

I scatter spells with short chanting times, shaving down the numbers of goblins. Fran cleans up the approaching goblins missed by my barrage. Together, we are cooperating well.

We didn't end up stowing away all the corpses, either. If we didn't leave behind a share for the guys coming in later, it would only incur more enmity than necessary. Moreover, the limit of our storing space isn't yet grasped. If the time came that we couldn't store any more, it would be quite unpleasant. However, all corpses whose magic stones I absorbed, we made sure to collect.

I use Appraisal during combat, checking our opponent's statuses and briefly identifying their skills. If I find one with anything useful, then their magic stone is cut through, as to absorb it before its corpse is stowed away. The bodies are stored to destroy the evidence. Once the process is finished, I put Appraisal back to work on those that aren't cut down yet.

Repeating the above over and over again, I've become strangely adept at using Thought Division. Now, casting two spells with large chants at once is possible. Since spell chants need considerable concentration, I had thought that even with Thought Division, 2 simultaneous arias would be impossible, and yet...

As expected, hard-to-use skills need practice to fully master them, or else their true potential can't be displayed.

『Hahahaha, Fire · Javelin x2!』

Nearly 20 flame lances pour down on the Hobgoblin crowd at my shout.

「Teacher: amazing.」

『Before long, Fran will be able to do this as well!』

「Gives headache. Ki—n[1]....」

『Well, that's a feeling I don't know, so~』

Thanks to the fact that I don't have a brain, I don't get things like headaches. It's likely because of that that I have a higher compatibility with Thought Division, too. There's also the possibility that I'm having an easier time because I have the Sorcery skill.

「While fighting: aiming for lower grade spell arias.」

『My next target is chanting different spells simultaneously.』

「Do your best.」

『Ou. Leave it to me.』

Fortunately, we don't have to worry about running out of sparring partners here.

Just like that, with Fran continuing to be peerless, we pushed deeper into the dungeon.

Just in case, I had used Echolocation to investigate the topography of the cave, but at Lv.1 no detailed information could be gained. Given that, Presence, Vibration and Heat Perception are being used to head towards areas with a high number of Hobgoblins.

「Teacher, found stairs.」

『So it had a second floor...』

The second floor seems to be just like the first. Maybe it was made simply because the density of Hobgoblins increased?

Well, either way, it's good for me. I'll be able to gather even more Skills, after all.

「Teacher, there.」

『Oh, that's... A treasure chest!』

At a dead end, an enshrined chest stands alone. It's made out of old looking wood, and is around the size of a microwave. Its metal fittings are covered in rust, giving it a certain charm.

『Hm, hm! This is the ultimate charm of dungeons! Right!』

「Teacher occasionally becomes like this.」

『Hahaha! So, what now? Open it? How do we unlock it?』

「Possibly a trap.」

『Hmm. That's right』

Well, in my case that's no problem. If I use Telekinesis, then it can be opened from a remote location.

『Fran, take some distance.』

「Nn.」

『Now, let's open it!』

GiGii.....

Hyun!

From inside the treasure chest, a single arrow flies out. If someone opened it by hand, the arrow would have passed right through the middle of their head.

『So, it was an arrow trap.』

「Cliché.」

『Now then, shall we see what's inside?』

「Excited.」

Inside of the chest was... A small black stone.

The result of Appraisal was that it's a 『Pocket Heating Stone』 . It's a body-warmer type magical tool that seems to emit a scarce amount of heat when it's charged with magical power.

In town, it would probably go for around 1,000 Gorudo. Maybe a freshly made dungeon only has things like this?

「Dull.」

With a flop, Fran's cat ears hung flat. Truly, a disappointment.

『For gold and silver treasures or strong magic items, it seems that we'll have to wait until a large dungeon』

「Nn. At least: experience earned.」

『That's the spirit! Let's keep going!』

Afterwards, as if to release her disappointment, Fran went into an even more peerless state against the Hobgoblins. Before I noticed it, it reached the point that Hobgoblins started to flee as soon as they saw Fran's small figure. Maybe information about her spread? Well, even so, Fran chased the fleeing Hobgoblins and finished them with a single strike to their backs.

The King and Queen also ended up being easily hunted down. Even if they're said to be somewhat strong, in the end they're only Hobgoblins. With this, is the commission considered complete? The cave keeps on going, though...

『Shouldn't the end be around here?』

「More ahead.」

『Could the Dungeon Master be ahead...?』

「Going while possible.」

『Alright, let's keep going!』

Like that, we continued pushing further into the second floor until we discovered a gate.

「Big door.」

『Is it a boss at last? Just in case, let's ready the Feather of Return.』

「Nn.」

Gigigiii...

Using my Telekinesis to push open the gate, the door slowly opens while making a creaking sound. Beyond it is a somewhat wide room, and inside is... Nothing? No, there're tiny presences of demonic beasts. Maybe they're Insect types?

『Don't lose focus, get it?』

「Of course.」

Batan!

Ooh! Suddenly the gate closed. Maybe it's one of those. 'A door that won't open back up until you defeat the boss' type of trap.

『But weren't we told that there weren't any traps?』

「Imprisoned?」

『Fran, calm down.』

「It's alright. Just need to defeat everything. Nothing changed. No problem.」

Right, Fran has nerves of steel after all.

BuBuBuBuuuu

「？」

『Seems that they're coming.』

Gushing into the room, insect type demonic beasts with green carapaces appeared. Sprouting horns, they looked like softball-sized ladybugs. However, on the other side, a Giant Isopod-looking insect appears. Extremely disgusting.

Race: Army Beetle Leader : Calamity insect : Demonic beast Lv5

HP: 8 MP: 20 STR: 4 END: 3 AGI: 22 DEX: 11 INT: 5 MGC: 12

Skills:

Wind Magic Lv.1, Summon Kin Lv.5, Leadership Lv.1, Cooperation Lv.1, Acid Fang

Race: Army Beetle : Calamity insect : Demonic beast Lv2

HP: 6 MP: 10 STR: 3 END: 3 AGI: 20 DEX: 10 INT: 2 MGC: 4

Skills:

Hardening Lv.1, Acid Fang

Race: Army Beetle Medic : Calamity insect : Demonic beast Lv4

HP: 10 MP: 15 STR: 1 END: 7 AGI: 20 DEX: 10 INT: 4 MGC: 8

Skills:

Recovery Magic Lv.2, Acid Fang

Race: Army Beetle Shooter : Calamity insect : Demonic beast Lv4

HP: 3 MP: 18 STR: 2 END: 2 AGI: 20 DEX: 10 INT: 3 MGC: 10

Skills:

Wind Magic Lv.3, Acid Fang

They're small fry, but their number is no joke: they easily surpass 100. Not only that, the leader has Summon Kin. If it's not immediately destroyed, it'll have a snowballing effect.

「Interesting.」

It seems Fran is already firmly walking the path of a battle junkie. Thrusting herself into the army of disgusting insects, she joyfully started to fight. As for me, I keep using Telekinesis to seal the movement of the insects as assistance.

If they're this small, even Telekinesis at its lowest output could prevent their movement. When the opponents are larger, it's more efficient to just throw the usual spells, but...

「Sh! Haaa!」

After stopping their movements, Fran pierces their magic stones. For once, an unusual demonic beast has appeared, so we've left behind about half of the materials to be collected.

The most troublesome ones are the Shooter's Wind Magic, but its power is exceedingly weak. On top of that, their MP is low, so they run out after shooting only a couple of times. Honestly, it's nothing more than a distraction in the end.

The Leaders keeps summoning subordinates one after the other, but that's more of a reward rather than a punishment. The magic stones just keep piling up.

30 minutes later, on the other side of the gate, the presences of several people appeared.

「Shit! It won't open!」

Donna and the others seem to have arrived.

『It can't be helped. Let's end this.』

「Bonus stage.....」

『Now, now. I feel the same, but...』

「Nn.....」

That marked the beginning of the extermination. In rapid succession, Fire Magic and wide ranged Sword Techniques were released one after another. It was finished in no time at all. Not even lasting 5 minutes, the ~200 remaining bugs were obliterated.

Before anyone noticed, my Wind Magic had risen to Lv.7. That's just how many magic stones were absorbed.

Gashan

『Huh? That side opened?』

The gate that Donna's group was intensely striking against remained shut just like before. Instead, a gate hidden in the wall of the opposing side opened.

「Amazingly strong magical power.」

『This strength of magical power... It must be equal to a C rank demonic beast — no, even higher.』

From the opponents I've come across until now, the one with the strongest magical power was the gluttonous Slime Lord. The magical power coming from beyond the gate, however, exceeds it.

『No way... For a recently created dungeon to have a being with such high magical power...』

「Itching to fight.」

『Wait, this time the enemy is really dangerous. We have to prepare properly.』

Antideath , status raising series, regeneration, invalidation of status abnormalities at fixed intervals and so on. Having put on as many buffs as possible, we enter the room.

[1] Not sure what this sound effect is for, but I'm thinking that it has something to do with the ringing one would hear when experiencing a headache.

Chapter 36: Goblin Subjugation – Demon

What lay beyond the gate was completely different than the cave we were in up until now. When we entered, we were surrounded by walls made of stone bricks; it was what would be called ‘an unnatural room’.

「Yo, yo! Our first guest! Welcome!」

Uun, a character fitting the title of an evil older brother floats in the air. His skin is black like tar, two bat-like wings sprout from his back, and horns sit atop its head. Truly, it was an appearance filled with the air of intimidation. It’s just... His delinquent-like behaviour spoils it all. Its scariness is cut by half...

Well, let’s use Appraisal.

Race: Demon : Fiend : Demonic Beast Lv.30

HP: 1900 MP: 2409 STR: 720 END: 798 AGI: 775 DEX: 658 INT: 882
MGC: 1108

Skills:

Digging Lv.3, Darkness Magic Lv.4, Coercion Lv.4, Transportation Lv.2, Panic Lv.4, Sword Techniques Lv.5, Sword Arts Lv.5, Abnormal Status Resistance Lv.7, Soil Magic Lv.7, Climbing Lv.1, Poison Magic Lv.7, Magic Barrier Lv.6, Dark Magic Lv.Max, Cooking Lv.1, Darkness Reinforcement, Darkness Immunity, Night Vision, Automatic MP Recovery, Control Immunity[E1], Skin hardening, MGC ↑ Low, Strength ↑ Low

Extra Skills:

Skill Taker Lv.6

Titles:

Demon Count[M1]

Equipment:

Demonic Shadow-Steel Longsword

Explanation: Only summoned by Dungeon Masters, this being is native to Dungeons. Followers of the God of Chaos, their combat prowess is exceedingly high, with their lowest Threat Level at C. The existence of individuals reaching level S has been confirmed. During the summons, for the sake of increasing the abilities of the dungeon master, it's abilities are extremely varied.

Magic Stone Location: Heart

『A Demon, huh...』

It's too strong. Its Status exceeds 1000. It's the first time I've seen something like this.

Darkness Magic:

The superior version of Dark Magic. It rules over darkness, shadow, poison and death.

Panic:

Causes the abnormal mental state to those who are subject to its user's sight.

Magic Barrier: By consuming magical power, a barrier resistant to both physical and magical attacks can be created.

Skill Taker:

After meeting certain conditions, this skill allows the user to steal skills from the target.

Uwa, his skills are also full of troublesome ones.

『Fran, it's a terrible opponent. If you lose focus it'll be an instant death!』

「Nn!」

Having absorbed magical power from the goblins and army beetles, my MP is almost full. My skills and spells can be used as much as desired, and yet... Our victory is far from assured against the opponent in front of us. It's overwhelming to that extent. As to be usable at any moment, I have the Feather of Return prepared at all times.

「Hah! Quite determined, aint'cha? Good! Even if I'm fightin' a brat I won't show mercy, got it?! You came here to clear the dungeon, after all!」

「Hey, Demon! What the hell are you doing?! Quickly, dispose of that... That thing!」

Hm? Looking closer, on the other side of the room is a Goblin. Only... It's different from normal goblins. It's speaking words fluently, too.

Race: Rare Goblin : Evil Beast : Demonic Beast : Dungeon Master Lv.11

HP: 25 MP: 131 STR: 12 END: 12 AGI: 13 DEX: 7 INT: 44 MGC: 13

Skills:

Digging Lv.2, Summon Kin Lv.5, Club Arts Lv.2, Talk from the Heart[E2] Lv.2, Taming Lv.2, Ambition Lv.1

Equipment:

Evergreen Oak Club, Leather robe, Substitute Bracelet

It's small fry-ish, but it certainly seems to be the dungeon master. Then, that thing shining in the cavity of the wall is the dungeon core? Which makes this the deepest part of the dungeon?

Well, in the end it's just a small fry. Did this fellow really enslave a demon?

Goblins and Beetles I can understand. They're adequate subordinates for such a weakling... But isn't this demon far too big a jump? Maybe it's because of a special ability given to dungeon masters? If it had a specific ability to enslave demons, that would be interesting. Still, I'm not able to identify a skill which is capable of that.

Another regrettable thing, it doesn't seem to have any skills to manipulate the dungeon. Most likely, the dungeon is changed through the dungeon core. That'd have to be it, given that there aren't any related skills belonging to the so-called dungeon master.

「Shut it! I'll properly get rid a' the intruders so just simmer down!」

「Damn it...! I invested all the GP I had into the Monster Lottery, drawing an extremely rare, supremely ranked Demon and yet...! Why won't it listen to my orders?! Rrrgh... and even in spite of being a skill-user type, its eager to fight head-on!」

Wah, that's one unbelievable exposition-speech... But thanks to it, all has become clear. As for the Goblin's question, the demon has the Control Immunity skill, and so it doesn't seem to accept the dungeon master's control.

「How could someone have reached all the way here...! What about my handpicked elites?!」

「Weren't they done in? They were only goblins, after all.」

「By such inferior creatures as humans, there is no way that my army corps of goblins, the supreme creatures, could be defeated!」

「Yes, yes. You're right~」

「Regardless, I order you to crush that guy!」

「I'd do that even without your order, y'know? They seem t' be pretty tough.」

Saying so, the demon unsheathed his sword.

「Since this guy's bein' noisy... Let's go?」

Like that, the demon closed in with a thrust. In spite of his magic skills being higher, he himself came in for close-quarter combat. What an ultra-belligerent guy! Looks like he would get along well with Fran.

「Oraa!」

「Haa!」

Giiin! Gakii!

「Haha! You've got a good sword t' be able to exchange blows with this one!」

Name : Demonic Shadow-Steel Longsword

ATK: 561 + 450 MP: 56 Durability: 1000

Magical Power Conductivity · C+[M2]

Skills:

Return to the Shadows

The magical power conductivity is high. It seems like it's already clad in magical power, and its ATK surpasses 1,000. Furthermore, due to the skill Return to the Shadows, even if it's thrown it'll return to the demon's hand.

On this side, we expended about 500 MP to raise my ATK[M3]. Like that, we could exchange blows but...

「Tsk, so your sword's superior, huh? Then, how 'bout this?!」

「? — Ku...!」

Just when he disappeared from sight, the bastard suddenly appeared from behind.

Not good! Fran's left arm was completely severed. Large quantities of blood have started gushing out, and her the HP just keeps decreasing.

『What happened...?!』

With Telekinesis, I recovered Frans left arm and pressed the two cross-sections together. Then, in a hurry, I chanted Greater · Heal. With that, the small amount of flesh lost regrows — it's Lv.1 Healing Magic after all. Something like rejoining a lost limb is easy.[M4]

「Oh? So you even have the Telekinesis skill? And usin' that level of Recovery Magic, too! Are you perhaps a Magic Swordsman?」

The demon was laughing, but on this side it was no laughing matter.

『That move just now... What was that?』

Once again, the demon's figure suddenly vanishes. Then, not a moment later, it attacks from the rear.

『Fran! Are you alright?!』

「Al...right.」

「Oraora!」

「Nn!」

「So, you can already receive it! You've got some good reflexes!」

No matter how you look at it, he seems to simply vanish. Teleportation? But he shouldn't have a skill capable of such a thing. Then, perhaps magic?

Dark Magic, or maybe Darkness Magic...?

「Ora!」

「Ha!」

As expected, that's it. Just now, when the demon transferred, magical power leaked out of his shadow. Then, he reappeared from Fran's shadow. It's a transfer magic that utilizes shadows.

If the trick is known, then dealing with it is possible. We're able to properly grasp the moment before he reappears now as proof.

「Hyahaa— Ga-!」

「Too cocky!」

「Kahaha, that's the way to go! You've already figured out the trick, huh?」

Tsk. To think he had this much lee-way. That strike that cut open his flank had Vibration Fang and Demonic Poison Fang added, but even with those...

「Ah? Poison? To poison me with something surpassing my Abnormal Status Resistance... Yeah, that's the way!」

Yes, yes. Freaking battle junkie!

Demonic Poison. It falls short of the effects of Sovereign Poison and Deadly Poison, but it should still do more than an ordinary poison. And yet, because of this guy's Automatic Recovery skill[E3], its effects are essentially nonexistent.

『Fran, let's aim for his vitals with a direct attack.』

「Nn.」

Our advantages in this fight are that the enemy is still taking us lightly, and that my existence has still gone unnoticed.

I haven't been attacking openly, after all. Secretly, I've kept on assisting while keeping the Feather of Return ready for us to escape at all times.

「Haaaaa!」

「Hyahaha!」

Once again the furious sword fight continues.

pka—!

Then, during the fight, something glittered around the two. Immediately following, from inside of the light, Hobgoblins emerged. How many? 4.

「GO, servants of mine! Kill the intruder!」

It was the dungeon masters doing. Summoning Hobgoblins here is... More than out of place, I can only say it's astounding.

As should be expected, Fran and the Demon's fight is immensely dangerous, and incredibly fast-paced. The Hobgoblins could only stand there, completely unable to interfere.

「What are you doing, quickly, get in there!」

On the dungeon master's command, a Hobgoblin resolved itself and approached the circle of combat...

「Get lost!」

And was immediately bisected by the demon's sword. At the same time, one more was slain by Fran.

「W-What are you doing?! They're allies!」

「Such shitty small fry'd do nothin' but get in the way! Just when it got good, too— vanish!」

Throwing a black ball of light, the demon blew away the remaining, pitiful Hobgoblins and sent them to heaven.

Angry and humiliated, the dungeon master quietly trembled where he stood. Looking at him, one could even pity him a little. Unrelated to such a miserable dungeon master, Fran's battle was getting more furious by the second.

Inside of the stone hall, only the sound of swords clashing could be heard.

「Hah, this is fun! Oi! Still, goin' like this it's clear — yeah, crystal clear!」

Shouting so, the demon repelled me greatly before taking a small distance away from Fran.

Just what is he planning?

「Now, it's time to settle this! First, I'll be taking your combat power!」

「?」

『Crap, it's his Extra Skill!』

「Hyahahaha! Eat this! Skill Taker!」

[E1] It's 'Immunity to being ruled over', not 'control what I'm immune to'.
(支配無効)

[M1] It's '悪魔伯爵' (Demon Count/Earl), but my understanding of the hierarchy is King → Duke → Earl → Count → Baron → Knight, so I'm going with Count (seeing as the demon doesn't have the behavior fitting for a high-noble type demon)

[E2] It's 心話 here, which is literally 'Heart Talk'. Searching it up, I found that it's something akin to a heart-to-heart... I think. If anyone has a better suggestion, feel free.

[M2] E was 5%, C- was 70%, A was 200%, so a C+ should be around 100%. The demon put in 450 MP or 15-20% of his total MP, in other words.

[M3] He should be around 1400 ATK.

[M4] Healing M. Lv.1 derives from Recovery M. Lv10, so its the superior version. For all those like me having a hard time remembering it.

[E3] The Demon doesn't have any sort of HP recovery Skill, but this is what Shisho says, so... *shrug* (奴の持つ自動回復スキルのせいで)

Chapter 37: Goblin Subjugation – Conclusion

「Eat this! Skill Taker!」

The demon shouted this while pushing his hand forward.

『Ku-! He got us!』

Just like the name implies, it's a skill to steal an opponent's skill. The demon hadn't used it at all during the fight, so I had come to the conclusion that it had some sort of difficult condition to invoke — like 'must be touching the opponent' or 'must invoke over a long period of time'! But in the end, it's merely shouting and pointing!

For it to be feasible to invoke it with just that...! With a shout brimming with confidence to that degree, it can only be assumed that the invocation condition was fulfilled.

He said that he would steal Fran's combat power, so did he take Sword Arts and Sword Techniques? Just when I had raised those skills with great troubles...! Having to raise them a second time is... — No, rather than that, if Swords Techniques is taken right now, our death is almost assured!

『Tsk, depending on the case, we'll have to use the Feather of Return!』

「Nn!」

「...」

The demon, still standing with his hand outstretched, didn't move. Fran also didn't look as though anything happened.

... Huh?

『..... Fran, are you alright?』

「？」

「Tsk! It failed, huh!」

Lucky. Somehow it seems to have failed. So maybe its success isn't always certain?

Well, our situation is a bit unique, too. The skills Fran's using aren't her own, they're mine. In other words, they're the 'equipped weapon's' special-ability category Skills. Even if a plundering-series skill is directed at Fran, it's possible that the Skills won't be stolen from her equipment.

「This damn— Rrrg! Can't do anything about it if it didn't work. In that case, eat this! Darkness · Vortex!」

Looking angry, the demon fired off Darkness Magic. It's a huge vortex of darkness that shaves off the ground like a drill while approaching Fran.

So, he's started using spells... Looking at his Status, he truly seems like a long distance bombardment type.

「Ha—!」

And yet, it just can't hit Fran.

「Oi! Once more!」

「Ho—」

「Tsk!」

Even if its attack power is high, his attacks are too monotonous. He's just like the Fran from a short time ago: undoubtedly strong, but with little combat experience. Well, he has only just been created by the dungeon master.

「Dark · Spear!」

『Fire · Wall!』

「Darkness · Blaster!」

「Naive.」

「RRrrrg! Stop movin' around!」

It's Darkness Magic, so it should really have a bunch of diabolical spells attacking the opponent's weak points... But this is several times more detestable. They're nothing but one-hit kill spells.

In this match, Fran is at a disadvantage. After all, the amount of brute strength between the two is too big. Our attacks can't attain a decisive blow, while this guy's all bring certain death.

Gradually, the times that Fran speaks decrease. It seems our leeway is being lost. Should we flee now?

It's just... We still haven't raised any considerable accomplishments. By running wild in the Dungeon, we managed to cut down the number of goblins. Because of that, I think the objective of preventing them from going towards the town has been achieved... But originally, that would have been done by the C and D rank Adventurers.

And so, that brings us to this demon. If only something could be done about this guy, it'd be the same as capturing this dungeon. Even if it's been decided that we'll escape, for Donna's group who will be fighting this guy later, I want to leave a bit more damage on this guy.

「Black · Bomb!」

「Mu...」

「Uwaa!」

The demon, after losing its temper, started scattering a bunch of wide-range spells. This is bad. In risk of being swallowed up, even the dungeon master is raising screams. Thankfully, we were saved by the narrow room. Had it been a bigger space, we might have been annihilated by a more extensive spell. In here, however, the dungeon master would be dragged into it.

『No, wait!』

I might have stumbled upon a good idea.

『He's a demonic beast of the dungeon.』

I recall Donna's explanation. He had explained a couple of things before the departure, but in summary it was stuff along the lines of 'the dungeon core can be reused, so don't destroy it'. At that time, he also gave a rough explanation of the core and its master.

The dungeon's nucleus is the dungeon core. If it's destroyed, the dungeon dies. Any created monsters, alongside the dungeon master, are destroyed in that case. The core is protected by a high density barrier so that half-hearted attacks won't be able to destroy it, but...

Connected to the dungeon core is the dungeon master. If the master dies, the core supposedly becomes dormant.

More important than that, however, is that if the dungeon master gets annihilated, all dungeon monsters bite the dust — just like when the core is destroyed.

In other words...

『If that goblin gets defeated, the demon also vanishes!』

「—— Fire · Arrow」

「Ah— b-bastard! That's cowardly!」

Seeing the spell fired by Fran, the demon performed a transfer in a state of panic, protecting the Goblin. As expected, my guess was right on the mark.

The dungeon master has a Scapegoat Bracelet equipped, but in the current situation, it'd use its only revival after an instant death. After that, only the worst course of events would await, so this guy can't afford to not protect the dungeon master. Even though he isn't bound by any sort of contract, it doesn't mean that he's disconnected from the reality that he is, in the end, a 'dungeon monster'.

「*niyari*[M1]」

「This brat— don't get conceited!」

『Fire · Javelin』

「Seriously? With no chant?!」

Nope, it's me using stealthily magic.

「Fire · Arrow!」

『Tri · Explosion!』

「Fire · Arrow!」

『Fire · Blast!』

Bon, BAN, DogOOOn!

Firing nonstop spells, the demon is completely engulfed.

「Ku—!」

「Hiiiiiiii!」

If it's only being grazed by the explosive flames, it's hard for the dungeon master to die. As long as the demon bastard doesn't move, we're at a standstill.

「You idiot! It's 'cause of this that I said t' make my combat area in the room before this one!」

「B...B-B...B-BE QUIET! If you didn't stay here, then this room's defensive combat power is lost!」

This dungeon master is an idiot beyond saving.

Bit by bit the demon's HP decreases, but this guy's magic defense is higher than expected... Like this, our side will run out of magical power first.

『Fran, change of plans.』

「Understood.」

I continue to cast magic non-stop with double chanting while Fran chants the Wind Magic spell she learned just now.

Lv.4 Wind magic: Sonic Shooter. In a nutshell, it's a spell to increase the speed of a thrown object using the power of the wind. Once it's used, manipulating the object's trajectory is possible to a certain extent.

「Ready.」

『Mh, I'm ready any time.』

「Ha—!」

『Hyaa—!』

I'm sent flying on a trajectory circumventing the demon, approaching the Goblin.

「What kind of skillful action is—! Wind magic? Even with that, I won't let ya!」

Because of the spells coming from Fran, the demon can't move imprudently. Therefore, he swung his right arm widely, wanting to knock me down. Even when coming at high speeds, the demon seems to be able to perfectly see me, huh...

The demon's fist draws near, matched up perfectly ——— and misses.

「Wha—?! Gaha!!」

At the last moment, I altered my trajectory with Wind magic and released my amassed telekinesis all in one go. It's the nostalgic Telekinesis Catapult Attack. With it, I charged towards Demon's defenseless torso.

Of course, most of our remaining magical power was transmitted into my blade. This was meant to be our final attack, so if it fails the only remaining option is to flee via transfer.

「Im...poss...ible...!」

『I somehow made it...』

Even this demon couldn't defend against the Telekinesis Catapult given these circumstances. Piercing the demon's barrier, the tip of my blade is buried deep into its chest.

Still, it gave me a cold sweat when I found its left arm thrust between me and its body. When did it even do that?! Had I been stingy with the conducted magic power, I might have been in a tough spot to pierce that arm... It seems that I took the demon too lightly.

「N-No way... The Demon got ...?」

「UoOo.....」

I had split the magic stone perfectly in two. Now, it was being absorbed into my blade.

「Gaaaaa——!」

Having his magic stone completely devoured, the demon raised a dying shriek filled with agony before falling down on the spot. Fuu— Thank goodness. He didn't turn into something like silver dust[M2], so I got worried that he might have not been dead, but the raw materials — or rather, its corpse was properly left behind.

We won't stow it away, however. It's a shame, but I plan to pass the body of the demon to the Guild as an apology for rushing ahead. Besides, even if we collected it secretly, it would be difficult to keep hidden. The reason for that is related to the dungeon core's system.

While dormant, the core can be used (with certain limitations) by pouring magical power into it. It's limited to creating things that it formed while it was alive, but bringing forth Items and Demonic Beasts is possible. With the magical power of humans, nothing great can be summoned, but... Even so, anyone who touches the dungeon core can see the list of things possible to be summoned. In other words, when someone reused this dungeon core, the Demon would end up listed.

Yeah. Assuming we secretly take the demons raw materials, we'll definitely be busted. Once that happens, we're assured to have a massive amount of envy and enmity aimed at us.

Therefore, we've decided to leave the body to the Guild. But first... A small disguise has to be made. With help of an explosion spell, we blow away the area around the Demon's heart, resulting in a large hole opening up in its chest.

With this, we can just say that the magic stone was smashed to pieces and vanished due of Fran's attack. The end. It should work as an excuse for why only the body remained... I hope.

We could also insist that we'd only be taking the magic stone, but that would mean that Fran's share would be too big. Doing that would definitely incur the resentment of the other Adventurers. Well, I guess there will be a lot of fellows who won't believe that we didn't take it too, but that can't really be helped. One can't give what one doesn't have.

The Demon's sword we have honorably received. If it's this, we might be able to sell it after falsifying its origin. Worst case scenario, we'll end up breaking it down and selling the materials.

Ah, while we were at it, we also finished off the dungeon master. To utilize the core, the dungeon master is said to be a hindrance after all. First, we

deprived him of the Scapegoat Bracelet, then we vigorously cut him part. Scapegoat Bracelet, GET.

「Teacher.」

Fran pushed her fist into the air, making a victory pose. It was a somewhat cowardly tactic, but she looks happy having beaten a higher ranked opponent.

Alright! As one would expect from a demon's magic stone.

From the fighting until now, my magic stone value had been 2599/2800. Now, it was 3099/3600. It ended raising by 500.

『With this, various power ups are possible.』

「Nn.」

<Fran's level has risen →

<Fran's level has →

<Fran's level →

<Fran's →

Fran's level also increased 8 times! This time we obtained something similar to a victory thanks to the incompetency of the dungeon master, it was truly a godsend.

gogogo

Oh, it appears that the seal on the gates have been lifted.

「Oooi! Little miss, are you there?」

「I-Isn't... Isn't this a demon—?!」

「S-Seriously?!」

[M1] The hyperbole for ‘broadly grinning’.

[M2] Bosses in certain games do this.

Chapter 38: Goblin Subjugation – Return

Author Note:

I received many questions related to the MC's vision, so to any discrepancies on the subject, parts of the 1st and 4th chapter have been revised.

I have the privilege of doing a detailed activity report of how people took the change:

The overall evaluation surpassed 20,000 points!

The following concerns the return of us, having captured the dungeon, to the town.

In the faces of the Adventurers, profound fatigue but overall delight can be seen.

They had 10 casualties total, but for a Demonic Beast disaster of this scale, it appears fortunate to end with only this much.

For being able to quickly capture the dungeon due to us annihilating Demonic Beasts along the way, we received the gratitude of the Adventurers. You might say that not monopolizing the corpse of the demon also had a hand in our favorable reception. More precisely, that was a huge part of it.

It appears that a Demon's raw materials are substantially higher priced than Demonic Beasts of the same rank. It's an endemic species that doesn't exist outside of dungeons, after all.

The amount of experience gained is also remarkably different; they're said to even rival a Threat Level A Demonic Beast by themselves. Fran's level rising 8 times is understandable in that respect. Demons appear to be quite the delicious opponents... Well, on the flip side, they also come with the large risk of us getting eaten up instead.

After leaving the Dungeon, we were scolded by Donna for having rushed forward alone. We received around 1 whole hour of preaching.

The scene with the Conqueror of the Century's End[M1] preaching to a small neko girl was beyond criminal — it was way too funny! When I laughed Fran pouted, but somehow she was able to bear with it to the end.

Also, if not for the mediation from the lad we were involved with before the departure, Donna probably would have continued for even longer. The mercenaries who picked a quarrel with Fran were dead, and the fact that he didn't end up the same as them was thanks to Fran; because of this, he came advocating in our defense.

『Those guys... They really died in the end, huh...』

(Even said in a good voice: can't deceive me.)

『Ahaha... As expected?』

(Teacher didn't get scolded. Unfair.)

『Now, now.』

(Only I got scolded.)

『I'm sorry.』

(Teacher. Lots of meat.)

『Understood.』

(Roasted meat.)

『Alright.』

(Steak and skewers, too.)

『Oki-doki—』

Lately, because Fran keeps eating my cuisine from Earth, I've started thinking that she might end up becoming a glutton character. Well, if this cheers her up, then let's make as much as she wants! For having defeated a highly ranked opponent like a Demon, a celebration is necessary, after all. Eat as much of whatever you want!

But before arriving at the town, I should confirm the fruits of battle. Before ranking up it was like this:

ATK : 392 Retained MP : 1650/1650 Durability : 1450/1450

Skills:

Self Evolution

And now, it's like this:

Name : Teacher

Equipment Registration : Fran

Race : Intelligent Weapon

ATK : 434 Retained MP : 2050/2050 Durability : 1850/1850

Magic Conductivity · A

Skills:

Appraisal Lv.7, Appraisal Concealment, High-Speed Self-Repair, Self Evolution , Self-Modification, Telekinesis, Telekinesis ↑ Low, Telepathy, ATK ↑ Low, ALL Wielder Stats ↑, Wielder Recovery ↑ Low, MP ↑ Low, Memory ↑, Demonic Beast Knowledge, Skill Sharing, Sorcery

With each evolution, my stats become increasingly amazing. In the beginning my ATK increased no higher than 30 per rank, with my MP only advancing by 100. My Durability and MP recovery were also nonexistent. How will they end up if I rank up even further? I'm looking forward to it.

Next are the Skills that leveled up. The Hobgoblins and Army Beetles had reasonably high skill levels, so some have grown quite a bit.

Wind Magic Lv.7, Sword Techniques Lv.8, Sword Arts Lv.9, Summon Kin Lv.6, Hardening Lv.4, Abnormal State Resistance Lv.3, Soil Magic Lv.5, Poison Magic Lv.3

As for Skills, the Hobgoblins had quite a few new ones as well.

Darkness Magic Lv.1, Bow Techniques Lv.1, Panic Lv.1, Club Arts Lv.1, Soul Talk[E1] Lv.1, Shortbow Techniques Lv.1, Dagger Techniques Lv.1, Taming Lv.1, Katana Techniques Lv.1, Leatherworking Lv.1, Magic Engineering Lv.1, Magic Barrier Lv.1, Dark Magic Lv.2, Alchemy Lv.1, Cooperation Lv.5, Trap Perception Lv.1, Darkness Reinforcement, Darkness Immunity, Acid Fang, Automatic MP Recovery, Control Immunity, Skin Hardening.

Extra Skill:

Skill Taker Lv.1

Despite having obtained 40 Self Evolution Points, there are way too many things I want to do with them, so '40' ends up feeling like a small number.

I should raise Sword Arts and Sword Techniques, as well as some Magic... Since I got my hands on Darkness Reinforcement, maybe I should raise Darkness Magic? Summon Familiar also seems like it could be useful, so raising its level and seeing what happens might be a good idea. There's also the previously-abandoned Instant Regeneration and Abnormal Status Resistance. Furthermore, Skill Taker is also on the list... And because the 'transforms into a superior skill at Lv.10' might apply to it, there doesn't seem to be an end to my troubles in sight.

But, of course, I'm not the only one who gained things. Fran has reached level 25. Usually, a Demon would have granted a huge amount of experience for a full party, but Fran had it concentrated on her alone, so...

Name : Fran Age : 12

Race : Black Cat Beastman

Occupation : Magical Swordsman

Condition : Contracted

Status:

Level : 12 → 25

HP : 189 → 304 MP : 115 → 215

STR : 92 → 150 END : 74 → 129 AGI : 82 → 140

INT : 50 → 95 MGC : 62 → 117 DEX : 63 → 108

Skills:

Goblin Slayer, Mental Stability, Skinning Expert, Indomitable Resolve, Directional Sense, Night Eyes

Insect Slayer, Growth Efficiency ↑, Demon Slayer

Titles:

Match for a Thousand, King of Dismantling, Master of Recovery, Goblin Slayer, One who Slaughters, Skill Collector, Master of Fire, King of Cooking

Insect Slayer, Big Game Devourer, Dungeon Conqueror, Demon Slayer

Insect Slayer:

A Title granted to those who exterminated no less than 300 insect type Demonic Beasts in a single battle.

Effects:

Acquisition of the Skill : Insect Slayer

Big Game Devourer:

A Title granted to those who overcame an overwhelmingly difficult opponent alone.

Effects:

HP +20, All Stats +5, Acquisition of the Skill : Growth Efficiency ↑

Dungeon Conqueror:

A Title granted to those who either killed a dungeon master, or destroyed a dungeon core.

Effects:

Inside of Dungeons: HP & MP Recovery ↑

Demon Slayer:

A Title granted to those who have slain a demon.

Effects:

Acquisition of the Skill : Demon Slayer

Again and again came the cheat Titles. Big Game Devourer in particular is just as powerful as Match for a Thousand. Thanks to that, Fran's status is quite something. Already, the sum of all her stats is equal to Donnadorondo's.

Fran... What a frightening child! — No, it's my fault that she's like this. Fran has ambition, so I don't think that she will get conceited, but... There is the possibility for her to search for even more dangerous places from now on. I have to stay focused and properly support Fran.

And so, raising Skill levels is an urgent matter.

『Hey Fran, which Skill do you want to raise?』

(Sword Arts and Sword Techniques.)

『Yes, of course.』

This time we experienced it first-hand — just how hard it is for Magic to show results on highly-ranked opponents. With a sword on the other hand, even in an unfavorable position a chance for a comeback exists. In fact, I can be proud of my ability to do so due to my high Magic Power Conductivity and vast MP reserves.

『Then, for now shall we raise Sword Arts and Techniques?』

「Nn.」

『Alright, done』

Expending 6 Self Evolution Points, Sword Arts and Sword Techniques have reached Lv.MAX. Furthermore, Master Sword Techniques Lv.1, Master Sword Arts Lv.1 and Sword Attribution Lv.1 were derived.

Master Sword Arts and Techniques I can understand, but ‘Sword Attribution’? It seems to be a Skill to be used with Magic, allowing one to infuse a sword with a magic attribute for a fixed time, but... Well, unless we try it out, there's no way of knowing its full effects.

So, what shall we raise now? There's still Skill Taker, too.

Skill Taker : Lv.1

Allows the user to choose a single Skill with rarity \leq Grade 1. If the chosen Skill is Lv.1, the Skill's chance of success is 50%. Only one Skill can be targeted at a time.

Cooldown : 1 day

Range : Skill Level \times 1m

Ho, skill rarity, huh... Appraisal's level isn't yet sufficient, so it doesn't show the Skill's degree of rarity.

If I used this, then even more progress in collecting skills could be made... Furthermore, if it became possible to steal an opponent's Skill, battles could become even easier. Above all, it would be possible to obtain skills which I previously couldn't get my hands on — ones from beings without magic stones... Skills from civilized races.

What to do about this... I'm already totally enthusiastic, but what about Fran?

『Say, about Skill Taker——』

With that, I explained the general stuff to Fran.

(It's good.)

『Is that so?』

(Extra Skills: definitely super strong.)

『Alright. Then, let's level it up.』

Ending up recklessly charmed by her cute words, I decide to raise it to Lv2 see what happens.

Skill Taker : Lv.2

Allows the user to choose a single Skill with rarity equal or below grade 2. If the chosen Skill is Lv.2, the Skill's chance of success is 60%. Only one

Skill can be targeted at a time.

Cooldown : 2 days

Range : Skill level \times 1m

What? Lv.2 and 60% chance? A-Alright, let's raise it some more!

Leveling up Extra Skills seems to cost 3 points per level, so my remaining Self Evolution Points are only 7... But I don't regret it.

Skill Taker : Lv.Max

Allows the user to choose a single Skill with rarity equal or below grade 10. If the chosen Skill is Lv.10, the Skill's chance of success is 100%. Only one Skill can be targeted at a time.

Cooldown : 18 days

Range : Skill level \times 1m

Nothing that can be done about the 18 day cooldown, so we'll just have to think properly about when to use it. Well, in our case Fran and I each have a chance, so we should be able to use it a bit more carefreely. I'll definitely have to investigate what Skills would have rarity Grade 10 later.

Maybe I should raise Appraisal's level for that? If by any chance Skill Taker can steal Extra Skills and Unique skills, then it'd be unbelievably strong. To put it bluntly, it'd be a complete cheat.

I want to use it at once, but... There're only allies around us. Won't some bandits appear? Well, even after thinking that, I know that bandits that would come to take on a bunch of adventurers don't exist.

And so, without anything occurring we reached the guild.

It was in quite the festive mood when we arrived. Adventurers were rejoicing at our victory while we received the remuneration for our efforts. Everyone's face is cheerful.

「Little miss, come over here for a moment.」

「Nn.」

Led by Donna, Fran and I move towards the Guild Master's room. None of the other Adventurers are surprised. They understand that Fran contributed the most, after all.

Various rumors had gone around, but even Adventurers who doubt Fran's ability seem to have come to the understanding that her summons has to do with her involvement in the subjugation.

「Ahh, must be nice. It'll be a bonus for sure, right?」

「Can't be helped, it was a spectacular victory.」

「She saved my life, y'know?」

「What did she do to become so strong at that age...?」

「She's a monster I say. A monster!」

「Maybe she'll want to enter our party?」

「Haaa... Haaa... Fran-chan, CUTE!」

The voices are split into Good Will: 5, Envy: 4, and Disgusting: 1. — Hey wait, this last guy is just plain creepy!

「Ah, Fran. I've been waiting.」

「Nn.」

「First, I'd like to express my gratitude. Thanks to you, the subjugation ended with very few casualties. For a dungeon of this degree to have a demon... If we had conquered it normally, the number of fatalities wouldn't have been a laughing matter.」

His words held a hint of gratitude, but a smile didn't cross his face. This person was different from Donna in that he doesn't let his guard down. Even now I get the feeling that he's doubting us.

「Still, stealing the march on everyone else and going out on your own is troubling. That being said, this time we escaped harm because of it, so I won't rebuke you for not complying with orders.」

It seems that after weighing various factors in the subjugation, the result ended up with us avoiding any punishment.

「As for the demon you were said to have defeated... I saw the corpse.」

Donna would need to show it to him, after all.

「I'll be frank. That was a Threat Level B specimen. Did you really defeat it by yourself?」

「Nn.」

「Then... If that's true, then it means your abilities are befitting of an A rank.」

I'm pleased with the evaluation, but if our rank was suddenly changed to A and we got assigned dangerous commissions right away, I'd be troubled.

「Had luck.」

「Oh? In what way?」

For now, we decided to tell the truth.

「I see, so you aimed at the Dungeon Master to restrain him, then got him by surprise...」

「Dungeon Master: an idiot.」

「Even so, not dying instantly is still strange... Besides, about this demon's corpse...」

「？」

「The fatal attack to the heart. How many people do you think can pierce a tenacious Magic Barrier and defeat a Demon？」

「Mmh？」

「Haa... That's... Well, alright. Then, onto the real issue.」

As expected, he'll ask about it?

「What happened to the Demon's magic stone？」

「Annihilated.」

「... Such a creature's magic stone is tremendously useful. It's valued so highly that entire countries would desire it.」

「Nn.」

「And you truly don't have it？」

「Doesn't exist anymore.」

I've absorbed it after all.

「Haa... I understand. I'll believe you.」

We didn't lie, so... Perhaps we've managed to deceive him for now?

Then, the moment I became relieved:

「Wait a minute! Do you seriously plan to overlook this just like that!？」

Vigorously opening the door with a *BAAN*, somebody barged into the room.

[M1] Conqueror of the Century's End.

[E1] Previously ‘Talk from the Heart’.

※ ※ ※

Mllhild:

So, this chapter was 4,800 Jap characters (~2,300 english words), and the next is 6,500. It’s gonna take me at least 2 or 3 days to translate.

Chapter 39: A Cliché ‘Foolish Noble’ Appeared

Author’s Note:

Regarding Skill Sharing and the unique-ification stuff, the explanation seemed to be insufficient, resulting in some parts that are hard to understand.

Since I received some pointers from the readers, I changed some parts.

I published a detailed activity report, so please look at it for further information.

For those who say that looking at the activity report is troublesome, I also included a brief explanation in the afterword of this chapter.

The one who barged into the Guild Master’s room was a fat, sluggish, unhealthy looking man clad in silver armor.

... Who the heck is this? I didn’t see him on the way in — I couldn’t even sense his presence... Ah, maybe it’s an effect of his equipment?

Name : Auguste Alsund Age : 29

Race : Human

Occupation : Soldier

State : Normal

Status:

Level : 30

HP : 108 MP : 99 STR : 52 END : 53 AGI : 45 INT : 50 MGC : 47
DEX : 45

Skills:

Acting Lv.1, Singing Lv.1, Horsemanship Lv.1, Deceit Lv.1, Court
Etiquette Lv.4, Sword Arts Lv.1, Arithmetic Lv.1, Socialising Lv.2, Poison
Resistance Lv.1, Poison Knowledge Lv.2, Herbalism Lv.2

Unique Skills:

Law of Lies Lv5

Titles:

Viscount, Vice Commander of Aressa's Knight Order

Equipment:

Mithril Longsword, Sturdy Silver Full-Body Armor, Red Lion Mantle, Ring
of Presence Concealmen

He's quite unbalanced, isn't he... Despite being Level 30, his status values
are low — probably around that of an E Rank Adventurer.

Besides that, his Skills are beyond lame. Things like Socializing are high,
so he's probably a noble of some sort, but something like Sword Arts
Lv1... Isn't that way too low for a Knight? And yet, despite that he has the
title of Vice Commander?

「What exactly are you referring to with, Sir Auguste?」

「Exactly as should be expected! A Demon's magic stone? A thing of such
value... For a young girl to monopolize it is absolutely unacceptable!」

「I thought that's what you were meaning, but... Regarding subjugations,
the raw materials of Demonic Beasts defeated completely by oneself are

granted wholly to the person in question. She, having defeated the demon, has the legal rights to the Magic Stone. Or rather, for giving the Demon's raw materials to the Guild despite that, there isn't a single reason why we should hold her at fault.」

「Nonsense! If it was something to the degree of Hobgoblin materials, then you could let her have as many as she wants, but high-ranking materials like the ones from a Demon — just handing it over to the likes of a low-class Adventurer would be absolutely absurd!」

In the end, it seems that the materials we obtained were even more amazing than I thought. I'm regretting giving that body away a bit, now...

「This young girl, didn't she arbitrarily act on her own? That's clearly a violation of orders! This sort of person, does she even have the right to receive a proper reward?!」

「Fuu... If we're moving to the subject of 'order violation', then believe me when I say it really can't be helped. Just about every Adventurer would end up as subject to that judgement, after all. In fact, it would be rather strange if Adventurers didn't behave on their own accord. If you know of an Adventurer that hasn't violated any rules or orders, then please, I would very much like to meet them.」

「So you're all just a band of low lives after all...」

「Well, compared to the well-behaved gentlemen of the Knight Order, it's a given that we'd end up looking like a gathering of crude ruffians.」

The Guild Master's eyes aren't smiling at all while he speaks... One can even feel the blood thirst being emitted. It's gotten to the point that I've started admiring this fat noble for not noticing it at all. Maybe because his facial skin is so thick, he ended up being naturally thick-headed?

「Hmm. Then let me tell you something good. This lass is lying, alright?」

Giku-

Ah, is that this fellow's unique skill?

Law of Lies

Allows the user to see through lies spoken by others, while making one's own lies become harder to be seen through. Furthermore, the user's lies will be easier to believe by others.

It's an ideal Skill for crooks, dictators, and founders of questionable religious sects. How does this guy own such a Skill and still only have the rank of a Vice Commander in a local Knight Order? In regards to the type of position held by hated people in fantasy novels, isn't the scale too small?

Depending on the way it's used, it's a skill capable of doing horrendous things, and yet... Well... I suppose this just goes to show you that no matter how excellent a Skill is, its power is fully reliant on its user.

It would seem that we've been driven into a corner... Or, we would be if his next words were what I expected. But they weren't.

「She said that the Magic Stone was annihilated, but that was definitely a lie. There's no doubt that she's hiding it somewhere.」

Huh? No, that wasn't a lie, you know? To say 'it was annihilated' was the truth.

「... Even if that's the case, she owns the property rights to the Magic Stone.」

「No, a false report in this sort of situation can't be tolerated! Besides, what if she's hiding something else, too?」

「Really annihilated.」

「Are you still lying?」

What the heck is this guy saying? Since he can detect lies, he should know that what Fran said was the truth...

— No, that's just it, isn't it? It's possible that he's well known for having the Law of Lies Skill. In that case, if he says that someone is lying, then they're automatically turned into a liar. Using that, he's planning on setting Fran up.

「？」

『Fran, don't talk for now』

(Understood.)

Now, the real question is ‘What's his goal?’...

「This isn't the site for official talks — she only came here to talk privately. Even if she spoke in jest, there isn't any sort of law that would find fault in that, is there?」

The Guild Master is strangely covering for us. Perhaps he has a hatred of nobles? Well, regardless of his reasons, I'm grateful. Go for it, Guild Master!

「She attempted to steal from nobles like myself while we weren't aware: no matter the place, that's a crime!」

「I will say it once again: I wasn't aware that something like telling a joke was a crime.」

「Regardless, this girl isn't trustworthy! I've heard that you don't even know her birthplace! She might be a foreign spy! Deliver all of her belongings to the Knight Order! If we receive and inspect the goods, no more will be said about her rude conduct today.」

Haa? This fellow, what did he just say? Deliver her belongings? Isn't that just a cover up for extortion? Does he seriously think we'll abide?

「What are you saying?!」

「To begin with, you bastards of the Adventurers Guild ignored our Knight Order and went to the Goblin Subjugation on your own, right? You loathed

that us elite Knights would snatch away the gains — an appropriate behavior for vulgar Adventurers. If you hand over the Demon's raw materials, we just might overlook this slight.」

「Haa? We did contact the Knight Order. The date and time we planned on carrying out the Subjugation were properly conveyed.」

「Humph, don't lie! At least half of the loot, all of the Demon's materials, and this girl's baggage: hand them over!」

「Half the gains? All of the Demon's materials? There is no reason to give such things to the Knight Order that didn't even do anything.」

「What are you saying?! You bastard Adventurers — too blinded by greed with what's waved in front of you — made light of protecting the town and went towards the Goblin den! While you did so, we Knights carried the town's public order on our backs!」

「So, you all got cold feet and didn't want to participate, thus ignoring our request...」

「Oi, did you say anything?」

「No. Nothing.」

So it was like that... The Knight Order was scared of the Hobgoblins, so they deliberately ignored the appeal for participation in the Subjugation campaign. And so, the Adventurers went alone. When they returned, they not only had very few casualties, but also produced tremendous gains. Now, the Knights want in on those gains.

So, who're the greedy ones again?

「Oi, kid! For starters, hand over that sword. It appears to be considerably beautiful, so where did you steal it? Speak the truth!」

The shitty, fat noble approached.

(Kill?)

『Wait, let's observe a little while longer.』

I also want to beat him into the dirt and chop him up, but we should refrain.

「Inside the Guild, the Knight Order has no authority. Even so, do you still insist on ordering us around? To demand us to hand over half the gains that the Adventurers risked their lives for?」

「It's our natural right.」

This bastard, he really said it. And now, even more tremendous bloodthirst is gushing out of the Guild Master. Uwa, after getting this angry, he's done well for enduring the desire to start a fight. Instead, he's just smiling cheerfully on the surface... This Guild Master is a man worthy of respect.

「First, hand over signed contracts. You, bastard, if you write your name here then the delivery of the raw material will be accepted.」

「Is this the consensus of the Knight Order? Or, to rephrase my question, the Commander also knows of this, right?」

「..... Of course.」

「Then, is it fine for me to inquire?」

「H-Huh? That... There is no need for such —」

「The one who decides that is me.」

It seems that the tides have changed.

「To inquire about something like this, is there any problems with that?」

「D-Don't joke around! Are you saying that I'm lying? Un-Unbelievable. For today I will take my leave!」

Uwaa... He totally hit the nail on the head, huh. Whether it was for earning reputation among his peers or for indulging in embezzlement of profit, it's certain that this guy came here without permission.

『Ok, let's try it out on him.』

Try what, you ask? Skill Taker, of course. He even has a Unique Skill all nicely prepared, after all.

(I want to try too.)

『Mh. First, I will attempt it.』

The target is obviously the Unique Skill. Thinking about it, this Skill would be quite hard to use on an opponent if you didn't have Appraisal, huh...

I'm mentioning that because the Demon didn't have Appraisal. The Dungeon Master had said that he won the Demon through something like a gacha-automat[M1], so maybe the Demon's Skills were strange because of that? Or perhaps Demonic Beasts won in the early stages of a Dungeon all have random Skills? Or maybe the Dungeon Master simply forgot to add Appraisal to its Skills...?

Yeah, that last one is the most likely.

「I will come again!」

Oops, the sucker almost left.

『Skill Taker!』

— — Success. The best part of this Skill is that it has no visible effects, allowing it to secretly steal Skills. It's truly villainous.

Law of Lies: Lv5, get! With this, we've verified that Unique Skills can be stolen. Furthermore, it seems that the Skill's true danger is that the stolen Skill remains at the same level when it's taken. If a high leveled Skill was stolen, you'd suddenly become an expert.

The flaw is that the Unique Skill that I gained doesn't count as a Set Skill. Whether for good or bad, because it's registered as mine, I can't share it with Fran. The opposite will most likely hold true as well. In the future, we'll have to choose who steals what depending on the situation.

「Skill Taker.」

Following me, Fran muttered in a tiny voice. Naturally, this was also a success. The next highest Skill, Court Etiquette Lv4, got stolen.

Kukukuku. It'll be quite entertaining when he notices that his precious Skills are gone!

(Teacher. Did it.)

『Ou, it was a huge success.』

(Now: kill?)

『Can I kill him, can I kill him... Why do you want to put an end to him so much?』

(Hate him.)

I have a hunch that this child is gradually becoming dangerous... Right, shouldn't she become more ladylike and refined now that Court Etiquette has been obtained? No? It's impossible after all, huh...

「Haa... I'm very sorry about that.」

「Who was that?」

「A greenhorn son of a big noble, and also the Vice Commander of Aressa's Knight Order. He's a snob that bought his position with gold, and because his pedigree is good he's hard to deal with. Around one year back he moved here, and ever since he's been brandishing his social position at every opportunity. Because of that, he's hated by most of the town. Showing such foolish behavior towards the Guild is a first, though.」

「Complain to the Knight Order?」

「Impossible. With people like him, their parents will suppress any complaints to the end. It's because of that that he's grown up to become such a fool, too. Moreover, he possesses a Skill called Law of Lies that can

see through lies... To be frank, even I can't deal with him, and he can't be taken lightly.」

「Small fry, but Vice Commander? With money: it's OK?」

「You should take complaints like that to the country itself. Anyways, small fry or not, his level is reasonably high. It's often said that nobles party up with strong Knights and hunt Demonic Beasts to raise their level, so that's likely the case for him.」

So, it's real power-leveling huh. If it's like that, then it's no wonder that his combat-series Skills haven't grown. In the end, he only has the appearance of a level 30 knight.

「Next time: beat to a pulp.」

「If possible, please don't. The Vice Commander is a fool, but the Commander is a reasonable fellow, so if I report this event to him the Vice should behave for a short while.」

「Alright.」

「Really, don't. If it becomes a situation where you started a fight, the troubles won't end with you alone.」

It's for your own sake after all, huh. Well, in this person's case, a give-and-take relationship is probably more reliable than friendship anyways.

「Once again, for offering us the Demon's raw materials: thank you very much. Thanks to that, the Guild has profited greatly.」

「Nn.」

「So, do you really have the Magic Stone?」

Es tu, Guild Master!?

「It's a joke.」

「Dangerous.」

「What is?」

「Almost reached for it[M2].」

「Hahahaha! That's quite scary! Well then, please take care around him. He abuses his Skill to see through lies and has been remorselessly tricking others.」

「It's alright.」

「Is that so? If you say so, then it doesn't matter, but...」

「Finished?」

「Yes, thank you again. Ah, but one last thing.」

「?」

「Please go rank up at reception. I've already processed the documents.」

「Again?」

「Yes, again. You raised outrageous accomplishments, after all. An Adventurer who exterminated a Demon alone... It's not possible for such a person to claim to be Rank F. For now, your rank will be raised to D.」

「Not E?」

「I planned to raise it to C, but as expected I wasn't able to obtain the other branches' consent.」

Well, that should have been obvious. A 12 year-old girl who just became an Adventurer independently crushed a Rank B Demon? What kind of adventure novel would that situation come from? In fact, getting raised to D is already a stretch.

「Understood. Going to reception.」

「Please treat us well from now on. Your compensation will also be paid when you get there — alongside a bonus.」

「Nn.」

It seems that the rumor that we'd be ranking up at the reception spread, so the other Adventurers got noisy. Apparently, this was the fastest rank up in this Guild's history. It's only been 4 days since we registered, after all.

It started with betting on whether it was actually Fran that would be ranking up, but through skipping a rank, we appear to have caused some really heavy losses... Or rather, the racket we caused became even louder than originally expected.

「Haha! Thanks to the little miss, I made a killing!」

「Shit! Such a heavy loss...!」

「Wahahahaha!」

「So, how is it? Shall I treat you to a drink?」

「Idiot, as if such a small child could drink alcohol!」

「Thanks.」

「O-Oh! You can?」

「Then, let's get you an Apple Juice!」

And with that, Fran's rank went up to D. Rank D, huh... She's already a splendidly 'average' Adventurer.

Thinking about today's events, maybe it would be better if I reveal myself? There might be even more situations like the one from earlier, but if it's a Rank D Adventurer, then having a slightly odd Magic Sword wouldn't be all that strange.

A sword that grows stronger by absorbing magic stones... If that much was revealed, it would also become easier for Fran. Anything more than that... I don't know. Next time, let's try asking Old Man Gallus for some advice.

Anyways, in relation to the Demon's Magic Stone, most of the fellows seem to think that Fran is secretly holding on to it, so revealing myself is no problem. Their understanding will simply change from 「She's secretly holding onto it」 to 「Her sword absorbed it」. If it's like that, then returning only the Demon's raw materials to the Guild is fine. It's also thanks to that that everyone got a bonus.

So... Next, shall we provide today's alcohol on us? Accumulating small favors is important, after all.

「Today: my treat.」

「What're ya sayin'? As if I'd let m'self be treated by such a small kid!」

「It's okay. Also got a bonus」

「Ohh. How big of you!」

「Not fat[M3].」

「Gahaha, ain't you amusing, lil' miss!」

「Then, I'll be regaining my losses through drinks!」

「Wahahaha!」

In the end, those drunkards managed to drown no less than 100,000 Gorudo...

Author Note: (modified)

Below, there's a longer explanation, but the point is the MC's and Fran's Shareable Skills are only the ones obtained from absorbing the magic stones, called 'Set Skills'. These Skills can be Normal, Extra, or Unique skills. Any others can't be shared. However, any Set Skills (sharable) that

go through a change and become Unique Skills can no longer be shared.
(Just to note, Sword Arts → Master Sword Arts is not an example of a Skill changing from a Normal Skill to a Unique Skill)

Mllhild:

There're a bunch of references to the chapters where explanations come from, but the important bits are these:

Any Skill taken with Skill Taker is theirs alone.

If Fran or Teacher develop/acquire a skill normally, it cannot be shared.

Because this doesn't matter anywhere after this chapter: remember that only Teacher has Law of Lies Lv5, and only Fran has Court Etiquette Lv4.

[M1] Essentially, the Demon would have been won by something like a 7-7-7 line on Slots.

[M2] 'It' being her sword (meaning she almost considered the Guild Master an enemy and pulled the sword on him). It's for this things that I love Fran.

[M3] Generous = futobbara, Fat Belly = futohara, so Fran thinks she got called fat.

Ensig: Thanks to lygarx for offering a suggestion on how to translate that joke over to English!

Chapter 40: Poisonous Fish Seem to be Delicious

Author's Note:

This is today's second chapter.

It's sort of like an apology for any trouble I've caused with the recent revisions to the setting, I suppose?

It's been 2 days since the Goblin subjugation.

We've come to the guild to look for a commission, but it's not for the money. At the moment our pockets are full, after all.

After selling off all of the Hobgoblin Horns, looted equipment, and the materials from the Beetles, we gained around 30,000 Gorudo. Considering the fact that they were materials from small fries, you could say they were sold a bit on the expensive side. Furthermore, some of the Hobgoblins' equipment included weak magic items, so those were particularly expensive.

On top of all that, we received quite the bonus for our participation in the subjugation. The standard participation reward was 30,000 Gorudo, with any bonuses[E1] amounting to ~40,000 Gorudo. Fran's special bonus was another 300,000 Gorudo on top of that.

Adding the cash we gained from selling the raw materials, our total income was ~400,000 Gorudo. Or, it would have been, but because we treated everyone to drinks, it decreased by 100,000. Because the other Adventurers

got a nice bonus out of the subjugation, they ended up turning up in the morning to thank us.

Anyways, today's request will be for the sake of gaining experience. As a consequence of our irregular rank ups, we have insufficient experience in completing 'normal' requests. In fact, the only one would have been the commission for collecting Heal Grass.

Therefore, we decided to look for a normal request.

『The only commissions Fran can take as a Rank D are marked C, D or E Rank.』

We're no longer eligible for easy G and F Rank commissions. They wouldn't have been bad commissions to accumulate experience...

『Harvesting, escorting, patrolling the highway, and assisting in construction with magic, huh.』

「Subjugation commissions: good.」

Assuredly the most convenient requests for us are subjugation commissions, but the bulletin board doesn't have any of our Rank. Are they popular?

『How about asking Ms. Nell?』

「Nn.」

Luckily the lineup to the reception desk was also barren.

「Nell.」

「Oh, Fran. Good day[M1].」

「Good day.」

「About the recent Goblin subjugation, you played quite an important part in it, didn't you?」

「Well.」

「You even ended up defeating a demon. Waa~, isn't that amazing~? You're cute, strong and lovely!」

「Thank you.」

「Kyaaaaan! An embarrassed Fran is also cute~!」

W-When did they get so close? Unbeknownst to me who is with Fran almost 24/7, did they get together at some point? Just where the heck...?

「No subjugation commissions?」

「Ah, right now there are none, huh~ Well, to begin with, the recent Goblin stampede was an abnormal case, right? Usually, Demonic Beasts seldom appear so easily.」

Of course. If hoards of Demonic Beasts appeared in the vicinity of the town resulting in subjugation commissions being emitted every day, then the daily lives of normal citizens wouldn't be possible after all.

Still... It appears that the number of Demonic Beasts in the vicinity of Aressa is even less than we thought.

「Understood.」

「Ah, wait a moment. It's not a subjugation commission, but there is a request that you'll certainly encounter Demonic Beasts in, is that ok?」

「Where?」

「Mh~ Wait....This one.」

Hm? Investigation of the ecology of the Poisonous Swamp? 'It's possible that Demonic Beasts have settled in the swamp[M2] situated near the Forest of Starvation. Verification of their existence is needed before starting the reclamation project'?

「The area mentioned is a troublesome swamp that poisonous gas spills out of occasionally; the gas causes poison damage to any peddlers going through it.」

It seems because of that, there're plans to fill up the poisonous swamp... But before sending in the workers, it's necessary to investigate whether or not there's any danger. It's especially so since there are rumors of Demonic Beasts living there, so this investigation appears to have maximum priority.

「A subjugation party would usually be sent out, but...」

「Defeating them all: OK?」

Fran, that's a death flag!

『Fran, that's no good.』

「? Don't defeat?」

『No, I don't mean that part, but...』

「It's no problem if you defeat them. Rather, doing so would cut down on the labor.」

「Nn.」

It's no use. I'll just have to carefully pay attention.

「While you're at it, why not take this commission as well?」

「Medical plant harvesting?」

「Right. It's a herb called New Moon Grass, and it's quite rare. It doesn't grow close to the town, but if it's close to the poisonous swamp then I think you should be able to find it.」

「Understood. I'll take it.」

「Thanks. I pray for your good luck. Let's meet again in the baths?」

「Nn.」

Now I see, so it was in the inn's bath! Well, that's good. Proactively wanting to interact with others besides me, that is.

『According to the map... The swamp's a little ways away from where we met Randell.』

「Nn.」

『If we depart now, I get the impression that we'll return... Probably the day after tomorrow?』

A sleeping bag, blanket, and cookware is all we brought. With that, our camping preparations were complete.



「That?」

『Looks like it.』

Around 100 meters worth of wetlands can be seen ahead of us.

We barely noticed any time passing since we left the town.

On the way here, the only enemies we met were Black Bugs and Giant Centipedes. I suppose because we having smashed their den, we didn't encounter a single Goblin.

In regards to any Demonic Beasts that leave a Dungeon prior to its defeat, after a few days their link to the Dungeon is severed. Because of that, even when the dungeon 'died', the Demonic Beast that left the Goblin Den didn't end up getting exterminated. Instead, they continued living on the outside.

And so, the moment the Dungeon got shut down all the Hobgoblins got annihilated, but the regular Goblins who had already left the dungeon should have still been roaming around here...

I guess most scattered or ran away. Even while camping, we weren't attacked even once. Needless to say, we were extremely bored.

「Smells like poison...」

『Abnormal State Resistance is set, alongside Poison Breath and Poison Absorption. There're no problems.』

「No Demonic Beasts?」

『Seems so. Yet, if they're lurking deep in the swamp it's possible that we won't be able to sense them.』

「Attacking with magic.」

『Wait, wait! If you blow it up imprudently, then poison will end up scattered all over the place.』

The end goal of the commission is to reduce the damage coming from the poisonous swamp, so what are you thinking, trying to amplify it...?

『A way to minimize the collateral damage...』

「Fill it with Soil Magic.」

『The swamp is too big. Soil pollution is also a concern.』

Hmmm... Maybe I should try leaving Fran behind and scanning the area by myself?

「Store the swamp.」

『?』

「Dimensional Storage: absorb swamp water. Like that: Demonic Beast left bare.」

『G-Genius? Indeed, that's a good idea.』

They wanted to reclaim the swamp anyways, so there shouldn't be any problem. If they're a group of people with high awareness, then they might be noisy about environmental problems or destruction of nature, but... I don't want to hear it! Even after coming to a different world, I don't want to care about stuff like that! That's only to be expected, right?

『Then, I'll be storing the swamp's water.』

「Nn.」

This will also be a good experiment. Currently, my Dimensional Storage's limit still isn't in sight. Adding up all the harvested Demonic Beast materials, it should currently contain about half of a 25m pool.

So, let's see how much swamp water it can take. It's quite a large swamp, and its depth also seems to be considerable, so... Its Volume must be quite immense.

『Alright! Harvesting: start!』

Zuzuzuzuzu— —

Slowly, the water level drops.

『It... It won't stop.』

Eh? Far from the limit being reached, the swamp's water is already decreased by half and the storage still isn't getting close to full.

『... I ended up harvesting it all.』

「More space?」

『Yeah. My guess is that it's not even half-filled.』

I think that around five 25 meter pools[M3] worth got absorbed, so... Dimensional Storage is incredible.

「Lots of Demonic Beasts.」

『Hee, those?』

「Fish.」

Appearance wise, they look like cow-sized Catfish.

Race : Madness Fish : Demonic Fish : Demonic Beast Lv7

HP : 100 MP : 32

STR : 33 END : 39 AGI : 38

INT : 10 MGC : 22 DEX : 17

Skills:

Stealth Lv3, Presence Perception Lv3, Poison Secretion Lv4, Poison Resistance Lv7, Tunneling Lv3, Water Magic Lv2, Poisonous Fangs[E2]

Description:

A troublesome Demonic Beast that produces poison from its skin to kill other aquatic creatures and defend itself. Throughout history, there have been Villages that were annihilated when one appeared in its water source. Its staple food is a peculiar seaweed that grows even in contaminated waters. Its body is exceedingly delicious. Because it is naturally endowed with Poison Resistance, its body contains no poison. Threat level E.

Magic stone location: Head, interior of the brain.

Weak. Going by its status, it's a small fry. Still, with poison related abilities and the ability to hide beneath the water's surface, it'd be quite a nuisance. Well, it was no trouble for us though.

There were 5 of them total, but they were easily dispatched and Dismantled on the spot. The muddy poisonous fish scales, poison glands and poison fangs were stripped off immediately.

The body appears as though it'd be delicious, and from the bones a Dashi[M4] could be made. Fish dishes can now be added to our cooking repertoire.

『With this, the commission is complete. Next is collecting medical plants, so let's finish it quick and return.』

Author note:

I've been informed that when clicking on an author's name, some couldn't get to the author's page and see the activity report. So... Authors shouldn't use pen names?

When I go to look at the activity reports of others, I just click on the Author's name and go to their page, where their activity report can usually be seen, but...

Is there some where that isn't the case?

I haven't mastered Narou's functions by any means, so right now I don't know what to do. I'm sorry.

That being the case, in the afterword of the next chapter I will include a detailed record. I also have been considering adding settings and other such things to the data in Chapter 0.

[E1] It wasn't directly mentioned, but I'm pretty sure most (if not all) of the 'bonuses' being talked about here is from the Demon's materials.

[M1] Nell used 'konichiwa', so it can be assumed that Fran came to the adventure guild after 10AM. That's pretty late considering the fact that commissions are usually posted first thing in the morning.

[M2] Numa = lake/pond/bog/swamp, aka 'a body of water'. I'm going with 'swamp' since no one makes reclamation projects for a lake, and also because the water quantity is about $2,500\text{ m}^3$, which is a bit low for a lake.

[M3] $5 \times 974\text{ m}^3 = 4,970\text{ m}^3 = 1,312,935\text{ Gallons}$

[E2] 毒牙 (@ the Footnote) ≠ 毒の牙 ('Poison Fang' in previous chapters). The former doesn't have a level, so I figure it's more of a Passive skill. That being the case, its name will be 'Poisonous Fangs'.

[M4] Japanese soup stock. Google it for images.

Chapter 41: Otherworldly Cooking

Author's Note:

Yesterday I posted 2 chapters, but from today on I'll be returning to 1 chapter a day.

Besides that, we've reached 1st place in the weekly ranking, and have over 10,000 bookmarks!

Thank you very much!

I will put even more fighting spirit into it and do my best!

It's now been 7 days since the Goblin subjugation

It's late at night, and we're in the inn's kitchen.

As promised to Fran, I'm here to cook her some food. Since the sight of a lightly floating sword cooking would certainly cause a commotion, Fran is here with me too.

The cooks said "If it's late at night after the Dining Room is closed, then there's no problem", so we've properly received permission. With this, I'll give my all at cooking!

『Chan Chan Chara Chachacharara~[M1]』

「Chanchan?」

『Chanchara, Chan Chan Chan~』

「?」

『Welcome! It's time for Otherworldly Cooking!』

「Oh~~?」

Not understanding the meaning of my words yet still guessing the mood, Fran started clapping.

『The first meal today is... This!』

「Meat?」

『Correct! Prepared for you today is minced meat from Rock Bison and Crash Boar: 30kg of each!』

Moreover, Rune Tulip bulbs that resemble onions, Golden Chicken eggs, breadcrumbs, and all sorts of spices were also prepared.

『Then, knead this Fran.』

「Nn.」

『You should make use of what you have, right?』

「With this: able to eat Teacher's cooking every day.」

『Considering your Titles, you should also be able to make good dishes.』

「Can't make what I don't know.」

『Ah, that's right after all.』

What Fran wants to eat is Earth's cooking, and no one but me can make that. Even if similar cooking is possible, in the end the degree of refinement would end up different.

So, with that I went on to chop the Rune Tulip bulbs. For the sake of cutting them into fine pieces, I've decided to use Aura · Blade.

So far, I had used myself after taking a thorough wash through boiling and purification magic, but... Still, I had used Demonic Poison Fang for slaying Demonic Beasts earlier, so a bit of anxiety still remains. Until now Fran's shown no sign of bad conditions, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's safe.

The finely chopped Rune Tulips were carefully stir-fried in the frying pan.

『Mix together the minced meats, then make an onion-shaped ball. After that, add spices and keep on mixing.』

「Leave it to me.」

I also mixed the remaining minced meat with Telekinesis. When that was completed, 60kg worth of special-hamburger base was completed.

Honestly, I had a feeling that I went overboard, but... When it's put into Dimensional Storage it won't go bad, so it's fine.

『Now let's start grilling the hamburgers.』

「Nn.」

Even using an enormous oven with Magic to shorten the process, it couldn't be done in one go.

『In the meantime, the next step is to cut up all of these vegetable-like ingredients and put them into a stew.』

「Nn.」

『Then, I'll also begin cutting.』

The ingredients besides Demonic Beast flesh were arranged plentifully.

Affected by the ambiance of the town market, I now realize that I may have gotten a bit carried away. After following my instincts, I got completely swept up in buying ingredients... A large earthenware pot of Miso and Soy Sauce alongside a giant bag of spices were also bought. After that, several super-extra-large sized pots got purchased.

Because of that, another 100,000Gorudo ended up being used. Ha...
Hahaha...

— No, it was for the sake of making delicious meals for Fran, so it was necessary!

『Now we add some water... And next, we'll throw in the spices.』

I added heat with Magic while using Telekinesis and Magic to shred the vegetables like a mixer. When finished, it was a specially-made demi-glace. It smelt good, to say the least.

After that, tomato sauce, consomme soup, chicken bouillon and so forth were also made. At this point I've started instructing Fran on the ways to use the ingredients.

「Guro, guro.」

『Mhm. Keep stirring, just like that.』

Around the time the third batch of hamburgers were cooked, all the soup and sauces were completed.

Good, good. If there are matching seasonings at the market, then I'm able to make any cuisine!

I cover the hamburgers in demi-glace sauce and toss them into Dimensional Storage one after another. The plan is to have them available regardless of the time and place while still steaming hot.

In the same way, tomato juice and japanese ponzu flavored ones were made. Tyrant Tiger Stew, Deep Fried Blast Turtle, Dopple Snake Kabayaki, Fried Stone Spider, Stewed Rock Bison Tongue, Ginger Air-grilled Crash Boar, Sausages, Bacon, Jerky, Meat Miso and other such dishes were completed as well.

『Alright. The meat dishes are almost finished.』

「Nn!」

Before long, dawn broke. We'll end here today and continue tomorrow.



And so, we're once again in the kitchen.

Today we'll be doing fish-based cooking. — Well, even if I say that, I don't have any fish ingredients other than the Madness Fish meat. I think I'll turn it into

Nitsuke, Shioyaki and Tempura.

I also considered making some into Meunière, but as expected a Japanese should eat Japanese cuisine! Er... Not that I'd be eating it, of course.

Ah, by the way, about the poisonous swamp: it seems that our actions turned into some sort of ghost story about a suddenly-vanishing poisonous swamp. Ms. Nell knew that we did something, but it seems that she wasn't the type of person who would spread that information to other Adventurers. Maybe we overdid it...

Oops, while thinking the Nitsuke finished. It's got a good color to it.

Well, that's about all for the main cooking, but we're not finished yet.

Next are the side dishes. Let's start off with soups. We'll be re-using the soup-like things made yesterday, but this time we'll fine-tune them with salt and pepper as well as throw in some other ingredients. A Consomme Soup with Sausages... Wouldn't that be delicious?

Furthermore, making use of the Madness Fish bones, the Chinese Fish Dashi Soup was also completed.

Of course, I didn't forget about Salad and Stir-Fried Vegetables either. The nutritional balance has to be enforced with an iron grip with Fran in her growth period. Related to that, her current state is quite worrying. Lately she's gotten somewhat better-rounded, but compared to the other kids in

town she still looks feeble. Furthermore, it feels like her height is little short... Meals are important, no matter what.

「Nn?」

『No, it's nothing. Next are the staple foods.』

Somehow, I had made light of Aressa's market, as today I found myself surprised that even Rice was sold there. In this area, the Northern and Southern regions appear to meet, so Rice and Wheat-based items are both eaten.

The Rice is cooking quietly, in several earthenware pots we bought for its sake.

Of course, flour is also being made use of. Udon, Bread, Naan and Okonomiyaki, all such carbohydrate-parade foods were around. Bread could be found in the standard baguette type, but there were also the rectangular type that Japanese people love.

We also made Chinese Noodles, since Lye Water was also at the market.

I don't think that any mistakes were made when kneading the noodles, since the process of making them went well because of the strange water. And so, Ramen, Yakisoba, and more could be made.

Now, since we have rice and Naan... That has to be made.

『Well then, next I was thinking of making a special dish.』

「Special?」

Hey, hey, your expectations are a bit too high if your eyes are gleaming like that... Well, I guess I'll just need to do by best, huh?

「What is it?」

『It's a special-hyper-ultra dish! Its name is —— Curry!』

「Kuuree? What is it?」

『Fufufufu. Well, you'll see.』

Curry was my favorite food back on Earth. Here, I don't eat — not even a single sign of appetite has shown up thus far. But the feeling of wanting Fran to eat delicious food is there instead. Therefore: Curry needs to be made. We can't go on without it.

『Break the spices like this.』

「Beautiful.」

『It's for the sake of making a delicious curry.』

「Cook it?」

『Right. While blending it, you keep on cooking.』

「Hmmm.」

One hour later, 3 business sized pots filled to the brim with curry sit in front of us.

In the beginning, we finished with just a normal sized pot. Spices are expensive, after all.

However, after Fran taste tested the first batch, she kept on eating it at a dreadful pace. In the blink of an eye, we ran out. Afterwards, upon Fran's continuous demands, all of the remaining spices were put towards making curry in vast amounts.

Sweet, mild, and scathing flavors were made, and the vegetables and meat were altered to fit. Even if I say so myself, they're masterpieces. If we took them to Japan, I have absolute confidence that it would sell.

「I was born to meet this dish.」

『You like it that much?!』

「Thanks Teacher.」

『That feels like the most emotion-loaded “Thanks” I’ve received up until now...』

I have to make sure that Fran doesn’t eat only Curry from now on...

Counting all the dishes made in these 2 days, ~2000 portions should have been made. In other words, we’ve made over 1 year’s worth of food. However, contrary to her appearance Fran is a big eater, so the chances that it’ll disappear sooner than that is quite high.

Well, with this there won’t be any concerns about meals for a while at least.

「For now: second serving of curry.」

『But you just ate...』

「Please.」

『... It can’t be helped. Only one more serving, alright?』

「Nn!」

Fran exercises properly, so just one more shouldn’t hurt... Right?

[M1] Like this?

Chapter 42: Regarding the Future and Such

Author's Note:

Eh? The reaction to the cooking part was that great...?

The number of replies was the highest of any of my previous chapters.

It's now been 10 days since the Goblin subjugation.

This morning, we returned after what seemed like a long time to Gallus' shop. As usual, merchants had intense looks in their eyes while they loitered around his store.

「Afternoon.」

「Well, if it isn't little miss and Teacher! It's been a while! What can I help you with today?」

『First things first, how's the armor coming along?』

「Gahaha! It's going fine! When you see it, you'll definitely be surprised!」

「Looking forward.」

「So, did you only come to ask for an update?」

『No. Actually, we wanted a bit of advice ——』

I explain to the old man how I grow stronger as Magic Sword through absorbing Magic Stones. Since Gallus hadn't leaked the fact that I was an Intelligent Weapon, he seemed like a trustworthy fellow.

「I see, so you had that type of ability... And, essentially, you're wondering whether it's alright for others to know or not?」

『Uh-huh. So, what do you think?』

「Hmm... I think you'd better not.」

「As expected: unusual.」

「Got that right. I've heard of large scale Magical Tools having similar traits, but for a sword to have such ability... It's the first I've heard of it.」

So my abilities were something that even a famous Blacksmith hasn't heard of? In that case, it's definitely not on the level of a normal person's knowledge...

「As expected. Teacher: amazing.」

「A bit too amazing. Intelligent Weapons aren't unheard of, but one that can grow by absorbing Magic Stones — and even gets skills through them to boot... It'd be easy to see something like that being labeled as a Divine Sword.」

Divine Swords: equipment of legends. The ones that exist are undoubtedly super weapons. Compared to me, they're on a whole different level of might.

「A single Divine Sword can easily influence the military balance between Nations, you know.」

『It's at that level?』

「Aye. Even though my knowledge only covers 5 of them, each one has unbelievable legends associated with 'em.

Being the origin of the ‘Divine Sword’ title, the first divine sword: Alpha.

Achieving fame in a war which ruined entire Countries, the divine sword that brings abnormal mentality to its wielder: Berserk.

Having served a single horseman to kill an army measuring 30,000 strong, the Battle-Horse sword: Chariot.

Considered to have sealed the Demon King itself, the Demon King’s sword: Diablos.

And then, the sword of flame that we’ve already spoken about before: Ignis.

In addition to those, there’re several other Divine Swords. Almost all of them have stories of mass-slaughter, and end with sites of great destruction in the end.」

「Divine Swords: amazing.」

「Well, there’s always some exaggerations mixed in with their tales, but without a doubt they’re on completely different levels. Of course, every Nation keeps their blades’ locations a secret, and the whereabouts of the Divine-Class Master Blacksmith(s) who forged the Divine Swords is completely unknown. Whether they’re still alive, or if a new Divine Class Blacksmith was born... Anything related to them is unknown.」

「Why?」

「That’s the question, isn’t it. Maybe they didn’t want to be used by governments and hid, or... Maybe they’re being sheltered by the Gods. There’re lots of rumors, but the truth is unknown. It’s for that reason that each Nation keeps an iron grip on the Divine Swords that they know of.」

『So, they’re existences of that magnitude, huh...?』

「Right. If by any chance the information that you’re a Divine Sword spread... No doubt people would come to steal you for the sake of acquiring your strength. And it wouldn’t be some small number, either. It wouldn’t even matter if you were actually a true one or not; in such

peoples' eyes, it'd be fine to steal first and verify later. After that, they'd test you out to measure your ability.」

Whether it's entire Nations or simply individuals, Divine Swords are certain to be aimed at by many.

「Even if their opponent wields a Divine Sword: surprise attacks, poisoning... There're always ways to give themselves an edge. Since your wielder is the little miss, some might turn to 'sweeter' forms of persuasion, but...」

『In the end, it's better to keep my abilities hidden.』

「You ought to do that. I'm happy that you came to open up to me, but make sure you don't become careless and get discovered from now on, alright?」

The risk gained from revealing my abilities is far too large. For now, let's keep it a secret.



After departing from old man Gallus', we went to the Guild to turn in our commissions as per usual. We were doing well day after day —— would be something I say tentatively, but it's a fact that we've been steadily piling up completed commissions. There was nothing else to do, after all.

「Today: also disappointed.」

『There was nothing besides insects, after all.』

「No consistency when chewed.」

『On this side, I've only gained 7 points in Magic Stone Value in these 10 days...』

Commissions like 'harvesting' or 'investigating' are nice, but our desired Experience Points and Magic Stone Value aren't being gathered at all.

『Fran is Level 25 now, right?』

「Nn.」

『Then... From now on, it'd be best not thinking that you'll be leveling up as fast as you used to.』

「Next: dungeons?」

『Haunts, probably.』

According to the rumors we've heard, Haunts have Demonic Beasts in high numbers, just like Dungeons. It's for that reason that they're known as "Boundaries of Demons[E1]", after all.

Maokami Plains also falls under that category. I think above 90% of the creatures there were Demonic Beasts, after all.

That being said, I'd prefer not going back there. Not only is there the fact that we'd have to get close to the Forest of Starvation, but it also appears that the Threat Level in the plains skyrocketed since I left.

Around the time we came to town, the Adventurers made an investigation of Maokami Plains — as to keep an eye on the turf war between large scale Demonic Beast. The reports filed to result of said investigation confirmed the presence of several Rank B Demonic Beasts.

During the time I was there, neither shadows nor figures of such beings were present. However, when talking about Demonic Beasts, even without breeding they can be produced spontaneously when magic power coagulates. Most likely, the Demonic Beast that showed up were born like that.

If that's the case, then after I departed, Rank B Demonic Beast were born...

— Really close!

If they had been born any earlier, I might not be here now. Or rather, that fact is almost certain.

There's even the possibility of an A Rank existing there, so the reconnaissance team's main body is still in the middle of continuing the survey. Because the danger is high in the Plains itself, they're supposedly observing from inside of the Forest of Starvation. Staying in that forest for a prolonged period: thanks, but no thanks.

Anyways, an A Rank, huh... For such a being to have come into existence... Saying that the Plain is an A Rank Haunt gives me a bad feeling, but I can agree with it. Or rather, I should probably count my lucky stars that the Demonic Beasts were weaker while I was there.

「Then: dungeon delving after all?」

『That's also possible.』

However, our taking down the Demon in this last Dungeon was largely due to luck. If the Demon was cool-headed and came to finish us off at long range, then we would have had to flee without being able to do anything.

『Let's not challenge Demon bosses if we come across any. We might be able to handle weaker ones, though.』

Hm... From now on, we should collect information on Dungeons and Haunts. We can't leave the town before receiving the armor from Gallus anyways.

(Check up on dungeon info?)

『Mh. Let's pass the rest of the day doing that.』

We'll have time to spare no matter what we do, so let's take our time searching the Guild's reference room for today.

In the second floor of the Guild is a room dedicated to books and documents. I can't really imagine many Adventurers reading documents as part of their preparations, but there seem to be some people here and there. They're all Scouts or Mages. Different from the muscle brains responsible

for the vanguard, they came to search for information on their commissions, I guess.

One can really see the sorrows of the intellectual Adventurers up here.

「Oho. Is this your first time here, missy?」

「Nn.」

「Then, let me take a look see at your Adventurer Card.」

At the Reference Room's reception desk sits an old man with a small build. He's bald with a white beard that reaches his chest, and his eyebrows have grown to the degree of hiding his eyes entirely. Even if he's wearing a classy robe, I can only think of him as a hermit.

『He brings quite the pointless ambiance...』

「Hoho, so you're the rumored Magic-Sword Girl, eh?」

「Rumored?」

「That's right! Lately, you've become quite the talk, missy. Because of that I immediately recognized ya!」

So rumors have started to spread, huh. Well... There's not much that can be done about us standing out like a sore thumb at this point. Judging by the old man's response, the rumors don't seem to be bad at least.

「I'm Shuuren[E2], and this here reference room is managed by me.」

「Nn.」

「Taking documents outta here is forbidden, but transcribe 'em all you like. A single parchment is 300Gorudo, and you can loan a pen for 30Gorudo per hour.」

Paper is quite expensive... Well, information is valuable in the long run, after all.

After buying one sheet of parchment, we start searching for the desired documents. Since Shuuren showed us where the documents were whenever we asked, finding things was quite easy.

The first thing we looked for was a map of the continent.

Taking a look at it, we're currently in the Jylbard[E3] Continent. Its form seemed close to a caltrop. It's probably around the size of Africa, but that's just conjecture. In the first place, it's questionable whether or not the map is accurate.

The town of Aressa belongs to a Kingdom called Kranzell[E4], and it's located in the Western part of the caltrop-like Jylbard Continent. I didn't know until now, but if you went West for ~5 days from here, you'd probably be able to reach the sea.[M1]

『So, places with Dungeons close to Aressa include... Iluuf[E5] and Urmut[E6].』

Iluuf is in a neighboring country to the North, and belongs to the Belios[E7] Kingdom. If we can't cross the border, then no matter how much we struggle there's no way we'd be able to reach it.

On the other hand, Urmut lays South of Aressa, and also belongs to the Kranzell Kingdom, so there shouldn't be much trouble with entering it.

(Both have dungeons.)

『Iluuf has one C Rank Dungeon.』

(Urmut: two D Rank Dungeons.)

So, do we take quality or quantity? Hmm... I personally think that Urmut would be the best choice. There wouldn't be any problems regarding borders, and it's probably best to accumulate experience in lower ranked Dungeons first.

『So, which one?』

(Urmu. Warm up with D Ranks first.)

『I also agree. Then, let's keep researching. This time, let's aim for information regarding the Dungeons of Urmu.』

「Nn.」

After that, we should find the route we'll be taking to get there, and any stops we should take along the way. There appears to be both a land and a sea route, too.

『By sea or by land... Which would be better, I wonder?』

(Land route would be easier.)

『That's true. By the way... Have you ever been on a ship Fran?』

(Once, as a slave. Was kept cramped at the bottom.)

Somehow... I'm sorry. Or rather, that's her only memory of a boat trip! That's no good! No way that can stay like that!

『I-Is that so. Well then, how about this time we enjoy ourselves on the sea route?』

(Enjoy?)

『Ou. Traversing the sea on a boat is enjoyable. There're also delicious marine products to be had.』

(... Fish?)

『There'd also be Shrimp, Lobster, Crab, and other shellfish too. There's a great variety.』

(Nn. No choice but the sea route, then.)

So it's for food in the end... Well, with that we've decided in favor of the sea route.



「N—n…」

Fran stretched out over the table. It seems that her body has gotten stiff from sitting for so long... Probably. We've been in the Reference Room for 2 hours straight, after all.

『Then, the things we should research later would be...』

(Nn. Urmut's delicacies.)

『Well, there's that too, but there are also other things to investigate, you know...』

Passenger fees, plans for our exact route, and so on.

(Right. Those too.)

『... Do you really understand?』

(Can't go without investigating specialities.)

『Ah... Oh well.』

[E1] A note on 'Haunts': in Japanese, it's 魔境. That can also be translated to 'Boundary of Demons'. Info on Haunts was introduced in C15, but a tl;dr version is 'they're areas under the control of Demonic Beasts'.

Just restating because C15 was released a while ago.

[E2] ‘シューレン’

[E3] ‘シルバード’

Note that ‘バード’ is the term commonly used in RPGs as ‘Bard’.

[E4] ‘クランゼル’

[M1] 1 day = 40^{km} usually, as walking speed is ~5^{km} per hour. Then, the time to build/take down camp before/after 12 hours of daylight needs to be taken into account — but ‘5 days’ could be air distance, too. With all this information, maybe I should make a map?

[E5] ‘イ ルーフ’

[E6] ‘ウルム ット’

[E7] ‘ベリオス’

Chapter 43: What Occurred

We're walking towards the exit of Aressa.

We've taken a simple commission again today while searching for some Demonic Beasts. You could also say that there was nothing else to do besides this.

「Yo! Another commission today?」

「Nn.」

One of the gatekeepers — Dert — calls out to us as we leave. He was the person who admitted us when we first arrived at this town. Thinking about it, we've formed a pretty good relationship with this uncle. We pass by almost every day and Fran stands out, so I suppose it was only a matter of time. He's a nice person. Even to the unsociable Fran, he tries to talk to her every day.

A guardsman showing a different reaction to Fran's unsociable-and-sour impression at first glance would be understandable, but Dert seems a bit soft. Testament to their relationship building, Fran's lowered her guard a little.

「Cute, as always.」

... Isn't this guy just a lolicon?

「That reminds me, are you acquainted with Viscount Alsund?」

「?」

『He's talking about that guy. The noble who came complaining to the Guild.』

「Ah. Small-Fry Vice Commander.」

To Fran's words, Dert was momentarily astonished before proceeding to laugh.

「Hahahaha! Yeah, yeah, that's the one.」

「What about him?」

「Ah, for some reason it looks like he's searching for little Fran. It'd be best to be careful. Yesterday, some fellow calling himself the guy's subordinate came here to check if you passed through.」

Hooh. How suspicious.

「Since he's a noble, he does whatever he pleases in the town... Even more, he seems to have a skill to see through lies.」

「I know.」

In reality, he had the Skill to see through lies. Now, I have that ability.

「So, about that Skill: in the world of nobles it's something of a godsend. Giving its user the ability to grasp their opponent's weakness, and allowing quick dispersion of political opponents... Those guys, telling lies is as easy as breathing for them, after all.」

Mr. Dert, I must say, you're my kind of guy. The type of guy who holds prejudice against nobles!

「Because he has that Skill, even if that Viscount causes trouble his parents crush any complains. And because of that, he got excessively carried away and became prone to doing foolish things. Those actions extend to little Fran as well, so I have no idea what he might want with you.」

「Understood. I'll be careful.」

「Good to hear. Ah, also on the subject of the Viscount, I caught wind of a slightly dangerous rumor.」

「Rumor?」

「Mhm, it's from a few days back. It seems that Viscount Alsund's state has started to become... Odd.」

「How so?」

「Well, he abruptly began acting suspiciously. Just when rumors started appearing stating that he might be becoming mentally ill he committed a terrible fault in the company of Royalty. I don't know the full details, but apparently his family was enraged — there were even talks this was the last time he wouldn't be forsaken. Thereafter, it's just been getting worse and worse. Various rumors like 'he's been cursed' or 'he's been possessed by the Evil God' are flying about.」

Uwaa, and that guy might be stalking us? That's scary.

「Well, anyways. Take care!」

「Nn.」

Our commission today is to harvest New Moon Grass. Since Fran still remembers where it grows, we should be able to complete it no problem. While we're at it, we plan on seeing how the development of the Poisonous Swamp is going. If things go well, we'll find a couple of Demonic Beasts along the way.



A short time after advancing on the highway, we sensed a couple of presences.

(Teacher.)

『Yeah. We're being followed.』

The number of people tailing us is two. One is amateurish — he isn't hiding his presence or anything. It's completely laid bare.

We slowly change our course off of the highway, and as we do so the presences follow after us. As expected, we're being pursued.

Like that, we advance for a short while into the forest, and allow the presences to close in.

「O-Oy! Stop right there!」

From behind, an angry voice is heard. To be lured here unawares... He's truly praise worthy.

「That's... Small-Fry Vice Commander?」

『Viscount Augusto, right?』

So, Dert's warning came true. The one besides him is probably a subordinate or something... But somehow, he doesn't give off the impression of a Knight. Anyways, for Augusto, at first glance you wouldn't be able to know that it was him. It's just to that extent that he's changed.

His cheeks are collapsed inwards, with bloodshot eyes and untidied hair which was falling out at certain points. He was going bald from misery... It's an appearance that wouldn't be out of place in a horror movie as a vengeful ghost. Erm... He didn't become an Undead, right?

Just what happened to him in these 10 days? He was a sickening fellow, sure, but when I see him in this state I end up feeling a bit sympathetic.

「Y... Y—... You!」

Uwaa... He's drawing near...

「I've c-come to take c-compensation f-for... The r-rudeness you committed against me in the G-Guild!」

That's quite sudden. Without any introductions, he's abruptly started shouting. Since he's doing so after such a transformation, I have a bad hunch.

「Who might you be?」

「W-What? Are you saying that you have... F-Forgotten myself?!」

「It's our first time meeting.」

「T-Truly? N-No, don't lie! There's no way that's—」

「Truly Truly. Mistaken for someone else.」

It seems Fran doesn't want to get involved. Has he really fallen this much? No... That shouldn't be enough to deceive him. Right?

「Eh? It's... Truly a misunderstanding? No — it's a lie! A... Lie... Right?」

「Not a lie. Truth.」

「Eh? Eh? It's not a lie after all? It's really not?」

Maybe he's believing it because he's gone a bit loopy? There'd be no way he could believe that otherwise... Will Fran actually get away with this?

That's what I thought, but...

「Ah! T-That Sword! A-After all, you are the beastgirl from the Guild!?!」

Sorry Fran. Because of me, he noticed.

「A-After all, it was a lie, right?! Shit... Everybody keeps telling me nothing but lies... !」

You don't say!

「T-That sword, g-give it here!」

「No.」

「S-Shut up! F-filthy Adventurers like you shouldn't defy N-Nobles! H-Hand it over!」

「Don't want to.」

「I-I-I'm the one who decides that! Me! Auguste Alsund[i]!」

Augusto clawed the nails of his right hand into head, scratching and tearing away at his skin. Hair quickly falls and blood trickles down his forehead in response. Yet, even with that he doesn't snap out of his eccentric behavior. Now, he's started to scratch his head with both hands.

「? Gone mad?」

How troublesome. While consulting Fran about whether we should flee or kill, his subordinate steps forward.

「Now, now, Sir Auguste. Leave this to me.」

「Gu-gununu...」

「I'll only punish them a bit.」 [M1]

「Is t-that so? T-Then I'll leave it to you. Hihihi.」

What an unpleasant face to laugh with... Since his mind seems to have snapped, there's just no way to go about fixing him, huh?

「And so: hand over the magic sword. That's an order from the Viscount.」

「No way.」

「Kukuku... Rather than resorting to violence, quickly handing it over is better for you, don't you think?」

「T-That's r-right! Gyuran is a master Mercenary!」

「Understand that? If you do, hand over the sword.」

「Not. A. Chance.」

「Tsk. Shitty brat, don't get all conceited, a'right! Can't you e'en comprehend th' difference in our abilities?」 [M2]

Well, let's just see how strong this gum-flapping Gyuran really is.

Name : Gyuran Age : 34

Race : Blue Cat[E1] Beastman

Job : Mercenary

State : Normal

Status:

Level : 31

HP : 168 MP : 136

STR : 78 END : 81 AGI : 118

INT : 70 MGC : 60 DEX : 81

Skills:

Intimidation : Lv3, Danger Perception : Lv3, Archery : Lv2, Strong Presence Perception : Lv5, Sword Techniques : Lv5, Sword Arts : Lv6, Shield Arts : Lv4, Instantaneous Movement : Lv3, Commerce : Lv3, Spear Arts : Lv3, Dagger Arts : Lv3, Threaten : Lv3, Capture : Lv3, Paralysis Resistance : Lv3, Vigor Manipulation, Pain Reduction, AGI ↑, Directional Sense, Night Eyes

Titles:

None

Equipment:

Illusionary Pyroxene[E2] Magic Sword, Dagger of the Sovereign Serpent, Leather Armor of the Blaze Lion, Shoes of the Hundred-Eyed Skink, Shield of the Black Stone Tree, Gauntlets of the Lesser Dragon, Hidden Claw Necklace, Bracelet of Protection, Bracelet of Poison Resistance

So-so, I guess? He's not a small fry, but he's not powerful by any means. As a 'master mercenary', he's quite lacking.

「Hm? You... Are you a Black Cat?」

「...」

「My esteemed self is from the Blue Cat Tribe. Could it be that you detest me?」

「Blue Cat Tribe: the enemy.」

Fran gives off a strong feeling of hostility as those words leave her mouth.

『Fran? What is going on?』

(Blue Cat Tribe: have lots of slave merchants. Black marketeers as well.)

『Like the ones who caught Fran...?』

This man might also be related to such things. He has Commerce, Threaten and Capture after all.

(Mhm. Around 300 years ago: the Blue Cat Tribe started becoming slave traders. Tricked members of the Black Cat tribe. Made into slaves and sold.)

『'Tricked'?』

(Blue Cat tribe pretended to be friendly, then launched a surprise attack. Many of the Black Cat tribe: caught and sold. Appealed to the King of the

Beastmen, but because of status: couldn't receive an audience.)

What a despicable story... I'll remember it. The Blue Cat Tribe consists of slave traders. Fran's enemy is my enemy. In other words, that guy is my enemy.

「What's with you, finally going silent? Are ya trembling? Well, it's too late now kahaha. You'll have to experience a bit of pain: lament your own recklessness! I won't give you any big wounds, though. You'd be unable to be turned into merchandise if I did!」

『He's completely guilty. This fellow is definitely connected to the black market slave dealers.』

(Nn.)

The man drew his blades, both of which were clad in magical power. They seem to be somewhat strong.

Name : Illusionary Pyroxene Magic Sword

ATK : 650 MP : 200 Durability : 600

Magic Power Conductivity · B

Skills:

Illusionary Attack

Name : Dagger of the Sovereign Serpent

ATK : 373 MP : 100 Durability : 700

Magic Power Conductivity · C+

Skills:

Sovereign Toxic Fang

(All over his body: magic tools?)

『Yeah, looks like it.』

(Then, take?)

『Using Dimensional Storage?』

Wouldn't harvesting the opponent's equipment during battle be effective? We'd been thinking so for a while now, — No, actually, we only noticed we could recently.

Originally, we tried various things to test the power of the Dimensional Storage. Tests to see if the passage of time truly stopped, or if the temperature really didn't change among others. The results of our investigation showed that the raw materials didn't rot, and foods stayed piping hot. After testing regularly, we came to the conclusion that time really stopped.

In the middle of such tests, we suddenly came up with the idea of stealing equipment from opponents. Since we had only been fighting Demonic Beasts there was no chance to try it out, but... The perfect opponent has arrived.

「Oh? You got the guts for it, lil' girl?」

Fran unsheathes me... And Gyuran falls to the ground.

「——Huh?」

「First: bracelets.」

「AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!」

Moving to his side in an instant, Gyuran's arms both fall to Fran's feet. On each arm was a magic bracelet.

(Teacher: harvesting went well?)

『Y-Yeah.』

No mercy for enemies, right? Or rather, it seems that her actions are slightly more severe than usual, with a calm anger resonating around her. Towards the screaming Gyuran, Fran's eyes grow dark as she pushes me against the bracelets. With that, Dimensional Storage invoked.

「Sword, too.」

I retrieve the fallen sword without issue. It seems that I can harvest things so long as they're separated from the wielder's hand.

「W-Why?! According to my Skill, she shouldn't be this strong — O-Only my life, pleaaaaaaah!」

Skills? This guy can talk quite well despite being in such a state... Ah, come to think of it, he had a Pain Reduction Skill. Is it thanks to that? Now, what were his other skills again...? Ahh, I see, he was talking about Strong Presence Perception!

Strong Presence Perception

Allows the user to perceive the difference in Levels between themselves and others.

So, it's because of this Skill that he figured Fran's Level was below his. A member of the Black Cat tribe with a lower level, and a young girl on top of that. In his eyes, there must have been plenty to make light of.

Hmm... Besides Strong Presence Perception, AGI ↑ is a good skill, but... Skill Taker can't be reused in the end. As expected, it's absolutely necessary to think before we use it. Hopefully a good opponent will arrive in front of us while Skill Taker is usable.

「Attempt harvesting again. Armor?」

「H-Hiii—!」

Zaku

I jab into the shoulder of the man who is trying to flee by crawling away.

「I-It huuurts!」

Even if he has Pain Reduction, there's no way this would remain painless in the end. While thinking so I invoke Dimensional storage, but...

『I can't harvest it. It appears that it's not possible to take anything that the other party is wearing.』

How disappointing. If it was possible, it would have been quite useful during combat.

(Then... If the wielder dies it'll work?)

『Well, that's right, but... I'll do it, so —』

(Nn-nn. It's alright. I will.)

Uttering so, Fran swings me down without hesitation.

「Ag—— kahyuu——.....」

With the nape of his neck cut, the sound of air escaping his lungs releases from his lips. As his life fades, he squirms slightly, moving what remains of his arms midair... And dies. Not quick enough.

『Are you alright?』

(Would have been experienced eventually. This guy as the first: good luck.)

For having killed a person with her own hands for the first time, she's quite calm. Perhaps it was because he was a bitter enemy of her tribe, or maybe it was because he was a scoundrel?

Well, the Mental Stability Skill might also be showing its effect. It's a skill that lowers the mental hurdle towards killing, so... It's good that she obtained it before this experience.

Anyways, I can rationalize it all I'd like, but it'd be best to ignore it for now. So long as Fran doesn't end up troubled for no reason, then it's fine. I never liked hesitant protagonists anyways. To get depressed every single time they kill an enemy is nothing but irritating.

『Then, let's harvest it at once!』

「Nn.」

『First, the armor!』

Armor, Boots, Dagger, Shield, Gauntlets, Necklace, one by one they get harvested.

「Hihihihihiii!」

It was uncertain whether it was a laugh or a scream that was raised as Small-Fry Vice Commander Auguste fell on his backside.

「Ri... Ri-Ridiculous! H-He was the hero of the Ruze[E3] War! T-To defeat the slaughterer of a th-thousand men, that s-superhuman, th-this easily...!」

He really was completely fooled... Slaughterer of a thousand men? That's just too laughable. Besides, this Gyuran: a Hero? No way. Anyone with even a speck of human intellect could realize that. It's difficult to believe that someone would fall for such a lie.

No, maybe... Is this my fault? Since I stole Law of Lies, has he become unable to distinguish truth from lies?

(Teacher's fault.)

『Eh... So it is, after all...』

(Nn. Good job.)

『Ah, you were praising me.』

She's harsh on those she's showed hostility to, as usual.

W-Well, you reap what you sow. It's just his bad luck that he picked a quarrel with us. Right. I'm not at fault. Nope.

「A-And Gyuran's equipment, w-where did it go?! I-I bought t-that as a present — i-it's the highest grade of armor!」

You really were an easy mark, huh. After being inspired with a bunch of lies, you easily opened your wallet. How pitiful.

『Hey, what should we do about him?』

(..... Ignore.)

『Hmm. Is that alright?』

For now, I guess we'll just focus on harvesting Gyuran's corpse. If it's left alone, it seem that he could become an undead, after all. It's a bother to have to dispose of it, but it can't be helped.

While we're at it, I take the ~20,000 Gorudo he had on him, too. Can't let anything go to waste, right?

Now, how should we deal with Auguste... Arrest him? Kill him? Ignore him? Brainwash him?

While being troubled about how to approach the issue, a new presence appeared, closing in on our location.

(Teacher...!)

『Ah, it's got quite the amount of magical power. It might just reach Threat Level D! Be careful!』

「Nn!」

[M1] Just a note: when the subordinate said 'me' they used 'Watakushi' which is a strangely formal way of addressing oneself — probably used for

a self-important and/or cool effect. When they say ‘I’ they use ‘ore’ (俺 – masculine way of addressing oneself), and continue using ‘ore’ from that point on.

[M2] For this line, he essentially lost his cool and talked slurringly — like a small time Gangster.

[E1] ‘Blue Cats’ aren’t actually ‘Blue’, in case you didn’t know. The name belongs to these types of cats.

[E2] Pyroxene.

[E3] ‘ルーズ’. It should be something like ‘Careless’ in translation, but it sounds like ‘Ruze’ when vocalized by a word → sound translator so I went with that for the sake of irony.

[i] The Author spelt Auguste’s last name slightly different here than he did last time.

Previous ‘Alsund’: ‘アルサンド’

This ‘Alsund’: ‘アレサンド’

Chapter 44: After What Occurred

(Teacher...!)

『Ah, it's got quite the amount of magical power. It might just reach Threat Level D! Be careful!』

「Nn!」

Despite my approximation, whatever's approaching has a peculiar magical power. It's not the same as a Demonic Beast's, Human's, or... Well, anything's. Really, it's quite a strange magic power.

And that enigmatic presence is coming towards us at frightening speed. Perhaps it's aiming at Fran? No, the idiot Viscount still counts as a Noble, so maybe he's the target?

Well, anyway, this is no time to be careless.

「W-Why is your sword still drawn?! D-Do you intend to kill me?!」

For some reason Auguste is being noisy. Thinking about it, it'd be bothersome if he became a hindrance during the fight, so let's have him be quiet for now. Lv3 Dark Magic: 『Mind · Lost』. It's a spell that steals the target's consciousness, causing them to faint. My guess is that this guy won't have any resistance.

「Ah.....?」

thmp

Moving the collapsed Viscount to the side, we remain waiting for a few tens of seconds, and what showed itself was a strange half-translucent thing.

How to describe it... It's like a water sphere that keeps winding and changing its form while floating in the air.

「Miss Fran, you haven't killed him, right?」

「?」

Suddenly, it started talking. Wait, it's not guaranteed that it's actually talking, as there isn't any evidence of it having a mouth — let alone a face. Still, I think that it's talking. Its voice seems familiar, too.

「Guild Master?」

「That's right. Ah, is this your first time seeing one of these? This is one of the kinds of Spirits I use. Please, be at ease.」

「Spirit... First time seeing one.」

It's also my first time coming across something like this. How should I say this... It's a bit different from what I imagined. I had thought that Spirits would have a more humanoid appearance — something like a Sylph or an Undine.

It seems Fran was thinking along similar lines.

「Somehow, strange」

「What is strange! To call it strange... This child is an Intermediate level Spirit, therefore it has no human appearance. However, this child is also cute by all means you know!」

「Cuter ones: better.」

「The ones with humanoid appearances are Superior Spirits. There is no way someone would summon such a being for anything other than combat.」

Ah, so Spirits with humanoid appearance are Superior Spirits. Furthermore, the Guild Master is able to summon ones like that. This one's only an

Intermediate level, but it already has a lot of magical power, so just how powerful would a superior one be, I wonder?

If he can have several Spirits summoned simultaneously, then he's quite the force to be reckoned with... The Guild Master is already tremendously strong all by himself, so with the addition of Spirits, wouldn't it be a bit out of hand? Well, I guess that's to be expected from a Guild Master.

「What did you want?」

「Oops, that's right. I received information that Viscount Auguste left the town chasing after you.」

That only just happened... He has some pretty good ears.

「The gatekeeper, Sir Dert, kindly notified me. It was something along the lines of 'Viscount Auguste went out chasing after her, will she be alright?'.」

Dert, I'm sorry for having thought that you might be a lolicon. You were just a good person.

「Nn. He appeared.」

「As I thought! An appeal to the Guild came in about securing the Viscount behind the scenes. You didn't kill him, right? Right? Erm, maybe you accidentally killed him? That sure would be troublesome!」

「Didn't kill.」

「R-Really? Good! Then, I'd like to take him off your hands. Of course, you won't be handing him over for free.」

「Okay.」

「Really? Thank you! Well then, I will immediately make my way towards your location, so could you guard him for the time being?」

「Nn.」

「Then, excuse me!」

At with the Guild Master's words, the Spirit's figure disappeared. It seems that it was used in place of a messenger.

10 minutes later, the figure of the Guild Master appeared. Pretty fast. Seem like he put quite a bit of effort into coming out here.

「Miss Fran, thank you for waiting.」

「Nn.」

「Viscount Augusto is... Ah, there he is. Hey, over here.」

The Adventurers the Guild Master brought along lifted the Viscount up and carried him off.

「Where will he go?」

「Ah, to the source of the request: Count Olmës[E1].」

That's a name I haven't heard yet. Who is he?

「Count Olmës is Viscounts Auguste's esteemed father.」

「Father detaining his child?」

「Yes. I would like this to remain between just us, but from the start Viscount Auguste had a problematic personality. Still, for the sake of possessing the Law of Lies Skill, Count Olmës didn't punish him, but instead used him.」

「Nn.」

「However... A few days ago, the Skill suddenly vanished. The reason is unknown, as it's quite an unusual situation. Well, it's possible that because he only used his Skill for worthless things, one of the Gods punished him.」

Hmmmm, he was given a punishment alright. Therefore, it'd be fine to be seen like that.

「Anyways, how he ended up after losing the Skill left even me astonished. He was the type to use the Skill to distinguish truth from lies with whoever he met, so when it was lost, it appears he became unable to trust anyone anymore.」

I see. If a Skill you had since birth was lost, then what would become of you? In his case, he became distrustful of other humans. Well, it wasn't that simple, of course. It was more along the lines of completely breaking.

I had only thought that I obtained a convenient Skill, but... I should refrain from using it as much as possible. I don't want to become like the foolish viscount. Thinking that I'd be alright so long as I had that Skill... I'm not special enough for something like that to become reality.

「A few days prior to the discovery he also caused problems towards members of the Royal House, who were visiting for an inspection. Disregarding all semblances of etiquette, he grabbed at them and started shouting not to tell lies in front of an audience.」

Uwaa... That's terrible. No, wait... We also stole the Court Etiquette Skill, didn't we? Did that also...?

「And, while under house arrest, he slipped out of his room and hid himself. On that occasion, it seems that he took quite the sum of money with him... Most of it, he apparently used. We tracked his spending all the way to the place he bought some expensive armor.」

In all likelihood, that was done under the influence of Gyuran. Then, after catching Fran he intended to abandon Aressa and escape... As if this idiotic noble would be able to pull that off.

「In Count Olmës case, he doesn't want this ordeal to breed a large commotion. And so, before Viscount Auguste made any more commissions, he came requesting to have him secured in secret.」

「Secret?」

「Correct. This is my personal opinion, but I believe he's concealed the fact that his son lost the Skill and plans to make use of it in some way. Whether he plans on directly manipulating him, or perhaps plans on using some manner of medical treatment to get the Skill back remains to be seen, but... For the time being, he wants to restrain the Viscount. And so, as to prevent the exposure of this incident, the Count wanted to proceed with the highest possible degree of secrecy. It's something along this lines.」

Hm Hmm... So in other words... Hush money has been prepared?

「*Jii—*[M1]」

「..... Don't stare so much. You have the privilege of having this treated as an accomplished commission with a bonus properly added on top.」

「Nn. Of course.」

「In exchange... You already know, right?」

「Mouth: sealed.」

Towards the suddenly nodding, seemingly self-confident Fran the Guild Master directed a strangely uneasy gaze.

「Haa. Truly, I beg of you: keep it a secret. The other party is a powerful Noble after all. If he's angered various troubles are sure to follow.」

We also want to be spared from being dragged into the family troubles of Nobility. Even if we weren't asked, there's no way we'd go around spreading rumors.

「Well, in regards to the Viscount's personal effects I was told there was no need to recover them, so don't worry.」

It seems that it's been concluded that we plundered the equipment alongside and a large sum of money. Er, it's a bit different, you know?

... It seems our debt towards the Guild Master has increased.

Afterwards, we made the decision to keep Fran's name from the Count. For such a powerful Noble, I doubt he'd have interest in the name of a commoner. It'd be really unlikely, right? Still, this is just in case.

By the way, the commission fee alongside the hush money added up to 200,000Gorudo, so all of a sudden our money doubled.

As one would expect of a Noble's commission. Their sense of money must be strange indeed.

[E1] オルメス

[M1] The sound effect for staring intensely.

Chapter 45: Return of the A Rank

We've gone to the Guild again today.

In the last few days a lot has happened, but the unchanging days have started up again. Frankly, there's not enough excitement. If there were good commissions it'd be alright, but... Well, you know.

『There are only Rank C requests with a large amount of working hours...』

(Again: medical plants gathering?)

『I've also had enough of that, you know~?』

There's still a whole week before we receive the armor from old man Gallus. In the meantime, what should we — hm?

As Fran opens the door to the Guild, we find it unusually noisy on the inside.

「Nell. What happened?」

「Right, Fran doesn't know. I wonder if you haven't met yet?」

「?」

「Well, after finishing the investigation of Maokami Plains, the Rank A and B Adventurers have returned.」

「There're Rank A's?」

「Yep. In our guild, there's a single Rank A Adventurer, and 10 B's. Around one month ago they left for the investigation of the Maokami Plains. Other than them, no less than 15 people of Rank C to F accompanied them to gain experience. It's thanks to that the Goblin Subjugation became a big deal.]

Indeed. If there had been A and B Rank Adventurers then the situation could have been settled far easier. In fact, there'd be a high chance that a few elite would have been picked out to capture it.

However, in that case we wouldn't have been able to bring down the Demon, so for us having them return now rather than then was lucky.

『And I had thought that Donna was the strongest...』

「Nn.」

「What's the matter?」

「Donna wasn't strongest.」

「Mr. Donnadorondo is skilled at teaching, so he holds the teaching position. In addition, if he had continued to serve in active duty he certainly would have been B Rank by now, you know? However, saying that he wanted to commit himself to the next generation, he became an instructor. It's already been 15 years since he took that position, so over half of Aressa's B and C ranks were taught by him, you know? Because of that, most Adventurers listen to Mr. Donnadorondo.」

It was also for that connection that Donna was at the front line of the Goblin Subjugation.

「The A Rank too?」

「Ahh, that person[M1] is different. Or rather... That person listens to no one. Honestly, their personality is so overbearing that they're difficult to handle, you know?」

「My, my... Nell, are you speaking ill of me behind my back?」

「Kya—! Amanda! Don't draw near while erasing your presence! It's because you do stuff like that I said you're difficult to handle!」

「Ufufu~ It's good being hard to handle you know? I'm not a dog for running errands after all.」

Their words are harsh, but smiles are floating on both of their faces. Their relationship is good enough to freely bad mouth each other, I guess.

But anyways, she's quite the beautiful woman. A slight Japanese-like air drifts about her black hair cut at the shoulders. She's a gentle and tender type of beauty. Her voice also floats with a gentle feeling, ringing pleasantly in the ears.

However... The feeling I have after hearing her conversation is that her character is fairly stubborn.

「Let me introduce you, Fran. This is Amanda, our A Rank Adventurer as well as our ace. Well, she isn't a bad person, and she's fond of children. At any rate, her title is—」

「Wah—! Stop it, Nell! That's embarrassing!」

「Why? It's the perfect title for you.」

「Oh, buzz off! — Ohohoho. Sorry for showing you something unsightly. It's nice to meet you, little miss. I'm Amanda.」

「Nn. Fran.」

「Amazing... To be so capable at such a young age... You're quite promising~」

「Do you see, Amanda?」

「Naturally.」

That's an A Rank Adventurer for you. To see through our strength after only looking at us a little. It doesn't seem to be an Appraisal type Skill,

however. Perhaps it's simply her own ability built up through experience?

Name: Amanda Age: 58

Race: Half-Elf

Job: Champion of Storms

State: Normal

Status:

Level: 70

HP: 646 MP: 825

STR: 327 END: 293 AGI: 451

INT: 390 MGC: 423 DEX: 356

Skills:

Coercion Lv7, Chant Shortening Lv6, Stealth Lv8, Dismantling Lv8, Fire Resistance Lv6, Hand-to-Hand Techniques Lv4, Hand-to-Hand Arts Lv7, Wind Magic LvMax, Danger Perception Lv9, Presence Perception Lv8, Herculean Strength Lv5, Mining Lv7, Harvesting Lv8, Instantaneous Movement LvMax, Blink Step Lv7, Sleep Resistance Lv6, Sword Attribution Lv7, Throwing Lv8, Poison Resistance Lv6, Cold Resistance Lv5, Whip Techniques LvMax, Master Whip Techniques Lv2, Whip Arts LvMax, Master Whip Arts Lv4, Storm Magic Lv4, Paralysis Resistance Lv8, Magic Perception Lv5, Lightning Resistance Lv7, Orc Slayer, Vigor Manipulation, Giant Slayer, Physical Reinforcement, Demon Slayer, Dragon Slayer, AGI ↑ High, Storm Reinforcement, Magic Manipulation

Unique Skills:

Grace of the Spirits

Tiles:

Orc Slayer, Guardian of Children, Giant Slayer, Dungeon Conqueror,
Demon Slayer, Dragon Killer, Personification of a Gale, Master of Wind,
Exterminator of Demonic Beasts, Rank A adventurer

Equipment:

Magical Whip of the Heavenly Dragon's Whiskers[M2], Full-Body Leather
Armor of the Old Multi-Headed Snake, Overcoat of the Poisonous Lizard
Demon, Shoes of the Sovereign Bull Demon, Heavenly Ring of Sacrifice,
Ornament of the Thunderbird's Plumes, Ring of bulwark, Feathered
Throwing Knives of the Paralysis Owl ×24

The title, 'Guardian of Children', must have been what Nell was alluding
to. Is it a Title given to ones who like children, or...?

Well, anyways, she's strong. I was astonished when I saw the Guild Master
and Donna, but Amanda is on another level. Frankly, she's quite terrifying.
That is, this person could even go hunting for Demons.

There's no point in going against her. No matter what manner of surprise
attacks are set up, I just can't see us claiming victory.

『She's dangerous. Never go against her.』

(Nn. Sure.)

「The story of being the one to raise Ranks fastest since the founding of the
guild, of course I've heard about it. A tiny, terribly cute, beautiful beastman
Girl wielding a Magic Sword!」

Eh? I'm happy that Fran is being praised, but... Wasn't there a bit too many
references to her appearance? Who on earth described her like that!
Where's the bastard that looked at Fran with dirty eyes?!

「But, despite that the Guild Master said to not be careless. He said that if
you're fooled by her appearance then you're in for a painful experience.」

Oi, Guild Master! What are you saying to an A rank adventurer?! — Well,
if the Guild Master went 「Fran-chan, C U T E ~」 it would probably be

worse.

「Ah, right. Fran. The Guild Master was calling for you.」

「He was? Fine if I go to the room?」

「Please, if you could?」

「Nn.」

「My, what a shame. I wanted to take her to eat, but with the Guild Master as my opponent, I'll give up.」

「Bye bye.」

「Kyaa~ cute~ I want a little sister like you!」

「Amanda, just how old do you think you are? You're mistaking 'sister' with 'daughter', don't you think」

「Ne~ll~? Just because you're a bit young, there are good things and bad things to say, you know? Besides Half-Elves age slowly!」

「Yes, yes. Right. Amanda is still young.」

They get along really well. Leaving behind Nell and Amanda messing around, Fran moves towards the Guild Master's office.



GanGanGan[M3]

「Hey! Who is it! Such rude knocking!」

Gacha

「Came.」

「Ah, it was Miss Fran. How should I say this... If you enter before admission is accepted from the inside, then there's no point in knocking.」

「Shocked.」

「Haa... Please be more careful next time.」

Sorry, Guild Master. I will firmly educate her.

「Called: why?」

「To be frank, there's a commission I earnestly want you to accept.」

A request from the Guild Master? There's no way not to have a bad premonition, but still.

「There're voices coming from in and outside the Guild holding your ability in question. Of course, I know that they're unjustified, but from the perspective of someone who doesn't know you personally there is no way for them to believe in your abilities. And so, to quiet those voices, won't you take on a certain request?」

No no, the one who went around raising our Rank at his own convenience was you, you know? And now, you come to us with this?

「Ranked by you arbitrarily.」

「Well, it hurts if you say it like that, but... Listen, there are more jealous folks sprouting up than expected. Furthermore, there are also voices advocating for you, which makes the situation grow worse. There are many rank D and C Rank Adventurers that have recognized you, understanding your power from experience on the field. It's beginning to seem as though you're popular because you're a mascot.」

Adventurers from the intermediate level and above growing to respect her were expected, but... To think she was also being seen as a mascot...

「Among the lower ranked Adventurers, many don't approve. There are also those who still haven't been able to ascend from Rank E for a long

time, so after seeing you being raised to rank D so easily, too many have gotten jealous.」

「Leave them be.」

「I would also like to leave it at that, but I simply can't anymore. Some among them are spreading unfounded rumors like you bought your Rank with money, or that I have preferences for little girls and have been charmed by you.」

For some reason, he's begun muttering complaints.

「There is no way that I prefer little girls! Good grief, spare me please. To begin with I prefer ——」

This guy... Could it be that he just doesn't like being called a lolicon, so he brought this up?

「Accepting: not compulsory?」

「Now, now. If you say it like that, then there would be several bonuses attached, right?. Please, just hear me out at least.」

He's desperate. Really, it only feels like he wants to deny the suspicions of him being a lolicon.

「The bonus added onto the commission fee is obvious, but there'll also be an entrance permit for the Dungeon of the town of Urmut issued.」

「..... How did you know?」

「Well, if you request documents related to it in the Reference Room, even if you don't want me to know I'll end up knowing about it. For admission to the Dungeon your Adventurer Rank is certainly sufficient, but with that alone permission won't be granted. In all likelihood, the person deciding will place their judgement — with the possibility of rejection — on the spot.」

Is that so... And for a lone, cute little beastkin girl, there's definitely a chance we won't pass. Furthermore, even if she does pass the process might take a while.

「If you have a permit, examinations are unneeded. You can immediately dive into the Dungeon.」

And, as a result, save time. Tsk, this clever Elf. He knows quite a bit about us, huh.

「... For now: I'll hear you out.」

「Thank you very much. Well then, the commission is this one.」

Essentially, the commission is an investigation request for the Dungeon in Aressa.

「A Dungeon in Aressa? First time heard about it.」

「It's a dungeon that has already been captured, but it's usually not open to the public. Every few months, the Guild carries out a survey.」

「Captured, yet: investigation?」

「The Dungeon Core is still in one piece, after all. If you have the core, then a small amount of manipulation is possible... It's only to the degree of being able to spawn certain Demonic Beasts using the spawning settings, and creating items though. In addition, those can only be made so long as they're within the range of the Core's magical power. Because of all that, Aressa's Dungeon is limited to the production of Demonic Beast with at most Rank F, alongside only a handful of items.」

With that, it isn't profitable at all. Were it possible to simply create high-level Potions or Demonic Beast with rare ingredients, then it would give birth to amazing profits.

「And if the Core amasses a lot of magical power?」

「If that was possible then we wouldn't have to go through so many hardships. We had assembled several dozens of human magicians to channeled their power into the core, but even with that there wasn't much change.」

「Then, how does it store magical power?」

「The core drains it from veins within the ground, the atmosphere, and apparently from any Demonic Beasts and Adventurers inside of the Dungeon. In addition, even if it isn't much, Dungeon Masters have other means of filling it with magical power. Otherwise, the maintenance of the labyrinth would be impossible」

Vast amounts of magical power should be necessary to summon things like a Demon normally, after all.

「Therefore, it's important for Demonic Beasts to inhabit the dungeon. If they don't, then magical power isn't accumulated, and to a certain degree the Core can't do its work. As for Aressa's dungeon, it's set up to generate items at periodic intervals. The request also includes the retrieval of those.」

「Subjugating the Demonic Beasts: alright?」

「It doesn't matter. They'd multiply again soon enough. Rather, thinning them out so they don't become too numerous is also part of the job. If left alone for too long, evolutions might occur... And that would be dangerous.」

The completion fee is quite good, too. There's just one problem, though. That is, in the details 「For several Parties」 is written. To work together with idiots like the ones who attacked us: no thank you.

「Ah, in regards to the parties, arrangements have already been made.」

「What types of people?」

「This commission serves simultaneously as a Rank Up examination to Rank D, so at present 9 Rank E adventurers are divided into 2 Parties, and a 3-person Rank C Party serves as the examiner. I can pledge for their background, but for their nature... You'll have to confirm for yourself.」

I'd hate to cast the request away, but... What shall we do? We're fine even if we don't take it, after all.

「Next, in the case you accept the commission I would need to receive a written Oath.」

「Written Oath?」

「Oath Magic[E1] makes it possible to bind a target through a written pledge.」

「Like a Contract?」

「Yes. However, in contrast to a Contract which is from one person to another, a written vow is able bind several. In exchange, the bond is frail.」

「Hm.」

「The content of the vow would be barring the disclosure of the request's contents. In the case this Oath is violated, your Guild Card would contain a remark about your violation. At worst, measures of decreasing one's Rank, or even Expulsion would occur.」

Oath Magic, huh? Somehow, it gives me a bad feeling. Binding someone through magic, no matter what it's for, reminds me of slavery.

『Fran. What now?』

「Nn—?」

When Fran showed a troubled expression the Guild Master, somewhat panicked, placed a small bag on the table.

「Now, now. I put a personal bonus for you as well, so...」

Hmm. A personal bonus from the guild master, huh? From that we can expect something, but...

「Please, take a look.」

As he turns the bag upside down, around 20 magic stones roll out.

「These are?」

「Something like my secret savings. They are magic stones I obtained while I was still in active duty, and each one of them is from a Demonic Beast of Threat Level D or above.」

So it seems. Selling the magic stones would be fine, but they can also be used for producing armor. In other words, this reward is better than gold.

Still, the Guild Master's eyes seem as though they're probing for something... Did he realize that we desired magical stones? Fran doesn't sell her magic stones, so perhaps he's begun suspecting us of something based off of that?

「Why magic stones?」

「Well? Are they to your liking?」

If anything imprudent is said here, I have a hunch that our side will gain the disadvantage. Of course, even if it's exposed that we desire magic stones, the purpose will still be unknown. With that in mind, we ought to finish it here.

「Not bad.」

「Right?」

(How about Teacher?)

『I'm sorry to say, but I don't know what Skills they hold. At best, I'm able to know which Demonic Beasts they're from. The extent of their magic power is also hard to guess.』

Even so, the ones the Guild Master placed in front of us are certainly good magic stones. Threat Level D was on the same level as the Blast Tortoise and the Doppel Snake, after all. Still, to compulsorily undergo Oath Magic is a bit...

「From these, I will present you with whichever two you'd like. How about that?」

「Hmm... For ten: I'll accept.」

「Wha- As you would expect, that is-! Three!」

「Nine.」

「Hey, that will go on with 4, 8, 5, 7 and in the end, won't this pattern raise it to 6?! No way! Four stones. I won't yield more than that.」

「Then: decline.」

「Gu...」

「Five. Paid in advance.」

「Mumu...」

「Good bye.」

「A-Alright.....!」

Oh, good job Fran! To corner this Guild Master!

「In exchange for them, I'll be counting on you for afore-mentioned matter.」

「Nn.」

「I've heard all about it!」

Without warning, the door is flung open and Amanda storms into the room. The same entrance pattern as Auguste. Is the security of this room even remotely alright? Even as a joke, it's still supposed to be the Guild Master's room.

But, well, that's an A Rank Adventurer for you. I couldn't feel her presence at all.

「Let me borrow this for a moment!」

Amanda quickly snapped the documents the Guild Master placed in front of him and started reading. What an audacious woman! And yet, even with her attitude, the Guild Master isn't saying anything.

「I thought so! For the accompanying Adventurers... Won't there only be men?!」

Well, there's no helping it. Even if you say that there aren't any girls coming along, it's only because there are so few female Adventures. The ratio is around 20 to 1, I think? If you consider that, then it's not strange for there to be no woman among the 12 people coming along.

「Among males reeking of sweat, the cute little Fran would be all alone... There's no way I could permit such a thing! Therefore, I will be going with her on this commission!」

「No. Furthermore, there is already someone with a suitable Rank that will be acting as—」

「I will be going with her!」

「..... I understand.」

To talk down to the Guild Master with such vigor... The Guild Master probably noticed that no matter what he said, it would have been useless.

「Miss Fran, are you also alright with that?」

「Nn. No problem.」

[M1] Nell is almost talking down on the A rank (through the use of negative connotation mostly).

[M2] The same material used in the wires of Akame ga Kill.

[M3] The sound of hitting the door. Yep: hitting, not knocking.

[E1] Remember: there's Contract Magic (契約魔術) and Oath Magic (誓約魔術), but they're not the same.

Chapter 46: Introductions

It's been one hour since we received the request from the Guild Master.

We've returned to the inn.

『Then, shall I absorb the Magic Stones?』

「Nn.」

『I wonder what kind of Skills we'll get...』

「Excited.」

『Thinking about it, this is a bit like a grab-bag[1], huh.』

「Grab-bag?」

『Ahh, how should I put it... A grab-bag is a bag filled with hopes, dreams, and a bit of despair.』

「Somehow: amazing.」

『Many brave men have challenged such bags for items of favor, only to meet a terrible fate.』

「Has Teacher seen one before?」

『Well...』

「Amazing!」

Well, before I make a fool out of myself, let's use absorb the magic stone.

Thanks to Demonic Beast Knowledge, I can see the stones' Ranks just fine. With 5 stones total, 3 are D Rank, and 2 are C Rank.

The D Ranks come from a Fortress Hermit Crab, a Sea Lion, and a Trident Shark. I had chosen Demonic Beasts of the sea since we hadn't actually seen the ocean yet.

As for the 2 C Rank magic stones, one is from a Red Colossus, and one is from an Old Yeti.

「First: D Rank.」

『Mhh! Here we go!』

Fortress Hermit Crab Magic Stone Status: 39

Hunger Resistance: Lv1, Water Pressure Resistance: Lv1, Underwater Respiration: Lv1, Weight Reduction

Sea Lion Magic Stone Status: 79

Swimming: Lv1, Current Manipulation: Lv1, Water Bullet Discharge: Lv1

Trident Shark Magic Stone Status: 43

Underwater Acoustics: Lv1, Current Jet: Lv1, Watersports[2]: Lv1

We obtained quite the variety. We've attained an extensive set of water-based Skills, just as planned. Next is the well-awaited C Rank stones.

「Ha!」

The Magic Stone thrown into the sky by Fran is cut in two through in one stroke by me. Uo—, it came, it came! After a long time, the sense of absorbing big-game has come!

Red Colossus Magic Stone Status: 196

Frenzy: Lv1, Heat Resistance: Lv1, Weight Increase, STR ↑

Old Yeti Magic Stone Status: 127

Cold Resistance: Lv1, Poison Knowledge: Lv1, Ice Resistance: Lv1,
INT ↑ Low

With these, a long-awaited Rank Up will occur! Prior to absorbing the 5 stones, my status looked like this:

ATK: 434 Retained MP: 2050/2050 Durability: 1850/1850

Magical Power Conductivity · A

Skills:

Self-Evolution 〈Rank 8 · Magic Stone Status: 3146/3600 · Memory: 70 · Points: 2〉

And now, it's like this:

Name: Teacher

Equipment Registration: Fran

Race: Intelligent Weapon

ATK: 478 Retained MP: 2500/2500 Durability: 2300/2300

Magical Power Conductivity · A

Skills:

Self-Evolution 〈Rank 9 · Magic Stone Status: 3630/4500 · Memory: 79 · Points: 47〉

Alright, alright! With this, I can tweak my Skills yet again. This time, Superior Skills are the things on my mind. I couldn't afford to tamper with it before, but I'd like to make use of it.

And so, my eyes are fixed on Sword Arts LvMax. When I make it a Superior Skill, will it simply become Master Sword Arts, or will it become a completely unknown Skill? If it does become Master Sword Arts not much will change in terms of sword-fighting, but what would happen to Sword Techniques? If its supporting skill Sword Arts disappears, would Sword Techniques even be usable? Or, because I have Master Sword Arts, would it work without an issue?

The chance to find out has arrived. Even if the worst occurs, there're many Goblins that carry Sword Arts, and with Self-Evolution Points, bringing it back to LvMax isn't really an issue.

『During this commission, we should be able to secure a magic stone from a Sword Arts carrier!』

「Ooh—」



It's been two days since that was said. We've once again returned to the Adventurers Guild.

「Now then, let's take this chance to introduce ourselves. My name is Cruz. I'm the leader of the C Rank party 『Azure Guard』 to which these two, Rigg and Izel, are members of. For this commission, I'll be acting as your instructor as well as your examiner.」

Name: Cruz Liuzel Age: 28

Race: Human

Job: Blink Swordsman

State: Normal

Status: Level: 33

HP: 256 MP: 175 STR: 113 END: 119 AGI: 178 INT: 80 MGC: 91
DEX: 119

Skills:

Malice Perception: Lv3, Stealth: Lv2, Evasion: Lv5, Court Etiquette: Lv3, Presence Perception: Lv4, Sword Techniques: Lv5, Sword Arts: Lv7, Self-Defense Arts: Lv4, Leadership: Lv2, Instantaneous Movement: Lv7, Cold Resistance: Lv4, Poison Resistance: Lv5, Trap Perception: Lv2, Vigor Manipulation

Titles:

Righteous

Equipment:

Mithril Longsword of Flame, Light-Silver Steel Armor, Light-Silver Steel Gauntlets, Light-Silver Steel Greaves, Cloak of One Hundred Spiders, Bracelet of Poison Resistance

He's an Ikemen. A blonde-haired Ikemen. An Ikemen that's C Rank despite his young age, and judging by his white-and-shiny equipment he's probably loaded. Furthermore, he has a family name, meaning he probably comes from an aristocratic home. His very facial features seem to emanate a feeling of nobility. Undoubtedly, this man is popular! Tch!

Aside from that, he has the Righteous Title. With that in mind, he doesn't seem like a bad person... So I'll refrain from cursing him for now. If he goes after Fran, it'll be an instant death, however!

「I use the Sword as my weapon. Please treat me well.」

Although the abilities between C Ranks should be roughly equivalent, he's weaker than Donna. Or rather, I should probably see Donna as top-class among C Ranks.

In terms of Status, his two comrades are similar to him. Rigg is a user of Water Magic, while Izel seems to be something like a Scout-oriented Thief. Although they give off completely different feelings than Cruz, their relationship seems to be good. They must have been picked quite skillfully.

「From the E Rank party 『Roar of the Dragon』, m' name's Clad: the leader. My forté is the Spear. With us 'ere, this Dungeon exploration'll be finished in no time!」

Clad has spiky gray hair and suntanned skin, and behind him several Yankee-like youths raise their voices. His height is most likely more than 180cm.

Name: Clad Age: 23

Race: Human

Job: Warrior

State: Normal

Status: Level: 20

HP: 127 MP: 97 STR: 67 END: 56 AGI: 47 INT: 50 MGC: 46
DEX: 42

Skills:

Transportation: Lv2, Balancing Act: Lv4, Danger Perception: Lv3,
Hunger Resistance: Lv3, Pugilist Arts: Lv1, Spear Techniques: Lv1,
Spear Arts: Lv4, Threatening: Lv3, Climbing: Lv3, Vigor Manipulation

Titles:

None

Equipment:

High-Quality Steel Spear, Plate Armor of the Rock Ox, Vambraces of the Rock Ox, Boots of the Giant Spider, Overcoat of the Stone Spider, Bracelet of Self-Healing · Low

It seems that the condition to raise to Rank D is only whether or not you can use Techniques, so while he's not particularly strong, Rank E's should be at

about his skill level. As for the four other members of his party, they have similar Spear-related skills. There doesn't seem to be a lot of flexibility, but they're probably strong when working together. Or... That's the impression I have, anyways.

From what I've seen, Rank C's are usually around Level 35, Rank D's are about Level 25, Rank E's are around Level 15, and Rank F's are only about Level 10; Rank G's are even lower. That's more or less how the ranks' level-zones are.

There are exceptions to that, however. For example, the former Mercenaries that picked a fight with Fran and were exterminated. Their levels were ~15, but their abilities didn't match up. Judging by their low Skill levels, they likely power-leveled just to seem strong.

Viscount Auguste is a similar case. Even though he was Level 30 — about Rank C in equivalency — he would probably lose against an E Rank in a fight.

In that respect, Clad is quite good. His status is definitely one that would allow him to step foot into the grounds of Rank D.

That being said, his personality doesn't seem to be all that great. He's been looking at Fran all this time, so chances are he thinks that the lovely little Fran is out of her mind for participating.

「I'm Frion, leader of the E Rank party: 『Eyes of the Forest』 . I'm not very good with weapons, but I can use Spirit Magic to compensate.」

A blond, thin-eyed Elf. There's no other way to describe him. He seems a bit younger than the Guild Master.

Name: Frion Age: 49

Race: Wood Elf

Job: Spirit User

State: Normal

Status Level: 26

HP: 71 MP: 233 STR: 36 END: 34 AGI: 60 INT: 91 MGC: 111
DEX: 69

Skills:

Archery: Lv1, Harvesting: Lv2, Cultivation: Lv4, Evil Perception:
Lv3, Nature Magic: Lv3, Plant Knowledge: Lv7, Drowsiness
Resistance: Lv3, Spirit Magic: Lv5, Soil Magic: Lv3, Water Magic:
Lv4, Medicinal Herb Knowledge: Lv4, Divine Protection of the Spirits,
Magic Manipulation, Child of the Forest

Equipment:

Cane of the Black Speckled Elm, Breastplate of the Red Monkey, Clothes
of the Forest Spider's Thread, Overcoat of the Forest Spider's Thread, Ring
of Water Production

He's a Wood Elf: same as the Guild Master. His Skill configuration is also
similar. The only difference is that he's not strong, huh? I think that Clad's
overall strength is higher. In particular, his peculiar pro-magic build
seemingly characteristic to the Elves isn't that eye-opening.

As for his companions, there're two Warriors and one person with the
configuration of a Ranger. It's pretty well-balanced.

「Then I guess I'm next? I'm Amanda. Best regards.」

Without mentioning her Rank, she gives a brief greeting. However, just that
was enough. The only Adventurer that didn't know of her would have been
Fran a couple of days ago, after all.

The Rank E's are too shocked for words. That an A Rank would take on a
Rank D request is unprecedented; she sticks out like a sore thumb.

Only Clad seems capable of forming his words.

「I see how it is...」

「What do you mean?」

「I mean that I know th' reason an A Rank like you'd take on such a low-rank request! This commission's probably just somethin' you took in your spare time, right?! We had to seriously prepare ourselves, y'know?! This isn't where you should be playing around!」

Uwa— He said it right to her face, huh. Well, I can see that he's only pretending to be tough given by his stiff expression though. Maybe he's at the age where he's compelled to pick fights with the strong?

「I have no intention of simply playing around though? Besides, I have permission from the Guild Master.」

「Tsk」

「Now, now. Then, the young lady next please.」

Cruz diverts the conversation to bring a change to the bad air starting to develop. With the selfish Amanda and the seemingly-strong Clad, he has good reason to worry about the situation. This has definitely surpassed the duties of an examiner. My condolences.

「Fran.」

「..... That's all? Is there anything else?」

「Rank D. Beastman. Favorite thing: Curry. Don't particularly dislike anything.」

Clad, your gaze is scary. He doesn't really seem to like Fran. She's a newly-raised Rank D, so it's possible that he can't permit such a young girl being ranked higher than himself.

「No, that's not... I was meaning your weapon choice or the like...」

「Oi, brat. I said it before, but we're going at this mission seriously. If y'think this'll just be a simple excursion, then it's better for you to go back home and suck your mom's teat 'nstead!」

We—ll, you certainly like picking fights, huh Clad? Even though you're a Human, you seem more like a mad dog. Moreover, he's even using his Threatening Skill. His intention to make her cry is clear, but... Well, things like that don't work on Fran at all.

「Mother's dead.」

「..... Tsk.」

Mhm. Those words hit the hardest, huh. If he could retort to even that, his identity as a Human would seriously be doubted. In addition, he would've needed to do so under the bloodthirsty gaze that Amanda's giving off.

「For an adult to shout at a child! Seriously... Are you alright, Fran?」

「Nn. No problem.」

Such a threat was only at the level of a puppy yapping away when compared to the feeling of intimidation given off from a devil. Hopefully, my implied meaning in those words is understood. Anyways, Clad returns with provocation. His aim isn't Fran, though.

「You—! Wadda ya mean by that? Aah?」

「Err— Then, because the self-introductions are over, I'll move on to the briefing.」

Wanting to avoid any more turmoil, Cruz forcibly ends the conversation. Hang in there, Cruz. I have no means of helping you, but because the above-mentioned dispute has happened early on, do your best. It's a good opportunity, probably!

「Please, attempt to be friends for the duration of the request.」

「Fu—」

「Ke」

「No problem. Good friends.」

「I sincerely hope that's the case...!」

After crying so in desperation, Cruz moved onto the briefing.

「The request consists of the investigation of Aressa's Dungeon:

『Cobweb』 which has already been conquered. In addition, we are to recover the Magic Ore that's being generated by the Dungeon at the same time.」

The Dungeon consists of six layers, and its inhabitants mainly consist of insect-type Demonic Beasts. In particular, the 5th and 6th layers are essentially Spider Demonic Beast nests, and their numbers are no laughing matter.

「Because the Magic Ore is generated in the Dungeon Core Room, it's necessary to make our way there.」

「So we're to collect Magic Ore, then.」

「Ah, 'bout the Demonic Beasts, can we take 'em down? They're bein' allowed to live there on purpose, right? 」

「Ahh, there's no problem. Reducing the number of Demonic Beasts is also part of the request to a certain extent.」

「Hehehe. I'm lookin' forward to it.」

Spider-type Demonic Beasts by the name of Trap Spider reside in Cobweb, ranked at Threat Level F. It isn't a bad opponent for low-class Adventurers for the sake of experience.

「I'll warn you now, but while the Spiders are weak when they're alone, they're intelligent enough to use traps in groups. Their true threat comes from their cooperation. Please, don't be careless.」

「Ke, there's no way I'd lose to a Demonic Beast that even a Rank F could take care a'. They're nothin' but experience points.」

「..... In addition, Demonic Beasts aren't the only thing to watch out for inside the Dungeon. Most of the traps in Cobweb aren't a big deal, but watch out for Transition Traps[3].」

Transition Traps are traps that transfer their victim to any place in the Dungeon. It's difficult to prevent them from triggering, so even experts can fall into a crisis.

There seem to have been cases where Transition Traps placed in spider webs were triggered, sending their victims to Monster Rooms. There's a need to be careful.

「The Transition Trap is a fiendish trap that can sometimes involve more than just yourself. Be careful.」

「Yeah, yeah. I got it, I got it.」

He doesn't understand at all. I'm worried. With a reckless, incompetent fellow with a high likelihood of sabotaging others... I'll have to protect Fran.

Author's Note:

Combat methods and Titles have been added to the earlier chapters.

As for the current Status of Fran:

Name: Fran Age: 12

Race: Black Cat Beastman

Job: Magic Swordsman

State: Contracted

Status: Level: 25

HP: 304 MP: 215

STR: 150 END: 129 AGI: 140

INT: 95 MGC: 117 DEX: 108

[1] A Grab-Bag is essentially a bag filled with a variety of objects; people're supposed to simply reach in and grab something without knowing what's inside. A good comparison would be Booster Packs for cards.

[2] So, there're two 'Swimming' skills here: 水泳 from the Sea Lion and 遊泳 from the Trident Shark. Because I'm simply using machines, I can't be sure of what the difference is, but I did look into the single characters that made the two different and found that the former seems to be just plain old swimming (水 = Water), while the latter seems to be referring to the sport/game-oriented side of swimming (遊 = Play).

If anyone has a better suggestion on how the two should be translated, I'd be happy to hear it. Thanks to Mesaphrom for the suggestion for 遊泳!

[3] 転移の罠. Tempting as it is, I won't translate it as 'Teleportation Trap' because it's possible that 'Teleportation' will simply be a stronger version of Transition. Something like a trap that teleports its victim anywhere in the world, for example.

Chapter 47: A Little Bit of Training

It's the first day of the Dungeon Investigation commission.

With the group who left the Guild after making a commotion, we arrived at the entrance to a cave after half of the day had passed.

Well, the journey itself was quite serious in its own way. Mainly due to Clad. It seems he has the king-of-the-mountain trait, not liking anyone taking the lead other than himself; he just charged ahead each and every time. I was surprised that he would even talk back to the examiner: Cruz.

If he really wants to raise to D Rank, he couldn't seriously think that leaving a bad impression is the way to go, right? Or is he thinking that 'I have to be assertive!' = 'I'm the type to make decisions proactively!' and 'I'm not scared of my superiors!' = 'I have courage!'...?

I don't see the appeal.

Well, the thoughts of one person doesn't amount to much in the end.

Anyways, because Amanda is quite strong-willed, standoffs between the two continued to occur regularly. Because Clad always ended up losing to Amanda's vigor, he really should have stopped opposing her from the start.

Frion stayed uninvolved with any disputes, taking the position of a complete bystander. However, it could also be said that he was unwilling to lend a hand in quelling the arguments, too. Because of this, mediation between the two whenever a dispute occurred was left entirely to Cruz. Is it just my imagination, or does he seem strangely fatigued even though only half a day has passed? Everyone should really pitch in to help with these sorts of things.

What about Fran, you ask? Well, everyone has strong points and weak points.

That all aside, it was interesting to see Amanda battling along the way. Not only was her use of the whip amazing, but her use of wind-type Magic seemed incredibly useful. Unlike fire-type magics, using them in the middle of a woodland is fine.

After everything that occurred, we arrived a bit behind schedule. While we should have arrived at the Dungeon in the evening, it's already night.

「Erm... Originally we should have gone inside on the first day and traveled through two layers of the Dungeon, capturing the rest tomorrow, but... Because we're a little behind schedule, we'll stop and camp here today and head into the Dungeon early tomorrow. Sound good?」

「What d'you mean 'camp'? We should just hurry up and start conquering the Dungeon immediately, right? Conquering this Dungeon'll be easy; there're only small fries inside, y'know?」

「The Ranks of the Demonic Beasts within are indeed low, but it's dangerous to go in with a tired body. And so, we'll be camping here today.」

「I agree.」

「Me too.」

「Sounds good.」

「Tsk! Cowards!」

Even after saying so, Clad doesn't stand up and go in by himself. Even he should understand that it's dangerous to go into the Dungeon after walking for half a day. Cruz seems a bit unsatisfied with his reaction, but he doesn't say anything else.

To be honest, Clad's the type of person I inherently dislike. He's just the sort of person to start throwing in weird suggestions and quibble when an

agenda is about to be finalized in class. Even though the surroundings are thinking 「Geez, it doesn't matter. I just want this to be finished so I can go home, so be quiet already.」 he'd continue to oppose the popular opinion endlessly.

「Fran! Would you like to sleep in my Tent? It'd be fine to leave the watch to the men.」

「Decline.」

「A—hh, so co—ld.」

「I'll leave the first watch to you, miss Fran. After that, my group, Clad's group, and Frion's group will take over in that order.」

Oho, he pushed the Midnight watch — the most difficult time — to Clad, huh. You shouldn't do that, Cruz. Even if it's only a little, don't retaliate.

「The A Rank won't be keeping watch?」

「Amanda is acting as a spectator. Besides, if I asked her to help then it wouldn't be a proper test for you guys. If she participated, it'd take less than an hour to traverse the Dungeon on foot, and we'd be able to leave for home before the day ends. As for the results of the examination in that case: you'd all fail.」

Even non-standard opponents would be easily finished off by an A Rank. In fact, they'd only be at the level of a nuisance. With that, it'd be better to look at Amanda as insurance in case of an emergency.

「Ke. Is that so.」

It's already been decided that I'll keep watch as well when it's Cruz's turn. He continued grumbling afterwards, but was made to fall silent by Amanda in the end.

「You should have been notified beforehand, but meals and bedding are to be prepared by each party individually, alright?」

There's also that. After asking Randell, we obtained some high-quality bedding. A sleeping bag and blankets, all for just 7,000Gorudo!

As for the meals... Well, that goes without saying. I had cooked large quantities of Demonic Beasts for this exact purpose, after all. Because we're the first watch we postponed the meal, however.

「Oi, Oi. Can a single brat e'en keep watch?」

「No problem.」

「Ahh? Y'think I can just trust a brat's words so easily?」

「She's a Rank D Adventurer. That's higher than you guys, right? If she says that there're no problems, then it's fine.」

「Her even being Rank D is questionable! What could a kid have done while we were on expedition, hah? Chances are, she just used 'er body t'gain the favor of that lolicon Guild Master, right? So, how'd ya be able to do it, huh?!」

Ah—, this guy was part of the returned-from-the-investigation group, huh. In that case, he wouldn't have a chance to witness Fran's battle prowess. At a Rank of this level, tricks shouldn't be possible to measure the ability of an individual, yet Clad misunderstood that as us getting our Rank through unjust means.

Well. Our increase in Ranks was quite peculiar. There's plenty of room for doubt.

Still, I can't forgive what I can't forgive.

『Fran, how are you holding up?』

(? Nothing particularly wrong. Slightly noisy.)

Clad continues exercising his Threatening Skill, but it seems that it's only seen as a bit noisy to Fran.

「Ability.」

「Ha! Ability? A brat like you can't reach Rank D with jus' ability!」

「Ability (mine and Teacher's).」

「Hyahaha! A'right, then show me. Let's 'train' a little.」

After saying so, Clad lifts up his Spear. It seems he's intent on having a mock battle.

Fran raises slowly in return. Haa— Her battle-preparations are already complete.

『Fran, sparring is fine but don't go too far, alright?』

(Understood. Just training a bit.)

She has a good smile. However, no one else is saying anything. Because Frion and his companions aren't the type to speak up I can understand it, but.....

I'd have thought that Amanda would have put a stop to this at the very beginning... Instead, she's just laughing. Well, maybe she figures there's no problem due to the difference in ability between Fran and Clad.

As for Cruz though, he doesn't seem to plan on stepping in at all. Has he become so exhausted that he's completely ran out of fuel? No, it doesn't seem like that's the case. He's looking at the two with an earnest expression.

That reminds me, I didn't see Cruz in the Goblin Subjugation either. Chances are, he was part of the return group in that case. In other words... He also wants to ascertain Fran's abilities. Cruz's two companions are casually paying attention to the surroundings, as to act as substitutions for Fran.

『Fran, before we begin, you should set up a Barrier in the surroundings.』

If we start the mock battle as-is, Clad might end up complaining that we didn't do a proper job as lookout.

(Nn. Understood.)

「——Wind · Zone」

「——Ground · Zone」

Wind · Zone is a magic barrier from Wind Magic, and can cover any range from its origin in a dome-shape. If anything intrudes within the barrier, the caster can sense it using the flow of wind.

Ground · Zone is also a magic barrier, this time from Soil Magic. It also creates a dome of any range from the origin. The difference between it and Wind · Zone is that it acts on and under the ground. On the other hand, it has no effect on intrusions via the air.

Through employing both Wind and Soil, one is able to cover all directions.

「.....Ha? T-This is... Magic?」

「Moreover, from two attributes...」

「Seriously?」

Clad's party members started making noise in the background. Up until now, they had been watching things develop with smirks on their faces... But now they've taken on a blue tint.

「Y-You... You're a Magician?!」

「? Not a Magician.」

「No, but, that jus' now was Magic, wasn't it?!」

「Usable without being a Magician.」

「T-That's true, but.....」

It seems that with only barrier-type magic we've managed to intimidate Clad. It's only a simple Lv4 magic, so only Rank E Adventurers and their equivalents will show up for Fran.

「Then, let's begin.」

「R-Right. A'right, let's go!」

'I can't use magic, but my Spear won't lose'. Such is the feeling I get from the determined expression on his face. In a fight between a Sword and a Spear, the Spear has an overwhelming advantage. In a one-on-one match, it can't be beat.

「..... Any time.」

「Tsuyaah!」

No wait-and-see tactics? Is that alright? Perhaps he's going full-offensive since he sensed Fran's strength a bit?

With all his energy placed in a lunge to her face, Clad has no plans on stopping just before the strike lands. Frion, who was watching in an easygoing manner while dining shows an expression of shock. This is, indeed, surprising. From behind, Clad's comrades leak a scream. Seeing Fran not move at all, they must have thought that Clad's strike landed directly.

However, their expectations were way off the mark.

「No use.」

Fran, with only light swing of me, deflects the tip of the spear. Clad, whose body was covered in too much momentum, becomes wide open. There, Fran's kick explodes.

「GAH!」

Blown off his feet, Clad falls to the ground.

「Damn it!」

「Continue?」

「O-Obviously! My guard was down jus’ then, but I won’t be ‘olding back from now on!」

Ohh! This is the first time I’ve heard the bad-loser cliché! He’s unsightly for saying such a thing, so I can’t really say that I approve. Well, maybe I can a little.

「Then, my move.」

「Aa—gh!」

From Clad’s perspective, Fran’s figure should have disappeared, followed by a sudden impact from the side. Through Fran’s quick movements, he was struck with my stomach.

「I can still……!」

「Nn.」

「Oraoraoraah!」

In desperation, Clad swings his spear around violently, giving off consecutive thrusts. Fran isn’t hit at all, however. Thrust, thrust, thrust. Dodge, dodge, dodge. I wonder how long this process repeated itself?

「Why?! What’s—!」

「Not hitting.」

「How is this even—!」

It’s probably been around three minutes since Clad continued striking with his Spear. I already feel dizzy, you know? Panting, his expression has turned miserable, probably due to the shock of realizing that not even one of his attacks have been successful.

「Damn it, damn it!」

「Then, time to finish.」

「Damn iii—GOHA!」

For the second time, I strike him. This time, the strike lands on his face, causing him to lose consciousness and fall onto his back.

「Leader!」

Clad's companions quickly rush to his side.

『Well, with this he shouldn't make such a fuss anymore.』

「Nn. Regrettable.」

『Ahh, regrettable indeed.』

He didn't make a good sparring partner by any means. Still, against a person with such a difficult personality, the battle was comical at least.

「Fran, so strong～」

「Nn.」

Suddenly, Amanda's arms wrap around Fran. I wasn't even able to notice her approach. Damn, how mortifying.

However, Amanda has a hint of discomfort on her face. She has the same gentle smile as usual, but... Her eyes aren't smiling at all. If anything, they look the same as a bird of prey which found game.

「Hey. Won't you spar with me as well?」

「With Amanda?」

「That's right. I'm a Solo A Rank, you know? I've been having trouble finding a training partner lately, but if it's Fran then some good practice

might be possible!」

Ahh, she wouldn't have anyone to train with, would she? Sparring with an A Rank... It would be a valuable experience. Training in of itself is good. I don't think that any accidents will occur, either.....

『Hey, Fran——』

(Great training for Master Sword Arts.)

『... That's right.』

「Nn.」

Hah... it's no good. She's in complete battle-mode right now. It won't be possible to stop Fran when she's like this.

Ensig:

There's an Author Note here regarding the inclusion of Fran's status at the end of last chapter, alongside a correction he made to this chapter (at the part where Clad is struck in the stomach). Because said notes have already been implemented, I'll exclude them.

Chapter 48: A Short Spar

Author's Note:

I've received a comprehensive evaluation of 30,000pt!

This is all thanks to your guys' support!

「Haahhh!」

「Fuu!」

『Dangerous! This is seriously dangerous!』

Amanda's whip strikes where Fran had just been standing.

DoGOoOoO

That isn't the power of a whip! It's more like some sort of giant mallet was thrown into the fray, sinking the ground in!

「Ahahaha! That's the way, Fran!」

「.....!」

We're caught completely in Amanda's pace. Fran's been obstructed by that transcendent-quality whip right from the start, so it's impossible to get in close.

As expected of an A Rank Adventurer. I had thought that we could have a good match, but I was making light of her.

『That whip sure is troublesome...』

Only defensive movement can be taken to block its attacks, which come from any angle. The strikes are ever-changing, and infinite in variety. Sometimes, the attacks can come in the form of heavy-hitting blunt strikes, sometimes they can cut clean through rocks, and sometimes, not even sound can keep up with them. Frankly speaking, it's strange that Fran hasn't been defeated already.

『Are you alright?』

(Teacher, interference: forbidden.)

『I know.』

(Nn! Will absolutely get an attack in.)

『Ou. Do your best.』

That might be too high a target... Amanda hasn't even moved from her starting position, after all.

She's already peerless when it comes to the whip, but it should be kept in mind that Amanda's Job is Champion of Storms, meaning she's fully capable of using the higher form of Wind Magic: Storm Magic. However, she has yet to use any magic whatsoever. In other words, she hasn't considered it necessary to do so.

Even if I observe her flow of magic using the Sorcery Skill, there's no change. And, on top of not using any magic, she hasn't even used any Whip Techniques, giving a looming feeling of dread.

However, Fran isn't ordinary either. Gradually, she's getting used to the movements of the whip. The distance between her and Amanda is growing shorter.

「Now!」

「Naïve!」

「Predicted.」

「Mu—! You did it, huh!」

Maybe the mock battle was worth it, after all? Fran reached a position where I could almost reach Amanda.

Finally, after five minutes since the battle began, Amanda was forced to move her legs. Fran, receiving an immense amount of bloodthirst, takes some distance once again.

「Ah, pardon me. It seems that the naïve one was me.」

「Nn.」

「..... Sh!」

「-Bu」

「It's the first time in a while that I needed to dodge in a fight.」

With her whip undulating like a snake, Amanda launches herself at Fran. Her movement is just like a snake. Furthermore, the presence of magic was felt from whatever Skill she was using. Most likely, it's a Whip Technique.

With that, the battle intensifies even further. Wounds, big and small, cover Fran's entire body the more time passes. The power of the whip clad in magic power using Whip Techniques is terrific, and while Fran is barely able to evade them, she's being damaged by the wind pressure.

Still, I'm not too worried. The day we met Amanda, we went to look up information on her. Right off the bat, we found that she was a good person in general, and was good-natured through and through.

To begin with, Amanda has managed an orphanage for more than 30 years. There're nearly 500 people in the current Aressa who came from said orphanage, making her well-loved by many.

When Cobweb was still active near Aressa in the past, Adventurers flourished. Because of that, the number of orphans whose Parents died while adventuring also rose, and the guards weren't exactly the kindest,

either. At 20 years old, Amanda (only a D Rank at the time) extended a helping hand out to such children.

Casting her materials aside, she built an orphanage to educate and bring up any orphans she could find. Nowadays there's plenty of help from people around town, and the management of the orphanage is favorable as well, but... Back then it would have been painful to smile through it all.

Furthermore, regarding the Title 'Guardian of Children', to obtain it you not only have to save children, but be loved by them as well. It's said to be a Title that would be lost upon enacting any inappropriate behavior.

Amanda, possessing such a Title, would obviously be a good friend for Fran, who is a child herself.

Perhaps, so long as they're both mutually satisfied, then it's of no consequence whether injuries are inflicted in this battle... Or maybe, it's because all of these wounds aren't inflicted with malicious intent.

「Ha!」

「Kuu.....」

Still, the intensity of this battle is worrisome.

It's gradually becoming a one-sided battle, with Fran on the defensive.

... Huh? At this rate, isn't this really bad? Anti-Death prevents instant death, but it isn't absolute. You could die again immediately if you're in a Poisoned or Bleeding State.

Should I stop them?

— No, let's wait and see for a while longer. Fran is intent on landing at least one blow in this battle.

「Now!」

Fran moved. To Amanda, who activated another Whip Technique, she stepped forward by force. At onlooker might see it as desperation, but I know that's not the case.

「Gu...!」

The whip, thrust forward, scrapes out Fran's side. Blood dances in the air as it escapes the open wound, but Fran, who pushes her back by force with Wind Magic, advances with a grimace.

「As expected of you!」

「Ha.....!」

Using half of her remaining magic, Fran lunges with her whole body. It isn't a Sword Technique, but its offensive power is probably equivalent to one.

Furthermore, there was no time for Amanda to pull back her whip for the sake of a counterattack.

「Wind · Shield!」

GYyYyan!*

With a high-pitched sound, the blow which had Fran's whole body invested in it was... Prevented. Wind Magic, which Amanda hadn't used up until this point, had nullified it. It goes without saying that it was only used because Amanda had been driven into a corner. However, Fran's aim was to land a single blow. She won't be satisfied with just this.

And so, Fran released the magic she had reserved: Flare · Blast.

It was launched immediately after defensive magic was used. Even Amanda wouldn't be able to reactivate a proper defensive measure in time.

『Splendid!』

Throughout the entire battle, I had been chanting Arias with Parallel Thought to see what times I could potentially land a blow, and in my opinion, that was the best timing thus far.

「Kuu!」

GaGOOOOON

With Amanda hit directly by Flare · Blast, a great explosion ensued. A cloud of dust, kicked up as though a bomb had detonated, covers the entire area. The ground around us melts, becoming something akin to lava. Just how hot is it, I wonder?

She isn't dead, right? She's an A Rank, but the explosion just now was a bit dangerous..... There was a time when I thought so.

What manner of magic would it take for her to remain unscathed? Not only that, to be in perfect condition! No matter how you look at it, this woman's too far out of the norm! I know that there's Fire Resistance and all, but to that extent?!

「That was dangerous.....」

「Nn..... Regret...ful...」

dosa

With that, Fran collapses with a look of vexation. With such excessive bleeding, there's no question that she had become light-headed. And so, reaching the limit of her endurance, Fran went unconscious on the spot.

『How regretful..... Still, you've done well.』

It was good to have fought against this monster of an opponent here. Furthermore, she did it without my assistance.

「Fran! I'm so sorry!」

Amanda approaches the collapsed Fran in a hurry, and takes out a Potion before sprinkling it on Fran. Without a doubt, it's a first-class Life Potion.

「As a reward for your perseverance you should have landed that strike, but... Grace of the Spirits protected me automatically.」

I see, so it was thanks to Grace of the Spirits. It seems to be a Skill which automatically invalidates damage to a certain degree. It's an extremely strong Skill, but it has the drawback of needing 24 hours to reuse.

Fran might be unconvinced, but I think that her strike was definitely a good one, one that invoked the absolute defense of her opponent.

Well, for now, rest well. As for the watch..... The others can take care of it. Probably.

Ensig:

There's an Author's Note here regarding how they changed the typo-correction's location to the Afterward. Because all of these Raws have their mistakes edited out already, I'll simply omit the Note.

Chapter 49: Lessons from Ms. Amanda

It's been one hour since Fran's sparring match and defeat with Amanda.

After waking up, Fran took a seat face-to-face with Amanda. As Amanda was feeling apologetic for letting the battle escalate so far, it was decided that she would teach us some of the information we wanted to know.

As Fran was able to learn a lot through the battle, I don't really think that there was a need take over Fran's watch and personally guard her while she slept as well as grant us this, but... Since it's already like this, we've might as well accept it, right?

「Then, first I'll explain fighting Skills.」

「Please.」

「However, I'm not too strong when it comes to theories, so I won't be able to explain everything. Is that alright?」

「That's fine.」

To us who know near-nothing, any information is precious.

「Then, Combat Arts are things like Sword Arts, which allow one to improve their handling with a respective weapon; these improvements can also be seen with Techniques. Combat Techniques like Sword Techniques, Pugilist Techniques, and my preferred Whip Techniques all hold special moves that consume one's magical power. Did you know of that?」

「Nn. I know.」

Sword Arts is required to learn Sword Techniques, and Bow Arts is required to learn Bow Techniques. Furthermore, it's impossible to learn Combat Techniques at a higher level than their respective Combat Arts, making the two a pair. In other words, one must bear in mind that if their Sword Arts is only Lv5, they can only level Sword Techniques up to Lv5.

「After that is only a matter of learning how to use Combat Techniques themselves, but.....」

「Nn.」

「Well, I'm not really clear on the details surrounding that.」

「Eh?」

「No, well, the methods to learn can be grasped through training, but... I don't really know the detailed theory around it. If you ask someone researching the subject, you might be able to understand it a bit better.」

「Just training method is fine.」

「That's usually how it is for Adventurers. Anyways, I suppose for that I should talk about the prerequisites of Vigor Manipulation and Magic Manipulation? As for the reason for needing them..... To be frank, I don't know why either. As a Half-Elf, I gained both of them before I could remember. Well, it seems that Fran didn't have any problems with them either, so shall I simply omit it?」

「Nn. Don't mind.」

「Then, moving onto the training method for Combat Techniques, just envision yourself pouring your magic into the weapon as well as your body. Then, like a flash, Combat Techniques arrive. The Techniques themselves are activated when you don't go against that flash. After the first use, the Technique is acquired in the form of a Skill of sorts, so there's no problem using it from that point on. Fran can use Combat Techniques too, so do you remember acquiring them?」

「？」

「Well, Fran is still small, so you probably learned your Combat Techniques when you were even younger, right? It's possible that you've forgotten. Still, to be able to use Combat Techniques at such a young age, you're pretty prodigious, huh.」

Dangerous. We were saved by the fact that Fran's a child. Anyways, in regards to the method of obtaining Combat Techniques, I have a rough idea of how it works. With this, not only Sword Arts, but Sword Techniques should also be able to be trained manually.

「Once a Combat Technique has been learned, you should continuously use it to raise the Skill's level. The reason being each time a level goes up in a form of Combat Techniques, a new Technique is learned.」

Lv1 must be the most difficult to raise, then.

「Next, shall I move onto the description of Magic?」

「Nn.」

「In Magic, the basic attributes are Soil, Water, Fire, and Wind. Their superior versions are Ground, Ocean, Flame, and Storm respectively.」

All four of the basic attributes can be used already.

「After those are what are called 'composite attributes'. Those are Lightning, Ice, Nature, Lava, Sandstorm, and Life: those 6.」

「Composite?」

「Yes. You can acquire those attributes after improving two of the basic attributes. For example, Nature Magic requires Water and Soil Magic.」

「Possible to learn? Or not?」

「Well, I'll get to that.」

To learn Magic, one can either become a pupil of an experienced magician, or learn it through means of memorization, or... Well, there're various methods.

Amanda seemed to have learned how to use magic through memorization and training. However, the training method is quite terrific. What makes it terrific is the fact that the method itself closely resembles the practices of a certain Hunter×Hunter[1].

For Water Magic, one has to touch water every day, drink it, soak in it, and hammer the essence of water into one's mind and body. When water flows even in one's dreams, then it becomes possible to learn Water Magic.

If it's Wind Magic, then running about naked in strong gales would work. For Soil, you'd just need to be buried under the ground, or take bites out of stones. Well, such training might be a bit excessive, so only some magicians do such things... Was it my imagination that Amanda's eyes swam for a moment? She would have trained for the Wind, so.....

Anyways, unlike Sword Arts, there seems to be no guarantee that magic can be learned, the reason being 'The Wall of Talent'. For Sword Arts, even if there's a difference in the effort needed between individuals, anyone can learn and improve through proper dedication. In Magic, however, if you don't have talent, you can't acquire it. Period.

「Talent?」

「Yeah. It might be better to say that each person has a certain compatibility with each attribute. For a person incompatible with the Fire Attribute, no matter how much effort they put into learning Fire Magic, they won't be able to do so.」

So, without talent, no matter how much training one does, it would all be to waste? Even with the dedication to burn oneself, it'd be possible to achieve no results... How terrible.

「Currently there isn't a method of examining which attributes one has a talent for, however, I don't think a person with absolutely no talent exists,

so it'd be possible to learn Magic so long as one keeps at it.」

「Depends on efforts.」

「That's how it is. Incidentally, I had attempted to train myself for Fire, but I wasn't able to learn it in the end. Instead, it seemed that I had talent for Wind, so I was able to learn it in about a week.」

「I see.」

「It seems that there're also cases of geniuses capable of using Magic ever since they were born too, I think? I wonder if Fran's one such case?」

「Nn?」

「You can't remember, huh. Well, that's fine. Returning to the subject of composite attributes, there're two main issues in acquiring them.」

「Have to learn two attributes first.」

「Right. After that, there's the question of whether you have talent for the composite attribute itself.」

Because of those two things, composite attributes are extremely rare. Until now, the only composite attribute we've seen has been Nature Magic from both the Guild Master and Frion... Both of which are Wood Elves. Because of that, I'm under the impression that aptitude towards Nature Magic simply came to them due to their Race. If that's the case, then it's simply to be expected that composite attributes aren't seen often.

「And so, composite attributes are very rare.」

As for Fran, I wonder where her talent lies? Magic shared by me is usable without a problem for the four basic attributes; Dark and Recovery Magic are also the same. In that case, perhaps Skills gained through a shared relationship disregard talent. No matter how you look at it, it'd be highly irregular for her to have talent in all 4 attributes, after all...

「Next, I'll explain the rest of the attributes.」

「Dark and Recovery?」

「Just like those. First, let's start with Light and Dark.」

The Light and Dark attributes aren't included among the four basic ones. While the methods to attain them doesn't differ with the basic four, they're exempted simply due to the overwhelmingly few amount of people with talent for them.

Surprisingly, they're even rarer than those with talent with Composite Magic, making the order of rarity 4 Basic → Composite → Light and Dark. Being able to acquire Dark Magic from the Demon was extremely lucky.

「With the inclusion of Light and Dark, there're even more attributes to be derived. The derivations of Light are Purification and Illusion while Dark can be derived into Poison and Ghost.」

Everyone with talent for the Light attribute will also have talent with Purification and Illusion without exception. Similarly, talent in the Poison and Ghost attributes is also guaranteed if one has talent with Dark, so the derivation attributes are actually seen as subordinate-attributes in the eyes of researchers. Also, having talent with the derived attributes doesn't necessarily mean that an individual will have talent in the Dark or Light attributes themselves.

Furthermore, Poison and Purification have higher attributes: Decay and Cleansing.[2] There're way too many magic attributes.

「Other than those, there're also unique attributes.」

The unique attributes include Recovery, Support, Summoning, Contract, Space-Time, Moonlight, Spirit, Smithing, and other non-generic ones. Practitioners of Support and Recovery Magic seem to be plentiful, but when it comes to attributes like Space-Time and Moonlight, their rarity surpasses even Light and Dark.

「Those're only the ones off the top of my head, but there're many other unique attributes scattered across the world. There seem to be attributes

unique to Demonic Beasts, too.」

「Such as?」

「Well, rumors have it that Dragons possess magic only usable by themselves. There's a similar case said about Fiends and such. Compared with mankind, Demonic Beasts that can use magic outnumber us by a wide margin, after all.」

「Why?」

「Well, in the first place, Demonic Beasts make use of magic on a daily basis. Demonic Beasts larger than castles would be killed off in no time if they didn't reinforce their bodies with magic, right? To them, magic is second nature — like breathing. Because of that, Demonic Beasts can use Magic even without Magic Manipulation, unlike mankind. Their Magic Stones might also have a hand in that, too... But of course, there're also ones that have Magic Manipulation as well, further increasing their efficiency.」

「I see.」

「It's the same with Combat Techniques. Even with differences between Vigor Manipulation and Magic Manipulation, in the end, aren't they simply Skills making use of magic? Because of that, Demonic Beasts can make use of Combat Techniques without Vigor Manipulation.」

I suppose Skills like Vibration Fang would fall under that category?

「And, due to the Demonic Beasts' peculiar magic-oriented nature, there're many individuals capable of using Light and Dark attributes too. Looking at it like that, they're far more talented than mankind.」

That reminds me, there's still one thing that I've been wondering about.

「Is Dark Magic only used by bad people?」

The Demon made use of it, and Poison and Ghost Magic are the types used by villains no matter how you look at it. If it was me, I wouldn't be able to

trust a practitioner of Ghost Magic on our first meeting no matter what. They'd be an evil person, after all. Or... I'd imagine them to be so, anyways.

「That's not the case. Demonic Beasts may make use of it, and civilians might think that it's inherently bad, but... For Adventurers, magic of all kinds is generally recognized as 'useful'. For example, Ghost Magic is really useful in Dungeon exploration, you know?」

Alright. In that case we can make use of Darkness Magic without a problem. With that, Darkness Reinforcement and other such Skills won't simply be left to collect dust.

Finally, we asked about the combinations of complex attributes.

Water + Soil = Nature

Water + Wind = Ice

Water + Fire = Life

Wind + Fire = Lightning

Wind + Soil = Sandstorm

Soil + Fire = Lava.

Those are the combinations.

As for the composite attributes between Light and Dark as well as unique attributes, they have yet to be confirmed.

「Well, I don't know of them, at least.」

「I want a composite attribute.」

「Fran made use of Soil and Wind magic a while back, and you're good with Fire too, right? With those, it's possible to aim for Lightning, Sandstorm, and Lava.」

「Nn. I'll do my best.」

Alright, if that's what Fran wants then we'll obtain one without fail!

I could learn a composite attribute through absorbing one, or through manual acquisition. I was able to learn Flame Magic through Fire Magic Lv10, so the possibility of a composite attribute being learned through raising the levels of other magics is high.

『As it stands..... The attribute second to Fire is Wind.』

In the Goblin Den, Wind Magic Lv3 was repeatedly obtained through absorbing the stones of Army Beetles. The efficiency of absorbing higher-leveled Skills is better than lower-leveled ones, after all.

Raising Wind Magic through the insects' Lv3 versions took far less time than advancing Sword Arts through the Goblins' Lv1 versions.

『What shall we do..... Perhaps we should give it a level or two?』

47 Self-Evolution Points remain. We should leave 28 of those for the sake of testing out the Superior version of Sword Arts.

『What do you think?』

(What to do?)

In the end, we used 6 Points to raise Wind Magic's level. As we attained the Lightning Attribute properly, I have no regrets. Furthermore, the Storm Attribute and Master of Wind Titles were also obtained.

(Want to use it quickly.)

『Not here. We only just heard about Composite Attributes from Amanda, so somehow using one immediately would be bad.』

(Alright.....)

『When we return to Aressa, let's test it out. Alright?』

「Nn.」

[1] Surprisingly mentions Hunter×Hunter without any censorship (狩人×狩人).

[2] In regards to the higher version attributes, the first (Decay) is actually Ptomaine Poison (死毒). Because Ptomaine is found in putrefying corpses/vegetation, Decay seems to be fitting, so I went with it.

The second is 聖淨, with the first character being Sacred/Holy/Pure and the second being Cleaning/Cleansing/Cleanup. ‘Cleansing’ in itself can be linked to the purging of sins/filth, so that’s what I decided upon.

It should also be noted that 淨化, which I’ve translated as ‘Purification’ could also be ‘Cleanup’, so if Teacher and/or Fran happen to get it and the first spell is something like ‘Clean’, then I’ll change Purification → Cleaning, and keep Cleansing the same.

As always, if you have a better suggestion, feel free to let me know in the comments.

Chapter 50: Traps and Tricks

Chapter 50: Traps and Tricks

It's the second day of the Dungeon Investigation.

「Alright, we've broken through 5 layers.」

Our group has already finished exploring four layers.

As for any problems: there haven't been many. Clad, most likely due to the effect of yesterday's defeat, has remained quiet. No, perhaps his silence is due to the shock of witnessing the spar between Fran and Amanda when he woke up? Well... It serves him right either way.

Still, Amanda's approach for 'training' was quite terrifying... The spar was fierce, and I could only witness Fran being beaten half to death too. When her side was practically gauged out my guts went cold... Not that I have any guts, of course!

There're many metaphorical expressions that use parts of the body, so it's quite difficult to use them for me who is inorganic. Still, that doesn't matter. The point is, I was a tad worried.

It was good that we were able to see the strength of an A Rank Adventurer firsthand, so while Fran was a bit vexed with the result, she doesn't seem to have started disliking Amanda. Rather than seeing her as an opponent who she narrowly escaped death from, it's more likely that Fran is viewing her as another wall to someday climb over. Testament to that is the sense of goodwill I can feel from her towards Amanda.

As for Amanda herself, it seemed that the spar from last night was satisfactory. She had lamented the fact that she could easily defeat common

Adventurers simply by wielding a Whip, but with Fran's high prowess in evasive maneuvers and attack even she would be in danger if she relaxed.

It was because of this that the morning was noisy with her request to spar again... Even to Cruz and Frion, the spar between Amanda and Fran was like something from a different dimension.

They didn't particularly change their attitude towards Fran, but pieces of their actions and language indicated a slight feeling of awe towards Fran. With that, it seems that they've fully recognized her strength.

Surprisingly enough, something akin to kindness was even felt from Cruz. Perhaps he's finally realized that the one he lost to was Rank D? Or perhaps he's the type of person who would only accept another after measuring their strength firsthand. How manly, Cruz. However, Fran is off-limits!

Moving on, layers 1 to 4 didn't have any strong opponents and the traps were few, so we simply proceeded without pause for the most part. The Demonic Beasts themselves were Insect-type, so while it's a shame, I couldn't obtain any new Skills from them.

「Now, just a reminder, Trap Spiders will be appearing from now on.」

「Nn.」

「If we're surrounded it'll get troublesome, so be careful.」

Becoming bound by thread is more than enough to lead to defeat — even if your opponent is weak.

「At the same time, the number of traps will increase. The Transition Traps are particularly dangerous, so prepare accordingly. Rather than focusing on the detection of enemies, I'd like to ask everyone with the Thief Job to focus on finding traps.」

And so, with Thieves as the lead, we plunge into the fifth layer. In case of combat, Warriors step forward, with the Magicians providing support from behind.

The materials capable of being gathered from the Spiders, being quite strong for their rank, have moderate value. Their utility is also a part of that. However, they're weak to fire and burn up easily, so we'll be refraining from fire-type Magic as much as possible. Instead, Fran wields me.

Like this, traversing the 5th Layer can be done without a problem. Well, that's only to be expected with this much fighting power on our side.

However... We immediately encountered a problem after delving into the 6th Layer.

「Shit, e'en though they're jus' small fries!」

「They aren't falling, even with Spirit Magic...? This can't be!」

The Trap Spiders have suddenly become stronger. Not only their size, their increase in vitality is also plainly visible. Perhaps the deeper we delve, the stronger they will become?

After using Appraisal, I can only be surprised by their Name and Description.

『Fran, these aren't Trap Spiders, they're Trick Spiders, their evolution!』

At a glance, a Trick Spider only seems to be a large Trap Spider, but their contents are entirely different. They're the products of Highbreeds that have evolved, after all. The Threat Level of a single Trick Spider is E.

As for their Status, their offensive power is more than double what we've been facing thus far. Furthermore, they make use of Confusion Poison, and even have the Deadly Poison Fang Skill. It seems that the number of Adventurers who mistook them for Trap Spiders and attacked them only to lose their lives in the process aren't few.

「Gennell! What's wrong?!」

「I... I don't know... I've tried using an Anti-Venom, but it's not working...」

So someone got hit, huh... The Poison from Trap Spiders is very weak, so if one swallowed a 5th Grade Anti-Venom it wouldn't be a problem. And so, mistaking the Trick Spiders for Trap Spiders, they must have continued fighting while swallowing low-class Anti-Venoms, thus falling prey to the deadly poison.

『Fran. These guys are dangerous.』

「Nn.」

When Fran takes even the smallest scratch, I immediately apply Antidote[1] — a technique that can even nullify Sovereign Poison completely.

「I-I'm saved!」

「Thank you very much.」

「Nn. Trick Spiders. Strong Poison.」

「Wha-! Trick Spiders?! Impossible! Did evolution occur?!」

In truth, Trick Spiders aren't supposed to be created in this cave. The strongest of this Dungeon's Demonic Beasts were supposed to be Trap Spiders.

However, if several factors overlapped then evolution, an occurrence surpassing one's expectations, can happen.

Those factors start with the birth of an individual too strong for its species. Although it is brought forth by the power of the Dungeon, there are individual differences between each Dungeon Monster. Demonic Beasts with more power than other individuals — sometimes labeled as Unique or Rare individuals — are more than capable of appearing.

And when a powerful individual is born, what do you think happens? It takes a monopoly of the food, forcing the weaker individuals to either cannibalism or starvation. There is the possibility of the strong individual to evolve after eating enough food... But there is also the possibility for a weaker specimen evolving through its survival and cannibalism.

There have been cases where both sides evolve only to eradicate one another, but there have also been cases where the evolved individuals live symbiotically, changing the entire Dungeon ecosystem.

Furthermore, there're cases where the accidental ingestion of experience-rich food, or external factors leading to evolution.

Well, in the case of a captured Dungeon, the latter two cases are pretty improbable.

「Damn, we were careless! Ms. Amanda!」

「I understand. Fran, will you be coming as well?」

「Nn.」

That marked the beginning of a one-sided slaughter. In an instant, we began reducing the number of Trick Spiders that the Rank E Adventurers were having trouble with. In only minutes, the cluster of ~20 spiders transformed into nothing more than a pile of silent corpses.

「Fighting against small fries really is boring. Right, Fran?」

「Nh-nn. Fun.」

「Oh, is that so? Well, so long as Fran had fun it's fine.」

While Fran has an enjoyable expression, the rest of the Adventurers have looks of fatigue. Even Clad seems to be nearing his limit.

「Let's pull back to the 5th Layer! Those guys shouldn't follow us there!」

Unless they've overpopulated or received instructions from a Dungeon Master, Dungeon Monsters are restricted to their own Layer. And so, the Trick Spiders shouldn't be able to give chase after we reach the 5th Layer.

「If they're already breeding, this is pretty dangerous.」

「We know already!」

「Fran, act as the rearguard.」

「Nn.」

「E Rank Parties, withdraw!」

「G-Got i- Gyaa!」

「C-Calm down! ‘S just a scratch!」

「There’re more ‘hind us!」

「’S only one! Jus’ don’t make any noise!」

「H-Here they come again!」

Falling into a panic were some of Clad’s party members from Roar of the Dragon. Not only do they not seem to be accustomed to being surrounded by Demonic Beasts, they’ve taken on the Status Abnormality: Confusion.

「Just wait a sec!」

「S-Shut it!」

Clad is just barely retaining his fighting spirit as two of his subordinates, ones who took a surprise attack from the rear, blindly ran towards the swarm of spiders ahead.

「Ah, wait! There’re might be traps over there!」

And so, sure enough, by running into the area that the Thieves hadn’t scanned yet they triggered traps.

KYUIIIIIIN

「That... Was that a Transition Trap?」

「Not good-」

With that, Fran disappeared.

I, who should have been in her hand, was left at the scene.

『Eh? Fran?』

「Fran!」

[1] Note that the ‘Anti-Venom’ used previously is actually ‘毒消し’, which can be ‘Antidote’ as well. The reason I opted out of translating it that way is due to the fact that this Antidote is a Technique/Spell (アンチ・ドート) and is written in Katakana (i.e. it’s literally pronounced as it would be in English: Anti · Dote).

In English, Antidote doesn’t have a space, pause, or seperater between Anti and Dote, so I can’t make use of the ‘ · ’ that I’ve been using to distinguish them. And so, instead of translating アンチ・ドート and 毒消し the same, I’ve made slight adjustments.

As for why I’m not making the Technique ‘Anti · Venom’ instead, once again, it’s Katakana. I’d rather keep it as-is from the Raws than take creative privileges here.

If anyone has a better suggestion, feel free to mention it in the comments.

Chapter 51: Its Name is Urushi

Chapter 51: Its Name is Urushi

Fran disappeared.

She disappeared by getting caught in a Transition Trap that one of Clad's companions set off!

The weapons of the two others who were caught in the trap were also left in place, just like I was. Not only their Spears, Daggers and Throwing Knives were also left behind. Similarly, Fran's throwing equipment alongside the Dagger of the Sovereign Serpent fell beside me as well.

「Forced cancellation of equipped weapons...?」

「Even the spare weapons were left behind...」

I had heard about the range of the Transition Trap beforehand, but they even force the cancellation of equipped weapons? If the trap was that dangerous, why wasn't that mentioned in the explanation?! Shit, for even the registration to disappear...! P-Please... Stay alive... No, it'll be alright. She should be alright.

What can I do? There must be some way to look for Fran..... There should be something capable of doing so in my various Detection Skills!

「Ridiculous! I've ne'er heard a' such a brutal trap existin' in this Dungeon!」

「That ain't a trap that should be in a Dungeon of this Rank!」

Cruz was also caught by surprise. Apparently, the trap doing this really was a bolt out of the blue.

「..... I think I know how this happened.」

「What, what do you know?」

「The Trick Spiders have a Highbreed variant called the Trickster Spider, which are known to have trap remodeling Skills.」

Trap remodeling Skills? In other words, they can modify the traps in the Dungeon? What a troublesome Demonic Beast! Even more, the they're Highbreeds of Trick Spiders? Isn't that bad?

「It was already irregular that Trick Spiders showed up, right? If Trickster Spiders are present as well, it's not a huge surprise.」

「Ku... Izel, the Map!」

「I've already checked it. If the terrain's remained the same, there should be a small room up ahead.」

「I'm going!」

After picking up the Dagger of the Sovereign Serpent and I, Amanda breaks into a run. I'll remain quiet for now.

Spiders in the surroundings pounce at Amanda all at once. Oi, oi. It hasn't even been 24 hours yet! Without Grace of the Spirits, Amanda won't be able to revive! Even if it's Amanda, this number is—!

「Nuisances.」

ZAN!

Amanda's right hand blurs, and even the Spiders that hadn't jumped at her in the surroundings burst open instantly. One strike. With only one strike, the Spiders were wiped out. I've made lightly of Amanda yet again. I

wasn't even able to see her attack just now. Like this, she never got serious in her battle with Fran either, huh.

After a minute, we arrive at the small room. Naturally, we do so without triggering any traps.

「Fran!」

「Victor! Bart!」

However, there was no one else inside the room.

「Even the destination of the Transition Trap was changed, it seems...」

「Shit! Th' hell are we gonna do?!」

「We should split up and look around. However, it'd be nothing but suicide if we divided our numbers too much in the current situation. Izel, Clad, members of Roar of the Dragon and I will form a unit. Rigg and the Eyes of the Forest will form the second. Finally, Amanda will move herself, with that, we'll have three groups.

「G-Got it.」

「Let's go!」

With that, the Adventurers move out... But Amanda stays in place. Leaning me against the wall, she closes her eyes and concentrates. It doesn't seem like she's using Wind Magic...

Ah, she must be thinking about a method of searching for Fran. I can't just leave this situation to the Adventurers. I have to do my best as well.

Telepathy is — useless. Because my Equipment Registration has been cut off, my connection to Fran was completely severed. Usually, thanks to that connection I would be able to use Telepathy even if she was far away, but... I can't feel Fran right now. To become so uneasy simply by having our connection dissipate...! No, the anxiety Fran is feeling likely trumps mine, I must calm down!

If only I had an Art related to Transition, or something like a spatial leap... Anything would be fine so long as I could fly to Fran. Or, perhaps a Skill that can return Fran to me..... Are there any good Spells that can be used?

No, wait. Pulling Fran back just might be possible with Summon Kin. Fran is contracted by me, so even if our Equipment Registration was dissolved, the contract remains! And, I think I can say that Fran is my kin.....

However, I've neglected verifying Summon Kin's effects after its level had risen. I couldn't summon anything when it was Level 1, and even after its level improved, because I don't make contracts I figured it would be a waste of time. Thus, I didn't check. However, things may have changed with the Skill's raise in level. Even if the possibility is small, I'm clinging at straws here.

Is Fran's name here—?

Hm?

Fran's name isn't listed, but instead the list of 'kin' I can summon are a bunch of individuals that I don't know about.

Summonable Kin: Wolf, Gray Wolf, Brown Wolf, Red Wolf, Blue Wolf, Green Wolf, Yellow Wolf, Black Wolf, Ruby Wolf, Emerald Wolf, Thunder Wolf, Onyx Wolf

What on earth is this? A wolf festival? I don't understand. I don't remember contracting such beings at all.

For now, I should look at the details of each individual.

The first Wolf is just a common wolf. The Grey and Brown Wolves are simply wolves that evolved from regular wolves after specializing in AGI and STR respectively. The Red, Blue, Green, and Yellow Wolves are wolves that can control the attributes of Fire, Water, Wind and Soil respectively. The Black Wolf controls Darkness and Poison.

The Ruby Wolf is the Flame attribute Highbreed of a Red Wolf. Similarly, Emerald is the Storm attribute, and the Thunder Wolf is Lightning. The Onyx Wolf seems to be a Highbreed of the Black Wolf with control over the Darkness, Poison, and Ghost attributes.

Although there're various other features, my eyes remain on one of the abilities of the Onyx Wolf. That is, the Life Perception Skill! Moreover, the Red Wolf and any proceeding wolves have the Echolocation and Keen Smell Skills. So, if it's an Onyx Wolf, will it be able to find Fran?

With that thought, I decide to choose the Onyx Wolf instead of the others.

『——Summon · Onyx Wolf!』

To make sure that a strong individual appears, I pour the maximum amount of MP into the summon. I don't know how much of an effect it'll have, but...

「Gururuu」

From a magic formation appearing out of thin air, a Wolf with jet-black fur springs out.

I-It's a bit bigger than expected. Considerably so. I thought it would be about the size of a big dog, but..... This fellow is more comparable to the size of a cow.

「An Onyx Wolf? In a place like this...?」

Dangerous. I completely forgot about Amanda. She's super surprised. Eh? If it's like this, then won't it just be subjugated...?

It's releasing a terrific amount of magic from its entire body while growling all the while as a form of intimidation... No matter how you look at it, this wolf is a hostile Demonic Beast!

「Grrrrrrr.....」

Please stop. Why are you growling so much? And stop releasing your magic!

『Oi, stop growling! Behave yourself!』

「Gururr!」

It's no use. It's like it's not even listening. Should I try even harder to persuade it? Or rather, why does it look like it's suffering? Just what's going on?

Name: None

Race: Onyx Wolf: Demonic Wolf: Demonic Beast

State: Contracted, Magic Power Discharge

Status: Level 1

HP: 319 MP: 313 STR: 146 END: 156 AGI: 251 INT: 103 MGC: 201 DEX: 128

State: Magic Power Discharge? That is—! That must be the reason why its magic is being dispersed all the time! Ah, is that because of me? Is it because I put too much magic power into the summoning?

〈Will you perform 〈Christening〉 on the Onyx Wolf?〉

At a time like this?! Should I give it a name? Let me see, a name... A name...

『Your name is Urushi[1]!』

Jet Black contains the character Urushi[2], and the dark red hairs occasionally mixed in with its mane is also associated with the lacquer tree. Furthermore, the wolf has control over the Poison attribute, which relates to how a lacquer tree can give one a rash. Even though I thought about it in the spur of the moment, I think it's a good name.

〈 〈Christening〉 of the Onyx Wolf complete〉

〈Onyx Wolf is evolving〉

Eh? Evolution? I only named it, though? What's going on? Is it because its magic is running out of control? Can someone explain what's happening?

As I thought such things, the Onyx Wolf in front of me transformed just as the announcement said it would.

〈Urushi has evolved into a Darkness Wolf〉

「AOOOOooooo!」

It's lively all of a sudden. Is its magic discharge alright?

Name: Urushi

Race: Darkness Wolf: Demonic Wolf: Demonic Beast

State: Contracted

Status: Level 1

HP: 451 MP: 670 STR: 216 END: 217 AGI: 310 INT: 202 MGC:
441 DEX: 208

Skills:

Darkness Resistance: Lv8, Darkness Magic: Lv1, Keen Smell: LvMax, Stealth: Lv7, Fang Techniques: Lv5, Fang Arts: Lv5, Shadow Lurk: LvMax, Shadow Movement: Lv5, Aerial Jump: Lv8, Dread: Lv4, Vigilance: Lv6, Conceal Presence: Lv6, Playback: Lv5, Decay Magic: Lv1, Instantaneous Movement: Lv5, Action Muffling: Lv6, Ghost Magic: Lv5, Life Perception: Lv7, Mental Resistance: Lv6, Poison Magic: LvMax, Echolocation: Lv7, Roar: Lv8, Night Cover: LvMax, Dark Magic: LvMax, Night Vision, Sovereign Toxic Fangs, Automatic HP Recovery, Automatic MP Recovery, Poison Immunity, Shapeshift, Magic Manipulation

Unique Skills:

Predation Absorption

Titles:

Kin of the Sword, Kin of the Wolf God

Description:

A Highbreed Wolf Demonic Beast capable of manipulating the Darkness attribute. Its Status is low compared to other Demonic Beasts of the same rank, but its Skill and Magic diversity is top-class. With many Skills related to stealth, especially the ability to hide and move within shadows, these Demonic Beasts are very difficult to find. Their existence has been confirmed, but there have been very few discoveries. Threat Level C.

Magic Stone Location: Heart Cavity

This fellow is huge. It was already quite large as an Onyx Wolf, but now it's at least twice that size. Onyx was cattle-rank, but the tip of a Darkness Wolf's foot to their shoulder exceeds 3 meters.

A sense of dignity flows from its deep, gold eyes as it glares at the surroundings. Its fangs are as sharp as daggers, and its limbs are more burly than even a bear's. Its black hair is the only thing that it kept through its evolution, sparkling with a peculiar gleam. It resembles the sky of a starry night, shimmering depending on the angle it's seen from, and holding a mysterious beauty.

In addition, it's quite strong. Its Threat Level is C. Also, as its description said, its stealth-related Skills are quite considerable, with an Assassin-like Skill configuration. Its magic is also quite substantial.

When I compare it to the Tyrant Saber of the same rank it's inferior physically, but their magic are leagues apart. That's how it is.

「Abrupt evolution? Could this be... A Darkness Wolf? It's my first time seeing one...」

For even Amanda to only see it for the first time, is a Darkness Wolf that rare?

「Moreover, there's a flow of magic connected to Fran's sword?」

Ugee... It was completely seen through! The danger towards Urushi fell, but I have a feeling that her interest towards me rose in return...

「Amazing... I knew that it was a Magic Sword, but to think that it was a Demonic Beast Weapon..... Furthermore, you don't see one with a Demonic Beast of Threat Level C lodged inside every day.」

Demonic Beast Weapon? Judging by her words, it seems to be a weapon that Demonic Beasts reside within. Hmm, so there're weapons like that too...

Ah, not now, Fran!

『Urushi, can you understand me? If you do, raise your right paw.』

「Oon」

sa

Urushi raises its right forepaw.

『Next, your left hind leg.』

「Oon」

『Alright, this time raise your left forepaw and right hind leg at the same time. Can you do that?』

「UoOon」

Well, it seems that it can understand my words. In addition, I feel that I can understand Urushi's feelings somehow or another. A sense of motivation is currently coming from it. Perhaps that's thanks to Telepathy?

I'll disregard Amanda muttering 「C-Cute...」 for now.

『Do you know where Fran is? She is my wielder.』

「Oon」

Urushi smells me with a *kun-kun*, then closes its eyes for a couple of seconds and howls *woo-woo*. It seems to have been using its Skills one way or another.

『Well?』

「Aoo—on!」

Urushi howls loudly before biting onto my handle and lifting me up.

『I'm not heavy?』

「Hwuoong!」

Because I'm in its mouth its bark sounds a bit silly, but because Urushi is huge, even if I'm being lifted with its mouth there doesn't seem to be a problem.

With that, Urushi runs through the cave with a terrifying speed. Please be safe, Fran!

『Alright Urushi, hurry!』

「Huohuon!」

Ensig:

There's an Author's note about the Transition Traps here, apologizing that their range wasn't fully described (i.e. they work as an AoE Trap rather than a Single-Target Trap), which was already changed when I Translated said chapters.

There's also a note regarding the reason it wasn't described in detail which, in summary, is because of the Author's irl stuff.

Because we're inhabitants of the future, I won't translate that stuff.

[1] Urushi is the raw translation of ‘ウルシ’, which was left that way without being compounded as ‘漆’. The proper translation for both is Lacquer, or more specifically Lacquer Trees, which will explain the proceeding lines.

[2] Urushi = 漆. Jet Black = 漆黒.

Chapter 52: Heading for Fran

Chapter 52: Heading for Fran

Author's Note:

It's a bit short, sorry.

Urushi, who is holding me in its mouth, runs vigorously. Will I be able to reunite with Fran just like this? No, wait, isn't this bad?

「Wait! There's a trap!」

Amanda shouts such words from behind. The worst possible outcome would be to have a Transition Trap activate right now.

『Urushi, because there're traps here be careful!』

「Ohwn?」

『You're unconcerned?』

That's right, it has Aerial Jump Lv8, doesn't it. So long as it doesn't step on the trap, it won't be activated. Furthermore, there seems to be magical power within Urushi's eyes. I believe it's Dark Magic, but... Hmm.

Perhaps it's a magic that allows one to see the locations of traps? That would explain why Urushi occasionally makes unnatural movements, seemingly avoiding something. Well, regardless, it seems that it has a trap-sensory system in place.

No traps have been activated at all thus far. However, after running about 300 meters from the small room, Urushi suddenly stops in place.

『Urushi?』

「Hwoon?」

『Where is Fran?』

Urushi places me on the ground and sits down in place.

「*Hah-hah-hah-hah*」

『Not *hah-hah* —』

「OnOon!」

All of a sudden, Urushi starts scratching at the wall, digging with great vigor.

『Eh? Is she perhaps on the other side of that wall?』

「Ohn」

「Is Fran over there, by any chance?」

With a face of astonishment, Amanda approaches. Or rather, how the heck did she manage to keep up with Urushi?! — No, in terms of AGI Amanda should be higher, so perhaps that's only natural?

「——Wind · Vortex!」

Using Storm Magic, Amanda shatters the wall.

『A hidden passage!』

「This Dungeon... It's because of places like this that I hate it. Even detection spells from Wind Magic wouldn't have worked.」

This place must be an end location for Transition Traps, one meant solely for imprisoning people.

I've searched for presences within, but I can only feel signs of Spiders. Is she really there? I can only feel an indescribable sense of unease.

『Urushi, go!』

「Oon!」

Urushi uses Aerial Jump and runs nimbly over the ground.

『There!』

Amazing, Urushi! She really was here! I can see Fran!

However—

『S-She is... Fighting...?』

Fran was at the far end of the passage, alive and moving.

However, she was surrounded by small spiders. Spider larvae, most likely. Those spiders clustered around Fran one after another. Even if they're weak alone, their number is clearly dangerous!

『Urushi, hurry!』

「Hwon!」

However, I notice something strange. In Fran's hand is something akin to a dagger, a weapon that she shouldn't have had. What is that? Fran should have been unarmed... Was luck on her side, allowing her to find it from a treasure chest?

No, that's not the case. It seems to be the Hidden Claw Necklace that we took from Gyuran. If it's imbued with magic power a dagger-like claw protrudes from the inside, but its efficiency isn't good.

『Run away, Fran!』

It's no use. She's not within the range of Telepathy yet. But why is she not running away...? The reason why Fran refused to escape despite being surrounded by spiders was clear after taking a closer look.

Behind her were the figures of two fallen Humans. They were Clad's party members who had transitioned together.

Fran was trying to protect them.

『Fran!』

Damn, these small fry spiders are irritating! Even if I try to use Magic, because these guys' webs are in the way the spiders surrounding Fran wouldn't be affected in the slightest.

『The level of your Sword Arts is low, Fran!』

Fighting in such a state is suicide!

I could only watch as spiders jumped on Fran. Not good! The current Fran can't fight that number of — no. She can...?

Her movements are certainly slower, but the way she's wielding the blade isn't that bad. She cuts down a small spider and dodges the shot threads nimbly. Was Sword Arts Lv1 ever that strong? Ah, another one was cut down.

However, the cluster of small spiders remains on the offensive. Climbing along the wall, they've started aiming for the fainted Adventurers this time. Fran makes use of the Hidden Fang immediately, but it isn't enough to stop the spiders. All at once, the Spiders pounce.

『Fran, don't be reckless!』

Using her body as a shield, Fran puts her life on the line to protect the adventurers. With that, the fangs of the small spiders make their way into Fran's flesh.

Blood...! Furthermore, a big one has...! A parent spider?!

With the parent spider's momentum, she was thrown to the ground.

Chapter 53: Exceeding the Limit

Chapter 53: Exceeding the Limit

Ensig:

There's an Author's Note about how Fran's Sword Arts was mistakenly Lv7 back when she was introduced and that it's been changed.

At the current time, the change has already been made, so... Enjoy.

Fran was overwhelmed by the parent spider. From the spider's mouth, sharp fangs are clearly visible.

The moment I saw those... My thoughts became seething.

Will I be exposed to Amanda? Just what are you worrying about, foolish me! Focus on what's important!

『UOOooooo! Mooveee!』

「OOoon!」

『——Fire · Javelin!』

Kyuiiiin — BOboOBoOBoON!

Urushi launches jet black arrows that mow down the spiders, and my spear of flame pierces through the obstructive cobwebs, setting them on fire in the process.

A little less than 20 spiders were obliterated all at once.

『Damn...!』

However, that was all.

Even more Spiders squirmed out at the end of the passage. Their flame resistance was considerably higher when compared to Trap Spiders.

『In that case——』

I'll just have to pierce through with Telekinesis Catapult! It had been 10 seconds since we found Fran, and since that time I've continued stockpiling Telekinesis. Doing so was subconscious. It had already been ingrained as a habit. Just like how a Swordsman would place their hand on their blade's handle at the first signs of battle, I stored Telekinesis.

However, until now I had hesitated to release it. I was mindful of Amanda, after all.

But it wasn't just that, either. Somewhere down the line I had started feeling that it would be useless. Because I clashed against the spiders of this Dungeon, I know firsthand the hardness of the spiders and the strength of their webs. And so, I came to the understanding that a simple Telekinesis Catapult wouldn't be enough to reach Fran.

And so, what was I to do?

『Just exceed the limit!』

I actually put the power of my usual Telekinesis Catapults to the 'limit' every time. They genuinely make use of my 'full power'.

However, is there really a limit? No. There has never been such a thing.

The 'limit' I've used thus far was placed by myself to secure a margin of safety. It was a limit placed so that I could come out of the attack unscathed. So, if that's how it is, then I'll simply remove the limiter.

Exceed the limit!

My magic power rushes wildly into my blade. Even I don't know how much magic I've channeled anymore! However, I'm still in control!

Not yet. I need more power! I cloak myself in flames using Sword Attribute, bringing it to the limits of my magic as well!

My blade becomes red-hot, glowing in the dark cave. Urushi, feeling the immense heat, releases me. I've reached a temperature that's started to slightly melt my blade, so that was obvious.

The spiders coming from the passage, sensing the oncoming catastrophe, spew thread towards me... But it's useless. Just by approaching my scathing form, the threads burn up and disappear.

『You spiders are a hindrance! Get out of my way!』

GyuudOOOooooOOOooooO!

I set off the accumulated Telekinesis, resulting in an explosion.

With unprecedented acceleration, I incinerate and pierce through the wall of spiderwebs. The multitude of strong cobwebs that had been set up were like paper. Even with the hard shell of a spider, once touched by my flames they became nothing but cinders.

If it was the usual Telekinesis Catapult, I would have been trapped in the thread halfway through... But not this time. With the intensity of the heat and shockwave, any spiders in my path were crushed.

And with that, I was able to pass through the defensive wall built by the spiders. Just as I did so, I invoked Telekinesis Catapult once more. However, this time it was facing the opposite direction.

『UOOooooaaah!』

Presently, I'm a cannonball. Even if I don't hit something directly, destruction spreads through the shockwave alone. And so, if I got too close to Fran she would also be damaged. Therefore, my solution is to use

Telekinesis to slam on the brakes. The cobwebs can also be used for this purpose.

『Get away from Fran, you damn spider!』

I rush directly to the parent spider and, as usual, pierce its magic stone. Overcome by the Telekinesis, the spider can only convulse before being blown away.

After that, I use Recovery Magic on Fran immediately.

『——Heal!』

It's a low-grade spell, but it prioritizes speed. She should be safe for the time being.

Now, how is she?

Name: Fran Age: 12

Race: Black Cat Beastman

Job: Magic Swordsman

State: Contracted · Poisoned (Deadly) · Light-headed

Status: Level: 25

HP: 106/250 MP: 31/166

STR: 120 END: 109 AGI: 110

INT: 75 MGC: 87 DEX: 88

Skills:

Stealth: Lv1, Court Etiquette: Lv4, Presence Perception: Lv1, Sword Techniques: Lv1, Sword_Arts: Lv3, Instantaneous Movement: Lv1, Cooking: Lv1, Insect Slayer, Vigor Manipulation, Goblin Slayer, Mental

Stability, Demon Slayer, Skinning Expert, Indomitable Resolve, Directional Sense, Night Eyes

Titles:

Match for a Thousand, Insect Slayer, King of Dismantling, Master of Recovery, Goblin Slayer, One who Slaughters, Skill Collector, Dungeon Conquerer, Big Game Devourer, Demon Slayer, Master of Fire, Master of Wind, King of Cooking

Inflicted with Deadly Poison and Light-headedness, her remaining HP is 106. I need to heal her at once! Frantically, I use Antidote and Greater Heal, bringing her to a perfect condition.

『Fuu... I can feel relieved with this.....』

Just in case, I use Heal and Antidote on Clad's comrades, too. They're idiots who rolled up Fran in their own mistakes, but I'll forgive them for the sake of Fran who risked her life for them.

For now, it seems she's fallen asleep, but what happened to the other spiders, I wonder?

「Auun?」

『Urushi, when did you—! Ah! Shadow Movement, huh.』

How dangerous, being able to surprise even me. I had completely forgotten! If we had made use of its Shadow Movement, it would have been far easier to arrive here.....

In the middle of the pile of spiders Urushi exterminated, it held something in its mouth. Oi, isn't that a spider leg?!

Haa... Just thinking about the food expenses for this fellow is going to give me a headache...

Well, it's good that it annihilated them at least.

『Fran. Fran?』

「..... Nn?」

『Are you awake?』

「Teacher?」

『Ou. Everything's alright.』

「The spider?」

『It's gone.』

「I see.」

That reminds me, when I looked at Fran's Status she achieved Sword Arts Lv3. She even gained Sword Techniques and Vigor Manipulation. Incidentally, Instantaneous Movement and Cooking also showed up. When we met, she didn't have such Skills. It seems that even with me Equipped, Fran will still gain proficiency.

Furthermore, even when the Set Skills disappeared her Titles remained. Master of Fire, for example.

However, isn't her growth quite fast? In a month, her Sword Arts has improved by two Levels... Perhaps that's due to my influence? Maybe using high-level Skills has a good effect on the growth of Skills in general?

Regardless, her gaining Skills is of little importance right now. Even without them, Fran's fighting spirit still would have persisted, even while poisoned and surrounded by spiders.

『You did well.』

「Teacher: tattered.」

『Well... Only a little.』

The compensation for using magic power beyond the limit of a regular Telekinesis Catapult was larger than I thought.

Combined with the magic I used to slow myself down, I consumed more than 1,200 MP. That's more than four times the cost of a usual Telekinesis Catapult. On top of that, I only have 800 Durability remaining. Even with using Telekinesis used to slow down my momentum, that much damage was still taken. It would have been dangerous if I collided with a firm obstacle at that speed.

A deep crack has spreads through the middle of my blade, and the parts that had been melted by heat have become black. I'm partially destroyed without a doubt. If a common sword became like this, disposal would be imminent.

『When a bit of time passes, I'll recover.』

「Nn.....」

『Hey, hey, what's with that face?』

「My fault.」

『That's not the case. It's the result of my foolishness. I should have controlled myself a bit more.』

It was more difficult to control magic beyond the usual limit than I thought. To be frank, it was difficult to adjust the amount of magic power I made use of.

However, through this event I think I've found the true value of the Sorcery Skill. So far, I've been looking at it as a substitute for a high rank Magic Perception Skill that can increase the power of Magic by raising the degree of magic power imbued.

However, it's more than that. Because it allows me to understand the flow of magic, I can imbue magic power beyond natural limits, and because I can

understand the flow of magic, I can just barely control it. An overboost of magic is possible, so to speak. Doing so is a double-edged sword, however.

『Well, it's fine so long as you're safe.』

「Thank you.」

The deep impression of a teacher and pupil reuniting. That was the atmosphere that should have been given off... If no one else was around, that is.

「H-Hey... Did that sword move on its own? Moreover, it seemed to have shouted several times..... It used magic as well, and—」

I forgot about Amanda—! Well, I was prepared for this to some extent, but I completely forgot about her halfway through!

I got too impatient and shouted through Telepathy... Even though it usually only reaches who I intend it to... At the time, it was transmitted in all directions. Naturally, Amanda would have heard my voice.

I even used magic to fly via Telekinesis, so...

「Nn...」

「Ah, wait. It's alright. You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to. I'm sorry.」

「？」

「It's just, I asked you unconsciously. So, only tell me if you really want to. Everyone has their own circumstances.」

Even if you say that, you definitely heard me speak, right? What's the point in hiding it? There is none, right?

(Teacher?)

『Fran, do you want to tell Amanda?』

(Nn...)

You've taken to her quite a bit, huh. Well, I had felt that was the case after the mock battle, but... Well, if Fran wants to tell her, I won't object.

「Amanda.」

「Ye—s?」

「It's like this ——」

— 3 Minutes Later —

Amanda is unreasonably excited.

「When you're talking about Intelligent Weapons, they're the weapons that make their own decisions, the things that're mentioned in fairy-tales, right? Kyaa! They really exist!」

She's surprised after seeing one for the first time. Intelligent Weapons are rare, as expected.

However, it seems that part of the reason for her high spirits stems from the fact that she was confided in with such a deep secret.

「Thank you for telling me, Fran! And... Teacher?」

『Ou.』

「Amazing... You really can speak~」

『Well, please treat me well from now on.』

「Yes. Same here! I'll take the secret of you two to the grave! Also, consult me about anything you have trouble with, alright? I'll help Fran's friends anytime.」

「Nn.」

「I have the Title Guardian of Children, feel free to rely on me as well, alright?」

「Thank you.」

「A—h, so cu—te! If it's for Fran, I'll do anything!」

Well, it's good that we confided in her. I didn't really want to do something so boorish, but I made use of Law of Lies as well. All of Amanda's words are true. In other words, Amanda really would do anything for Fran.

『How nice, Fran.』

「Nn.」

「Ahh, but I really want Fran to know that flustered feeling Teacher was giving off before striking the spider~! I was surprised to hear 『Fran, don't be reckless!』 coming from a sword, you know?」

「Teacher: flustered?」

『O-Ou. I'm ashamed.』

「Because Wolfie[1] jumped without warning, I couldn't provide cover fire with magic, too. It'd get caught up in it if I did... I was quite flustered, myself~!」

「Owuu...」

I'm 100% no-good! In a haste-ridden panic I made error after error! There should have been way more methods to choose from! I should have requested Amanda for help or used Urushi's Shadow Movement from the beginning...!

Haa... Not just Fran, I have a lot to learn too...

[1] Amanda calls Urushi 'Wolf-chan' (オオカミちゃん) here.

Chapter 54: Urushi and Fran

Chapter 54: Urushi and Fran

「This dog is?」

『Dog...?』

「Wuu...」

As expected, it must be pitiful to be seen as a mere dog.

『It's something I summoned.』

「I was surprised when it came out all of a sudden~」

『Fran, this is Urushi. It's a Darkness Wolf that, as I said, arrived via my summons.』

「Urushi?」

「Kuun」

「Good boy.」

When Fran strokes its head, Urushi raises a joyful voice.

「There, there.」

「Whuu」

... This guy is a Wolf, right? It's acting just like a big dog would...

「Nn.」

「Hah, hah, hah」

「Cute.」

As the nape of its neck, its muzzle, and its chin are rubbed Urushi closes its eyes out of pleasure and licks Fran's face. Hey, hey, didn't you eat a giant Spider just a little while ago? You should probably wipe up your face, Fran...

Well, that aside, Fran's safe so how should we proceed? I guess first we should meet up with the rest of the Adventurers. I was a bit impatient so I didn't worry about it before, but this Dungeon was dangerous for Clad and Frion, right? If they ended up dying I'd have trouble sleeping at night.

「Hey, you guys, get up.」

「Uu..... Nnh...」

「Huh...? Where...?」

「In a panic, you guys triggered a Transition Trap and got caught up in its effects.」

「Ah, right, the lil' kid was too!」

「'S she a'right?」

It seems that after becoming unable to fight after being transferred, these two passed out due to poisoning and bleeding. However, while in a light-headed state, they caught glimpses of Fran defending them.

「Y'saved us.」

「Thank you.」

Oh-ho. The fact that they bowed their heads is worthy of praise considering they're Clad's companions. If they had acted haughty towards their benefactor I would have punished them a bit.

「Ohn」

「Uwo! What's that?!」

「W-W-W-Wolf! It's a Demonic Beast!」

They didn't react very well, huh. They're finding it hard to even stand up — or should I say that they've been completely paralyzed from shock? They're just sitting on their backsides looking up at Urushi with desperate expressions.

「A-A-Amanda! Please, save us!」

「Oou?」

「Hii! Its tongue! Its tongue is—!」

「Urushi, no.」

「KUUuuu...」

When Amanda explains that Urushi is Fran's companion the two manage to settle down.

「T' make such an 'ighly ranked Demonic Beast yer companion...!」

「S' th' first time I've seen a Demonic Beast Weapon!」

After saying so, their eyes became full of respect towards Fran once again. They're completely captivated by Fran. It seems like they'll begin calling her 'Big Sis' any moment now.

「Ah, anyways, what'll we do now?」

「Yeah, where're th' others?」

「They went looking for you guys.」

How should we go about finding everyone else...?

「Urushi: look for Humans?」

「Oon!」

With that, Urushi laid down and stared at Fran.

「Ride?」

「On, Oon!」

「Nn. Thank you.」

「Oh my, it's quite intelligent, isn't it?」

Urushi's back is still high up even when it lays down, so Fran simply climbs up.

「Soft...」

「Aun!」

Fran holds onto the back of Urushi's neck, and I fix her in place using Telekinesis. Like this, she won't be shaken off.

But what should we do about Adventurer A and B? They won't be able to keep up with us on foot, but it's dangerous if we leave them here. Should we ask Amanda to escort them?

「Urushi: carry?」

「Onn」

Urushi gently looks up at Fran and gives her a short nod.

「Like dogs?」

「Huh? Tha's kinda abrupt, lil' lady... Dogs... Well, I guess I like dogs, but—」

「Alright.」

「Eh? Uoo—!」

Urushi lifts the nape of Adventurer A's leather armor with its mouth, just like how a parent cat would carry its kittens.

『Are you alright with giving them a lift?』

(Wafuun!)

Well, alright, but don't pick up Fran like that.

「Then, I'll carry you.」

「Eh? Amanda will?」

「That's right, so behave yourself alright?」

「Uwaa!」

Amanda picked up Adventurer B and placed him under her arm despite him clearly being larger than her. What an odd sight to behold.

「Then, let's go.」

「Hwoooooon!」

With that, Urushi starts running. By the way, I've been sheathed and am assuming my usual position on Fran's back. I've sealed up the crack on my blade for the time being, but I should wait until we leave the dungeon for a complete recovery. Until then, I'll just have to patiently settle with emergency repairs.

「Urushi: amazing. Running through the sky.」

『That's thanks to Aerial Jump Lv8.』

Unlike Aerial Jump Lv1 that we possess with effects similar to multistage jumping, Lv8 allows Urushi to perfectly run through the air. It seems that it's quite a pleasant experience for Fran.

「Spiders ahead.」

5 Trick Spiders can be seen heading towards us.

「Go.」

「Hhwoon!」

Oi, oi, Urushi, even if you don't plan on slowing down there's no reason to speed up, right? Even the pitiful screams of the Adventurers are being ignored.

「Huhoon!」

Called upon by Urushi's roar, jet black spears rain down on the spiders. Furthermore, the spiders on the left and right were torn to pieces and scattered about just as Urushi entered the next passageway. Most likely, it was Urushi's doing when its forepaws moved at lightning speed.

『——Flare · Blast!』

「——Fire · Arrow」

「——Wind · Cutter!」

In the nest-covered passageway, magic is fired in rapid succession to create a way through. Although the strength of the nests themselves are considerable, they're unable to endure the continuous barrage. Like that, we run through the cave without stopping while eliminating any spiders along the way.

「There's no response.」

「Hii... Hii...」

「Ha... Hah...」

Amanda mutters so with a composed expression, while the two Adventurers look like they're barely holding onto their lives.

After running for a while, we arrive in front of an especially large passage. Inside was a large amount of spiders. Because of the numerous nests set up in the vicinity it's hard to see, but seriously, the number of spiders here is amazing. However, the presence of Humans can also be felt. Most likely, these presences belong to Cruz and the others. How is it that they managed to break through to this point? Perhaps there's an alternate entrance?

Well, either way, we won't be stopped by something of this level. Firing magic in rapid succession, we break through the passage and arrive at some sort of great hall. It's about double the size of the room we fought Army Beetles in at the Goblin Nest.

Spiders jostled around in such a room. Not only on the floor, nests had been set up all over the ceiling and walls, amounting to more than 50 total. Inside that spider-filled hall was Cruz, as well as the others. Isn't it unreasonably dangerous to challenge this room with their fighting potential? Testament to that, they were cornered against a wall. Some of them had Status abnormalities.

「Damn it, e'en if I cut an' slice 'em...!」

「If the path of retreat wasn't blocked off...!」

It seems that they went too far in and got trapped.

At the center of the spiders was a remarkably large spider. Poisonous-looking purple hair is grown over its entire body, arousing a feeling of discomfort.

Race: Trickster Spider: Demonic Bug: Demonic Beast Lv13

HP: 196 MP: 110 STR: 71 END: 89 AGI: 103 INT: 61 MGC: 45
DEX: 108

Skills:

Keen Hearing: Lv5, Playback: Lv3, Leap: Lv1, Poison Spray: Lv3, Lasso: Lv4, Trap Remodeling: Lv7, Trap Perception: Lv6, Trap Creation: Lv6, Confusion Poison Generation, Confusion Fang, Shell Enhancement, Infrared Sight, Enhanced Molting, Paralysis Poison Generation, Paralysis Fang, Deadly Poison Generation, Deadly Poison Fang

Description:

A Highbreed of the Trick Spider species, this demonic beast makes use of traps while hunting. Its ability to modify traps with the Trap Remodeling Skill in Dungeons is particularly troublesome, with turning simple Poison Spray Traps into fatal ones, or redesigning Transition Traps to lead to their own nests being notable examples. Its physical abilities are low, making it weak in close combat. Threat Level C.

Magic Stone Location: Head

So it was present in the Dungeon after all. A Trickster Spider. Its Status far surpasses the other spiders, too.

It's the boss of the spiders that caused Fran to have a terrible experience!

『Alright, let's take our revenge!』

「Nn.」

「OOoon!」

Chapter 55: Do Tricksters Feel Fear?

Chapter 55: Do Tricksters Feel Fear?

Just as I raised a shout in front of the hoard of spiders, I heard a pitiable scream.

「Uwaa! H-Help!」

「Leader!」

「Big bro[1]!」

Adventurer A was already released, and B rushed forward in a panic.

Hmm. It appears that Clad's been wound up with thread, rendered to a state that he'd probably be dragged into the cobwebs. Rather than being Poisoned, he's been Paralyzed. He's in quite a pinch.

『Shall we help? Urushi, to the Adventurers.』

「Onn」

「Nn. ——Fire · Arrow!」

Magic is cast to burns down the spider's cobwebs, but...

「Achichichi! Hot!」

The flames streamed down the thread, coiling around Clad himself as well. His hair might get a bit singed, but he won't die.

「AOOooooooooon!」

With that Urushi unleashed jet black arrows, defeating the spiders surrounding the Adventurers. I don't know if the spiders are intelligent enough to consciously feel fear, but after witnessing Urushi's strength they edged back.

Well, the reactions of the Adventurers was more terrible, though.

「Uwaaa!」

「W-What the hell is this guy?!」

「Hii! This magic power is...!」

「A-an Onyx Wolf?」

「Idiot! This is way stronger!」

「I di'n hear anythin' 'bout this!」

「Damn it...! Everyone calm down!」

They had just been struggling against Rank E Demonic Beasts, so it's understandable that they'd fall into a panic when something of a higher rank appeared in front of them.

「No, wait! Amanda's over there!」

「An' on its back, ain't that the lil' lady?!」

「Ehh?」

They seem to have noticed somehow or another. With this, we won't have to worry about Cruz jumping out and attacking. Alright, as for our arch-nemesis the Trickster Spider——

「Bleed out and die!」

DoGASHK

「This is the consequence of doing such a terrible thing to Fran!」

Amanda's whip was breaking the Trickster Spider into pieces. Its Magic Stone was being shattered, too.

Well, of course it'd be an instant kill. Trickster Spiders are only Threat Level C due to how troublesome they are with the Trap Remodeling Skill, right? In terms of status, they're closer to Threat Level D. Still, to be finished off so easily...

『Eh —— Ms. Amanda...?』

「Eh?」

I sent Telepathy to Amanda unintentionally.

「Ah!」

Turning in place, Amanda's has an expression of 'I really did it now!' plastered on her face.

I had told her about my ability to absorb Magic Stones only a short while ago. In fact, didn't she promise to give us the Trickster Spider's Magic Stone? Wasn't it something like an unspoken agreement? No, maybe it was foolish to believe her carefree 'I'll hand it over~'?

In that case, I, who didn't make her promise properly, am in the wrong...

「W-Well, now we can take out the rest of the spiders!」

She's trying to gloss it over!

「Right, Fran!」

... It can't be helped. We should give priority to exterminating the other spiders for now.

「Nn, let's do it.」

「Grruuuu!」

『In that case, let's make them feel the true meaning of despair!』

As a barrage of Fire Magic is immediately released, the frenzied dance of Magic began.

Amanda's Wind Magic cut down the spiders on the ceiling together with their nests, Urushi's Dark Magic skewered the spiders to the walls, and our Fire Magic burnt down the spiders over wide areas. Even Frion participated, binding the spiders in place by wrapping ivy coils around their bodies.

The best part, however, was when Amanda used Storm Magic on the ceiling, finishing off all the spiders all at once. Perhaps this is Amanda being serious? The magic didn't affect the Adventurers at all... It was perfectly under control.

「As expected of Amanda.」

「Oh—? I was praised by Fran!」

Her bashful figure in response to being praised doesn't seem strong at all, though.

Once we finished, what was left of the spiders was littered across the floor. Although they're quite tattered, there should be usable materials here and there. Magic Stones should also be scattered about.

『Urushi, look for Magic Stones.』

「Auf」

At the very least I have to secure a Magic Stone from a Trick Spider, so I asked Urushi to reserve a couple of them for me. Urushi, who has a good nose, found them one after another.

Moreover, it's stowing away them inside of the shadows. It's an application of Shadow Lurk, most likely. How convenient.

「You two, um, er... That wolf...」

Cruz and the others approach cautiously. They made it out alive, but it seems that some of them are in pain. The Poison in their bodies must have started taking effect.

『Fran.』

「Nn. ——Antidote! Anti · Paralyze!」

「Ooh...! We're saved!」

Frion sat down on the spot, probably out of relief. There was even a guy who started crying. Well, it's good that no one ended up dying.

「So, this fellow... Is it possibly an Onyx Wolf?」

「Different. Darkness Wolf.」

「Ehh?」

「This is the first one I've seen!」

「Seriously...?」

So noisy. Well, it's a rare Demonic Beast that even Amanda hadn't seen before, but...

「Miss Fran?」

「Nn.」

「I've never seen such a strong Summon before... Rather, Isn't it a bit strange that you're only Rank D if you can summon this?」

Frion's eyes shine while he watches Urushi, seemingly losing his inner battle against his curiosity. Perhaps he's a researcher-type?

Anyways, doesn't it stick out a bit too much? We'll attract too much attention when we get back to town... And whether it could even stay in an inn is questionable.

Truth be told, I've tried to un-summon Urushi, but it doesn't look like it's possible. It seems that it's the type of summon that simply remains summoned.

Also on that note, with normal Summoning, magic is consumed so long as the Summon is around. In this case, however, magic was only consumed during the Summoning process. I'm quite thankful for that.

『Urushi. Using Shadow Lurk, can you hide in Fran's shadow?』

(Ohn)

After responding via Telepathy, Urushi sinks into Fran's shadow. Ohh, it was instantaneous. Furthermore, there's no sign of it at all. Because I have the Sorcery Skill I can just barely identify its presence, but it would be extremely difficult for lower-ranked Adventurers to notice.

『When it town, can you possibly remain inside her shadow?』

「Kuu.....」

『No good?』

「Onn」

『It's just that you'd stick out a bit too much in town. It's possible that you'll be attacked on sight, you know?』

「Ouu...」

Urushi's ears lay flat with a *petan*, making what seems to be a sad expression. Muu... Even if you make a face like that, it's not like you were

forced into her shadow.

(Teacher, a plea from me as well.)

『No, but that's...』

(No good?)

(Ohnon?)

How sly! Having four round eyes directed at me is no fair! To the people in the surroundings, this is only a strange scene of a man and beast staring at one another, though.

「Oon!」

『What? Did you detect something?』

「Aooooon」

Ohh? With its howl, Urushi began shrinking! Within seconds it became the size of a common large-sized dog.

『Is this perhaps the Shapeshift Skill? I had thought that it was a Skill that allowed its user to change its form to another Demonic Beast...』

「On, oon」

「Kya—a! It became so small! It's so cute! Ahh, I want one too!」

No no, it's small if you compare its size from a minute ago, but it's still plenty large... Well, if it's like this, maybe it's tolerable for town?

『Haa... It can't be helped. Can you retain this form when we're in town?』

「Onn!」

(Thank you Teacher. With this I can mofumofu[2] Urushi all the time.)

Fran, was that your reason for pleading with me...? Well, I want to mofumofu Urushi as well, you know!

A-Anyways, there's no helping it. I'm the one who summoned it, so I have to take care of it properly. When the time comes, should we take it out on walks? On that note, I guess there's no real need for a leash? Hm... It's really turned into the feeling of having a pet dog, huh.

「Best regards mofumo– Urushi.」

「Oon?」

[1] Adventurer B shouts out ‘クラウドの兄貴’ or ‘Clad-aniki’. Because I’ve been fully changing the text to English and simply ignoring honorific titles (while sometimes mentioning them in Footnotes), putting in -aniki here would be out of place. Thus the translation.

[2] Since there was a chapter that had ‘mofumofu’ in the title, I’m not sure if this needs mentioning, but... ‘mofumofu’ (モフモフ) is literally ‘soft to the touch’, but in context it essentially means ‘cuddle’. It can also be used as a sound effect which is why, to my understanding, it’s used as an onomatopoeia regardless of context.

Still, because I’ve been fully translating the text to English, I’m willing to change it if that’s desired. Leave a comment.

Chapter 56: The Core Room

Chapter 56: The Core Room

Ensig:

The Author made a note of changing one of Amanda's lines in Chapter 53, but it's just a grammatical error.

They also changed the Trickster Spider's threat level from C to D in Chapter 54. Because these changes were already made prior to this Translation, I won't bother translating them.

※ ※ ※

After exterminating the spiders our party made its way to the Dungeon Core room.

「That over there is the Magic Ore.」

「Hooh. So this is Magic Ore in its purest form? It's quite amazing.」

「Ain't this th' same as a pile a' treasure?!」

Clad's eyes shine as he rushes towards the Magic Ore.

「Pu—」

「Don't you laugh, damn it! Jus' who d'you think is at fault fer this!」

「Your life-saver.」

「Gu—」

「The cost of life.」

「I-I know already!」

Clad's hair had been burnt from Fran's Fire Magic, so it was shaved off. However, because it was a bit hard to cut it all using a dagger, several places remained unshaven. It's amusing to look at, no matter how many times I see it. The fact that we could have solved his hair issue using Greater · Heal is a secret.

「Pfhuu...」

「Shit...」

Every time Amanda and Fran looked towards him, they fought a losing battle against their withheld laughter.

「Yeah, yeah. Now then, Ms. Amanda: please collect the Magic Ore.」

「Ok.」

「Everyone who has an Item Bag, please do so as well.」

「Nn.」

Anyways, there sure is a lot of it. The Core room is completely filled with high-purity Magic Ore ingots. If I'm not mistaken, Magic Ore is quite precious, and is useful when making weapons.

「I'm sure you're all aware, but information regarding this place is confidential. Upon speaking about it the Pledge will immediately be broken, thus notifying not only the Guild, but the Country as well. That being the case, please be careful.」

「We had no problem entering because we had permission, in the case an outsider enters the vicinity a Barrier would immediately detect them.」

「Fran should be careful too, ok? Otherwise the Guild Master will become noisy.」

「Why go so far?」

「Well, there's a lot of Magic Ore here, right?」

「Yes?」

「That's exactly why. Characteristics between Dungeons Cores vary, most notably regarding the amount of magic power needed to produce certain items. In this Dungeon, Magic Ore with high purity can be created with very little magic power.」

I see, so that's why it isn't open to the public.

After all the Magic Ore was packed away, Cruz took a look at the Core's settings. If its state is as normal, only Trap Spiders should be listed as spawns.

「How is it, Cruz? Are all the Trick Spiders exterminated?」

「It's reported back more than one species.」

Although their numbers were significantly reduced, the Trick Spiders weren't fully subjugated. In this case, if we leave them alone they'll just start breeding again. It's also possible that another Trickster Spider is out there. If we leave things as they are, not only will the difficulty of the Dungeon be raised, but the recovery of Magic Ore will become considerably harder as well.

There is, however, a good point to leaving the situation as it is.

In comparison to Trap Spiders, the materials from Trick Spiders are more useful, and thus more expensive. If they're recovered on a regular basis, it wouldn't be bad by any means. Furthermore, the Trick Spiders provide more magic power to the Core. As a result, the production of Magic Ore would also be influenced positively.

「Well, in cases like this ain't it better t' leave th' decision t' th' Guild?」

「That's indeed the case. On top of that, we'll have to report the finding of Human Bones.」

As it happens, we ended up finding what seemed to be brand-new bones within the hall we exterminated the hoard of spiders in. Moreover, there were enough for almost 10 people. Judging by their condition, we arrived at the conclusion that the individuals had died one or two months ago.

And yet, according to Cruz, reports of deaths in this Dungeon hadn't occurred for several years.

So, just where did all of those bones come from? A Barrier that perceives intruders made by an A Rank Adventurer with the nickname 'Barrier Salesman' is in effect at the Dungeon's entrance, so it should have been difficult for anyone to get in without permission, and yet... Well, it's quite the mystery.

「Then, for now let's return.」



In regards to the journey back, there weren't any particular problems. Fran was defeated in a mock battle against Amanda again.

Urushi joined in as well, but both of them were beaten up. That being said, their cooperation improved considerably thanks to that battle; even Amanda was surprised.

Urushi's fighting style has a high level of versatility. First is in regards to its Magic. With the ability to use both Dark Magic and Poison Magic, it can play an active role through both frontal attacks, and attacks from unusual angles.

Second, with its Fang Techniques its direct attacks aren't something to scoff at. In particular, its use of Shadow Movement is terrific. It's the kind of surprise attack that a Fiend would use, but in Urushi's case, it's actually more efficient. It can attack using Dark Magic without exposing its body by hiding inside of shadows, and its ability to transition in and out of Fran's

shadow at unexpected times could be seen as downright dirty. The distance it can transition in is a bit short, but that's not much of a problem in combat.

If the Demon from a while back could utilize magic in this way, we would have had no choice but to run away.

Anyways, as thanks for the training, we were taught a bit about about 〈Christening〉. As a result, it was discovered that the reason for Urushi's evolution was undoubtedly Christening. Still, Fran had given me a name, so why was it that nothing happened?

Through Amanda's explanation, I figured that out as well.

Christening is essentially the act of a higher-ranked individual giving a name to a subordinate or retainer. However, not only a name is gained. Through Christening, something akin to a contract is formed, strengthening the connection between both parties' souls.

The receiver of the name has their potential released, resulting in a raise in Status among a variety of other benefits.

In the case of Fran and I, she wasn't regarded as a higher ranked individual. So, while I gained a name, the act of receiving it wasn't exactly the same as taking part in the Christening ritual.

In Urushi's case, its potential was let loose and it evolved. Furthermore, it fully received the excess magic power that was running rampant in its body. In the case that I put off Christening... It most likely would have gone out of control, only to be subdued by Amanda. I'm very sorry, Urushi. You were in quite the pinch.

Anyways, the information I wanted to know most — the reason why Demonic Beasts of the Wolf type appeared in Summon Kin — remains unknown. I managed to infer a little, but there's just not enough information.

I'd like to research that alongside more detailed information on Magic in the library but... Well... Places where one has to sit still for long periods of

time are Fran's weak point.

I suppose when it comes to fishing she'd be able to manage, though. Most things seem possible at the mention of all-you-can-eat curry.

Mhh. On the note of food, the size of the servings she's been eating have been increasing lately. She'll be dashing straight into the Gluttonous Character archetype if I leave it alone... I should definitely reduce the amount I'm serving her.

Ahh~, but I become so weak when she stares at me with those eyes. With Urushi in the picture, that stare's power has been amplified by two~

Chapter 57: Returning to Aressa

Chapter 57: Returning to Aressa

Ensig:

The Author left a note at the start and end of this chapter, relating to a double release the day of this chapter's posting, alongside the reason for it. I won't bother translating it because there's no need.

For those of you who don't find these chapters through my Posts here, note that there's now another person working with me on Sword-shisho: whey30, otherwise known as Pengu. They'll be translating on Fridays/Saturdays, while I'll translate Sun-Thurs.

When I feel like it, that is.

I'll put a note at the top of the chapter on who the TL and Editor are from now on.

◇ The day after we set out to return ◇

We've finally returned to the town of Aressa... But there's a bit of a commotion at the front gate.

『What's all the fuss about?』

「Lots of people.」

Certainly, a large number of Humans have gathered. I think I've seen them somewhere before, but... Where?

「Knights, huh. What's goin' on?」

Cruz's words jogged my memory. Their armor looks just like the set that Auguste was wearing. In fact, the man leading the group had armor even more luxuriously decorated than his.

「Small fry knights.」

「My my, that's well said.」

「Hey, wait a minute both of you... Please make sure not to say such things in front of the Knights! The only strong thing about them is their pride!」

「I know, I know.」

「Nn.」

I understood as well. To be frank, the public's impressions of the Chivalric Orders was low, but it wasn't to the level that they would openly antagonize towards them. Why was it that the Knights themselves picked quarrels despite that fact, I wonder?

『Well, for now... Urushi, make sure to stay quiet, alright?』

「Onn」

It's already in its miniature form, but Urushi's still attracting a decent amount attention. It'd be troublesome if the Knights quibbled with us because of this fact.

「Well, it's fine, isn't it? The leader seems to be Urs.」

That reminds me, the Guild Master had said that their leader was a respectable man.

「Ohh, is that you, Ms. Amanda?」

「Yeah. It's been a while.」

「Indeed it has! Having you here is quite reassuring!」

He's quite the lively old man, isn't he? He's shorter than Donna, but their expressions are largely the same. — He could be described solely with the words 'Dandy Macho[1]'.
[1]

Name: Urs · Bendoro Age: 52

Race: Human

Job: Shield Knight

State: Normal

Status: Level: 50

HP: 527 MP: 223 STR: 218 END: 274 AGI: 132 INT: 103 MGC: 119 DEX: 122

Skills:

Coercion: Lv3, Pugilist Arts: Lv4, Hardening: Lv4, Danger Perception: Lv2, Horsemanship: Lv4, Leadership: Lv6, Shield Techniques: Lv8, Shield Arts: Lv8, Abnormal Status Resistance: Lv4, Spear Techniques: Lv3, Spear Arts: Lv6, Provocation: Lv7, Poison Resistance: Lv7, Magic Perception: Lv2, Vigor Manipulation, END ↑, Fortitude

Titles:

Baron, Leader of Aressa's Knights, Defender

Equipment:

High-Quality Mithril Spear, High-Quality Adamantite Kite Shield, Sturdy Silver Full-Body Armor, Red Lion Mantle, Bracelet of Mental Abnormality Resistance

He seems to be a bit stronger than Donna. However, while Donna is an attack-type Heavy-Warrior, Urs is a defense-type Heavy-Knight.

「Has something happened?」

「Yeah. There was a reaction to the Barrier. It seems that there's a Demonic Beast of Threat Level C nearby.」

「So you're heading out to subjugate it?」

「That's right. First, we have to place restrictions to the outside of the town, then we'll investigate the surroundings with a fine-toothed comb. We've issued a request for support from the Guild, too.」

Hmm. He really is an upright man, isn't he? He's something like a stereotypical Knight.

「There're a lot of young Knights...」

「Ah, they've joined the order for various reasons. A purge was performed, you see. Once the problematic people disappeared, the motivation from the youngsters increased.」

The 'problematic people' stemmed from Auguste, no doubt about it. Once he and his followers disappeared, more proper Knights must have taken their place.

Anyways, a Demonic Beast of Threat Level C, huh? It couldn't be—

Immediately, the eyes of the Adventurers who participated in the Dungeon investigation turned to Urushi, who sat itself down beside Fran.

「Urushi.」

「On」

「Muoo! T-That is... A Demonic Beast? Even if it's small, what a dreadful amount of magic power...!」

「Most likely, the Demonic Beast you guys detected was none other than Urushi.」

「..... Is it Ms. Amanda's familiar?」

「Nope. This is Fran's pet.」

「I see. This young lady...? Hm. Is she perhaps the girl who wields a Magic Sword from the rumors?」

It seems that the name of the before-mentioned Magic Sword wielding girl hasn't spread.

「Well, if it's familiar then it's fine, but... Can you distinguish it somehow?」

「Understood. Next time, wrap with a scarf before passing through. Have to issue a Familiar license later?」

「Got it. How about I just ask you a couple of questions for now, and I'll write down your answers on the official documentation?」

「Thoughtful.」

「Then first, you're positive this is a Darkness Wolf, correct?」

「Nn.」

After taking out a small piece of parchment, Urs starts writing. It seems that an official certificate is absolutely necessary to have a familiar.

「A—and... What's its name?」

「Urushi.」

「Urushi. And you? What's your name?」

「Fran.」

「Next, what's its gender?」

「...? One moment.」

Hm? That reminds me, I didn't check that either. It didn't think about that at all.

「Hyuuin!」

Kya—, Fran, how bold! She just walked behind Urushi, lifted up its tail, and confirmed whether or not anything was there! P-Perhaps it's simply because she's a child...? To Urushi, this whole ordeal must be a disaster.

「Male.」

「Kuuuuun.....」

「O-Oh. Is that so.」



After tying a red scarf around Urushi's neck, we were granted entry into Aressa. In accordance to the Familiar contract, we also received a crest to show that he was tame. It seems it's meant to be put on a collar or a similar item.

When we arrived at the Adventurer's Guild, there was a small uproar.

「..... Seriously, this time it's a C ranked familiar? It's not like you were a popular topic already or anything.」

Right after opening his mouth, the Guild master threw that sarcasm at us. Still, it can't really be helped. When any meddlesome Adventurers got in our way to the Guild Master's office, Urushi returned to its true size and bit their heads. Of course, he didn't kill them or anything; it was just simple play-biting. They were left half-dead and covered in blood because of it, though.

「And on top of being a Darkness Wolf, it's a Unique individual? Even though it's already a rare race...」

What? Unique individual? There's no way I overlooked something like that. Isn't Urushi just a regular Darkness Wolf?

「Unique individual? Urushi is?」

「Oh, you didn't notice? Normal Darkness Wolves have completely jet-black fur, but this fellow has red mixed in at the edges. Because it's tucked into the scarf, it's a bit hard to see. In addition to that, it has a Unique Skill. A regular Darkness Wolf wouldn't have something like that. Even if it was only Level 1, having one means it's a Unique individual.」

Seriously? I didn't know about that at all... I had never seen other Darkness Wolves, so I thought Urushi was the norm.

「Well, setting that aside... For accomplishing my request, thank you. With Amanda vouching for your strength as well as the addition of your familiar, people won't be making light of you anymore. Amanda's recognition in particular will spread through Merchants and Adventurers like wildfire, so when you arrive at Urmut it'll probably be a common rumor.」

「Nn.」

「Please make sure to take your Guild Card to the reception desk later. It'll be stamped to grant you entrance to Urmut's Dungeons.」

Alright, alright! With this, we can do Dungeons.

「Nn. Then, leaving.」

「Ahh, may I suggest confirming the status of your Job while you're there? A Job increase might be possible, after all. Usually it's 500 Gorudo, but I don't mind waiving the fee this time. Think of it as a farewell gift.」

A farewell gift, huh... So stingy! We'll accept it, though.

「Thank you.」

「When will you leave for Urmut?」

「Soon.」

「I see. It'll be a bit lonely.」

「..... You don't mean it.」

「Hahaha. That's not true. For better or for worse, you've impressed me. But, with this, my quiet daily life will return once more.」

「Nn. Take care.」

Seeing Fran lower her head with a *pekori*[2], the Guild Master's eyes went round. He seems pretty surprised. So Fran can do stuff like this too, huh?

BAKAN[3]

「Fuu. I kept being surprised right to the end.」

[1] ‘マ ッ チ ョ’ = Macho, ‘ダ ン デ イ’ = Dandy. Feel free to Google the two separated and/or together.

[2] Denotes lowering one's head.

[3] Door-slam SFX.

Chapter 58: Klimt – side story

Chapter 58: Klimt – side story

Knock* Knock*

「Enter.」

「Uncle, I've prepared the report.」

「Ah, Frion. You came at a good time.」

It was my nephew, Frion, who entered my office. Recently since there were many people who rudely entered my room without waiting for an answer, they seem to have forgotten that I'm the guild master. In this aspect, Frion is courteous. Taking a lesson from that, I would like to protest against the various unclear rumors.

「Please, sit.」

「Thank you very much.」

「Thank you for your hard work. There seem to have been various irregularities this time around, but...」

「There were many times that I almost died.」

The appearance of the Trickster Spider and the mysterious pile of human bones, is it? These problems were giving me a headache. Still, the discovery of the human bones was quite lucky.

「Uncle, about those bones...」

「Yes. I believe that some of them were the remains of Auguste Alsund.」

Actually, one of Auguste's subordinates had confessed about a certain ploy. That is, the smuggling of Magic Ore using Transfer Stones.

Transfer Stones are magic tools composed of a pair of stones. When stone A is used, the holder is transported to stone B. However, because they can only be used once on top of being very expensive, they usually aren't amassed in large quantities.

Auguste's plan consisted of placing one such Transfer Stone inside of the Dungeon, as to return later without being sensed by the barrier and steal Magic Ore.

If I'm not mistaken, this plan would have commenced three months ago, when he declared his interest of inspecting the Dungeon and went in by force. Of course, I didn't lend him any Adventurers for something he was doing of his own convenience, so with their forces alone, it would have been impossible to fully traverse the Dungeon.

Sure enough, they were unable to get past the third floor, forcing them to turn back. As it turned out, however, they had used that occasion to set up a Transfer Ore in secret. I had conducted a personal investigation later, but nothing had caught my attention at the time. Most likely, it was because they prepared an expensive Transfer Ore with a concealment function. Up until there, the plan was going smoothly. Later, I'll have to seriously reevaluate the security system.

Anyways, it was after that point that irregularities began to occur. The Trap Spiders evolved into Trick Spiders after preying on one another, and Auguste, who turned back at the third floor, had no idea.

Well, we didn't know either though. As a result, the intruders were wiped out when they transferred in.

However, they also brought in new Transfer Stones after going in, as to allow multiple intrusions.

Through doing so, several intruders were sent in... But no one returned. This was natural, given the fact that they were transferred right into a spider den.

As a result, a trick spider who had eaten the magic tools, such as the transfer stones possessed by those who were sent in, made an even further evolution. That's my theory for why the Trickster Spider made its appearance in the dungeon.

If I knew that was going on inside the Dungeon, I wouldn't have sent in low-ranked Adventurers. I'll need to give them a generous bonus.

「I'll be giving you a bonus for the danger you were subject to as well.」

「Please do.」

「That aside, your report, please.」

「Yes.」

The reason I had called for Frion was because of the request I had given to him personally.

「Then, according to you, how was she?」

He joined the dungeon investigation request to observe the rank D adventurer Fran, and to that I mean to ascertain who she is.

He is not only an Adventurer, but a member of the Guild's staff as well. Rather than a Spy, he would be more like a hidden examiner.

「One moment please. ——Tarua.」

『Hmm. It's been a while, Klimt.』

「You're as splendid as ever.」

We Elves are a race that loved by Spirits, and among us there are people who are born possessed by a Spirit. It'd be about every 1 in 10 people, I

suppose?

The Spirits that possess such Elves are known as Guardian Spirits, and are capable of receiving training. Furthermore, unlike Contracted Spirits, Guardian Spirits require significantly less magic power to summon; you could say they're a buddy-like existence.

Many Guardian Spirits have affinities that the Elves are naturally gifted, so Nature, Soil, and Water spirits are numerous. Frion's Spirit on the other hand is special.

It's of the Soul attribute. Among Spirits, such an attribute is rare. I've made a contract with a single Soul Spirit, but its abilities don't come close to Frion's Tarua.

There were times when the Spirit perceived Fran as wicked, but half the time it was wrong. That was the capability of my Soul Spirit. Tarua on the other hand is much stronger, making it more suitable.

『Through my judgement, I could not see a wicked heart on the young girl called Fran. In fact, it has been a while since I saw someone with such little malice towards others.』

「For example, how she acted towards the Adventurer called Clad?」

『Fumu. That case was somewhat curious.』

「Curious how?」

『Umu. When the one known as Clad caused a commotion, the others reacted with anger and irritation... But that wasn't the case for that girl. On the contrary, whenever Clad caused trouble, she found it rather interesting.』

Clad's Roar of the Dragon was a promising young party. Their pace for growing was fast, considering they were able to reach Rank D within only a couple of years. Well, if you excluded Fran, that is.

Their problem, however, lied with their attitudes. They cause trouble, and they've made a lot of enemies as well. Even with that, however, I could promote them to Rank D without a problem.

Therefore, they were considered for this time's request.

Using them, I could watch how Fran reacted towards people with bad character. At the same time, by having Clad interact with someone of a higher Status, I planned on having Clad become aware of his own hubris, but...

The effect was a bit more drastic than anticipated. Because they lacked sufficient strength, I intended to decline their promotion from the start, but when they were notified of such they accepted it with slightly-disappointed faces and a deep nod. I could understand why they reacted so after hearing about the Commission through Frion.

Nowadays, the Adventurers are preaching of Fran's splendor.

「Tarua, thank you very much.」

[Umu]

「Return · Tarua」

「Then, Frion. What kind of impression do you have of Fran?」

「Let me think... She's an amazing child, I suppose?」

[Is it not the same?]

[Yes. But, it isn't only her strength. How should I say it, I felt like her actions were considered beforehand. Shall I say that it is the conclusion I reached after I had a conversation with the person herself? Rather than concerning a plot, I think that she just thinks about things more deeply. To be that composed at that age, it's to the extent that I want to learn from her.]

[Hohou. That will serve as a reference.]

[If you say so, it's worthwhile to persist. But, why are you fixated on that girl to this extent?]

[Do I seem to be that fixated?]

[Yes. To the degree that rumours of you having a Lolita complex is spreading.]

[Silence!]

It was a waste to think he was courteous. Let me tell you, I don't have a Lolita complex, you know?

The reason I was fixated with Fran in particular..... One is because we lack information. As a guild master, I have to pay attention to troublemakers who are always in the center of turmoil. Despite this, there is surprisingly little information on her. Since she was approved by me as a guild member, this is like one of my duties.

It was never a Lolita complex. However, everyone has me as a Lolita complex, Lolita complex. Oops, my thought deviated a bit. Not good, Not good.

[Speaking of what I know, she has a magic sword, and is said to have appraisal.]

[I know of the magic sword, but appraisal?]

[Yes. It is certain.]

It was a magic stone that I handed over as an advance payment for this request, and I was convinced when I saw her selection. She chose a rank C magic stone of only two among the 20 stones, other than that, she also chose the magic stone that came from a demonic beast that inhabited the sea. It is too much to be a coincidence.

She not only possesses Appraisal, but also Appraisal Concealment. This is surprisingly advantageous in battle. That alone deserves precaution.

[Another thing, one of her weapon skills reached an advanced level. Judging from her combat style, it appears to be the art of a master swordsman. In addition, her magic is flame, storm, and darkness, and she learned lightning and healing afterward. Furthermore, her MGC is more than 100.]

A while ago, Fran changed jobs and returned. Her chosen occupation is a Magic Warrior which is the advance level of a Magic Swordsman. It's status growth is better than a Magic Swordsman and it has the inherent skill [Magic Convergence]. The condition to choose this job is to have one or more of the sword, ax, or spear system combat arts to reach the advance level, in addition to using two systems of advance magic, it means that the MGC is more than 100.

And also, in the column of possible occupation choices, there seem to be Darkness Art User, Storm Art User, Lightning Art User, and Healing Art User.

In this short period, I wonder how much her skill will grow. She is in her first half of her teens. It is half-hearted to call her the term genius. There is possibility of her holding several blessings of god. Honestly, I can't help but feel fear.

And then, the second reason that I'm fixated on her.

While her real nature is unclear, she is growing at a terrifying rate. It is impossible not to be alarmed.

[Well, I thought it even when she chose the magic stone, her naive side was unexpected.”]

Certainly, I didn't think that she would really change occupations. If you go to the temple, you can change your occupation without leaking any information even if it is rather expensive. Isn't she concerned that the information about her ability growth and skills would be leaked to us? Or, did she not think to this extent?

[Also, Amanda likes that one.]

If I indirectly bring up the subject of Fran, I thought that she would start talking about accompany Fran on this request..... I was surprised that I got even more than I plan to. Perhaps, she might have noticed my expectations. She was that concerned about Fran.

[Does Ms. Amanda have the ability to judge a person that much?]

[Rather than that, she could see through children. For example, though a child is seen, but if he or she is a long lived species who merely grows slowly, she normally comes into contact with them. Is her title usage the reason for that, I wonder?]

In other words, Fran is truly 12 years old. Until today, there was a small doubt of her being disguised as a long lived beastman.

[Honorable Uncle, I don't understand. I wonder what kind of person she is?" (pengu: just a genius girl with a magic sword that has another world memories)

[I don't understand either. No, it is probably who is she not?]

[What do you mean?]

[We were convinced that she was concealing something. But, is such a thing really true?"

Naturally, since she works as an adventurer at that age, I'm sure that she has some kind of circumstances. Just like many other adventurers. However, the kind of schemes and conspiracies we were anxious about didn't exist. That is the final conclusion we came to from the gathered information.

She has diverse skills and a magic sword, a little belligerent and easily involved in trouble, accompanied by a unique darkness wolf, thought to have a special background, and is in someway a 12 year old girl.

It is neither more nor less than that. Could it be that the figure of Fran we saw is not everything? No, when I list it again, I am likely to fall into paranoia again. Not good, not good.

[Don't depend on the judgement of the spirits too much, you might lose the eyes to judge people.]

It may be that Nell, who got along well with her in a blink of an eye, has a very discerning eye.

Chapter 59: Night of Return

59 Night of Return

「Then, kanpai ! 」

「Kanpai」

「Kanpai!」

The night after we finished the dungeon exploration.

Fran is at the bar. Amanda and Nell are also here. Having heard that Fran was leaving Alessa, they decided to throw a farewell party.

「Aah! Fran-chan is leaving me! Farewells are so sad!」

「Me too! Do you really have to go!?!」

「Nn. Going to dungeon」

「Is the dungeon more important than me!」

「Right! It's just a dungeon! Didn't you only just meet Amanda, while we have been friends for nearly a month, right?」

「Mou! It's not about length! I've been making friends with Fran-chan on a sleepover!」

They keep talking, about how Clad and The Roar of the Dragon failed the exam, how Donna was dumped by a woman, all the while drinking more and more.

The two gradually got drunk and the skinship increased. Urushi eventually retreated to Fran's shadow after being stroked too much.

「I am also concerned about Fran-chan〜」

「The orphanage?」

「Ara? Fran-chan knew? But it'll be all right. There is no problem if I leave taking care of the children to the director, right? Isn't it better if I go out and earn a lot of money for the orphanage? So, I'll go Dungeon Diving with Fran!」

「Nn. I don't mind」

「E? Really? Yahoo!」

「That's no good!」

「Eeh? Why, Nell?」

「You, did you forget the contract?」

「Ah, that one. Ngh, I've signed a troublesome one!」

「You're bad with the Guild Master's sweet words, right」

「Uuuuh...」

「Contract?」

「That's right! I can't leave Alessa」

「Why?」

「Ehm, you see...」

「Hey, Amanda! There are too many people here!」

「Ah, right. ——Silence!」

Amanda set up a barrier to block sound. It's a good magic for telling secrets, but maybe because she's drunk her control was not too good.

Not just our own table was affected, but several of the surrounding tables got affected as well. Suddenly the sound disappeared and I could see a customer with a look of confusion on his face.

「Didn't we enter a dungeon? That's pretty important over there. After all, it's a place where we can mass produce magic ore. It's a place where it can be supplied steadier than with a mine, right?」

That is true. Looking at it from a military standpoint, it would be quite important. It may be natural to hide the existence using Oath Magic.

「But, the dungeon is under the jurisdiction of the guild, right? Even for a country it's not something they can just obtain. But, the country wants the dungeon in Alessa no matter what!」

「Nn」

「And, Alessa is quite close to the border of the Raidos Kingdom, right?」

「Is that so?」

「Yes. Our relationship with Raidos is quite bad. That country is expanding pretty aggressively. At worst, there is the possibility of Alessa being targeted」

「It's impossible to keep the magic ore a secret forever. Some day it'll be known」

「And the country has been trying to obtain jurisdiction of the dungeon on the basis of this fact!」

「However, I do not want Alessa's guild to lose this jurisdiction to the country! Because there is nothing else around Alessa than that dungeon, so if that dungeon is taken Alessa's income will sharply decline, right?」

「And, our salaries would be cut too!!」

「So, the guild needs to guarantee that there is enough strength to protect Alessa even if we're attacked by a neighboring country. By making Rank A adventurers be residents」

So for that reason Amanda cannot leave Alessa, huh?

「Because the country is eyeing us, the knight order here is kept weak. Commander Urs is a graduate of Alessa so he refused to leave though. The knights used to be a lot more serious in the past!」

It was not just because of bribes, but also for reasons such as Auguste becoming Vice-Commander, and perhaps there was also an element of harassment.

「And so, that's why I can't leave this town～」

「I see」

「Even though I wanted to take care of Fran-chan—!」

「I said, it's impossible!!」

「Well then, I'll cherish today at least!」

「Yay. Truly Amanda!」

「Ara, not you, Nell. Only Fran-chan～」

「Stingy—!」

「Good stuff! Fran-chan～! Don't forget me even though you're leaving!!」

「Nn! Won't forget」

Well, she was beaten up many times. Of course she won't forget that.

「What!? Fran, you're leaving Alessa!?!」

「Wh-What did you say!?!」

Somehow, it seems like the surrounding adventurers had been listening in. It seems the effects of Silence had ended without me noticing.

It's a dwarf. Sitting there with a huge ale mug it certainly matches the atmosphere of a dwarf.

Who is he? I feel like I've seen him somewhere but.... Ah! He was one of the rank D adventurers who came after we had first fought the goblin army! I think his name was Hellbent.

「Hey, you serious!?!」

「Shit, and we wanted to let her enter our party」

「What! We were going to invite her!」

「Fran-chaaaan!!」

「Hey, don't try to steal a march, guys!」

Heyhey, where did all these guys come from!?! Somehow, it seems like everyone at the surrounding tables were adventurers. Besides that, even more adventurers have gathered!

「Fran-chan, I'm glad to have gotten to know you!」

「Damn it! I haven't repaid the favor yet, ya know~!」

Frion and Clad are there too. It seems they too have been drinking here.

「Where are you going?」

「Ulmut」

「Oh! A dungeon huh!」

「Nice! Some day we want to go too!」

「Wait a second! You should rank up first!」

「Yoosh! A cheers to the young lady's prospects!」

「Uooohh!!」

「Cheers!!」

「Kanpai!!」

「Kampai!!」

「Bring more booze!」

「Bring a whole barrel!」

「Gahahahaha!!」

「Drink! Drink!」

「Another! Another!」

It's a real Don Chan fuss. They even want Fran to drink!

「Are ye drinking, Fran-chan?」

「Nn」

「This's not juice! It's something better〜」

「Hey, Amanda! What the hell are you making her drink!」

「It's... It's just wheat juice!」

「I'll drink」

「No!」

「Eee〜! Stingy! Just a bit!」

「Stingy」

「No means NO! I'll be taking that!」

「Ooooh! Nell is downing it fast!」

「That's hot!」

「This is fun, Fran-chan〜!」

「Nn」

Well, Fran looks like she's having fun so I guess it's OK.

In the end everyone drank until they collapsed. Fran and I ended up coming home in the middle of the night. It seems Urushi was sleeping in Fran's shadow most of the time.

『Are you OK?』

「Nn」

While I couldn't drink myself I did enjoy the atmosphere. Maybe I got a little drunk from that alone. It seems poison resistance does not fully negate alcohol.

「I'm OK」

『Is that so?』

「Nn」

『Are you hungry now?』

If she's hungry I'll just pull something out.

「Bit hungry. Curry?」

『This time it's not curry. Just a moment! Yosh, the date has changed!』

This inn has clocks in all the rooms. In fact, it seems it's a fairly cheap magic tool so it's common.

Most places has a clock on the wall to show the time. However, I have never seen a wristwatch so maybe it's hard to downsize it.

And, there are calendars. Each month is 30 days but there is a special day every three months. It's written as a Party Day. It seems like the four seasons are officially separated by this day.

So, one year ends up with 364 days. By the way, today is March 18.

『Well then, try this』

「? What's this? Smells sweet...」

『It's a pancake. Actually, I wanted to make a decorated cake but I was lacking in materials and time. So, I settled for this』

「Why? Any celebration?」

『Yupp! Today it had been one month since we first met. How could I not make something?』

It was actually quite hard. I had to be creative to not be noticed. Doppelganger is still lvl 1 so it can only be used 5 minutes a day.

Even if you greatly lower the status of your alter ego and kept pouring magical power excessively with the Sorcery skill, the maximum limit of activity was 15 minutes.

I could only send my Doppel out secretly while Fran was sleeping. But since we had already gotten permission to use the kitchen outside of working hours it'd have been a waste not to use it, right?

I secretly snuck in the material during our shopping and then advanced the preparations for 15 minutes every night; making cream from the milk, cutting fruit for decorations, it was hard work.

I finished the first prototype a few days before we went to the dungeon. I studied how to bake with only 15 minutes to work with every night; it was a fierce challenge!

In addition to that, because my Doppel was so weak the level of Cooking actually sunk to 1!! It was a real challenge to make decent dishes like that!

I tasted it once but due to the quality of my Doppel its sense of taste was really dull. In addition, it seems to use magical power to digest things

eaten in reverse, it is a vicious cycle that the activation limit becomes shorter as you taste it!

Also, when people saw me during the work I could not explain what I was doing, also due to the quality of my Doppel.

Well, because things didn't work out I ended up cooking while carrying my main body. The more you're used to a skill, the more you tend to rely on the sensation of it. //Maaka: Like Small-Fry Vice Commander did

「This cake, for me?」

『Ou!』

It looks like Fran hadn't noticed anything, Surprise Successful!!

『Please go ahead!』

「Nn. I'll eat」

On top of the two-tiered pancake, I had put plenty of fresh cream, syrup and fruit. Fran cut the pancake with a fork and started eating.

“Mogyu Mogyu...”

『How is it?』

「Tasty. Super Tasty」

“Mogyu Mogyu Mogyu Mogyu...”

Good! it seems like she liked it. Fran is eating energetically in silence.

『Hey, your mouth is all sticky』

「Nn」

『Yosh, that’s better』

「Thanks」

“Mogyu Mogyu...”

『Oi, you got sticky again!』

「Because the cake is good」

『Yes yes〜』

Fran goes silent again. She wouldn’t say another word and just kept eating the pancake.

「Thanks for the food」

『It was nothing』

「Ne, Teacher?」

『Hmm?』

「Thank you」

『Ou!』

That smile is more than enough of a reward.

Chapter 60: Verification

60 – Verification

「Oh, have you come today too? Magic-Sword Girl」 (Shuuren)

「Nn」 (Fran)

Stop it with that name, Shuuren-jisan!

We were in the Guild's library to learn more about some things Amanda taught us during the dungeon visit.

Fran has no problem focusing on most things but when studying her concentration doesn't last long.

So, we're checking carefully while keeping it quick.

The last few days have consisted of sparring with Amanda in the mornings, taking a nap after lunch and then studying in the afternoon. It has been rather relaxing.

「Today I want to study magic」 (Fran)

「Even if you say that, there are many different kinds」 (Shuuren)

「Then, compound magic」 (Fran)

「Hou. Then, on the shelf there, on the third row from the bottom, on the right end there are beginners books about composite magic」 (Shuuren)

As always, he has an amazing memory.

The books recommended by Shuuren-jisan contains a brief introduction to various compound magics which is easy to understand.

I read while asking Fran to turn the pages for me. Fran does so with a bored expression. After that, I studied various other spells but as for rare attributes there wasn't very much written.

And so, let's summarize what I've learned in these past few days;

- Wood Magic: Composite of Water and Earth. As its name suggests, it can control plants. It can not only grow plants, but also make them die. There also seems to be a spell for not getting lost at sea.
- Ice Magic: Composite of Water and Air. It can manipulate cold air. It can attack with ice and snow, and it can also freeze objects by removing heat in the area. There are also spells for Cold Resistance.
- Life Magic: Composite of Water and Fire. It is Magic which manipulates life itself. It does have recovery spells but that's not its true value. It's able to nurture life, and can even create artificial lifeforms (homunculi) when combined with alchemy!
- Lightning Magic: Composite of Wind and Fire. It can not only control electrical forces but also magnetic fields. Apart from attacking it can also be used to enhance the body's nervous system, increasing reaction speed.
- Sand Magic: Composite of Wind and Earth. Apart from manipulating sand, it can also be used for drying, dehydration, weathering, etc. It seems like it can be used for processing food this way.
- Lava Magic: Composite of Earth and Fire. It manipulates metals, ores, lava, etc. It's an attribute with a strong connection to the deep earth. It seems to have spells useful for blacksmithing.

That's how compound magic works. There are also the special attributes.

- Spatial-Temporary Magic: It's Magic that can manipulate time and space. Metastasis, time manipulation, and summoning are confirmed to be of this

attribute.

- Moonlight Magic: Deals with reflection and mental manipulation, even physical manipulation. In my opinion, it really reminded me of vampires and werewolves.

- Auxiliary Magic : Attributes specialized for assisting status ups, barriers, etc. There is a technique that is similar to other attributes, but effects like auxiliary attributes can not be obtained it seems.

Another thing I was interested in was old man Gallus's skills, so I checked out his other skills in detail.

- Blacksmith: A system gathering magic that is necessary for smithing. It is something created by the God of Blacksmithing. It includes various spells dealing with fire, wind, molten iron, and so on, but it seems that it can only be used for smithing because its power is drastically reduced when its used in battle.

- Magic Blacksmith: Allows the creating of magic equipment by putting mana into things created with Blacksmithing. It provides magic control far beyond common blacksmiths, allowing the user to give the desired effects and attributes.

Even though their names are similar they are completely different.

There are many other things I would like to look into, but we decided to leave the library room. I lost to the sound of Fran's stomach grumbling so we went to eat lunch.

Oh well, it can't be helped. If we eat lunch we can go and verify some skills later. Fran is tired of the study room anyways.

After we left the town we had Urushi confirm that there are no people nearby. Now, let's verify the skills!

First, let's confirm the skills I got from the spiders. Unfortunately I was not able to absorb the Trickster Spider's magic stone, and we had to be careful

with absorbing other stones too since we were not alone, but I managed to absorb 10 magic stones from Trap and Trick spiders.

Confusion Poison Generation: Lv 1

Infrared Vision: Lv 1

Poison Jet: Lv 1

Paralytic Poison Generation: Lv 1

Strong Poison Production: Lv 1

Poison Generation skills gave you the ability to create poison in your body. It can give poison attributes to your blood and body fluids. This poison has no effect on the creator so Fran is unaffected when using it.

Infrared vision is, well, as its name suggests.

Poison Jet is the ability to spray poison. It's a meaningless skill if you don't have a poison generation skill, but regardless of that I can already inject Demonic Poison. It seems like our repertoire is getting quite dirty...

I also want to check the Attribute Sword.

『First is the Flame Attribute』 (Teacher)

「Nn」 (Fran)

I also used it against the spider web, but it's quite powerful.

『Is it hot?』 (Teacher)

「It's alright」 (Fran)

「Ou」 (Fran)

Fran answers with a calm face while swinging my red-hot flaming body. It doesn't seem like she's enduring so it should be fine.

However, Urushi looks like he finds it too hot. It seems like the user is less affected by the heat.

There might be a problem when using the Overboost of the Sorcery skill though. Let's try it carefully with a little power.

『How is it?』 (Teacher)

「Hot」 (Fran)

「Kyaun」 (Fran)

Un, it seems like it's impossible to swing me in this state. It seems like it can only be used with the Telekinetic Catapult. Too bad.

『Well, shall we try the other attributes as well? We'll try all basic attributes first』 (Teacher)

Earth and Water attributes are subtle. Of course the attack power increases, but both seem to simply increase the impact power. It seems like it'd be useful with blunt weapons.

However, the effect of Wind attribute is good. It increases my sharpness tremendously. Although the effect doesn't affect as large an area as the Fire attribute, if it's pure attack power the Wind Attribute wins hands down.

『How about the Dark Attribute? Is it possible to use Attribute Sword with it in the first place?』 (Teacher)

「Try?」 (Fran)

Oh! It's a sword of darkness! Cool——!! However, I don't understand the effect well. It definitely increases the sharpness.

『Urushi, do you understand?』 (Teacher)

「Oon」 (Urushi)

Urushi understands Dark magic better than me. I thought he might have a hint.

『Ah! Urushi!』 (Teacher)

「Gyan!」 (Urushi)

Urushi who was sniffing the blade let out a scream. Hey, what are you doing?

If you check the status, his MP is decreasing. It seems like it has a Mana Burn effect. Moreover, it just requires physical contact.

「Kuu」 (Urushi)

「Alright?」 (Fran)

「Uun...」 (Urushi)

I learned the effect through Urushi's sacrifice. Yosh, let's continue to the next one.

「Next, Lightning」 (Fran)

『Yosh, Let's do it!』 (Teacher)

My blade is crackling with electricity. Fran tried the cutting ability.

It's pretty useful. If we keep it weak it acts as a stun gun. If we make it strong it will fry the opponent from the inside. Moreover, it's difficult to defend against since weapons and armor would just conduct the electricity. It should be quite effective in battle.

「Lightning sword. Cool」 (Fran)

『Does Fran like this?』 (Teacher)

「Nn. Biri-biri, amazing」 (Fran)

「Oon!」 (Urushi)

Fran is swinging around my crackling body. Next to her, Urushi's fur is standing straight, he looks like a hedgehog. Looks kinda gross. It seems both are having fun though.

Next up are the special attributes. First we tried Recovery and Auxiliary, but the Attribute Sword wouldn't even activate. It seems only the basic, compound and light/dark attributes could be used with Attribute Sword.

『Next is Fran's new inherent skill』 (Teacher)

「Nn. Magical Convergence」 (Fran)

It is a skill she got when changing her class to Magic Warrior, so I don't have access to it. Therefore I can't give her advice on it. First, let's have Fran use it.

Magical Convergence: Increase the power of magic and fighting techniques by manipulating and converging magical power instead of increasing the amount of magical power used.

According to the description I got through the Sorcery Skill it seems to be a skill which breaks the user's limits.

『Be careful』 (Teacher)

「Nn」 (Fran)

First Fran cast an ordinary Fire Arrow. Five ordinary fire arrows appear. I'm very familiar with this spell so it's just right for comparison.

And then, the Magical Convergence version.

「——Fire · Arrow」 (Fran)

Bobow!!

『Whoa! Ain't that amazing』 (Teacher)

The arrows are twice their normal size and there's almost twice as many as well. It seems the power of each one is quite high.

『Can you do it more precisely?』 (Teacher)

「Will try」 (Fran)

After experimenting we found out that the Magical Convergence can be used quite liberally. Its effect is consumed by a single spell but increases its power several time over. It seems to be useable about 20 times.

It seems the magical power consumption when using Magical Convergence does increase to about three times normal. Well, as long as I'm here we won't have to worry about that though.

More importantly, it's better than being unreasonable by using my special skill. Since I couldn't control the Sorcery skill even if I forced it. It's power is simply too high so it would hurt Fran.

Fran's Magical Convergence may not have the output of the Sorcery skill, but it can be controlled perfectly. It truly is worthy as a unique skill of a high-ranked job.

Well then, we still have some skills to verify left.

「What next?」 (Fran)

『That's right. Well then, how about trying that?』 (Teacher)

「That?」 (Fran)

「Oun?」 (Urushi)

『Skill Superiorization』 (Teacher)

「Oo」 (Urushi)

For the sake of today's request, we have secured some magic stones from Goblins. Of course, they have Sword Arts.

『I've been thinking about how we should use the Self-Evolution points. I think we should do some experiments with Superiorization』 (Teacher)

I'd like to know if Superiorization is useful. If it's not worth the points we'll ignore it in the future.

「Nn, agree」 (Fran)

『Then, let's do it?』 (Teacher)

「Nn」 (Fran)

My remaining Self-Evolution points are 41. We'll use 10 to superiorize Sword Arts.

〈 Sword Arts: LvMax will be superiorized 〉

A few seconds after the announcement ended I start shining brightly. Something amazing is coming!

〈 Superiorization is completed. Sword Arts: LvMax has changed to Sword Arts: SP 〉

The name is quite subtle; it just changed the notation to SP. Well then, what kind of skill is it?

Sword Arts: SP – Special skill: The Sword Arts skill growth rate of equipment registrants greatly increased. All status of equipment registrant +2. The effect of Sword Arts skill rises.

It was expected that the effect of the Sword Arts skill would rise. However, the status and growth rate increase is a terrific ability. Rather than empowering me, the superiorization improves the growth and strength of my equipment registrants!

Since the growth rate of Sword Arts greatly increases it means that Fran will be able to one day stand at the peak of swordsmanship even without me.

『Fran, how's the feeling when swinging me?』 (Teacher)

「Same as usual」 (Fran)

『How about Sword Techniques?』 (Teacher)

「Nn. Dragon · Fang」 (Fran)

It looks like it's working properly. No problems with Sword Techniques either huh. With Fran activating a Sword Technique from a higher level than her Master Sword Arts level it means it properly counts as a higher level than the Sword Techniques. Well, it seems like I won't need to take over and raise her Sword Arts intentionally.

Superiorization. Not bad. However, it's hard to tell whether it's always better to do it. It's a matter of priority. Well, the Sword Arts I tried this time is a weapon skill, I do not know how magical skills will change. I would like to try it for a bit.

「Teacher, want to superiorize other skills too?」 (Fran)

『Well. No, let's stop for now. Rather than that, I have something I'd like to talk with you about』 (Teacher)

「Consultation?」 (Fran)

『Ah. After we went to dungeon, I have reflected on things』 (Teacher)

「Nn. Me too」 (Fran)

『Until now, we've equally increased all useful skills; magic, weapon and other combat related ones right? But, I thought about whether to raise a different kind of skill』 (Teacher)

「I see」 (Fran)

Unlike the wide outdoors, escape routes are quite limited in a dungeon. I've come to realize that to survive there you need more than just combat ability.

This is the candidates I've thought about for that.

Chant Shortening: Lv 1

Crisis Detection: Lv 1

Sign Perception: Lv 2

Instant Regeneration: Lv 1

Abnormal Status Resistance: Lv 3

Magical Barriers: Lv 1

Trap Sensing: Lv 1

With Crisis Detection, Sign Perception and Trap Sensing we can try to avoid traps and dangerous enemies in advance.

Chant Shortening will widen our range of viable tactics.

Instant Regeneration, Abnormal Status Resistance and Magical Barriers will allow us to survive in a pinch.

I have 31 Self-Evolution points left. I could max out one of the skills or distribute it to three different skills for diversity.

As for me, I'd like to increase the detection skills for a bit, especially the Trap Sensing. When you think about dungeons, it's traps right?

『What do you want to do, Fran?』 (Teacher)

「Unnn〜」 (Fran)

After talking with Fran, we decided to raise the Sign Perception, Trap Sensing, Chant Shortening and Abnormal Status Resistance to Lv5.

Since we're not diving into a dungeon right at the moment, I felt we should probably save some points but... I decided to raise the levels right now. Are

we a bit too loose with points?

If you can get the skills you want, don't you want to use them right away?
So we decided to allocate the necessary skills right now.

With this we'll be much safer when exploring the dungeon. I only have 5
Self-Evolution points left though.

『With this we should be safe even in a dungeon』 (Teacher)

「Nn」 (Fran)

「On」 (Urushi)

『But, you won't regret it?』 (Teacher)

「Nope」 (Fran)

「Owan!」 (Urushi)

Chapter 61: Getting New Equipment

61 – Getting New Equipment

「Equipment, ready?」

「Ou! It's perfect!」

Four days after the farewell party we were at old man Gallus's workshop.

We have been in this town for one month now. Today is the promised day.

『Has it gone well?』

「Gahahaha! It's the best! It's been the most enjoyable time of my life!」

『Isn't that exaggerating it?』

We gave him C and D ranked monster materials. It's certainly not weak but a blacksmith of Gallus's level would definitely have worked with more advanced materials.

『Haven't you created stronger equipment before?』

「Nono, I didn't mean it is my best work ever」

「?」

「How to say it, it's like I put my soul into it. That's important! Well, I always put my soul into it. However, there are moments when I can do a particularly satisfying job」

Nope, I can't really understand what you mean...

「This was one of those times. My skill, creativity, soul, and more. There are times when they come together amazingly well」

『Well, what can we expect then?』

「Ou! This is armor blessed by God!」

「God?」

Gallus went to the back of the store and brought back a huge bag. He then put the contents on the counter with a confident expression.

「Take a look, this is the young lady's new armor!」

Name: Black Cat's Armor

Defense : 100

Endurance : 600/600

Effect: Pleasant Sleep, Deodorant, Purification, Mental Stability Boost

Name: Black Cat's Gloves

Defense : 70

Endurance : 600/600

Effect: Impact Resistance Boost, Arm Strength Boost

Name: Black Cat's Light Shoes

Defense : 65

Endurance : 600/600

Effect: Jumping Boost, Agility ↑ Mid

Name: Black Cat's Heavenly Earring

Defense : 15

Endurance : 300/300

Effect: Poison Resistance Boost, Noise Tolerance ↑ High, Attribute Resistance Boost

Name: Black Cat's Mantle

Defense : 85

Endurance : 600/600

Effect: Cold Resistance, Heat Resistance, Equipment Self-Repair

Name: Black Cat's Leather Belt

Defense : 15

Endurance : 300/300

Effect: Magic Resistance ↑ Low, Abnormal Status Resistance ↑ Low, Item Box (small)

Yes, that is horrifyingly powerful. It's far stronger than our current equipment, which we paid 150 000 for. It's even superior to the expensive equipment we took from Gyuran.

By the way, the equipment we took from Gyuran is like this:

Name: Leather Armor of the Fire-fighting Lion

Defense : 90

Endurance : 500/500

Effect: Fire Resistance ↑ High, Poison Resistance ↑ Low

Name: Shoulder pads of the False Dragon

Defense : 61

Endurance : 400/400

Effect: Impact Resistance Boost, Arm Strength ↑ Low

Name: Hundred Eyes Shoes

Defense : 45

Endurance : 330/330

Effect: Paralysis Resistance ↑ Low, Agility ↑ Low

Name: Shield of the Kuroishi Tree

Defense : 68

Endurance : 900/900

Effect: Fainting Resistance Increase, Impact Resistance ↑ Low

Name: Protective Bracelet

Defense : 15

Endurance : 300/300

Effect: Magic Power Consumption Reduction, Physical Barrier

Name: Anti-poison Bracelet

Defense : 5

Endurance : 100/100

Effect: Poison Resistance ↑ Mid

The equipment made by old man Gallus has both excellent defensive power as well as effects. Moreover, it's also lighter than our current equipment? But, what does he mean with them being blessed by God?

「This is my masterpiece, the Black Cat series!」

「Good name」

『But, it sounds too cute for an old man』

「Onn」

「Leave me alone! Well, it wasn't I who named it as such」

「then, who named it?」

「It was God」

「?」

「Owan?」

『What do you mean?』

「What, you didn't know? This is a “Named Item”」

It seems Named Items are special items given a name by a God. For example, if the God of Blacksmithing recognizes something made by a blacksmith then a name will be given to it by the God.

It seems legendary equipment found in labyrinths often are Named Items.

Divine protection will be granted only to the best created items, increasing their performance further.

「It is the highest honor a blacksmith can receive to have an item created by them be recognized by God. I thank you for giving me that opportunity. My acquaintance who helped with the production also cried from joy. Thank you!」

『No no, we're the ones who should thank you for such amazing equipment』

「Gahahahaha! With the divine protection that equipment can compete with equipment created from Rank B monsters!」

『That's amazing!』

「Moreover, the protection is amazing!」

『Eh? You mean it's not the resistances that's the protection?』

「Well, you'll get it somehow when you equip it」

「Got it」

We borrow a room in the back where Fran can put on the Black Cat series. The equipment has a sense of unity with white fringing on a black background, which kind of resembles Fran.

The equipment has both a boyish atmosphere and cuteness living together. Clothes with a hole for the tail. A pleasing outerwear with a collared big shirt in bisuche style. The jeweled clasp at the chest also adds femininity. It shows off her navel but I'll forgive it since it's cute.

Open-fingered gloves and boot-like shoes which covers her calves. The leather belt has a cowboy-like shape and can conceal a dagger. It even has a small Item Box which can hold about five potions. The platinum-colored earring doesn't have much of a presence but it looks cute when Fran wears it.

The mantle reminds me more of a raincoat rather than a mantle. Still, it's light and supple, and it doesn't disturb movement.

「Mostly non-metallic materials have been used. It was a real struggle to make leather this strong. The composite materials used to make the equipment was created through immersing the Tyrant Saber's skin, the Doppel Snake's scales and the Blast Tortoise's shell in the Slime Lord which had been mixed with various reagents」

『Just hearing that is amazing』

「It was a series of failures before I was satisfied. Because it's made with a special material it's far stronger than common metal armor. Above all, it's light」

Lightness is important. Fran uses speed and agility as her main attributes, so this is perfect equipment for her. When I checked again, I noticed something.

『Black Cat's Protection?』

「You noticed? It's the effect of God's blessing. Black Cat's Protection is given while wearing the whole Black Cat Set. The effect is all status +10. In addition, it negates instant death effects. In exchange, it can only be used by the Black cat Tribe」

To get such protection from equipment, isn't that fantastic? All status +10 alone is amazing. While it might not be quite as hard as heavy plate armor, considering its lightness it is definitely far better than that. It has a huge amount of effects and is as hard as metal fitted armor.

「Very cool」

『Moreover, it's cute. Overpowered!』

「Right? It's the strongest equipment right. Gahaha!」

『Is it really all right for us to get this for free?』

「Yeah, that was the promise. Since I got all the extra material I still made a profit you know. Also, just being able to create that has been amazing, so I wouldn't accept money even if you wanted. However——」

「However?」

「There is one thing I must tell you. This is equipment of the highest quality. However, due to that, it requires a rather powerful demonic magic stone to repair damage to it. Which would be quite expensive...」

『About how much would it cost?』

「About 100 000 the first time, then it'll probably double each time」

『Geh! That's pretty bad』

「Yes. However, the mantle has Equipment Self-Repair. That actually affects everything equiped so if you are not in a hurry you can just wait a few days for it to be restored」

That's a relief. Then, maybe we won't have to get it repaired ever. Phew, I rushed to conclusions.

『Then, next would be equipment for Urushi』

「Is that your dog?」

『Aa, it seems that we have gotten a familiar. Is there any armor that can be equiped by a wolf?』

There are other problems as well. Urushi changes in size often. We can't afford it breaking everything he does. If it fits when he's small, it'll probably strangle him when he grows big.

When I told Gallus about it he said it won't be a problem.

「There are many armors with automatic size adjustment functions. If you just get one with that it will be fine」

「Really?」

「On?」

「Ou! Leave it to me. I can make it in two days」

『In that case we'll rely on you』

「Ooon!」

『Then, how much would it be?』

「Let's see... If I get 50 000 I could make something quite good」

「Good, please do」

After that, Urushi ended up licking and hitting old man Gallus with his wagging tail as he tried to take measurements, and other such things happened.

Since old man Gallus is quite tough it was fine, but a normal blacksmith would have had his life endangered. Or rather, isn't this old man amazing? To take no damage from all that...

I guess I'll have to seriously train Urushi to behave or we'll have a serious incident some day.

「Where are you guys going next?」

「Ulmur」

「Hou. I've already done what I wanted to do in this town. Maybe I should head to Ulmur next?」

『Oh? Well, should we head there together then?』

If it's old man Gallus he's most welcome to join us.

「By the way, what route will you be taking?」

『From here we'll head south to Darth and take a ship to Barbola. From there we'll head to Ulmur on land. It's more expensive than only heading by land, but it's also faster. More importantly, I want Fran to get to experience a journey by boat』

「Go together?」

「...I'm sorry, young lady. I don't think I can go with you」

「？」

『Why?』

「...Dwarves are mountain folk」

「Nn」

「In other words, we're not good with deep water. I can't swim!」

I see, because he's a dwarf. Certainly, when I look at Gallus he's built like a boulder. He definitely doesn't seem like he'd float.

「I see. Too bad」

「Kuu」

「I'm Sorry」

『Well then, I hope to meet you again in Ulmot』

「Ou!」

Chapter 62: New Wings

62 New Wings

Three days after receiving the new equipment.

「See you～」

「I'll be waiting!」

「Let's meet in Ulmut!」

「We'll be waiting for you!」

「See you～」

We were seen off from Alessa by Amanda, Donna, Gallus, Randall and Delt.

『It was a good town』

I do not know about any other towns in this world, but I'm glad this was the first place we visited.

「Nn」

『Well then, lets head west from here on. To the port town Darth』

We'll get on a ship in Darth and head south from there to Barbola. After that we'll travel by foot to Ulmut.

Since we sold all the materials we had we have plenty of money. So, my current goal is to take a good ship. Preferably a real passenger ship rather

than a transport ship.

If it turns out to be too expensive I'm planning on earning a little in Darth. We bought quite a bit of potions but we still have one million Gorudo. It'll work out somehow.

『Well then, I'm counting on you, Urushi!』

「On!」

Urushi lowered himself and Fran jumped up on him.

『You've got a good grip?』

「Nn」

Fran is holding on to Urushi's collar firmly. The collar made by Gallus has a string specifically for making it easy to grab hold of. If she holds on it that, Fran will not be thrown off easily. Nice job, old man Gallus!

Urushi's forelegs are equipped with black and gold anklets. They slightly increase the strength and speed of the wearer and they also has a size adjustment effect so Urushi can wear them no matter what size he takes. These were also made by Gallus.

He's amazing to make these in just two days. As expected of a master blacksmith.

「Urushi, Go!」

「Ooooooh!」

Urushi barks with great spirit and runs west.

Fast Fast!! Alessa is quickly disappearing behind us!

『Keep it up, Urushi!』

「Onon!」

Urushi speeds up even more with my encouragement. His tail is swinging with excitement. But, it seems Fran doesn't share the excitement.

「Eyes, hurts」

It seems Urushi is too fast. Fran can't keep her eyes open due to the wind shear, so I use wind magic to reduce the pressure.

『How's this?』

「Nn, feels comfortable」

Good. It seems Fran can enjoy the scenery comfortably now by just narrowing her eyes a little.

「What's that?」

「Birds」

「That mountain, the top is white」

Fran is enjoying the ride. The scenery is flying past us. Also, Urushi never slows down at all. Even if there are obstacles he just flies over them with a jump and continues in a straight line.

『Oh, is that a magical beast?』

「Where?」

『Look, behind that tree』

「Let's go」

『Ooon』

Occasionally we spot magical beasts, and hunt them down. There doesn't seem to be any strong magical beasts around here, they all die from a single attack by Urushi. I absorb the magic stone, store the meat, and let Urushi eat the bones and organs. Un, it's best not to waste anything.

However, this high speed didn't last. No matter how much of a magical beast Urushi is, he'll get tired if he keeps running. He'll also get hungry.

Sometimes he also uses Sky Step so his MP has also decreased a lot.

『It can't be helped. Let's go by foot for a little while』

「Good job」

『What'll we do with urushi?』

「On!」

Urushi barks lightly and then slips into Fran's shadow. Urushi has two skills for entering shadows; Shadow Dive and Shadow Migration. Shadow Dive can only enter a shadow, while Shadow Migration allows him to move from shadow to shadow.

Unlike Shadow Migration which consumes a lot of MP, Shadow Dive seems to consume almost no MP at all. Also, it seems to only consume MP when entering the shadow and nothing while remaining inside of it. Therefore, it seems like Urushi can rest and recover while inside a shadow as such.

If he's in Fran's shadow he'll also of course move along with Fran so it's a useful skill.

『Well, shall we continue leisurely?』

「Nn」

We keep on going while having lunch at the same time.

Around here the surroundings change. The forest surrounding Alessa ends and turns into plains. However, it's not a savannah like wilderness, but a green grassy plain.

Considering the change compared to around Alessa you understand it's actually quite far. It makes you understand just how fast Urushi was.

It's only been half a day since we left Alessa. When I casually looked up into the sky my mind shouted out in surprise.

『Uoooh! That, that! What is THAT!?!』

「Nn?」

『Look, over there! Up there!』

「Which one?」

「On?」

『There, next to the clouds! The one floating in the sky!』

「That floating island?」

『Floating island? What's that? FANTASY!!』

You know, it's a flying island! A Flying Island!! Ghibli fans will drool. Well, even if you're not that, no fantasy lover can resist that.

Just above us, an island is floating in the sky. I get excited just watching it!

how is it floating? Is it that? Flight Stones? Or is it wind magic? An even more fantasy-ish power? Nice~, I want to go~!

『Ne, nee, is that not something rare?』

Fran doesn't seem very surprised. Maybe it's a common sight in this world.

「Nn. Sometimes they float」

『Seriously!?!』

How terrible! It's already been two months since I reincarnated into this world, yet I still didn't know of such a wonderful spot!

No, wait a second. If it's a common occurrence, that means you can visit them without problems right?

『I want to go up there!』

「Impossible」

『Eh? Is that so?』

「Very high」

It seems you need to use a certain magic item to get up that high, and the usage fee is tremendously high. Fran doesn't know exactly how much it costs but it seems impossible for ordinary people to go up there.

Is it like how private space travel was in my old world? but, I want to go!!

『Hey, isn't there any other way?』

「Seems to be some magicians who can fly up there themselves」

『I see』

In that case, wouldn't Urushi's Sky Step work? If you keep using it to jump ever higher...

『Urushi, how about it?』

「Kuuuu...」

It seems like it's impossible. Well, I guess he'd run out of MP from such continuous use.

Then, what if we use Floating? No, impossible. There is an altitude restriction for floating, and if you go above that it'll just slow your fall instead of maintaining the altitude.

『I wonder if I can get up there with Telekinesis』

「Teacher, cunning」

『Hm?』

「Me too」

『Want to go?』

「Of course」

「On!」

「Well, let's not rush」

That being said, as a matter of fact... No, wait! I got a flash of inspiration!

『Well, let's give this a try shall we?』

I use Telekinesis to hover in front of Fran with my side up.

『Now, get on!』

「Get on?」

『That's right. There's no way you'd know about surfing. Anyway, stand on top of me』

「Nn...」

Fran seemed a bit nervous about standing on me.

「All right」

『Ou! Also, it'd make it easier if you used Floating. I'll be using wind magic to weaken the wind resistance』

「Got it」

『Urushi, enter Fran's shadow for now』

「On!」

『Then, let's go!』

I made use of Telekinesis and Floating and flew upwards. Acting as a surfing board, with Fran on me.

「Oooh. Flying」

Success!! I'll name it Telekinetic Air Ride!

Initially I moved horizontally. Fran seems to be OK with the movement. It seems to have been a good idea to fixate her feet with Telekinesis.

I turn right, turn left, go up and down while gradually increasing the speed. Good. It doesn't seem to be any problems.

『Well, let's go』

「Nn!」

『Oryaaa!!!』

I was flying in a spiral, going up smoothly. I don't rise vertically since that wouldn't be comfortable for Fran.

「Amazing. Teacher is amazing」

「On on!」

『Urya uryaaa〜!!』

Telekinesis Full Power!! We're gradually approaching the floating island. The island which originally only looked like a tiny pebble has grown to the size of a fist.

Even though I've already reached a height where clouds are racing by, the island is still far away. It really is high up in the sky.

The bottom of the island is just plain rock. I really want to see what's on top of it.

『Fran...』

「Nn?」

『I'm sorry!』

I was becoming exhausted. It's no good, it seems it was impossible to fly into the sky while carrying Fran. It seems that continuous application of force is different from the explosive strength of the Telekinetic Catapult. I'm running out of magic power.

Perhaps, even with practice I could only fly for about 15 minutes?

If I become good at this it will be a new method of transportation, which seems to be useful for bypassing dangerous areas as well as escaping quickly.

「Too bad」

「Ouuu...」

『Shit!! Some day I will definitely get there! Just you wait!』

Chapter 63: Neel Village

Chapter 63: Neel Village

Two days after leaving Alessa...

We have arrived at Neel Village, halfway between Alessa and Darth. We made it in half a day even though it normally takes four days by horse. We got here so fast thanks to Urushi's fast legs and my ability to get through swamps and over cliffs with Telekinetic Air Ride.

If we get another familiar like Urushi we could travel really far in no time at all by riding them in tandem, don't you think? Thinking so, I tried another summoning, but...

It was no good. Why, why did the summoning list get all grayed out and unusable...

I could not find out much about that in the guild library, but I think my "Vessel" is simply insufficient.

Summoners refer to the upper limit for contracts as "Vessel", and the familiar's strength as "Capacity".

Vessel is as it sounds, while Capacity has a water-like image. A powerful familiar has a greater Capacity, and they can only be summoned as long as the summoner has the Vessel to support that Capacity. And, when the summoner's Vessel is filled up by the Capacity of the summoned familiars it is impossible to make further contracts.

Urushi is a unique individual of a Threat Level C monster. It's not really strange at all for his Capacity alone to fill up my Vessel.

『For the time being, we don't have a choice other than to keep burdening Urushi huh?』

「On!」

You don't need Telepathy to understand this. You're saying you're going to do your best, huh. I am happy to have such a praiseworthy pet.

『In the meantime, could you get smaller Urushi?』

「Ou...」

Well, despite that, I do not intend to pamper you.

「Gate is over there」

The village is surrounded with a wooden wall, it seems you have to enter through the gate.

When Fran presented her guild card to the guard at the gate he was quite surprised but we were able to enter without problem.

『It's a tranquil village, ne』

Uncles with scythes giving of a farm-like aura, aunts doing laundry, it's almost like a painting.

「Countryside」

「On」

『As you say』

We'll be staying here for the night. The questions is whether there is even an inn here.

『By the way, is there an adventurer's guild here you think?』

It might not even be 100 people living in this village. Would there really be a branch in such a small village?

As I thought so, there it was! Well, at least there is the sign hanging there. But no matter how you look at it, it's just a normal house. Furthermore, it's even smaller than the other houses.

「Hello」

「Oh, welcome?」

Even the inside is really a private house. It's like someone just smacked a counter at the entrance to some old house.

「Girl, this might seem like a café or a tool store, but it's actually a branch of the adventurer's guild ya'know?」

「Know」

「Haa? Ehm, well, what do you want?」

Well, it's not that we really want anything. We just saw the guild signboard and entered on a whim.

But, to be honest...

『Fran, let's sell the material』

We picked up the materials from the monsters we beat while going here. It's just from threat level G and F, but it will at least cover today's lodging.

「Want to sell this」

We took out the materials from the Storage, making the receptionist uncle's eyes open wide in surprise.

「Where did you get this?」

「Defeated」

「You did, girl?」

「Nn」

「Eh?」

Yupp, he has a doubting expression on his face. Maa, it can't be helped really.

『Fran, the guild card』

「This」

「Girl, you're an adventurer? Eh? Rank D? Haha, ain't this well done～」

Treating it as a fake huh? Seems like he thinks it is just a child's mischief.

「Still, it's really well made. Can't tell the difference」

The uncle holds the card over the crystal functioning as a guild card authentication device. It seems like he's going to check if it's real or not. And, he gives off a startled shout.

「Hoho, it's real? A real D rank adventurer?」

「Nn. Real」

「How surprising!」

From what he tells us, it seems like Alessa sends a few adventurers to Neel village on a half-year basis. He's been stationed in this village for 3 months so he didn't know about Fran.

However, he had heard that an amazing newcomer had appeared in Alessa from merchants travelling to Darth.

「Say, it was a black cat beastman girl, who's terrifyingly strong, and so beautiful it makes the guild master cry? The so called Magic Sword Girl. I'd heard that you were no weaker than C rank」

The first half is good; Strong and Cute. To make the guild master cry... Well, that rumor doesn't harm Fran. The problem is the nickname! Even here it's Magic Sword Girl! What the hell is up with that!?!?

『Fran, you're being called Magic Sword Girl you know!』

I have to correct it!!

「Magic Sword Girl?」

「Ou, that's you right, Girlie」

『It's widespread after all!』

If I do not correct it here, it will spread even further.

「Nn. Cool」

『Eh? No way?』

「I'm a Magic Sword Girl」

I'm appealing with a broken heart. Does she like it?

「I knew it」

『Fran! Wait a minute! Something like Magic Sword Girl? Is that OK to be called?』

「?? It's good. Cute and cool」

『U, Urushi, what do you think?』

「On!」

Aaaa... He's positive about it. Am I alone in this? What about the uncle there?

「How nice. I hope I'll be able to pile up enough achievements to get a title some day〜」

I have no comrades here!!

Are? Is my sensibility wierd? Is Magic Sword Girl a cool nickname? Seems like it's seen as a good nickname...

Maa, if Fran likes it, it can't be helped but...

「Oops, got lost in the story there. We don't buy that here」

「Is not a branch?」

「Even if you call it a branch, it's mainly here to contact Alessa」

Is that so? It certainly doesn't look like there's any money in a place like this. Probably, it's just doing simple monster extermination and such.

「However, we do buy medicinal herbs and such. Since it's used in the village. How about it? If you have any I'll buy them」

Medicinal herbs huh? We collect stuff when we have the time, though a lot of it is poisonous grass. Even Urushi does search for it, but he too finds mostly poisonous grass. Is it because he is good at poison magic?

We don't know its exact effect, but the seemingly dangerous poisonous grass has been piling up in the Storage.

「Poisonous grass?」

「Well, it depends. Some are used for pesticides or for producing anesthesia. Here's a list of all different herb we're buying」

There's about 20 kinds listed, but we don't have much of the ones on the list. The only one we have a reasonable amount of is Ghost Grass. I have no idea how to use it, but Urushi found a sizeable colony so we have a fair amount.

「Here」

「Oh, Ghost Grass. And it's a lot!!」

Even this amount is just one third of what we have in Storage.

「Used for?」

「This? It works as a catalysy for Ghost Magic, and if you process it with alchemy you can make undead purifying potions」

Hohou, that's some good information. When we get to the next city, should we bring it to an alchemist? No, it would be interesting to try it out ourselves too right?

「Then, in total that'll be 7000 gorudo. Well, this guy can't be found easily around here so we'll be saving this」

Oh? is that so? We found a colony near the village quite easily...

「Actually, this area seems to have many areas where magical power has stagnated, and undead will spawn there. There are a lot more undead than normal monsters. Well, it's mostly Lesser Zombies and Lesser Skeletons, so it'd not that dangerous」

(Teacher, what to do?)

『Is it the place of the colony?』

(Nn. Tell?)

Un, it's fine to tell him. I don't want to monopolize it and I don't know if we'll come by this area anytime soon. There is no reason to keep it a secret.

「Found a colony nearby」

「Hee?」

「This child did」

「That's amazing. I've heard that some pharmacists train dogs to find medicinal herbs. Has that dog been trained to do so?」

「Have no done, but his nose is good」

「On!」

「hey, will you sell information about this colony? If we have such a place we can harvest it periodically」

「Intended to」

「I'm grateful!」

We decided to show him to the colony. At first, we were told to mark the location on a map, but we really don't know the geography of the neighborhood at all. Actually, since I was carried around while we traveled I don't really remember much about the exact locations. We'll have to depend on Urushi's nose here.

Payment would depend on the size of the colony, but it would be at least 50000 gorudo.

「I'm a rank E adventurer, name's Argen. Nice to meet you!」

「Nn」

Chapter 64: Colony

Chapter 64: Colony

With Urushi's speed it takes 2 hours to the colony of Ghost Grass. Walking normally would take a day. We decided to move with Argen on a horse and Fran on Urushi.

Argen was quite surprised to see Urushi get big. Oh yeah, that's right. He thought Urushi was a dog, and he turned out to be a Darkness Wolf. I will praise him for not running away.

However, Argen's horse is terrified. It refused to get within 5 meters of Urushi while moving. It made Urushi a little depressed. Come on, you're a predator! Don't get down from a damn horse!!

「Urushi, good boy」

「Kuuu」

As Fran said that, we came back to a place I recognized. That rocky cliff, and that tree on the hill; we passed here yesterday as well. Over there's where the colony was.

「In that forest」

「Hou, well done finding it」

It's a small grove a bit away from the highway, which you'd normally not have any reason to enter when travelling. We could not have found it without Urushi's nose.

「Thanks to Urushi」

「On～on!」

Urushi sticks out his chest as if bragging.

「Hee～ As expected of a threat level C monster」

「Urushi is amazing」

「Oon」

Don't look so embarrassed! Because Urushi is so smart he really does have a lot of facial expressions.

「Well then, shall we go?」

「Nn. Here」

It's nothing complicated getting this far. Though the colonies are in the middle of the forest.

『Hey, shall we ask a little about how to use Ghost Grass?』

I'm interested in magical catalysts.

「Um?」

「What is it?」

「Ghost Grass, how to use?」

「There are various uses, but if used as is it has a combined effect of poison and paralysis. It's pretty dangerous if you eat it without knowing anything. Though I don't think anyone would ever eat it by mistake」

「Other uses?」

「By making it into a potion. You can make a potion that only damages the undead, and sprinkling that on the ground can keep undead away temporarily」

So it's like Holy Water?

「Also, it can be used as a catalyst to increase the effect of Ghost Magic. I'm an amateur when it comes to knowledge about Ghost Magic though, so it's just something I've heard」

Hmm, there are a set amount of known uses it seems. It seems interesting to try out some experiments with it.

While we were walking and being taught about Ghost Grass, right before we entered the forest, Argen suddenly stopped.

「Argen?」

「Hey, are they really further up here?」

「Growing up there」

「Iya, understood...」

What? Did he suddenly become afraid? But why? There are no sign of enemies.

「?? Going?」

「Iya, but...」

「Urushi」

「On!」

「Uwawawa! Don't push me!」

「On! On!」

「Uwaa!」

Arget got pushed by Urushi's nose, fell forward and rolled forward into the forest.

Ah... Isn't that too excessive? Arget crashed headfirst into a tree.

「Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!」

「All right?」

「Ah, yeah」

「Then, let's go」

「I, I got it!」

Oh? Didn't he say he'd return home already? Making him forcibly enter the forest if he doesn't want to is a bit harsh, you know.

However, this time it was Fran who stopped and tightened her expression. Well, I'm the only one who can see that change in expression though. I also know the reason why Fran stopped.

『Something's there』

「Nn. Probably a monster」

「Eh? There's a monster?」

Raising the level of Sign Perception was worth it. It seems Argen doesn't notice it. Well, his highest detection skill is Crisis Perception at lvl 3 so it can't be helped.

「Towards the colony」

「Is that so...」

I just feel a presense, so I don't know any details. However, if it was a really strong monster we'd be able to feel it's magical power all the way over here easily. It's not an opponent we cannot beat.

「Then, let's go carefully」

「Nn. Urushi」

「Oun!」

「So he can even do things like that huh」

Urushi gave out a quiet howl. Then, a thin layer of shadow covered Fran and Argen. It's a barrier that blocks off their life-signs. It covers the body like armor so you can move with it active. Furthermore, it even shrinks the body a little, a perfect covert mode.

「Going covertly」

「Ou」

「Got it」

We slowly approach the colony of Ghost Grass. When we're approaching the center of the forest we can detect the magical power of the enemy. It's a magical beast of about rank E.

Fran and Urushi won't have any problems, but it might be a hard foe to Argen.

「You should crouch a little」

「Ah, ok」

「Guruu」

We proceeded while protecting Argen. Light is filtering in from ahead of us, from the clearing where the Ghost Grass grew.

「...there」

『Human?』

When we looked into the colony from the shadow of the trees, something was there. It was squatting down in the field of red and black Ghost Grass

and doing something. It seems like it's picking the grass.

However, I do not know if it's a human or not. It's wearing a big robe with a hood covering the head. Although it feels a bit too thin it is human-like in terms of physique.

『Let's take a moment to observe』

(Nn)

「It is slow, it's slow」

The moment when the robed person stood up, we saw it's face. And Argen suddenly gave out a shout.

「Wa!!」

「Who!?!」

Damn! We were noticed!

『Shit! Let's go, Fran!』

「Nn!」

「Ouuuu!!」

Make fast decisions. Rough estimates are not good, you need to be decisive.

『Skeletons have their magic stone in the torso』

「Decide with a single blow」

So, the thing wasn't human. Peeking out from the hood is a white skull.

It's a skeleton. I don't know why a monster is picking Ghost Grass, but since we're noticed we'll take care of it quickly.

「Fu!」

Fran makes a great leap while drawing me, and Urushi runs along the ground like a black wind.

The skeleton starts to move but, too late! We'll make it no matter what!

But, the next action by the skeleton was completely unexpected.

The skeleton didn't pull out a weapon nor chant magic, nor even show any intention to dodge, it just held it's hands above it head.

「Hiyaaa!! Help!!」

『Wait a-! Fran! Urushi! Stop!』

Chapter 65: Bernardo

65 Bernardo

In front of us the skeleton is cowering while trembling.

「Pl, please spare meee〜」

「？」

Fran looks really confused.

「Aah! God of the Netherworld! Please, help me!」

「Um...」

「Hiii!! I'm not tasty! I have no money!」

Somehow, it seems like we are the villains here...

「Oioi, Fran-chan! What happened!?!」

Argen had regained his composure and was approaching.

「? Beat a monster?」

「Noo! Don't kill me!!」

「What the? Argen too is surprised at this guy」

「I was... I was just surprised because it was so sudden」

「Don't beat?」

「This skeleton is someone's creation, so don't beat it」

「Creation?」

「It's kinda like your Urushi. It was created by some Necromancer (Ghost Magic user) somewhere」

「Then, not enemy?」

「Well, if it serves some evil guy it could be an enemy, but just beating it suddenly without asking questions is a bit too much. In some cases that could be considered a crime」

Is that so? If we take down this subordinate, we could be making an enemy of the Necromancer.

I heard from Amanda that Ghost Magic is not considered evil in and of itself, and that the undead created by it are not particularly hated by adventurers either.

Undead that spawn naturally are considered pests, but those that serve a necromancer are treated like a pet or subordinate, much like Urushi who is allowed into towns despite being a magic beast.

「I, I am a good representative?」

Your appearance is completely that of an evil-looking undead though.

「however, this is the first time I've met a talking skeleton」

「Rare?」

「Pretty much so. I guess it was created by a pretty skilled necromancer」

「My master is a genius indeed」

「Oh, it seems you can not only talk but also have a fairly good thinking ability. It really must be an amazing necromancer」

「Bones, what you doing here?」

「Collecting catalyst」

「Ghost Grass is it?」

「Yes. But it seems someone has torn down a lot of it. It's a shame」

It got torn down by someone? Is that about us? No, but if it grows in the wild you can't complain if it's harvested right? There is no sign here saying it's someone's field. That's why we are not evil! Or is that not what you meant?

「Are you growing it here?」

「That's right. Because of the dense magic power it is suitable for cultivation. I just provide fertilizer and water the field」

Aaa... It's completely a cultivated field. It seems like there is no sign because there's a barrier protecting it.

According to the skeleton you would normally have a feeling that you do not want to go here, which is a psychological effect caused by the barrier.

Right as we were about to enter the forest, it must have been that barrier which caused Argen to become frightened all of a sudden. It seems like the barrier is concealed somehow, even my senses didn't pick it up.

「A barrier that rejects people? Then, was it an application of magic of the spiritual control system of Ghost Magic?」

「Exactly」

So it's a type of spiritual control. Thanks to our battle with the demon we have a control immunity skill and Urushi has resistance towards mental skills so I guess we didn't notice when we came here last time.

「But, it seems like something that has penetrated the barrier. Like you people」

「...」

Argen was glancing at Fran, but that can't be helped.

『Fran, it's best if we apologize』

「Sorry」

Fran made a clean and deep bow. Good! Sincerity is important when apologizing.

「What do you mean?」

We took out a bunch of Ghost Grass we had left and put it on the ground.

「Mistook it as growing wild」

「It was you?」

「Returning」

「No, I'm grateful for the feeling but, you should keep that」

「Don't need?」

It seems it's no problem to take some and make potions ordinarily, but it seems the quality his master seeks is not normal.

「Just pick it up」

「Understood. But it's not really such a great prize」

It seems like the quality of Ghost Grass deteriorates slightly when it's touched by the living.

「I was troubled」

「Not using all this?」

「How to say it? Ummm...」

「What?」

「I don't know, I have to ask my master」

Maybe, if his master is concentrating on alchemy he could be really good at that too. It's a bit wasteful, but it's best if we still return this Ghost Grass.

Then, the skeleton asked me with an apologetic tone.

「I cannot carry this much. I'm really sorry but...」

「Got it. Will carry」

It's something we got ourselves into, it can't be helped...

「Thank you!」

「Argen. What will you do?」

「I'll come too. I'm related to the issue after all. Besides, the colony belongs to someone, so I would like to ask if we may keep harvesting some Ghost Grass in the future」

「Then, let's go! Ah, I'm Bernardo by the way」

Name: Bernardo

Race: Skeleton (Skeletal Undead)

Condition: Contract

Status Level 4

HP:40, MP:183, STR:23, END:17, AGI:34, INT:122, MGC:61, DEX:38

Skills

Darkness Resistance LV.4, Sword Arts Lv.1, Harvesting Lv.3, Regeneration Lv.3, Vibration Operation Lv.2, Dark Magic Lv.1, Magic Manipulation

Titles

none

Explanation: A dead body which moves through magic. Many serve a necromancer. They generally have a low intelligence, but possess regeneration and will keep moving until its Magic Stone is destroyed or until its magical power is cut off. Threat Level F. Magic Stone position: Torso

For a skeleton this guy has high intelligence huh. Magical power too. Even though the explanation said they have low intelligence. Is it not just a skeleton after all?

「I am Argen」

「I'm Fran. This is Urushi」

「On!」

「Hou... A Darkness Wolf huh?」

「Know of it?」

「I have only received knowledge about it from Master」 (TL: Meaning he has never seen one before)

Bernardo looks closer at Urushi. Although it's just a slightly special-made skeleton it seems Urushi is a bit afraid. Well, he wins overwhelmingly in combat strength though.

I think we've walked for about an hour. In the middle of a wilderness, just north of the forest, there is a small hut.

「We're here」

A small hut at a prairie, that's what comes to mind.

It's not at all big, and certainly doesn't look like the home of a powerful necromancer.

「Ragged」

「My master does not care much about such things」

「Fufufu. That's right」

「!」

「Guruu!」

There was a sudden voice from behind. There was no premonition, even though I have the detection skills active and we even have Urushi here!

『I couldn't feel him!』

(Nn)

(Oun!)

Fran and Urushi are ready to go at any time. I also start charging up with magic power.

「Wh, Who is it?」

「When asking a person's name, is it not appropriate to name oneself first?」

「M, My apologies. I am Argen, an adventurer」

「Fran. Who are you?」

「Sorry. He's my master」

So, this is the necromancer in question!

If we had encountered him without knowing anything, we would have definitely attacked!

A dusky black robe. A multitude of skull-themed accessories. Morbidly white skin. His face was mostly shadowed by the robe, and all I could see was a wide smile that seemed to reach all the way to his ears. I think it's a man, but I can't be certain.

He's super suspicious. He really seems like an evil necromancer.

The necromancer introduces himself loudly while his rope flutters in the wind.

「Fuhahahahaha!! My name is Jean Dovey! The one who shall become the supreme lord of the undead!!」

I really don't want to be involved with this one. I want to just have Fran turn around and leave the way we came. This guy was that really annoying loudmouth type of guy...

Chapter 66: Jean Dovey

Chapter 66: Jean Dovey

「Fuhahahahahahaha!! My name is Jean Dovey! The supreme lord of the undead!」

It was a suspicious person in a slightly inaccessible atmosphere shouting a monologue. If there's even an incident, there is no doubt this guy would be really suspected to have caused it.

Name: Jean Dovey

Age: 49

Race: Demonkin

Job: Dark Guru

Condition: normal

Status : Level 45

HP:180, MP:616, STR:91, END:93, AGI:119, INT:179, MGC:226, DEX:123

Skills

Darkness Resistance Lv6, Chant Abbreviation Lv4, Appraisal Lv8, Sign Concealment LvMAX, Kin Summoning Lv8, Staff Arts Lv4, Ghost Operation Lv8, Ghost Magic LvMAX, Dagger Arts Lv2, Compounding Lv7, Poison Resistance Lv3, Poison Knowledge Lv7, Fire Magic Lv3, Netherworld Magic Lv5, Medicinal Herbs Knowledge Lv4, Dark Magic

Lv5, Absolute Sign Concealment, Ghost Rampage, Friend of the Dead, Magic Manipulation, Magic Power Boost

Unique Skills

Soul Eye

Titles

Scales of Assassination, Undead Creator, Slaughterer, Necromancer, King of the Dead

Equipment

Dragon Bone Staff, Dead King's Robe, Demon's Shoes, Bracelet of Death, Substitution Bracelet

Absolute Sign Concealment? That certainly explains why I didn't notice him.

Regardless, he's strong. His physical status isn't that high but magical status and skills are considerable. He is just a little weaker than Klimt, the Guild Master of Alessa.

And this guy is the necromancer huh. Being able to completely hide himself from detection means he can force you to fight only his undead in battle. I'd prefer if we don't have to fight this guy.

「Are you a demonkin perhaps?」

Argen's voice sounds quite terrible.

「Hohou! So you know?」

「Yes, you can glimpse the horns at the top under the robe, and those claws and fangs. Also, pure white skin is another characteristic of demonkin」

「You've studied quite well. Yes! I am a demonkin indeed」

「Well, it's rare to see one around here, so I was surprised」

「There are not many of us demonkin on this continent, that's true. We mostly live on the eastern continent」

Are demonkin a type of human? I am a little worried, but it might be that my common sense is a bit wierd, like how I thought about Ghost Magic. Anyways, it doesn't seem like demonkin are all enemies of humans at least.

「So, where are you guys from? It seems like Bernardo has brought you here huh」

「Yes, they seem to have a problem」

「Hm? Oh well, let's talk in the laboratory for the time being. Come along」

「Everyone, please come this way」

Is that cabin the laboratory? What should we do. I don't think he's an enemy but...

Fran and Argen are already following him, so I guess I'll just pay attention.

『Urushi, pay attention you too』

(On!)

「Hahaha! Welcome to our abysmal institute of darkness and death!」

He's acting extravagantly, but, the laboratory... Maybe the outside is just camouflage and the inside as a state-of-the-art institution with tons of equipment? NOPE!

It's wider than I thought but that's about it. Other than that, it was just a normal mountain cabin like I had thought.

「Laboratory?」

Fran seems to have the same question.

「Hahaha! Since my experiments are often accompanied by danger, the main body of the laboratory is in the basement so that the surrounding area will not be damaged. Do you want to see it? Fufufu, let's say that curiosity killed the dragon. Kukuku!」

I see. Certainly, I can feel magical power from underground. What Jean says is true. On one hand I want to see, on the other I don't... It's the laboratory of a necromancer. It must be like a slaughterhouse! Corpses, one after another.

「Here you go」

Bernardo is arranging tea cups at the table. He was wearing an apron before I knew it. It gives off a surprisingly human vibe.

「Thanks?」

Wow, looks poisonous... The liquid in the tea cups is a reddish purple. Is that really tea? Or does it only look like poison? However, Jean took a cup and downed it all at once.

「Mm, this excellent fragrance. Exotic taste. It truly is the best」

Really? Well, the Crisis Detection isn't reacting, and we have Abnormal Condition Resistance too.

「It's ok」

Fran gently returned the cup to the tray after drinking the mysterious tea. I'll let her eat something to get the taste out of her mouth later.

「So, Bernardo, what happened?」

「Well, the thing is...」

Bernardo explains the circumstances to Jean. Uwaa~, he's looking this way.

「I see. Is there a lot of Ghost Grass?」

「You can't use this?」

Fran takes out the Ghost Grass, but Jean shakes his head.

「It's useless. If a living being has touched Ghost Grass even once their life force will contaminate it. It's not a problem for normal use but it's not useable to my purposes」

It's no good huh.

「Well, it can't be helped. I don't own the land that field is on, and I hadn't even put up a sign or anything」

「If you're willing to overlook it we would truly be grateful」

「How about making the Ghost Grass you guys picked up be a present?」

「Really?」

「Really... BUT!」

「Uh」

Jean suddenly shouted loudly and started grinning. Hey, you even shocked Fran! This guy's behaviour is really hard to predict.

「To be sure, it was something I cultivated right?」

「Nn」

「There's no way there won't be any compensation right? Naturally, just lowering your head won't be enough」

Aah, it's this kind of development? Well then, what will he want. Money? Or some medicine or material for an experiment? Maybe something we have to fight to obtain.

Fran and Argen are looking at Jean waiting, and the tension in the lab is high.

「Shall I have this girl here accept a request of mine?」

「Request?」

「Yes. Of course, I'll pay you the fee. How about 200 000 Gorudo?」

「Content?」

「Of course, it's not compulsory. Even if you are obliged to do it, it's annoying to make you do it」

「Um, what is it you want me and Fran-jouchan to do?」

「As for you, nothing」

「Nothing...」

「Yes. You're not needed」

「I,Is that so?」

「Therefore, you go home. Even if I sit here, it's disturbing」

So, it's convenient if Argen just goes home? If it comes down to a run-in with Jean it's probably better if he's not here.

「Argen, bye bye」

「Even jouchan!? Okay, I got it. Then let me be rude for just a moment, just once」

「What?」

「She is still an adventurer, please make a formal request at the guild」

「Fufufu. Got it. If I do not, will the guild be causing trouble?」

「Well, probably」

Hou, Argen-kun, you played a good hand there. With this, Jean cannot ask something impossible of Fran.

「I understand. Since I'm an adventurer」

E? Seriously? I didn't see that coming at all. I cannot imagine him walking through mountains and dungeons at all.

「Is that so?」

「Really?」

「Yes. A Rank B adventurer!」

He took out a silver card from his pocket while saying so. True enough, he seems to be a rank B adventurer. Ain't he a senior huh?

「Then, I'll be leaving it to you, ojouchan」

Argen said so and left. Still, it's good that we got the promise to periodically buy Ghost Grass.

「Well then, before moving on to the main subject...」

「Nn?」

「Now we have no hindrances in the way」

Mu. That smile looks really evil. Is he suddenly revealing his true nature? Crisis Detection isn't reacting at all!

「That sword」

He points at me. Perhaps his target is me? Are you going to say you want to be offered me or what?

「Now, don't you mind talking anymore?」

「!」

「Kukuku, I understand! Also, the soul that lives within that sword! You can speak with Telepathy, can you not! Now, show me your true nature! Kahahahahaha!!」

Chapter 67: CAUSE FOUND

CAUSE FOUND

(A/N)

I've made an error! I'm sorry.

(TL: I have no idea what error he's talking about)

Have my thoughts come true? What does it mean?

「.....」

「My eyes can't be deceived, my skill 'Soul Eye' is a skill that can target the soul! I'm looking at the soul directly! Appraisal blocking is meaningless! Fuhahahaha!」 (TL: wow, this guy is annoying)

Seriously? It's an appraisal skill that can't be blocked? Gallas had a similar skill, magic eye skills were scary! Damn! What will I do? Should I keep my mouth shut? No, I shouldn't hurry.

Jean nods with his hand on his chin, while the tension is increasing over here. 「I saw some rare things! Intelligent weapon for one. Performance is sufficient, and if I can borrow your power, my long cherished wish will be well within my grasp!」

『Wish?』

「Oh, so you finally speak. Sword, it's a strange experience to talk with a speaking sword! It's funny but pleasant!」

『Is that so.』 Wow, it's tiring when the tension is too high.

「Well, I'll have to give you an explanation of the request so you guys can help me.」

Hmm? I feel like I don't want anything. Simply, he just wanted to know if I could really talk?

『Hmm, you know I am an intelligent weapon, is there nothing else?』

「What do you mean?」

『No, I mean, do you want me?』

「Can I have you if I want you?」

『Never! I will not give myself over.』

「If you don't want to give yourself to me then I don't really have any interest.」

『Do you really not want me?』

「Well... I don't need you.」

It feels like a lie, but he's not lying at all. It seems he really isn't interested. I really do not need him to be serious. Well, I feel a bit frustrated, but I feel more relieved.

「Are you satisfied? Shall I explain the request? Kukkuku.」

What kind of impossibly difficult demands are you going to throw at us? Thoughts of human experiments and assassinations are swimming in my head.

「The request is to aid in my exploration!」

It was an ordinary request. Huh? Really? 『Exploration? Where are you going?』

「Well, I'm glad you would like to help me, the location is not far, and with me, you can arrive in less than 30 minutes.」

The place isn't that far, I hope it is not a dungeon. Some say there is a dungeon around a field near here. But Jean has betrayed my expectations before. 『Are we aiming to go to a dungeon with a den of the undead inside?』

「Huh?」

No, no, if there is a dungeon in that area, we haven't heard any information from Alessa. What does this mean? 『I did not hear this information in Alessa』

「Of course you didn't. After all, I'm the only one that knows.」

『Did you hide the information?』

「Well, there isn't an obligation of reporting it. Because disaster could occur, reporting is recommended, but it's not that bad even if we don't.」

「News to me.」

「If you report it you'll receive a reward, so most would report, but the location of the dungeon isn't exactly in this country, rather it's not of any country, so there's no need to report.」

「?」 (Fran)

A place not belonging to any country? Is it a buffer zone or something?

「Fufufu. You're troubled.」

『Can you tell me the location immediately?』 No, maybe I don't want to know.

「Well, let me tell you the history of discovering that dungeon!」

「Hmm」 (Fran)

「Ask!」

『Impossible!』

As a result, Jean spoke vainly, sprinkled with gestures. 「About ten years ago appearances of the undead were frequently reported in the area. In the village of Neel, somehow, the sightings of undead were higher than other demon beasts.」

We heard something about that from Agen. So the ghost grass has been useful.

「Originally, as a necromancer, I came to survey the area. I continued my research steadily, scolding my heart that seemed to break sometimes, I made efforts through sweat and blood.」

「Ah-」 (Fran) Fran, you don't have to applaud!

「As a result, I made a big discovery! I found several strange spells of magical reservoirs! Fahahaha! It will be amazing!」

「Magical reservoirs?」

「It's a phenomenon where the magical powers of the natural world accumulate in one place by various factors, and a beast is born from stagnant pools of magical powers.」

「Ho.」

「However, attributes that resemble ghost magic has been added to the magical pond I had discovered. Of course, it's not that there was no magical unbalance among the puddle's attributes. Volcanos' magical reservoirs which have a strong fire attribute means it's easy to create demon beasts of the fire attribute, just as water attributes are most likely to be born around water.」

「Then, from ghost attribute reservoirs, the undead are born?」

That's why there's a lot of undead.

「Yes, I guess it's pretty funny though.」

「What's wrong?」

「This is just a plain, I've examined records from ancient times but there's no site of an old battlefield nor underground tomb. I investigated the vegetation and plant life, but the factors that might strengthen ghost attributes are missing. So why is there a magical reservoir with ghost attributes.」

「Well?」

『Hm?』 If you ask me, the big question is why?

「Possible factor?」

Jean suddenly got up and walking around with wild gestures, making the tension in the room grow. 「Someone is deliberately doing so! Well! I initially thought so, for example, it might be part of military operations of the Raids kingdom of the North and the kingdom of Belio.”」

『Was that wrong?』

「In the first place, it's impossible to artificially create a magic reservoir and add more attributes and the likes. I haven't heard of any succeeding but there are few studying.」

「I see.」

「Then I examined if there was anything in common with magic reservoirs.」 Jean looks back at the bag and points to it. It seems like when a detective is showing off a guess.

「Something?」

「Well, before that, do you know the existence of floating islands that travel around?」

It's not that I know, but I've seen them. In fact, I could be challenged to land on one, but that seems impossible.

「There's something that falls from the floating islands sometimes around here, it's a plant growing in the upper part of the island, or a rock, it varies from time to time.」

『Is that what causes the undead?』

「What a person you are... it is. The magical pool of the ghost attribute and the position of where the objects fell were all the same.」

Wow, if I said the conclusion earlier the tension would have fallen. I bet he wanted to announce it himself. I sit on a chair and spoke frantically. No, this was useless.

「So, because I felt the island was suspicious, I went up there, and I found a dungeon!」

I have completely lost my motivation. Well, I wish it were quiet at least.

「The dungeon is a dungeon of mainly the undead, so the whole floating island is enveloped in the ghost attribute and is sticking to everything, including the objects that fall as well.」

「Floating island a dungeon?」

「Whether it was a dungeon core born in the sky and picked up by a nearby floating island or a dungeon core that occurred inside the floating island, as far as I know, that is the only floating island dungeon.」

Dungeon cores not only appear on the ground, but also in the sky? Does the core that was created in the air fall and crack? No matter how much the core is protected by barriers, if it falls from high altitude it will not come out unscathed.

「There's no such thing, as the strange power seems to work and the core will not move from the spawned point unless there's a special reason. If it is

in the air it will be left there, so that even if it's swallowed by water it does not move.」

「Reason?」

「For example, if the core on a floating island moves like this, though it's an old record, it seems that there has been a dungeon core inside a gigantic golem that turned into a moving dungeon. It will be an exception, do you understand?」

Truly a mysterious object created by the chaotic god himself. There's still so many mysteries.

「How did you get there?」

「If you become a magician there's various ways.」

『Does the floating island not belong to any country?』 He said such a thing a little while ago? Is it not the jurisdiction of the kingdom of Kranz that we are in now.

「It's because of the migratory route of the island that a country can lay claim on it, right now it's just a little over the Raids kingdom and the Belio kingdom. So it doesn't yet belong to anyone. Even the landing troops can not be sent and so the existence of the dungeon is not cleared up.」

「I see.」

「But it's a nasty thing, the dungeon is quite dangerous. It's also a golden egg. If you know that there is a dungeon on a floating island where there is little danger of those on the ground, you will get it by any means possible, even if it causes military actions」

『Is it okay that we go there without permission?』

「I have to get it out of the way.」

Do you mean it's dangerous?

「Well, I will say again, will you accept the request? We will go to the dungeon of the floating island and carry out a search of the inside.」

『How long do you consider exploring? Do you aim for capture or something else?』

「Of course, my aim is capturing. If you attack the dungeon and capture it, it would douse the fire between nations.」

Certainly if you destroy the dungeon core and get rid of the dungeon there will be no war over it. Huh? Is he actually a nice guy? Such a stupid... !

「But, if it seems difficult, capture a certain beast to return to the ground」

『Capture a beast?』

「What kind?」

「The beast's name is Dead Eater. Undead yet it eats the undead, it's a demon with a threat level B. Even if you can not capture it in the current , if you add the ghost beast as your subordinate you can make future progress.」

『Threat level B?』

「Originally I was going to use a potion of ghost grass to advance my capture but if you are as skilled as I think you guys are, it's more secure than potions or anything like them.」

「I'm fired up.」 (Fran)

Well, what to do? Danger is dangerous (TL: no duh). However, it seems to be worth it. Besides, going to a floating island is a big deal

「What will you do?」

(I want to go to the dungeon.) (Fran)

That's right. I do too. Besides, it's an unspoiled dungeon, isn't it? It's also great to visit a floating island. As a result of consulting Fran, we decided to accept the request.

「Okay! Let's do our best! FAHAHAHAHA! It's becoming fun!」

(A/N)

It's about the end of the year.

The year-end and New Year holidays are full of busy season and plans at work.

I would like to continue updating every day as much as possible

I do not know how far I can go.

Chapter 68: UNFORESEEN INSIGHT

UNFORESEEN INSIGHT

We decided to take Jean's request.

「Well, let's introduce ourselves again! My name is Jean Dovey, the one who faced the darkness, looked into the abyss of wisdom and is the overlord of the immortal!」(では、改めて自己紹介させてもらおう! 我が名はジャン・ドゥービー。闇に蠢きし不死なる者たちの主にして、英知の深淵を臨みし者 TL: this is a little confusing, I'm getting a whole bunch of different translations.)

Well, while he is a necromancer, is he also a researcher? It somehow feels as if I'm getting used to Jean's actions. Unfortunately.

「I am Fran. Black cat family. I like curry and pancakes. This is Urushi.」

「Ou!」(Urushi)

「I'm seeing it for the first time but it seems it'd make a good companion if it was undead.」(He's talking about making Urushi undead and obey him)

「Oun!」

「No good.」

「Hahahahaha.」

『It's not a lie nor a joke that I am an intelligent weapon. The name Fran gave me is Teacher.』

「Ho, your name is Teacher?」 Ah! Is it impossible for him to read the mood? 「It's an eccentric name, it is! It's good, I love it!」

It was a funny one.

「Nn.」 (Fran)

The two people shook hands. However, I will negotiate so that the reward for the request will be changed slightly.

「Fewer rewards,」 (Fran)

「Why?」 (Jean)

『Instead, we want the magic stones.』

「Magic stone? Is that a good enough payment?」

『Yes?』

「Well, well, what are you going to use it for?」

『Well... ...』 As expected, he asked.

「Hmm... ... I see, I see.」 Jean brings his face closer to me. Being watched feels terrible!

『What? What is it?』

「The magic stone's value.....」

『!』

「Maybe you can convert the magic stone into an energy of some sort?」

「What do you know?」 (Fran)

「Guru」 (Urushi.)

「Kuku, with my Soul Eyes secrets are meaningless. You want a magic stone so you have some use for it. It's a mystery but there can only be one answer!」

Wow, what vain thinking! It's completely perfect! In the first place, can he use such an appraising skill?

「You look frustrated, did I hit the mark?」

『So?』

「Fahahaha, it was a joke, but it seems to be the right answer!」

It's over! I've been caught by his trap perfectly.

「Goa....」

Urushi, don't look at me with eyes like you're surprised. You have wide eyes too!

『Damn!』

I've gotten stuck. I brush my hair back in my mind. You guessed a crazy thing! No, I may be influenced by Jean. Perhaps it hasn't done any damage to Fran's education. I might kill Jean if he laughs like "hahahaha" again.

「But if you're a magic sword that eats magic stones, that's fun. And... perhaps you don't only gain powers but skills as well?」

『!』

Hey, do you really understand? There's no surprise in your voice anymore. Rather, for reference, I would like to ask why.

『Why do you think so?』

「Is that actually right? Hahahaha, truly?」

『I never thought you could see through it.』

「Surprise.」 (Fran)

「It's simple. The first thing I noticed was your skills, there were too many similarities, so I guessed that you could share skills with her.」

『I see.』

「That means that some skills are from your skill, but how could you have such a versatile skill? Even if you're legendary, how many skills could you have? I thought there must have been a way for you to grow your skill.」

Everything is being seen through.

「In addition, the composition of the skill is somewhat funny, so you can infer that you didn't grow your skills through natural means.」

『Huh? The skill composition is weird?』

「What do you mean?」 (Fran)

「Did you not notice it yourselves? For example, it's weird to have abnormality tolerance.」

Normally, in order to acquire abnormality tolerance, seven or more lower abnormality tolerance skills such as poison resistance and paralysis resistance are required, and it seems that the total of all skill levels must exceed 40. However, we only have poison resistance: lv.3; drowsiness tolerance: lv 1; disease tolerance: lv 3 and paralysis resistance: lv 2. Well, it does seem strange.

Besides, although Dark magic is only lv 2, I have Darkness magic. Even if I shouldn't have it yet, I do have it. There's also no swordsman, but swordmanship is there. The more I looked, the more the skills seemed weird.

「Therefore, I thought that you are acquiring skills with something else, though I thought that you could have taken them away with Skill Taker, but it feels a bit unnatural.」

His reasoning is perfect! No, I guess if one had a bit a knowledge and insight they could probably figure that out as well. If so, I have to be careful with people with magic eyes in the future.

Well, it can't be helped if this happens. I decided to tell Jean everything. I asked him if he could help us with collecting magic stones if we helped with exploring.

「Hahahaha! Good idea, it sounds interesting. That is, do you have to have the magical stone in order to absorb the skill from a magical beast that possesses that skill?」(TL: god, that was a frustrating sentence, anyone have any better ideas? つまり、君たちが持っていないスキルを所持する魔獣の魔石を入手し、師匠君に吸収させればいいのかというのだろうか?)

「Nn.」

「Please assist me. I will help you two onto a large boat! Huhahahaha!」
(TL: Where did this boat come from? 大船に乗ったつもりでいるがいい! ED: Colloquial equivalent of 'I will help you get a big haul' maybe?)

Uwaa, this guy is suspicious, but the fact that he's a necromancer is authentic. The dungeon heading over us now is the undead dungeon. Some confidence can be expected.

「Do you know there's an evil spirit with skills like yours?」

「Where is it?」(Fran)

「Ou?」(Urushi)

「There's a high possibility that it is also on the floating island. Because it is the evil spirit of a demon beast!」

『Wow. What kind of evil spirit?』

「Huh, do you know the evil spirit called a memetic spirit?」

「Don't?」(Fran)

Jean laughs and shakes his head. Urushi is shaking his neck fur in the same way. I also do not know.

「As the name implies, it's a demon that mimics a wall and attacks those who approach. Well, it's not that strong so it won't be a problem if you don't notice the surprise attack.」

『What kind of skills does it possess?』

「It has mimicry skills as the name suggests. Its other interesting skill is appraisal disturbance.」

Appraisal disturbance seems to be a skill that doesn't allow one to be appraised accurately. Unlike appraisal blocking, it only weakens it. If the level goes up, lower leveled appraisals can be invalidated.

『Will we have our appraisal cut off?』

「A skill with good appraisal disturbance?」

「No, it's different! It's preemptive to this point!」

『Hey. Well then why did you talk?』

「Because I wanted to talk!」

(TL: The previous three lines are hella confusing, help. 『いや、俺達には鑑定遮断があるんだが?』 「鑑定妨害が良いスキル?」 「いや、違う! ここまでは前振りだ!」)

「... ...」 (Fran)

「Ku.」 (Urushi)

『Oh, I see.』

「It's still a story that doesn't not matter.」 (so it matters a little)

Sometimes among memetic spirits there seems to be a mixture of evil spirits, like a supernatural species, a spoofed spirit. (So sometimes there's a fake spirit that acts like a mimicry spirit) Since it is threat level D, it seems to be quite strong. But because it's difficult to distinguish from a real mimicry spirit, it seems weird to put them in a different group.

「And this disguising spirit is the beast I recommend for you!」

「Why?」 (Fran)

「Well, as the name implies, it possesses a unique skill for camouflaging, which doesn't simply preventing appraisals, but allows you to show false information at a whim.」

『So it could purposely make someone come to a false conclusion?』

「Oh, that's the most fearsome part of the skill, it's far more troubling than just blocking.」

Appraisal blocking is a skill that prevents opponents from finding out information about you. In other words, the only appraisal result the opponent gets would be whatever wasn't blocked. The information that could not be obtained remains.

But what about camouflage? By releasing fake information, the possibility that the appraisal was prevented seems low, and if one believes the information they got, it will be easier to surprise them. In other words, you will be able to stay ahead in the war of information.

「And it's possible to combine it with appraisal blocking. After you block a little information and let the false information slip, the false information seems that much more believable! I think it's a very terrible combination.」
(Jean)

「In addition, appraisal camouflage is a unique skill so it will also be effective against most magic eyes. Most of the skills in the demon eye system can be prevented with this!」 (TL: I think I previously translated the

demon eye system as the magic eye system but it seems they are two different things.)(Jean I'm assuming...)

「I want it.」 (Fran)

『Oh, I absolutely want it.』

「Ou!」 (Urushi)

「Fahahahaha, leave it to me. In the last exploration I already found where a mimetic spirit is!」

「Oh great.」 (Fran)

『Truly someone we can rely on.』

「Ou Ou Ou!」 (Urushi)

「Hahahaha! Don't be afraid to speak the truth, don't be shy!」

No seriously, I wasn't expecting that. Also, Jean might be a little cool. It looks like he's seriously shining. You may not be accustomed to being praised by people, but lift yourself by yourself. (LT: I guess he means that if you're be uplifted by praise, don't let it be other people's praise? idk)

『Ah! Too bright!』

「Oh!」 (Fran)

「Ooo」 (Urushi)

「Fahahahahaha!」

(ED: Wew, lots of comments to the previous chapter, always good to see. If you catch anything we missed or have any feedback, don't hesitate to let us know! Helps us improve both this chapter and others in the future!)

Chapter 69: GHOSTS

GHOSTS

The next day, we went down the stairs. Last night I was asked to stay at Jean's cottage...Well, the night when the mind is not so sharp brings a morning of refreshness.

Occasionally I could hear a mysterious groaning voice, explosions from underground and sounds of people moving outside my room. How does Fran sleep so well! I am glad she is a heavy sleeper though.

Breakfast is a fried purple egg and a black-green soup, and there was also a pale blue milk-like drink and fried mystery meat. The rest also had mystery meat and blue milk.

It seems that the taste is not bad, but it's still scary. Fortunately it did not cause an abnormal state, but is it really okay? I confirmed it with Fran and Ursi about 5 times.

「Come here.」

After that, Bernardo guided us to a stairway so we could get down to the basement, where the self-proclaimed laboratory was. No, when you get down to the basement, there were plenty of facilities. It was rude to call this self-proclaimed.

「You seem surprised at the true form of our laboratory.」

『It's pretty amazing.』

「Cool.」

「Ou.」

There was a huge magic circle drawn in the middle of the floor, tools like a sickle and a cane were hung on the wall and instruments like flasks and mortars were left in a cluttered mess. Poisonous medicinal herbs and ore sat in pots and baskets, and there was even a big kettle with a strange liquid boiling inside.

How nice! I would definitely call this a laboratory, it feels like a workshop. It has an atmosphere like a secret laboratory of a necromancer. I want to try all sorts of teasing!

「What's there?」

「Do you mind?」

「Smell of blood.」

「Ha ha ha, as expected of a beastman, your nose seems to be good. This is the room where dead bodies are kept. It has strengthened walls for the more dangerous experiments I did a little while ago!」

It sounds casual, like some sort of corpse store. Truly like a necromancer. Did you die? Are we alright?

「Well, let's prepare. You guys have dimensional storages, so can you bring a variety of items?」

「Leave it to me.」

Should we carry luggage? Well, our odds of survival will rise, so I will bring as much as I can.

「First of all, with this and this, Oh, I will bring this too, that is also necessary, I wonder, I will bring this and this, anyway I am not carrying it. Then, with this and that -」

『Isn't that too much?』

A small mountain was made on the floor in a matter of seconds. From potion-like objects to strange instruments, there's a lot of variation. Inside, there were amusing skeleton-shaped lamps, pendants that simulated zombies, and tools that I would hesitate to even touch.

「Sniff」

『Those, Urushi! Stop it. Do not know what that does! 』

「Kuu ...」 I can not smile because it could be seriously cursed.

『It can't be helped, I'm going to put half of it in. 』

「Hmm.」

While listening to Jean saying who knows what, we finished stowing the items in about an hour.

「We're ready!」

『Is it finally time to start? 』

「Finally.」

「Yes, let's go.」

We left the laboratory with Jean leading us. The question is, how do we get to the floating island?

『What is the way to go to Floating Island? 』

「Teleportation?」

「Hey, I'm a necromancer, I don't use magic like that!」

Does that mean there is a technique of flying in the sky for evil magic or nether witchcraft?

「Well?」

「Fahahaha. Well keep watching! You'll know soon! Bernardo!」

「Yes!」

「Are you ready?」

Where did you come from? B. When did you get here?

「Bernardo will guide you to the back of the laboratory. There is a magic circle about 10 meters in diameter, and magic stones were arranged on top of it in a regular pattern.」

「Well! It is good!」

「Thank you for the hard work.」

「Let's show it at once! Pay attention to the essence of my magic!」

Jean who screamed so, crossed his hands in front of himself and pushed up towards the bag and the sky. He began to recite spells without notice.

It is perfectly a behavior of someone else (Tl: it said Kitami, but who knows who that is), but now it suited Jean well. I was watching from the yards and I had no sense of incongruity at all.

「Cool」

「Ou!」

Well, I can't deny it. Continuously spiraling while saying an aria, strike a pose, a spiraling magical spirit swirls around Jean as he continues casting spells, it's certainly like a cool magician.

「----」

「----」

Even so, it takes a long time. He has been chanting for about 3 minutes now. It has this long of a chant.

And after another 3 minutes.

「---- Overspec · Undead · Summoning!」

Along with a powerful cry, the magic circle lights up in jet black light. It is such an overwhelming sight that the black light fountain is shining vigorously from the ground.

「Kahahaha, please come out, my servant! Your name is Andy!」

「Goo-san!」

『Wow! What is that!』

「Great!」

「Guruuuu!」

We saw the foot that appeared to crawl out of the magic circle, we were surprised. Fran's eyes shone brightly, but Urushi raised his guard. I was also a bit wary.

When the ceremony ended, the skeleton Jean summoned exceeded the magic circle's length of 10 meters. It's probably a Wyvern. Not the Lesser Wyvern that I fought before, but the larger, more powerful genuine Wyvern.

「Ha ha ha How is Kuhahahagahogo ho! (TL: okay, what? Lol did he interrupt himself to laugh?) How is it! Isn't it amazing!」

His heart was throbbing, he was sweating and his breathing was rough - I guess it was more tiring than I'd thought... But the result is worth bragging about. It's so cool, and has such a strong magical power...

Race name: Skeleton · Wyvern ·

Overspec: Ghost Story: Monster Lv 30

Condition: Contract, weak point relaxation

HP: 1034

MP: 433

Foot strength: 539

Physical strength: 551

Agility: 531

Intelligence: 10

Magical power: 93

Devices: 55

Skills:

Threat: Lv 6, Covert: Lv 3, Appraisal Disturbance: Lv 3, Depression: Lv 6, Reproduction: LvMax, Magical Barrier: Lv 5, Vengeance, Poison Invalid.

The status far exceeds Lesser Wyvern. Also, I have one skill I have not seen.

『A Ghost? I haven't seen this before...』

Ghost Spirit: Complex skills of superior evil spirits who have a strong grudge.

Due to the influence of appraisal disturbance, the effect is not understood at the same time.

「The evil spirit is a synthetic skill that combines several skills. The effects include Flight, Magic use, Physical tolerance, Mental status resistance, Grudge conversion, a status increase, Light magic resistance, Recovery magic obstruction and Purification. It becomes a skill that combines weak points of necromancy.」

Indeed, it is a skill that combines various effects. It would be difficult to fight.

「Although it has beneficial effects such as flying, it can be said that it is a double-edged sword that also increases its weaknesses. Though we can reduce the weaknesses with our magic, worry is unavoidable.」

「Weakness reduction?」

『Now that you mention it, that's how it is. The name is also something strange. Overspec?』

「Well, it is the effect of the technique called Overspec, undead summoning」

It seems to be a technique you can learn at Lv 5 of the Netherworld magic. Is not it a high level technique! The effect also has a tremendous thing.

Undead's HP, MP, strength, physical strength, agility of +200, play Lv + 5, weak points relief, unparalleled performance which is summarized by this technique. Instead, it seems that the undead summoned through it will simply disappear after 24 hours. That's still strong. If the weaknesses of the ghosts are reduced, it will be enough for defense.

No, despite the insecurity of defense, I want the skills of ghosts. If equipped only at the time of movement, you can move by flight.

『Can you get Ghost skills if you go to the dungeon?』

「Do you want to be have ghost skills?」

『Oh, it's the flight that's in there that I want.』

「If it is then, you better absorb this.」

Jean takes out things like jewels from the bosom. It was a special magic tool that can summon the dead spirit who is the Lord of the magic stone by incorporating the Devil's Manastone. It seems to be called a summons ball.

「I will give you a magic stone in this」

『I think it's okay, I think it's a fairly powerful manastone.』

「It's fine, it's a demonic stone called Berserker Ghoul, but it's always a troublesome devil in a frenzied state. It attacks regardless of your friend or friend. Take it as if you have something to use Oh, but let us serve you guys! 」

So, I decided to have the magical stone and to be thankful. I will return this debt in the dungeon.

『Fran!』

「Ou!」

Oh!

I will cut a magic stone thrown into the air by the Fran.

It's been a long time since I've had such a powerful magic stone. And I get a ghost skill, a decaying fang: Lv 1,. The decaying rot makes the partner rot, that is, it seems to be a corrosive attack.

And, vampire skills. Lucky. I got a means of flying with this. I might even be able to go to floating island by myself.

『I will equip it immediately』

「Okay!」

Devil skill set!

『Oh, oh?』

「Fluffy」

What is this feeling. As Fran says, it's fluffy and strange. I can see something. warm. It sounds like a sunny day Oh, I feel good.

「This is! Dude, hey, Teacher, you're dangerous! Get rid of your evil skill now!」

『Wow?』

「Gow Gow Gow!」

Something like a dog is barking. It would have happened to be towards?

「Are you listening? Get rid of your evil skills!」

『Nanka, like rising into heaven -』

「Master please!」

Ah, pleasure -.



Ah, it was dangerous. I was literally ascending.

「Are you okay?」

『Oh, I'm fine.』

Apparently it seems that strong grudge skill is necessary, as its name suggests, in order to control evil skills. I do not have such a thing, evil skill set → no grudge → There is nothing to remember → Buddha! That's what it seems to have become.

Fran should be like that as well, but it seems that it did not become a compulsory Buddha visit due to the connection between the body and the soul, instead it just became a state of trance.

In the case of myself, because the soul is contained in the instrument called the sword, the power to hold back to this world seems to be weak.

Evil skill is sealed.

「Well, I got interesting data! Thank you!」

『I almost died! 』

「Ha ha ha, I got a valuable information, is that not enough?」

Damn. In this case, he is seriously talking about his bad feeling.

『Hey. enough. Let's start quickly.』

「Then, get on Andy」

「Hmm」

「Because there are so many places to grab, hold on where ever you want」

Well, it's a bone. Fran is caught between the wings and holds the spine tightly. Urushi returned to her shadow. Jean is sitting on his neck.

「Are you ready?」

「Nn」

「Well, let's go, fly away, Andy!」

「Gowohoa!」

Andy started flapping with Jean's shouting. Thinking normally, there is no way to fly with the wings of the bone, but Wyvern 's giant ignored gravity and flew into the sky. It is an effect of the ghost skill.

「Fuha! Aim is the undead's dungeon!」

「Hmm」

Chapter 70: ANDY

ANDY

Jean called out Andy and he is truly capable.

Beyond the extraordinary altitude we have gone beyond a bit, it will rise with Gungun(TL: I believe this is a sound effect for fast, it appears later as well). Moreover, thanks to the magical barriers, coldness and wind pressure are also reduced, and comfort is also comfortable.

「So high!」 (Fran)

「Fahahaha, those who live on the ground are like garbage!」 (Jean)

「Yeah, trash!」 (Fran)

『Stop saying garbage. Ants is cuter!』 I only remembered later that calling them ants is still pretty mean...

「I see it!」 (Jean)

As we passed through the clouds, an island of huge rocks appeared in front of us, floating in the blue sky. The sight was honestly overwhelming.

『Ooooooooo! Awesome!』

「Nn.」 (Fran)

「Ou ou.」 (Urushi)

It's a homerun! I feel touched. (TL: roughly translated to "It's Rapes! Yeah, I was touched!" but that felt wrong in more ways than one, lol. So I used a

couple more sites to help and came out with homerun. Also, I think it was a reference? ラピュ○だ！)

Andy keeps flapping towards the island unaffected.

『Are we going in now?』

「Well, what do you think Teacher? Don't you want to finally rush into the dungeon?」 (Jean)

「Not on dungeon yet?」 (Fran)

「Dungeon is a term that refers to what is in the sphere of influence of the dungeon core, so whatever is in the sky, or rather, whatever the magic power of the dungeon core can reach is part of the dungeon.」

It seems Jean's words have raised a flag as I felt massive signs of something coming towards us.

『Somethings coming!』

「Until you land on the floating island, some demons named Bone Birds will attack you in a large flock.」 (Jean)

「Countermeasure?」 (Fran)

「Countermeasure? Fahahahahaha, just break through the front, it's a flock of small fry.」 (Jean)

「I see!」 (Fran)

『That's not the kind of size we can just break through!』

「But they're faster than Andy, it's impossible to escape.」 (Jean)

『Is there something like a tool or a barrier to eliminate the undead?』

「Tools like that aren't convenient for such small fry! Though there is a technique to eliminate undead, I can't use it so close to Andy.」

So we can only break through from the front? Damn, I'll use brute force then!

「Fahahaha! Andy! Full of rage, but this is good!」 (Jean)

「GOOOOOOOO!」 (Urushi)

「Teacher!」 (Fran)

『I can't be helped! I'll do it loudly!』

「Wow!」 (Fran?)

That's how we entered a battle with the Bone Bird flock. As individuals, they are G rank. However, there's around 1,000 birds. Bone Birds cluster like clouds, even if they were knocked down or defeated, it feels like there's no progress.

With the blessings that Andy releases, Jean's magic, Fran's sword swings, Flying around in the air and Urushi knocking down birds one after another, we're bound to make a dent though...

「- Reverse Undead!」 (Jean)

「- Fire, Arrow!」 (Fran)

「Gagaoou!」 (A beast)

「Gollo Ooh!」 (A beast)

Me? I flew away from Fran. (TL: Not too sure about these next lines, seems rather rude to Jean) Everything was wrong with Jean. I will be missed when I become like this.

What Fran is using now was a phantom sword of the phantom stone that she took from Guillain before. Although it is a sword with the phantom attribute, it also has a small Light attribute so it was quite effective against the undead.

Fran using a sword other than me ... I will endure it. (TL: haha, cute)

『Haha! An all you can eat buffet after such a long time! There's so many magic stones to eat!』

For the flock to be this dense. Even if we jumped around randomly, we would be able to beat the birds without pause.

『It's a Magic stone festival!』

「Kisha!」

「Shogyo!」 (TL: Animal sounds? キシャア & ショギョア)

『That won't work!』

They try to close my movements with the intimidation skill, but such a low level is meaningless to me.

Name: Bone · Bird : Undead : Demon Lv 3

HP: 18

MP: 6

STR: 7

END: 10

AGI: 16

DEX: 3

INT: 1

MAG: 5

Intimidation:Lv1, Beak Attack:Lv1, Evil Spirit

These guys gave me the skill of the Dead, but since these things are evil spirits I should be careful. Rather, I don't think I'll equip it anytime soon... Furthermore, Beak Attack is useless to me, since I don't have a beak...

After 30 minutes, we broke through the flock of Bone Birds and approached the floating island. When you see it up close, it's really impressive.

By the way, the skill Evil Spirit seems to be a combination skill of Flight, Magical Emission, Grudge Conversion, Light Magic Weakness, Recovery Magic Weakness and Greater Purification Magic Weakness.

Also, I was told not to equip it. Not that I plan to.

「Okay.」 (Jean)

『Finally?』

「No, not yet.」 (Jean)

『What does that mean?』

「I will know soon - it came!」 (Jean)

「Same as Andy?」 (Fran)

「Fuha! It looks alike! Andy is a Wind Wyvern skeleton, but they are Lesser Wyverns! They are different grades!」 (Jean)

Name: Lesser · Wyvern · Skeleton : Undead : Demon Lv 10

HP: 108

MP: 50

STR: 87

END: 63

AGI: 133

DEX: 12

INT: 1

MAG: 33

Threaten:Lv 3, Covert:Lv 2, Play:Lv 3, Spirit, Poison Nullification

It was a little weaker than the Lesser Wyvern I encountered before, but it seemed that it was going to be hard to beat down with the Play and Undead skills attached. And about 30 such people are there.

Besides that, it is not only that.

『Wow! What's that? Is that a Cannon?!』

「It's a bombardment from the island. It could be a stray bullet shot by mistake. Teacher, concentrate on interception.」

『Well, what about the Wyverns? 』

「I will deal with them!」

「You will?」 (Fran)

「Fran and Mr. Urushi have not completely shake off Bone Bird yet!」

「Roger.」 (Fran)

「Ou!」 (Urushi)

It's the last stretch until we can land.

I intercepted the cannonfire, sometimes crushing the shells directly and sometimes intercepting them with magic. Though there were a lot of shells, I managed to prevent us getting hit.

『Dangerous!』

It was dangerous. Although I somehow warped the trajectory with magic, if it was a few moments later we would have been run through by the cannonfire.

『Jean! How did you survive this shelling when you landed last time.』

「That time, I was following a Skeleton Griffon! For my fellows who wore wind armor, these attacks were useless! So, I got in from the front!」

Will it ever end? Besides, there is no longer that skeleton that I have not summoned now. It may be called out with overspec. (TL: Talking about summoning skeletons here I think? ED: ... Taking advice on this mystery.)

「Gyo Oho!」

Damn, the wyvern skeletons are getting restless! But because we handled the storm of shells, it got out of hand! It was quite quick, and the attacks of the flock seems not to have been hit directly. If you hit it, you can beat it. (TL: Agreed)

What is this? Is this not silly?

Andy buries its head into a wyvern, biting through fur with its teeth. It's almost as if he's saying "Count on me!"

「Thank you, Andy.」 (Jean)

「Goou!」 (Andy)

But it's only possible because of Andy pushing himself. It's impossible to manage this number normally. Regeneration is gradually failing to catch up and Andy's HP is dangerously low.

『Jean! What are you doing!』

「Wait a moment! I'm preparing it now!」 (Jean)

Then I saw it, Jean was in the middle of putting magical power into a summoning ball. Do you still have a trump card to summon?

「Okay! I'm ready! Teacher, Urushi, get back!」

『Roger that.』

「Ou!」 (Urushi)

「Fran, keep still in case of anything! Believe in me!」

「Nn.」 (Fran)

「Fahahaha, that's a good reply.」

『So? What are you going to do?』

「I'm going to do this! Andy, do it!」 (Jean)

「Gowawon!」 (Andy)

「Waa」 (TL: Like awe I think) (Fran)

『Deformed?』

According to Jean's command, Andy's bone body starts to strain and transform. The ribs and sternum swelled, wrapping Jean and Frans, the wings folded like covering the body. Because it's flying with the evil spirit skill, it won't affect flight...

It's as if the wyvern's neck is growing from a sphere made of bone.

「-Instant summoning!」

Meanwhile, Jean summons a new creature. Instant summoning is a technique to summon a part of a creature for a certain period of time. Although it is much weaker than the main body, there is a merit that even if the body is dead, there is no influence on the main body.

「Slime?」 (Fran)

『W-what? Damn it--』

「It's fine like this!」 (Jean)

What Jean called was a bright red slime. The slime started to wrap around us.

『Jean?』

「It's okay!」

Jean said that we should stay as we are. Hey, hey, is it melting? The undead slime called Undead Ooze has completely covered Andy and the party. Meanwhile, although the shell is bending around Andy, it seems that somehow it is enduring. Though I don't know how long it will last. What will Jean do?

「Andy! It's been a rough time.」 (Jean)

「Goou!」 (Andy)

「Well then!」 (Jean)

When Jean ordered, Andy changed directions with hurry. It's form with his head facing away from the floating island.

「Gaaaooooooooou!」 (Andy)

Andy unleashed a powerful breath that he had charged within himself. A tremendous ray paints the sky white. It's super powerful without a doubt. Andy then curled itself up like a bullet and sped towards the floating island while crushing several wyverns.

「Fahahaha, good! Andy! You've done it exactly as planned!」 (Jean)

「Fast.」 (Fran)

Andy's magic power is decreasing with tremendous momentum. Hey, isn't this dangerous? Certainly if an undead runs out of magic power won't it disappear? But Andy did not stop releasing the breath and the floating island was rapidly approaching gungun.

「Make sure not to bite your tongue, Fran!」 (Jean)

「Nn.」 (Fran)

Scary!

Immediately afterwards a light shock hits us. Apparently it seems that physical barriers were set up, but in front of Andy, those were useless. And....

「DOGOAGOAOSOGO!」

「Huuuuu」

「Aaa」

「Kyuwen」

『Wow!』

Andy made a huge crater on the floating island. Despite the fact that Undead Oooz received the shock, it was an incredible shock. Anyway, HP is decreasing for everyone. The body of Undead Oooz has disappeared. Andy, who received the shock the most, had not kept its original shape already. Both whole body and manastone are shattered. It's only possible to distinguish half a skull.

「Goou」 (Andy)

「Andy, we will not forget your loyalty.」 (?)

「Thank you.」 (?)

「Nn!」 (fran)

「ou!」 (Urishi)

『You're amazing.』

「I'll send you the last at my end, sleep peacefully. - Ascension」

「Gou-」 (Andy)

From the remnants of Andy, the light rises and raises to the heavens. It was a beautiful sight.

「Bye bye」 (Fran?)

Chapter 71: RUSH

RUSH

Thanks to Andy, two hours after landed on the floating island.

「I saw it, that's the entrance to the interior of the dungeon!」

We passed through the wandering forest of zombies and skeletons and reached a place like ruins.

There were no noteworthy battles in the forest. The enemies are only lower demon animals, not smart enough to erase any indication of their presence. There are no elements other than a large number that are likely to be a threat. Well, if there's something of note, it would be the absorption of magic stones and Urushi.

There seemed to be traces of a staircase that descended into the basement in the center of a group of ruins.

「It's here, the last time I was exhausted before I got here, but this time I still have plenty of time!」

『What should I look out for? There's plenty of dangerous traps, aren't there? Last night I heard about a secret plan.』

「Leave the leading to me, you guys should concentrate on battle.」

「all right」 (Fran)

「On on!」 (Urushi)

「Wait a moment, please.」 (Jean)

Jean takes out the summon ball again and begins to cast.

「---- High undead summoning!」

What was summoned was a deadly monster. It looks a little like a zombie? A mummy with good skin? It had such a feeling. Looking at it from a distance, it may seem like a slightly thin person with brown skin. It also wore clothes knitted with warp yarns.

「Thy name is Sercan!」 (Jean)

「Va」 (Sercan)

//TL: This will be cleaned up by the Editor and the right words will be put in place when he sees it. I'm too lazy, if you care all that much, check out previous chapters skill sheets and you'll find the correct terms. Where's that shrug emoji when you need it?

Tribal Name: Custom · Revenant: Dead

Spirit: Demon Lv 14

Name: Sercan

HP: 69

MP: 165

Power: 33

Strength: 23

Agility: 66

Intelligence: 109

Magical power: 25

Devices: 93

Skills:

Play: LvMax, momentary playback: Lv 4, trap cancellation: Lv 5, trap detection: Lv 4, playback enhancement

(good luck with that)

「Kuku, this is a specially made servant whom I made improvements on with custom undead techniques for this day!」

It is a devil devoted exclusively to leadership. It seems to be at the expense of combat power, but playing power is not hampered. Looking for traps and dismantling them, it becomes a wall of flesh that takes on the trap with himself if you don't do it. Well, convenient and incompetent.

「Fahahaha ... I will go, Sercan, lead us!」

「Va!」

However, Sercan was tremendously useful. Most traps canceled out, or it starts and disables them.

It seems that Jean has supplemented the magic power necessary for regeneration, so there is no worry of falling down or death.

「Va!」

Gashakon! (TL: Sound effect)

Oh, it was skewered to the spear that came down from the ceiling! I could not cancel it, nor catch it on purpose and invalidated it. However, Sercan plays it's role immediately and walks as if nothing had happened.

I did not do a good job.

In addition, Jean only said once, but it already grasped its internal structure (TL: I don't know who's grasping internal structures but someone is). We almost never stopped and we had been searching steadily.

The zombies that occasionally appear are destroyed before attacking fran with my attack.

『Good.』

「Well, here it is not」 (Jean)

『What do you mean? 』

「The last time, supplies have run out in the hall ahead of us and we've had to turn back, so I don't know what's in there.」 (Jean)

「Is there something in the hall?」 (Fran)

「There's a monster room, in which you will see an intermediate demon beast」

Apparently there seems to be a stairway to get down to the basement in a place beyond that hall. The speed of advance will fall considerably. There's probably a new gimmick.

First of all is a hall.

『Well, it's all about the preemptive magic strike.』

「Hmm」

「Oh!」

And annihilation begins (TL: lol, I'm totes using that line somewhere). About 30 of the dead spirits collapsed in the first magic. Still, there are still more than 50 bodies left. But that wasn't all. From the magic room (circle?), the evil spirits gushed out one after another.

Inside is mixed with intermediate demons such as zombie soldiers equipped with weapons and armor, skeleton warriors, and magical beasts.

『let's go!』

「Hmm!」

「Guru!」

Well, it's not our worst enemy. Rather, a monster room without traps, it's easy for frans to fight. Flame magic works well also.

In only 20 minutes all the spirits were put back into the corpses.

「well done!」 (Jean)

『If you have this degree of opponent』

「Oh, novice」 (???)

「Nom Nom」 (Urushi)

Urushi is as usual. Why doesn't eating zombie meat break your belly? Or is it rather tasty? No, it seems that everything goes well with rot, it's unexpected? Well, I hope it's delicious.

「Do you have any injuries?」

「I'm okay」

Then Jean purifies the room and we decide to take a rest for about an hour. In the meantime I will make a meal but I take out the curry at the request of Fran.

「Oh, supreme」 (Fran)

『You never get tired of it.』

Every time let her eat it, she praises me every time. It is not a lie that if I had a tail it would be standing tall.

Jean also had had some curry, and he seems to like it quite a bit. I've changed it twice.

「Mu」

Don't look at me like that Fran! I still have plenty! The children become very aggressive when it comes to food.

Jean gave Urushi the femur of a Skeleton Lizard. He was gnawing on the bone, As Urushi also experienced a blessing.

Because I am have time and am taking a break, I decided to tell Jean about the undead spells. I thought of Amanda at the time, but who better to ask than the lord of the undead himself? I , but I would definitely know who heard the advanced party more than examine himself.

「Kahahaha ... it is difficult to raise knowledge, but you have a good idea! It was good to hear!」

Jean is a researcher and I thought that if I could hear it would teach me Rather, he was a man of a system he wanted to speak, to talk about things not even heard. As a result, you got to know a lot about the evil spirit.

I was particularly surprised about the concept of the soul. I thought that the undead magic was manipulating the soul of the dead or manipulating it with the soul possessed by the corpse, but that was not the case.

It seems that the power may cause part of the soul that should originally go to the nether world to stay in this world. And the fragments of the soul in which imperfections and power are put together are combined with the magic stone, transforming it into a powerful evil spirit.

So it was generally recommended that a necromancer cast a ghost spirit. Because they can be cleansed by serving a Necromancer and can ascend. For grudge who wanders while suffering with gratitude, it can be called salvation. Besides, if you serve as one body, you will also have 1 Vengeous Spirit that you dislike people. Among them are those who are going through countries to purify the evil spirits and ascend.

「Well, I'm not that kind of fond of getting up to it, instead of ascending, I will lend you my power, a way of saying “Give and Take”. Even if I make

things disposable, I'm grateful, so laughter will not stop, Yo!」

『I'm telling you, but you used Ascension for Andy, did not you?』

The technique of Ascension which Jean used for Andy was a technique to clear up the grudge of the dead spirit and ascend the fragments of the soul. It was a famous magic typical of nether witchcraft, which was also mentioned in the information examined in the library.

Although it is slight, it is a technique that interferes with the soul, so consumption is severe, depending on the strength of purification grudge it is even to reduce the life expectancy of the caster. Indeed, Jean did not become a fighting force for a while after it landed. Andy would have disappeared if it left as it was, and one should not use Ascension by force.

「Well, it's about that extent that we can do it, for a short while, for Andy who served with loyalty, he is for the hands at least, are not you complaining?」 (Jean)

「No, not for such a good guy」 (Fran)

『No complaints』

「on!」 (Urushi)

「Is that so, right?」 (Jean)

Something, it's a breezy atmosphere. However, Jean seems embarrassed that she made such an atmosphere. My ears are red. And, in order to change the topic, I just started to talk about the future by further raising the voice of the crowd. Well, it's okay though.

「Fufa, Fuha! Well, next will be the second tier!」 (Jean)

『Is there any information?』

「No, not at all!」 (Jean)

Why do they look great?

「But please be calm. There are measures!」 (Jean)

「What?」 (Fran)

「This is it!」 (Jean)

What Jean took out is a familiar summons ball.

『What's in it?』

「If you see it you will understand! So fufufu, you won't forget it!」

Then Jean began to recite the summoned spell again.

Chapter 72: DUNGEON'S CORRIDOR

Chapter 72: DUNGEON“S CORRIDOR

DUNGEON'S CORRIDOR

“ -High undead, summoning!” (Jean)

It appeared from the undead summon stone of Jean's. What came out though? Fog? Vapor? It was something indefinitely whitish.

“Cloud?” (Teacher)

“This is the secret of dungeon capturing, it's a custom ghaſt fly.”

//TL: Again, I don't remember what these things are actually ſupposed to be and I don't want to hunt through comments. If that kind ſoul would comment again, I'll go about fixing theſe things.

Race name: custom ghaſt

Dead Spirit: Demon lv 7

Name: Fly

HP: 22

MP: 401

Power: 8

Stamina: 13

Agility: 36

Knowledge: 89

Maka: 210

Devices: 19

Skill: Dissolution: lv 7, Map creation: lv 6, communication: lv 3, shadow classe: lv 7, magical absorption: lv 6, trap detection: lv 3, Evil spirit, physical attack nullification

This thing seems to specialize exploring.

Fran reaches out to touch it, as well as Urushi who imitates Fran by trying to bite it. Even I cannot catch the fume like fly.

“Oooh” (Fran)

“Wow” (Teacher)

Just this is interesting. The white smoke staggers over and over. If we weren't inside the dungeon, we wouldn't be able to see it.

“Fly can send information from the map creation to me through the mind! Even without doing anything, you can get a map of the dungeon! Kahahaha! I cannot get rid of this shaking by myself!” (TL: I guess he's excited?) (Jean)

Certainly, without Fly, mapping would be crazy.

“Go, Fly!” (Jean)

By Jean's order, the fly begins to divide into twenty bodies. One body is weak but it's not battle power we're concerned about. Fly starts to move quietly. At first glance it seems like the smoke is following the air current.

“After about ten minutes we can get a map of what's up ahead.”

“Leave it to me!” (Fly?)

Is it not pampant yet? It's only a small fish. (TL: I think it's talking about the amount of ghaists that are running about) Fran is posing with Urushi, having a motivated face.

“Last time I didn’t do this to find out about the floors. I just went ahead to scout.” (Jean)

“So is this structured floors in your mind?” (Teacher) Certainly you’re not saying there’s no information of this floor at all?

“No, I couldn’t break through this area before, so I don’t know the layout ahead, but there’s no problems as we’ve made improvements.” (Jean)

“Don’t you understand what’s ahead?” (Teacher)

“Well, there’s something that I know of only one. It’s the mimic spirit you’re looking for, but it appears up ahead. They are the one that blocked Fly’s way.” (Jean)

“Really? Okay, let’s go!” (Teacher)

“Nn.” (Fran)

“Ou!” (Urushi)

“Before we go, let’s have a drink before the battle” (Jean)

“What is this?” (Teacher)

“Fuhahaha! It’s a specially made spirit potion. It has the effects of reducing damage from the dead and increasing resistance against special attacks such as spirit control.” (Jean)

“Amazingly high-performance! Isn’t it petty valuable.” (Teacher)

“It’s not a big deal. If it’s on the market, it’s about 200,000 gold.” (Jean)

“High!” (Teacher or Fran, I forgot)

200,000 gold is the same as the reward for success. Is this okay?

“For me, it’s not that much money, don’t mind it! We’ll just take more than that in materials.” (Jean)

Truly a B rank adventurer. 200,000 is a lot of money

“Let’s get to it” (Fran)

“Also, feel free to use stuff I give you. It’s me who will be troubled if you leave.” (Jean)

I’m happy with this type of client, because I am a poor man. I hesitate to use items, even with RPGs, leaving things like elixirs and world trees (TL:?? Unfamiliar with RPGs and items in them) until the end. But that’s dangerous. If Fran was in danger, I guess I wouldn’t say such a thing, but that’s how I usually think.

“We’re going into a long corridor where it extends to the entrance to the second floor, enemies there use hypnotism attacks.” (Jean)

“Well then!” (Teacher)

“Oooo... ..” (spirit)

“Damn! THis one is also different! Well then, you!” (Jean?)

“Oo”

“This is not it!” (Teacher)

“Oooh”

“Owio” (spirits)

“Ah! This is annoying! Which is the spoofed spirit?” (Teacher)

Ghost, Specter, etc. attacks back and forth, right and left, sometimes coming through walls and floor to attack.

But this was the corridor we’ve been looking for. There’s mimic spirits among the attacks. There’s also spoofed spirits which are like subordinates of the mimic spirits.

We are constantly activating the fire attribute to maximize damage, they continue to disguise as dead spirits. Our strategy would be impossible without the magic tank called me. Actually, I raised the level of magic absorption.

Because the bodies of the spirits in the dead system consists of magical power, they're weak against absorption.

So, because of attacking and magical supply, magic absorption increased to level 3.

With this, the remaining points have decreased to one, but it's a skill that'll be advantageous in the long run, I think there's no loss in raising it. (TL: I guess rather than saying he raised it naturally through combat, he used points to raise the level artificially, it was a little confusing so I thought I'd explain)

As a result, if combined with attribute sword, most of the spirits could be knock down in a single shot. My magic power is still around 1500. Afterwards, it would be perfect if I could take an appraisal camouflage from a spoofed spirit.

Actually, it's easier to annihilate with widespread magic. Then destroy magic stones. I just want to get appraisal camouflage by all means.

“Jean! I can't find a camouflage spirit?” (Teacher)

“Mm, I have not.” (Jean)

“Are you sure?” (Teacher)

“I don't understand?” (Jean)

(TL: okay, I have no idea on this next like [いると信じて戦うんだ])

“Believe that's you're fighting and fight!” (Teacher)

“Ou ou” (Urushi)

It also places a considerable burden on Fran. If you think that it's a mimic spirit and attack it, there's a chance of it being a spoofed spirit. In order to prevent damage to the magic stones, I only have try to attack the mimic spirits.

Then Fran only has to deal with the spirits other than the mimics.

The spiritual abnormality coming from the ghosts are not at all an issue due to Jean's spirit potion. Physical attacks aren't a big deal. To Fran, they're only annoying.

Then 30 minutes into the fight.

“Now is...” (Teacher)

Mimic spirits have a lot of magic I feel like. I hurriedly check my skills.

Obtained appraisal camouflage.

“Damn! It came!” (Teacher)

“Yosh! This is good already.” (Jean)

“Ou!” (Urushi)

“At last” (Fran)

“Oooo” (Fly?)

After that, the furious fighting kept for half an hour more, soon settled down. Everybody used widespread magic so it was completed because of that.

“Nn?” (Fran)

“Oh?” (Jean)

No, even I can see. I wanted camouflage. Well, since it might be hard work, let's give up. (TL: This was confusing as well [鑑定偽装が欲しかったん

だ。まあ、必要な苦勞だったと思って、諦めてくれ))

“Congratulations” (Jean)

“I tried to set it, but how is it? Can you see with soul eye? I tried to conceal the skill and to make it look lower than the actual status.” (Teacher)

“Hmm... Well, it’s a success, it looks like half the status I saw before.”
(Jean)

“What about skills?” (Fran)

“I don’t see any skills at all, however, it’s better to research a little more. It’s doubtful that you don’t have any skills. We should adjust it so that it looks safe.” (Jean)

“Oh, I know.” (Teacher)

How to disguise it?

Well, I’m having fun. Showing the disguised status to those who appraise Fran. “Fighting strength is just 5, garbage.” Let me think, it’s also possible to do, “I have 530,000 battles.” (TL: He’s talking about what others might think when they see with appraisal for the first one. The second one was more like blowing people out of the water with shock, lol)

“Kukuku, I’m looking forward to it.” (Teacher)

“Teacher, bad voice.” (Fran)

“Ouou” (Urushi)

Chapter 73

Fly was quite a bit more useful than I'd anticipated. We didn't really know anything about the second floor, but his abilities allowed us to advance through it as quickly as we had on the first. He even managed to find a treasure box along the way.

Our trek was going smoothly. We basically hadn't stopped since we broke through that one corridor with all the specters.

Seeing fly in action makes me want one of his species in my party. I wonder if leveling up ghost magic'll let me get my hands on something like him?

I decided to ask Jean about it, but he ended up cutting my hopes short. Apparently you needed all sorts of high quality magic tools and herbs to make it, so each specter would end up costing at least 10 million Gorudo. Actualizing it was a whole another matter, and that'd apparently take another 3 or so years in and of itself. To make matters worse, every single individual was different, and so not all of them would be able to use Shadow Clones the same way the one Jean summoned could.

In other words, you needed all three of money, time, and luck. Yeah, I guess that's not happening. I'll have to give up on the idea for now.

「Bored.」

「Ahahaha! Do you not think it wonderful to be able to experience boredom as you journey through a dungeon?」

「Still bored.」

Well, I guess that's pretty much something that's been due. I've been handling all the battles and stuff, so Fran's started to get frustrated out of

sheer monotony.

「Well then...」

「Hm?」

「It appears as if Fly's found us a set of stairs.」

『Already!?』

「Already indeed. However, it seems as if the area is being secured by a guardian, an ogre zombie with a large horn sticking out its head. There are quite a few other zombies around it as well.」

「Really?」

Oh god damn it Fran, why is that your eyes started to sparkle the moment you heard that?

「Hahaha! How ever reliable you are!」

「Leave it to me.」

「Woof!」

「Hahahaha! Then why don't we be on our way? Let us advance, for it has come time to exterminate the undead!」 (TL Note: Lit. Exterminate Oni. Reference to Momotarou.)

Though, it looks like we've got a black cat, a sword and a wolf instead of a talking chicken, a monkey, and a dog, but whatever. Either way, it looks like we're going to be getting something much better than a mere kibidango or two, so I'll give it my all.

We grab the treasure chest and then head over to the corridor leading to the stairs, where we rendezvous with Fly, who was standing by with all his parts merged back into one.

According to Jean's Undead Search, the corridor was filled with a large ogre zombie, twenty odd soldier type zombies, and about a hundred zombified dogs and rats.

『Alright, let's charge in and then start by throwing a few AOE spells.』

「Understood.」

「Woof.」

Getting swarmed by all those mini zombies is probably going to be more of a pain in the ass than fighting the big one, so it'd be better for us to go with the Lv. 8 wind spell Gale Hazard. The spell isn't too much of a hard hitter, but it compensates by covering a large area. It's AOE is about 30 meters in either direction, so we should be able to cover the entire corridor if Fran and I both use it at the same time.

『I'll leave all the soldier-types to you, Urushi.』

「Woof woof!」

「What about Jean?」

「I shall spend my time doing what I can against that ogre zombie over there. Serkan, Fly, wait here.」

「Va」

「...」

『Alright, let's go.』

「Nn.」

It's finally time for us to take on the floor boss!

『 「——Gale Hazard」 』

Violent Winds rage within the corridor and smash all of the smaller scaled magic beasts

「Arooo!」

Urushi pierces four different zombie soldiers with its dark spears.

「Hahahahahaha! How overwhelming you are!」

Jean gives a loud laugh as he completes his task with ease. He traps the ogre zombie inside of an Undead Jail and keeps it from moving.

『We'll be leaving that big ass one to you then, Jean!』

「First, small fry.」

「Woof!」

We leap into the zombie horde.

The zombie soldiers are a bit troublesome to deal with. They're far more agile and skillful than what you'd normally expect from zombies, and they're able to counter attack for quite a bit of damage — not that it matters to us since we can get rid of them in a matter of moments.

Fran starts by cloaking her blade in flames and using her sword arts to chop their arms, and in doing so, completely negates their ability to counterattack. She then destroys their heads and splits their bodies in half. The damage from this combination instantly defeats them, she inflicts far too much damage for them to regenerate. Fire is especially effective against zombies because it naturally hinders their self restoration.

That said, she seems a bit dissatisfied that she wasn't able to use lightning, her favourite element. On the other hand, I'd say I'm pretty content. The flame cloaked blade reminds me of Gundams and their beam sabers.

Urushi was fighting in a much flashier fashion. He was using a mix of fang and magic to completely grind the zombies to dust. His fur's starting to get dirty though, so I'm going to have to give him a wash later.

Things were going pretty smoothly for me too. All I have to do is use magic perception to find their magic stones and pierce right through them in one go.

The hallway is kind of reminiscent of what we ran into on the first floor. Spirits keep gushing out of the corpses and end up all over the room. Heh, what good experience points they are.

The spirits stopped spawning after we beat all the grunts though, so before long, we were left with nothing but the ogre zombie.

『Orya!』

「Woof!」

And even that was killed instantly. Jean made it stop moving, so I easily pierced through its magic stone by launching myself with telekinetic catapult.

〈Self Evolution has activated. 50 evolution points received.〉

Finally! It finally happened!! I mean, I knew we came here so I could absorb magic stones, but I've already gotten at least 300 worth!

—

Name: Master

Wielder: Fran

Race: Intelligent Weapon

Attack: 524 Mana: 3000 Durability: 2800

Magical Conductivity: A+

Skills

Appraisal: Lv 7

Appraisal Block

Shape Shifting

High Speed Regeneration

Self Evolution: Rank 10 | Magic Stone Value 4511/5500 | Memory 89 |
Points 51

Self Modification (Superior)

Telekenesis

Low Telekenesis Up

Intermediate Wielder Status Up

Low Wielder Recovery Up

Low Mana Up

Intermediate Memory Up

Knowledge of Magic Beasts

Skill Sharing

Sorcerer

Unique Skills

Principle of Falsehood: Lv 5

Superior Skills

Sword Technique: SP

—

Oh hell yeah! I can start leveling stuff up again! Alrighty, what should I level up this time? Or wait, maybe I should hold my points till we're out of the dungeon first.

It even looks like my magical conductivity risen! Hell yeah! I'm one step closer towards the peak! I even got a new skill too.

Shape Shifting: Change into whatever shape is desired through the consumption of magical energy.

Does this mean I can change into other types of weapons? I guess I should give it a try whenever the situation happens to call for it.

That said, it seems like we're having a pretty easy time right now. The dungeon's interior is much easier to get through than the exterior was. I wonder if I'm just overthinking things...

Chapter 74: To the Depths!

74: To the Depths!

We continued to fight zombies and skeletons as we made our through the dungeon's third floor. The traps were getting more dangerous, but Serkan's abilities let us breeze right through them.

We've managed to progress at a pretty good pace without tiring ourselves out.

All that's left is for us is to find the Spirit Eater Jean was looking for. If things go well, we might even be able to conquer the dungeon while we're at it.

『So what kind of magic beast is this Spirit Eater thing anyways? What's it look like?』

「Hahahaha! I have absolutely no idea.」

『Wait, aren't we supposed to be capturing it? You should have some sort of idea at least...』

「Its appearance used to match that of your average zombie, but the consumption of its peers has led to its evolution. It had become a giant the last time I laid eyes on it, and I believe it has likely evolved even further. I can no longer fathom its form.」

『Where'd you last see it?』

「My last sighting of it was just outside the dungeon's entrance. It was a member of what I believe to be a squad the dungeon master called upon to drive me away.」

「Couldn't beat them?」

「Indeed. It is regrettable, but I have to admit that not even my experience in necromancy was enough allow me to forge a plan that would lead to my victory. All of the schemes I'd conjured had led only to the Spirit Eater throwing me down its hatch.」

『Sounds like quite the opponent.』

「Yes, but that is precisely why I would not mind if we are unable to succeed in its capture. We have no idea as to its whereabouts, and I only desired for it because I wished to use its powers to conquer the dungeon. I've no need for it with companions like yourselves by my side.」

『So we don't have to go looking for it?』

「That is correct.」

And with that, we continued to advance through the dungeon, our sights set on only its deepest depths.

It took us two days to traverse its top eight floors. By the time we got to the ninth, we'd already ran into some rank D monsters like Hellhounds, Zombie Nagas, Skeletons and Dark Paladins.

Jean's support was quintessential. We honestly probably wouldn't have made it this far without him. His ability to make purify and take control of the undead within a dungeon composed solely thereof allowed him to act like something along the lines of a Joker in a game of cards.

The items he brought along were super useful too.

His skull shaped lamp turned out to be something incredible. It could create safe zones that warded off the undead so long as we stayed inside of them. Thanks to that, we were able to get ourselves a good night's rest despite the fact that we were in the middle of a dungeon. Though, I did feel a bit revolted by the fact that zombies would end up circling the safe zone while making the ever so anticipated “ahhhh” sounds. I couldn't help but feel a

sense of awe and respect for both Fran and Jean, as both were able to get right to sleep despite the zombies.

That said, it was pretty obvious that Jean was still much more comfortable with our conditions than Fran was. Jean would put up a safe zone whenever we stopped to eat, and naturally, zombies would end up circle us just like they did when we went to bed. Fran would end up making a bit of a disgusted face as a result, but Jean was able to keep eating as if nothing was wrong at all.

I knew he was a necromancer and figured that he was probably used to stuff like this, but honestly, I was still a bit shocked. I mean, those are zombies, you know? They're literally walking, rotting corpses. Some of them even look like they're falling apart at the seams.

On a side note, I tried shapeshifting a few times as we fought our down into the dungeon's depths.

I was able to transform into an axe, a spear, and even a dagger, not that any of those forms ended up being of much use. There were quite a few problems with the skill. First and foremost was that it continued to consume an incredible amount of mana so long as I remained transformed. There was also the fact that we didn't point any other weapon's arts. The most annoying part of it all was that my mass had to stay constant, so I couldn't even turn into any sort of larger weapon either.

I'm sure that there's gotta be some other way to use the skill, but it's going to have to sit on the backburner for now.

『Looks like we've reached the ninth floor's boss room.』

The dungeon's been set up so that each floor is a labyrinth of sorts. The only thing about that's really stayed constant is the fact that every floor's ended with a large room with a boss in it.

It's marked by the same kind of door every time too, so I know for sure that the room we're about to enter right now is the boss' room.

The bosses we've fought thus far are as follows: an ogre zombie, a skeleton tiger, a dragonoid zombie, a naga skeleton, an orthrus zombie, a chimera skeleton, and an elder zombie (Great Superior Rank). Each boss was stronger than the last, and the elder skeleton we fought on the eighth floor was even equipped with a magic spear. It knew how to use divine spear arts and divine spear techniques, so it made for an extremely difficult foe.

It even managed to drop Fran's HP below the halfway point. Though, on the bright side, defeating it allowed us to gain access to both Divine Spear Arts and Divine Spear Techniques. I wonder if that means my spear form might end up seeing some use after all.

「Now, why don't we go ahead and open the door?」

「Nn.」

The room was filled with naught but a single skeleton. What kind of foe will it be, I wonder...

『Flare Blast!』

「Hexagonal Tornado!」

「Hell Blaze!」

「Arooo!」

We start with our usual strategy. All four of us simultaneously bombard the skeleton with magic.

「It is still capable of movement!」

That's a bit of an understatement. In fact, it doesn't feel like we've done any damage to it whatsoever.

Race: Legendary Fighter Skeleton, Undead, Magic Beast

Lv. 24

State: Guardian

HP: 1568/1663

MP: 988

STR: 647

VIT: 713

AGI: 436

INT: 289

MGC: 521

DEX: 550

Skills

Appraisal Jamming: Lv 6

Sword Arts: Lv Max

Divine Sword Arts: Lv 1

Sword Techniques: Lv Max

Divine Sword Techniques: Lv 1

Regeneration: Lv 8

Autocast Lv 6

Resistance to Abnormal Status Lv 9

Spirit Control: Lv 4

Ghost Magic: Lv 8

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 9

Elemental Blade: Lv 6

Poison Magic: Lv 6

Magic Resist: Lv 9

Dark Magic: Lv 4

Vigour Manipulation

Extra Skills

Latent Potential Release

Titles

Dungeon Guardian

Equipment

Magic Sword: Deathgaze

Full Orihalcum Plate Armour

Aidoneus' Mantle

The skeleton begins to rise. I feel a sense of urgency overcome me as its crimson bones rattle within its golden armour. The sheer amount of magical energy emanating from its body tells me that it's threat level is no lower than B.

It's a monster on par with the demon we slew. It's status reveals that it's got far fewer tactics at hand; its skills were instead focused on enhancing its defensive prowess.

It was in possession of Lv 8 regeneration, Lv 9 resistance to abnormal status, Lv 9 resistance to mental abnormalities, and Lv 9 magic resist. On top of that, it even wore orihalcum armour, a type of armour that focused on boosting its magic resist even further. All those resistances meant that attacking it with spells simply wasn't going to get us anywhere.

『Jean, pull back.』

「Of course. It appears that I've got quite the poor matchup against this here skeleton. I will focus on Healing.」

『Urushi, your job will be to protect Jean. Make sure you keep an eye out too, just in case any other undead show up.』

「Woof!」

The skeleton would end up facing off against Fran.

「Master.」

『Sure thing.』

Fran puts the phantom sword she was using back into her dimensional storage. She could tell at a glance that she wouldn't be able to beat the legendary skeleton lest she gave it her all.

She grabs ahold of me and takes up a stance, a situation that makes me feel much more natural.

「Nn. Much more natural with Master.」

『Hahahaha!』

「Nn?」

『Nothing, don't mind it. There's no way we can lose if the two of us work together, right?』

「Of course.」

『Alright! This'll be the first hard fight we've had in awhile. Let's do this!』

「Nn!」

TL Note: Divine (Weapon) Arts/Techniques are not necessarily of the holy element. It simply means something along the lines of "Sword Saint," but "Spear Saint" sounds awkward, so I've decided to standardize them as Divine Arts. Please let me know if you believe this to be an issue and if you have any suggestions for improvement.

TL Note 2: I've been using the word Spirit. It's important to note that these refer specifically to spirits of the dead as opposed to a race of spiritual beings. I've attempted to imply this through the connotations. Please let me know if there's anything better for me to change this to going forward.

TL Note 3: Wolfy -> Urushi again. A certain individual pointed out the author's intent. Props to them.

Chapter 75. Overwhelming Power

75. Overwhelming Power.

A violent ringing filled the room as Fran and the skeleton exchanged blows. Blade against blade, the two continued to clash.

The battle was rather simple and barebones, but if anyone were to have watched it, they undoubtedly would have ended up staring in wonderment, for the duel almost seemed to be one of an inhuman caliber.

From a pure numerical standpoint, Fran was at an overwhelming disadvantage. Her stats were much lower, and the two were about equally proficient in swordplay. Luckily, I was able to bring her up to par by raising her abilities with my skills and spells.

And so, we were stuck at a stalemate.

The most annoying part of it all was that the skeleton was capable of appraisal jamming. I wasn't able to figure out where its magic stone was, so I had to guess. Thanks to that, I wasn't able to catch it off guard with a sudden telekinetic catapult. Though, I guess I did always have the option of just using it over and over again until I hit the right spot.

『It's healing again!』

「Haa!」

「Kakaka! (Skeleton noises)」

Another aspect that brought us trouble was the Skeleton's Dungeon Guardian title, as it provided rapid recovery to both its HP and MP so long as it remained within the dungeon.

Seriously? God damn, dealing with something with the ability to regenerate this much is a huge pain in the ass... On second thought, telekinetic catapult might not be the best idea, as using it would revealing it, which in turn could potentially allow the skeleton to react to it when we need it the most. Our only choice was to slowly and steadily whittle him down.

Another thing that gave us trouble was that one autocast skill it had. The skill did exactly what its name implied, and continued to bombard us with magical projectiles. And since it was automatic, it would continue to function regardless of what the skeleton itself was doing. It would often end up getting in our way the moment we got it into any sort of favourable position. The spells it fires off are pretty powerful too, so our HP tends to take a nosedive every time we get hit.

We were able to fight back by putting points into magical barriers. Through their use, we managed to not only nullify the spells automatically cast by the skeleton, but also some of its other attacks as well, a welcome miscalculation.

The tradeoff was that a decent chunk my precious self evolution points ended up getting used up in the process.

「Haaaa!」

「Kakakaka!」

Ring!

The duel continued for over ten minutes.

Ring ring!

The sound made by the clash of steel on steel was occasionally drowned out by the ringing of a glass bell. Each ring was accompanied by an activation of the Black Cat Armour set's instant death prevention passive. In other words, the skeleton's magic sword, Deathgaze, must've had some sort of instant kill ability, but it was negated through and through.

Thank you Gallus! I'll definitely treat you to a good drink or two once we meet up in Ulmut!

Even with the anti-instant-kill passive, Fran was still at a disadvantage. The enemy we were facing off against was a member of an undead, a walking corpse that knew not of fatigue or exhaustion. Fran, on the other hand, would suffer from its effects. The longer we fought, the bigger a toll would be taken on both her body and mind. That said, the ten odd minutes this exchange had lasted had not been spent in vain.

『It's magic stone is probably somewhere in its head.』

「Nn!」

I'd left all the fighting to Fran whilst instead spending my time observing the skeleton and searching for its magic stone.

Since it had no sense of pain and could regenerate rapidly, the skeleton straight up tanked most of our attacks. The only exception was when we targeted its head; it would always defend against anything aimed towards its cranium.

『Looks like it's invulnerabilities ended up giving us a hand!』

「Haaa!」

「Kakakakakakakaka!」

That said, it wasn't going to just let us attack its sole vital point.

Our knowledge of that point, however, caused the battle's intensity to suddenly rise to a whole new level. Fran focused the entirety of her assault on the skeleton's head while the skeleton defended against her attacks and concentrated on countering them.

「Ha!」

「Kaka!」

「There!」

「Kakkaka!」

The skeleton focused every last bit of its attention on Fran's attacks, a fatal mistake.

『Urushi!』

「Woof!」

「Ka!?!」

Urushi hadn't been able to provide much support due to how quickly and erratically the two melee fighters had been moving about, so instead of focusing on long ranged bombardment, he ended up sneaking into Fran's shadow. There, he waited until the most opportune moment: now.

He extended his head out from within the shadows and grabbed ahold of the skeleton's leg.

「Master! Now!」

『Here we go!』

I finally reveal my trump card and launch myself with a telekinetic catapult from point blank range.

『Oryaaaa!』

It didn't matter how strong it was or how fast it reacted. The skeleton wouldn't be able to dodge the attack; it was done for — or at least it should've been.

「Kakakaaaa!」

Shiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiine!

「Kya!」

「Whimper.」

『Wha-!』

Light erupted from the skeleton's body and blew us back just as we were about to emerge victorious. What a tremendous amount of magical energy!

I quickly scanned our surroundings in order to figure out exactly what was going on; the skeleton was already on the move.

「Kakakakakakaka!」

「Ua!」

『Fran!』

The skeleton moved so quickly that it almost seemed to vanish on the spot. Before I knew it, it'd already ran up to Fran, who had yet to recover from the last attack she received. She quickly drew her phantom blade, but the skeleton knocked it out of her hands with but a single strike.

I quickly started moving towards her right as the skeleton began to swing it's blade once more. The weapon moved with an incredible speed. I didn't know if I could make it in time.

『Uraaaaaaa!!!』

The sound of steel on steel echoed throughout the room yet again

I managed to force my way between them at the very last moment. I didn't have enough power to fully deflect the blow, and I was sent flying yet again. Luckily though, I was able to buy Fran enough time to get back up.

『You still okay?』

「Nn!」

The skeleton continues to attack, but Fran manages to grab ahold of me and defend.

「Kaka! Kakaka!」

「Kuh!」

「Ka!」

「Ua!」

『Middle Heal!』

God damn! Fran's started to get pushed back. She's been taking more damage than I can heal, and all that damage has been piling up. All the magical barriers I have to keep casting have also taken their toll on my mana. Why did this god damn skeleton suddenly power up so much!?

—
Appraisal!

Race: Legendary Fighter Skeleton, Undead, Magic Beast

Lv. 24

State: Guardian, Latent Potential Unlocked

HP: 1229/1663

MP: 988

STR: 647 → 1137

VIT: 713 → 1213

AGI: 436 → 936

INT: 289 → 789

MGC: 521 → 1021

DEX:550 → 1050

What the shit!? All its stats rose by 500? Seriously? Its strength, vitality, magic power and dexterity are all over a thousand too. What the hell! Talk about overpowered bullshit!

Its current state says that it has its latent potential unlocked too. That's probably because of that Latent Potential Release skill it's got. Let's take a look.

Latent Potential Release: Unlocks the user's latent potential. Gains stats based on how much room the user has to grow. Since it pushes the user to its limits, this skill will drain the user's life force throughout its activation. The user is also required to provide some sort of compensation. Compensation will vary from user to user.

Now that I take a second look, I realize that the skeleton's HP is plummeting at an incredible rate. That's nice and all, but with the way things are going, Fran will probably collapse before the skeleton actually manages to use its remaining hp.

「Kakaka!」

「Ugh!」

Shit! Why the hell is it so strong! I have to use Telekenesis every time it attacks just to stop myself from flying out of Fran's hands.

「Woof!」

「Kaka!」

「Whimper!」

Its reaction speed seems to have risen as well. Urushi was cut down the moment he emerged from Fran's shadow and attempted to attack.

『Urushi, fall back!』

「W-Woof.」

Urushi musters up whatever strength he can and dives back into Fran's shadow. Thankfully, the skeleton's attacks aren't able to follow it there.

「Reverse Undead!」

Jean's voice rings throughout the room right as the skeleton's blade passes through where Urushi had been just a moment before. The spell he cast was one with a powerful effect; it could completely obliterate undead creatures. It should be even capable of turning high tier undead into nothing but dust.

But it failed.

「Curses, it is as I feared. My magic has no effect.」

「Haaa!」

「Kakakakakakaka!」

Fran and the skeleton continued to exchange blows, but her HP was still dropping much faster than the undead's. It was gradually but steadily driving us into a corner.

Chapter 76: On the Edge

76. On the Edge

The Legendary Skeleton had become overwhelmingly powerful after releasing its latent potential.

It delivered strike after strike, each with all the power and technique of a master swordsman. Its movements were so fast that it was near impossible to keep track of. Even the spells it automatically fired off from time to time had been powered up. Not even my max leveled magic barriers could stop them anymore.

Urushi had already long been defeated, and Jean's magic simply didn't work on it. It was just far too powerful.

「Ha!」

「Ka!」

Fran's being pressured to the point where she can no longer do anything but defend. Her HP continued to drop as the skeleton attacked with a storm-like assault. It's goal was obviously to end her before it exhausted all its strength.

Fran managed to dodge each fatal strike by the only the slightest bit. The situation didn't look good for her, but, she didn't give up. Her eyes almost seemed to glimmer as she searched for an opportunity to take back the momentum.

『You should probably use Skill Taker.』

「Nn!」

To be honest, I wanted to save it a bit more so we could use it on whatever bosses lay in wait for us after this one, but, it didn't seem like we really had any other choice. Using it now isn't all that detrimental though, seeing as how Fran and I can both use the skill once each. Besides, we've got a trump card up ours sleeves anyways.

That said, I didn't even really know whether or not skill taker would work. I even had to muddle over which skill to steal. Latent Potential Release might not deactivate even if we steal it, but stealing a different skill would allow him to keep his current stats regardless, so I didn't have much of a choice but to at least give it a shot.

『Use it now!』

「Ha!」

「Ka?」

Fran activates Skill Taker and targets the skeleton's Latent Potential Release. Hopefully this'll drop its stats back down to what they normally are....

〈Skill Taker's current target cannot be stolen. Process Failed.〉

Wait, what the hell!?

Skill Taker's effect is as follows: Skill Taker: Lv Max. Steals rarity level 10 and below skills with a success rate of 100%. Can be used once per target. Cooldown: 18 days. Range: Skill level * 1 meter.

We're still in the midst of a melee, so there's no way the skeleton's out of range. Latent Potential Release doesn't have a level either, so that shouldn't be the issue, which means that the skill's rarity has to be at least 11. Shit, seriously!? Or wait, is it because it's classified as an extra skill? Is it possible that we can't steal those?

「Kakkaka!」

「Ku... The skill...?」

『It failed!』

「Again.」

Fran tries to use the skill again.

「...Can't!」

But she wasn't able to. It seemed that failing to take a skill also consumed one of the skill's usages. Fran won't be able to use skill taker for another 18 days!

I could always try using mine...but it'd probably be better to change up our strategy a little. It was time for me to pull out my trump card!

『Fran, I'm going to do that』

「Nn!」

I start putting points into the Divine Sword Art skill and raised it all the way to Lv 5 in one go. It was a trick was one that Fran and I thought up whilst journeying through the dungeon. Its purpose was to catch the enemy off guard, and to that end, we purposefully left it at Lv 5 instead of pointing it all the way. That way, we'd be able to use the exact same trick in the future as well.

「Kaka?」

「Ha!」

「Ka-Kaka!?!」

Fran's movements undergo a visible change as her knowledge of blade deepens. Every step she takes, every motion she executes becomes much more precise. Just a moment prior, the two were swordsmen on par with each other. But, Fran had easily surpassed the skeleton in a matter of moments.

Based on what we've experienced, a three skill level difference would lead to an gap in strength too wide to be crossed. The reason we chose to boost the skill's level by four was to make up for the difference in stats. That said, the skeleton still had the advantage. It felt no fatigue, and its body was effectively immortal.

However, the sudden change in Fran's abilities threw it off and momentarily dulled its movements.

And thus, we were given one last chance.

「Haaaa!!!」

Fran activated Impact Slash, a Lv 1 divine sword technique. Though the skill had a bit of a recovery delay after it, it was still an impressive one, a full forced right to left horizontal cut packed with nothing but pure power. The two of us worked together to combine her Magical Convergence and my Sorcery so that we could cloak the strike with a Wind Blade Overboost. The attack was truly one with every last fibre of our beings behind it; it was several times more powerful than anything else we'd ever done in the past.

But even so, the skeleton still managed to deflect it. What monstrous strength!

Its arms were fast. At this rate, it'd be able to get a hit in before us. We'd be in trouble.

Or at least that's how things would've been.

『We weren't thinking of finishing you off with just that one hit either!』

「Nn.」

『Sorry about this, Fran.』

「Doesn't matter.」

Impact Slash would normally end with an opening because the user would have to twist their hips a full ninety degrees whilst delivering the swing.

But I forced the skill to end a bit earlier than usual by stockpiling and then suddenly releasing a bunch of telekinetic force. This allowed us to cancel the technique's post-cast delay, at the cost of sending all the force and shock right back up Fran's arms.

And the result?

A series of loud cracks resounded throughout the boss room.

Fran's arms broke, and her muscle fibres were torn to shreds. The noises that accompanied the event made me feel discomfort, and the thought it was my own fault even more so.

But even despite Fran's current condition, we still needed to deliver the finishing blow.

『Frannn!』

「Urahhh!」

Though her arms were screaming in agony, Fran managed to activate Snake Slash, a Lv 1 sword art. Though I could hear her arms breaking as she thrust the blade, I boosted the attack's speed with telekinesis. We couldn't afford to hold anything back, even the slightest bit.

Impact slash had thrown the skeleton off completely, it had yet to right its stance.

「Aaaaahhhh!」

「Kakka!」

The hell!? Even though we'd managed to completely mess up the skeleton's posture, it was still able to react in time by tilting its head backwards. Shit! I'm not going to make it!

Damn it, what do I do? Is there any way for me to.... Wait! Yes! I know exactly what to do!

『Here we gooooo! Shapeshift!!』

I thin my blade in order to elongate it by approximately 20cm. My form becomes less like that of a longsword and warps into something akin to a long estoc. The process cost me a whole 200 mana, but it was well worth it. I'm really grateful I managed to get my hands on this skill!

「Ka!!」

The skeleton's completely run out of options. I flew straight through it's skull and split it's magic stone in two.

「Ka... Ka」

The legendary skeleton finally stops moving.

「Kakakakakaaa」

And then, it laughed. It laughed an ominous, unsettling cackle as its body collapsed underneath itself. The crimson skeleton crumbled into not but a pile of bone, as if all its prior actions had been nothing more than an illusion.

But even then, it still gave off a ghostly impression, as if it could rise up again at any given moment. As expected of a B level threat.

「Ugh....」

『Alright, I'll fix you right now, Fran. Greater Heal!』

「Are you all alright?」

「Woof woof!」

It was a tough battle, but, winning it paid off. the skeleton's magic stone was worth over three hundred magic stone points, and I managed to get ahold of it's appraisal jamming, spirit control, and magic resist, amongst many other useful skills.

We should be able to save Latent Potential Release for whenever we need a trump card.

The skill's effect is supposed to change based on the user, so I'm kind of curious how much it'll have an effect on Fran and I. I wish we could test it right now, but it costs HP, has a few other requirements and even has a 24 hour cooldown, so I'll have to just hang on to it for now.

「I'm...fine.」

『Are you sure? Does it hurt anywhere?』

「Nn. Fine.」

「Woof woof?」

Urushi licks Fran's arms. He also seems to be concerned about her as well.

「Thanks.」

「Woof!」

Jean went to go retrieve the skeleton's bones.

『Can you use those for anything?』

「These bones hold great value for use as a catalyst in the practice of necromancy. They alone more than make up for every last bit of this expedition's cost. Hahahaha! I thank you greatly.」

『I guess that means you can use potions and the like as freely as you want now.』

「Whatever did you plan to do with the skeleton's equipment?」

『I don't know. Didn't think about it yet.』

「I've no need for its sword or cloak, so I shall pass these two items to you. That said, I would very much like to keep ahold of the armour, orihalcum is

a material that mages like myself find to be quite useful after all.」

『Sounds good to me. You sure though?』

Jean was the one who made the request for us to come along in the first place. I wouldn't have minded even if he decided to take all the loot for himself. I was quite grateful that he was willing to split it with us though.

Chapter 77: The Phantom King

77 The Phantom King

Thirty minutes had passed since we defeated the Legendary Skeleton, but we were still sitting around in its room. Fran and Jean were restoring their MP through potions, but I was stuck waiting for mine to naturally regenerate.

I was still far from ready to explore despite the fact that we'd already rested up quite a decent bit. My durability was at half, and I had less than 500 MP remaining.

Fran's armour had almost been completely torn to shreds, so Jean summoned a skeleton to repair it. He was so prepared for any given situation that he even had the necessary magic crystal on hand.

I decided to use this time to inspect a few of the skills I gained throughout the dungeon's exploration.

The ones I looked at first were the ones I got from the Legendary Skeleton. Specifically, I focused on Appraisal Jamming and Autocast before looking into three of the skills I got from other parts of the dungeon, namely, Mana Emission, Physical Barrier, Herculean Strength. All five of these skills were currently Lv 1.

The first skill I tried to use was naturally Appraisal Jamming. And as I expected, the skill's functions seemed relatively limited because it was still stuck at Lv 1. Like other informatic-type skills, it wouldn't be able to prove itself useful unless I pointed it.

The spells Autocast were pretty weak too. A kid could do the same amount of damage if they just chucked a pebble at something. Yeah, I don't really

know what I expected from a Lv 1 skill.

Mana emission did exactly what it said it did, and allowed me to emit magical energy. I could use it for both offense and defense by either firing it off like I would a bullet or spreading it around me like I would a barrier. It was a great skill, but again, it wasn't really able to do all that much at Lv 1.

Physical Barrier was pretty much the same as one of the skills I already had, Magical Barrier. The only difference was that the former had better defense against physical attacks, whereas the latter had better defense against magic.

The Herculean Strength skill was an active buff. It would temporarily increase the user's strength upon use. I'm not really sure what to feel about the numbers though, they seemed kind of pathetic. The Lv 1 version would only raise the stat by 2 for 10 minutes, but I am kind of curious as to what would happen if I pointed it.

Honestly speaking, none of the skills I gained would really help us much in a fight, Latent Potential Release aside, that is.

I didn't mind though. All the skirmishes and boss battles we've experienced throughout the dungeon have allowed Fran and Urushi to level up 10 and 15 times respectively. Those level ups alone have more than increased our combat prowess by more than enough.

「Nom nom.」

「Chomp Chomp.」

「Splendid, another meal as delectable as could be.」

Fran, Urushi and Jean ate as we rested. The three were all greedily shoving pieces of my special fried chicken down their throats, though I guess it'd be called fried monster instead, seeing as how it was made out of meat harvested from a variety of magic beasts instead of well, you know, chicken. It seemed that fried foods were exceptionally difficult to come by, and now that I think about it, I can't seem to recall ever seeing anyone ever

bread anything before frying it – though I have seen people dumping food in piping hot oil before. The fried foods I made were apparently so uncommon that they even caught Jean by surprise.

Urushi was especially overjoyed. He got way more than usual because both Fran and Jean continued to pass him bones as they finished with their meat.

「Hmm... it appears as if Fly's discovered another door. Hahahaha! And this time, he's found the dungeon core behind it!」

「Boss?」

「Allow me just a moment to answer that question for you.」

Jean pauses.

「...」

『What's wrong?』

「I've lost Fly's signal.」

「Killed?」

「It appears so, but he's already informed me of the path we should follow. And so, I shall take the lead.」

The monsters on the dungeon's tenth floor were pretty much exactly the same as the ones on the ninth, but we had an easier time dealing with them. We knew that we were about to finish the dungeon, so we started pushing forward with renewed vigour whilst also using our items more generously.

「Behold, companions of mine! That door right there is what marks the boss' room.」

We finally managed to reach the dungeon's last boss after three entire days worth of exploration.

I absorbed quite a few magic stones during all the skirmishing we did on our way here, so I managed to recover almost all my durability alongside 2000 or so MP.

Fran's movements have gone up a notch as well. The fight with the Legendary Skeleton had provided her with quite a bit of combat experience.

But despite our improvements, we continued to keep our guards up.

「Boss?」

「Fly was not able to provide us any information, but there is simply no way the room would be left unguarded.」

『The dungeon master's probably in the core room as well.』

The dungeon master might turn out to be something pretty powerful given the scale of the dungeon he's managed to create. He's even able to order B ranked magic beasts around, so we know for sure that he can't just be some random pushover.

「I require some time to prepare.」

『Prepare what?』

「Wahahahahaha! I'm glad you asked. The answer is of course, my trump card. Its incurs quite the cost, so I wished to avoid its application whenever possible. However, the current state of affairs calls for me to prepare for the worst.」

Jean was right. We needed to do everything in our power to ready ourselves for the battle ahead...except I didn't know what or how to prepare.

「Raise skills?」

『That's one thing I was considering...』

I still had 25 self evolution points remaining, but I had to make sure I used them wisely.

『I think it'd be better for me to save them for now so I can point whatever we end up needing to beat the boss.』

The floor boss had to be at least a threat level B, and we didn't have the slightest clue as to what we were up against. Pointing stuff right now might end up screwing us over instead of doing us any good.

「Fran, Master, I would like to request that you retrieve a few of the items I left within your dimensional storages.」

『Which ones?』

「The first I would like to retrieve would be the pendant.」

The pendant? Oh yeah, there was something like that wasn't there?

「This?」

「Precisely. I'd like to you wear it.」

What the hell? Whoever made that thing has to have some issues, I swear. There's an incredibly realistic zombie face plastered onto the pendant.

「That pendant functions to protect the user in the case they take a fatal blow.」

『Seriously?』

It totally looks like the type of item you'd use to curse someone or summon a zombie or something like that.

「Hahaha! Your doubts are well placed. I made the same mistake in the past, and only purchased the item because I'd assumed it would have some use in necromancy.」

『Well, yeah. I mean it's literally a zombie head on a pendant.』

「It's effect is quite incredible regardless though, is it not?」

The pendant would stop the user from dying once whilst restoring both their HP and MP back up to half. The latter half of the effect was impressive, and evidenced that the pendant was a pretty expensive item. Other, similar items would often just leave the user with a single point of HP.

『Well, if you're sure you don't mind, we gratefully accept.』

「No problem. That aside, I would also like you to retrieve several other items as well.」

「Which?」

「Most of the amulets. I would prefer that you wear them as well, in fact.」

Fran ended up getting about 10 different magical amulets. I couldn't really feel much magical energy emanating from them, but they were still pretty nice to have for the sake of peace of mind.

「And with that out of the way, I too must prepare myself for battle.」

We bring out a bunch of different tools and medicines as per Jean's request.

One of the items he picked was a large, rectangular box. Inside of it was a sinister looking, spine shaped staff topped off by a skull. It suited Jean pretty well because of how ominous he looked, and really amplified that necromancer vibe he had going for him.

I quickly swept over the staff and appraised it.

Name: Unknown

Huh, doesn't seem like I can appraise it.

「Hahahahaha! This staff is a bit special. You will require more than a merely the appraisal skill to see its worth.」

「Why?」

「Its name is Aidoneus' Blessing, a named item I happened to procure in a dungeon during one of my adventures.」

It seemed that the staff's stats were so high that I'd need some sort of upgraded or special appraisal skill to be able to see through it.

『It's ability is t-』

「Kukakakakakakaka!」

『Wha-!!』

「Nn?」

「Woof?」

What was that? It sounded like a human laugh, and at first I thought it came from the staff, but Jean seemed surprised as well, so that can't be right.

「Kukakakaka!」

The laugh was strangely irritating too. Just hearing it was enough to annoy me.

I quickly began scanning the room for the voice's source.

And that was when the situation took a sudden turn for the worse.

A loud “shing” resounded through the corridor, accompanied by a bright, glowing light.

『A magic circle?!』

My crisis sense started to go off as a magic circle appeared within the hallway.

Shit!

『Fran, Urushi!』

Fuck, it doesn't look like we're going to be able to avoid it.

The magic circle began to expand. It only took a few seconds for it to grow to the point where it filled the entire corridor with blinding light.

「You've kept me waiting for far too long. If you won't come, then I'll just bring you right to me! Kukakakakaka!」

Our surroundings had completely changed by the time the light had disappeared. We were now standing within a large room, several times larger than any other we've come across in the dungeon thus far. But despite that, all our gazes were focused but on a single target.

Or rather, we had no choice but to direct our attention straight ahead. We simply didn't have the liberty to pick any other option.

「Kuakakaka! Welcome, intruders of mine.」

The figure that stood before us was emanating an overwhelming amount of magical energy. His very existence seemed to lay ridiculous pressure upon us, but most importantly, he was implausibly revolting to gaze upon.

His threat level was estimated to be a B, but I simply couldn't see him as something that stood shoulder to shoulder with the Legendary Skeleton we defeated earlier. He was so powerful that I probably would've shat myself if I wasn't a sword.

The colour drained from Fran's face as she tightened her grip on my handle. She was able to stand up to a demon without so much as even flinching, but the being before us was so intimidating that she had started to tremble in fear.

.

『Don't worry, Fran.』

Seeing Fran like that calmed me down in an instant. Why the hell was I getting all panicked? I couldn't let myself get carried away, I still had to

protect her. For the time being, I decided to consider our escape options. We could still use the Warp Feather if it really came down to it.

『We're going to be making a break for it, Fran.』

(Understood.)

『Jean, let's get the hell out of here.』

「Hold that thought for just a moment.」

Fran had already grabbed ahold of Jean's arm, and I had already readied the Warp Feather. There wasn't any way in hell we'd be able to fight the monster standing before us.

But.

『The hell!?!』

The Warp Feather refused to activate. I didn't know what happened, nor did I know what to say. I should've had more than enough magical power.

「Kukakaka! Unfortunately for you, this room was designed to prevent escape through teleportation. You have no choice but to fight me to the death! Kukakaka! Kukakakakakakaka!」

The monster, the lich standing before us laughed joyously as he announced a cruel declaration.

Translator here, got a few things to say.

Firstly, this chapter effectively wraps up my initial burst. From now on, I'll be translating at a more sustainable pace. 1 or 2 chapters per week is my current estimate, but this is subject to change based on how busy I end up being.

Secondly, the translations can get pretty far from literal. There are some places that the Japanese doesn't work that well in English, so I end up splitting things up and even occasionally adding in an extra line or two here and there. I occasionally cut a bit of stuff out too. The only thing I really work towards retaining is a scene's undertone. My opinion is that LN/WN are the only medium that truly allows for this, as screwing around with the lines can mess up Manga and VN pretty hard. What I mean to say is, if you're confused as to why something was translated a certain way, feel free to hit me up and ask. I don't mind making things even less literal for the sake of flow and shit, so feel free to throw suggestions too. I'm pretty used to translating, and I've done something along the lines of 70k lines of text in my time, but I'm not used to not having an editor, so yeah.

Now if you'll excuse me, I've got a date with US border control. ||| (°Δ°)
|||

Chapter 78: Vs Lich

78. Vs Lich

As the light faded away, it left behind it nothing but a single undead creature. The sheer amount of magical energy that emanated from its body made me feel as if I was getting goosebumps. What stood before us was the most powerful undead known to man. A lich.

Basic Information

Name: Lich

Undead

Magic Beast

Dungeon Master

Lv 23

Stats

HP: 863

MP: 2467

STR: 134

VIT: 337

AGI: 366

INT: 1009

MGC: 1098

DEX: 366

Skills

Encantation Shortening: Lv 7

Dread: Lv 4

Fear: Lv 4

Regeneration: Lv 6

Spirit Control: Lv Max

Ghost Magic: Lv Max

Hell Magic: Lv 4

Vengeful Spirit

Magic Manipulation

Equipment

Tattered Robe

—

The Lich species was one whose name was spread far and wide, and for good reason. They were far more powerful than any other species of undead.

Looking at its stats confused me a bit though. Is that really all it's got? It'd seemed so intimidating and had so much pressure that I'd almost wanted to classify it as an A ranked threat. I mean, I know that every lich is going to be a bit different, but this guy here, his status seems to show that he's only a B ranked threat at best.

「Overload: Summon Undead」

The lich started summoning undead before we were able to fully recover from the shock of being unable to port out.

「Why don't you face off against these first? Kukakaka! Don't die too easily now.」

「OoooooOoooOooOOOOoo...」

「Ahhhhhhh...」

「Graaooooooo...」

The lich simultaneously summoned 10 powerful undead creatures. Even the weakest amongst them was ranked C; half were strong enough to be classified as B level threats. They were just as powerful as the legendary skeleton we had just struggled to defeat just a bit earlier in the day.

『Fran』

「Nn. Ready to go all out.」

We focused our magical energies as we readied ourselves for a battle to the death. We would have to thin out their numbers with magic whilst hoping for an opening with which we could attack the lich.

Or at least that's what I'd planned before I noticed Jean stepping up in front of us.

「Leave this to me.」

『You sure...?』

「Absolutely. I shall not fall to the likes of mere pawns so long as I have my staff.」

Jean's face was plastered with his usual, brazen smile, but I couldn't help but feel as if he seemed a bit more grim and resolute than usual.

「Hahahaha! Behold, my trump card!」

Jean rises to face the incoming undead head on.

「Aidoneus' Blessing, commence activation!」

The skull atop the staff almost seems to react to his words; its jaw dropped open with a click, and its eyes seemed to gain a sort of dubious lustre.

「OOOOOOOOOooooooooOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOooooooooOOOO
OOoOOoooo」

『The hell?!』

「Nn?」

「Woof...」

A sort of half-hymn half-moan emerges from within the skull. It was hard to describe; it sounded mysterious, creepy, and a bit like a grudgeful prayer all at the same time.

It was quite a strange thing to hear.

「OOOOOooooooooOOoooo」

「Aidoneus' Blessing, grant peace to those unable to achieve salvation. Sing them a melody of love, hate, and resentment!」

A blueish-white light flowed out from within the staff.

「Escape, companions! Escape the light!」

The undead attempted to follow the lich's orders, but there wasn't any way for them to leave the room. They were eventually caught by the staff's brilliance.

And when the light finally faded, the summoned undead followed and disappeared back into nothingness.

『Eh?』

「Amazing.」

「It took you only an instant to rid me of my companions?! Kuakakakakaa!! What was that?!」

「The last line you uttered is one that I would like to return to you.」

「And what exactly is that supposed to mean?」

「Hahaha! This staff is a divine artifact that possesses the ability to cause any and every sort of undead to ascend to the heavens. And so, by that logic, you too should have been influenced by its effects. Why exactly are you still here?」

Jean coughed out clot after clot of blood as he spoke. His face had paled to the point where he himself almost looked like he'd already become a member of the undead.

『Jean!』

「Here. Shoulder.」

「Thank you kindly.」

「Kukakaka! I see now. The item you possess allows you to use a high level, area of effect purification spell by consuming your own life force. It looks like getting rid of all those high level undead did quite the number on you! Kukakaka!」

Damn, Jean must've completely exhausted himself. Casting ascension on Andy alone was already enough to make him feel pretty tired. The spell he just cast probably probably drained him of everything he had. It might've even cut into his life span.

『I'll heal you r-』

「Do not bother. The damage I sustained comes not from injuries but rather plain exhaustion.」

「This then.」

「Thank you.」

Fran pulls out a stamina potion and hands it over to Jean. Stamina potions were a bit special in the sense that they didn't recover HP, but instead directly targeted and recovered one's life force.

「So what will your next move be? It appeared as if your trump card had no effect on me.」

Why did it have no effect anyways? The staff was supposed to get rid of all undead unconditionally. He shouldn't be fine. Is he not an undead? No, that's not possible, his status says that he's a lich.

「As powerful as it may be, that tool of yours has no effect on a being of my caliber!」

That might in fact be true. Liches are practically thought of as kings amongst the undead. There's always the possibility of the item not working simply because they're in a class of their own.

「Kuhahaha! Tell me, how does despair feel?」

The lich continued its incessant verbal assault, but it had little effect. We were far from hopeless.

「We cut him, we win.」

『Yeah, that's the way!』

Fran closes the gap between her and the lich and disallows him the chance to summon anymore undead.

「Ha!」

「Kukakakaka! How pointless!」

What? The sword's just passing through him? None of his skills were supposed to do anything like that...

「Raah!」

『Fire Arrow!』

Fran tried to use an elemental blade attack while I tried to use magic, but neither had any sort of effect. Both passed right through him, just like initial slash. At first, I thought that the lich was just an illusion or something, but that's impossible given that he's already used magic. And on top of that, he even counterattacked the moment our strikes passed right through him.

「Gah!」

『Middle Heal』

All he did was throw a single punch, but that was enough to halve Fran's HP. He was definitely more than just an illusion.

Wait, how did he do that much damage with only 134 STR? He's supposed to be weak as hell, and it's not like he used any skills or magic either. How the hell did he manage to chunk Fran so badly?

『There's got to be some sort of trick to this.』

「Nn. Strong.」

There has to be something in his status page that I'm missing. Or actually, his status page could be wrong altogether. Everything would totally check

out if he had some type of appraisal jamming skill.

『What a pain in the ass.』

(What now?)

『He's definitely using some sort of trick to phase through our attacks, so we might be able to steal it from him if we use Skill Taker, but...』

I can't really affirm the specifics because Appraisal isn't working properly.

『Jean, have you tried that skill of yours?』

(It does not work. Soul Seeing eyes has no effect on the undead.)

『Have you thought of any sort of strategy then?』

(I haven't anything on the level of a strategy, but I would like the two of you to buy me a slight bit of time if possible.)

『Will buying you time let us beat this guy?』

(I cannot say for sure, but I would like you to trust me on this.)

Well, it seems like he's got something up his sleeve. He isn't all that confident about it, but we're already grasping at straws here, so might as well go along with it.

(Got it.)

『We'll end up stalling for you if we just fight it anyways, so why not.』

(You have my thanks.)

An hour passed.

We were still fighting against wave after wave of undead.

「What's the matter? Are you tired already? You're starting to get stiff.」

「Not... yet!」

「Woof!」

「Splendid! How splendid! I cannot wait until I see the look on your face when all that hope takes a sudden turn and transforms into despair. You will make for fine undead! Kukakakaka!」

Our attacks have yet to show any effect on the lich. We've tried all sorts of things during our battle with the undead he summoned; we threw as many spells and attacks his way as we could, but each and every single one would just end up slipping right through him.

The only reason we were able to last this long in the first place was because he was just toying with us. He himself wouldn't do anything at all, and he even let Fran heal up when necessary.

It seems that he's more interested in crushing our spirits and turning us into undead than defeating us – which makes sense. I'm pretty sure a necromancer as powerful as Jean could probably even end up turning into a Lich.

But thanks to that, we were able to buy Jean enough time to complete his preparations.

「Come on, why'd you stop moving? I'm going to summon even more undead at this rate.」

「Woof woof!」

Urushi fired a Dark Lance at the lich, but as expected, it was to no avail.

「Yes, yes, exactly. You must keep attacking at all times. Now, why don't you show me what it is you've been plotting this whole time?」

「Will definitely hit you.」

「Kukakakaka! Go ahead. If you can, that is.」

I was already down to about half my mana. The same applied to Fran, Urushi and Jean as well.

『Still not done yet, Jean?』

(Just a second longer! And for certain this time!)

After repeating a phrase he's said time and time again, Jean finally reveals why he had us stall for time.

A loud explosion rings throughout the hall as it begins to shake with the intensity of a magnitude 5 earthquake. What the hell!? Did someone drop a bomb in the dungeon or something?!

「W-What in the world are you doing?!」

The lich's usual, haughty attitude vanishes in an instant.

「It seems to have worked.」

「You did that?」

「T'was a subordinate of mine.」

It looked like what Jean was waiting for this whole time was for one of his subordinates to destroy something.

「T-The Phantom Flame is losing its magical power!? M-My forlorn desires, they're disappearing!!? Arghhhhhhhhhh!!!!」

『What's happening to him?』

「He should be growing weaker as we speak. His strength stemmed from his ability to draw from the dungeon's mana supply, and let us just say that I've arranged for it to be removed from right under his feet.」

『You should've just told us you were doing something like that.』

「My apologies. I would not have been able to destroy it lest you distracted the lich.」

「And?」

「Deceiving one's allies is how one truly begins to deceive the enemy. I've no idea as to whether or not he possessed any sort of skill that would allow him to read minds, so I felt it better to hide it from you.」

「You bastard! You shall not be forgiven! I no longer have any need to turn the lot of you into subordinates! I'll crush your limbs and have you tormented by the undead until you wish to have never been born! I refuse to let you know peace, even in death!!」

Chapter 79: Grudge

79. Grudge

The destruction of his dungeon's innards caused the lich to flare up in rage.

It was kind of weird. His face was well, literally just a skull, but I could still somehow tell he was angry.

『He's probably got a few more openings now that he's gotten weaker.』

「Nn!」

「What's with that look on your face? Are you truly so foolish that you would even consider defeating me to be a possibility? Very well, I shall crush your hopes immediately. Use that appraisal skill of yours and behold.」

The lich's status page warped as he deactivated a skill and allowed me to properly appraise him.

Basic Information

Race: Lich

Undead

Magic beast

Dungeon Master

Lv. 71

Stats

HP: 4863

MP: 7467

STR: 934

VIT: 737

AGI: 666

INT: 2369

MGC: 4312

DEX: 1207

Skills

Skills

Incantation Shortening: Lv Max

Wind Magic: Lv 7

Appraisal Jamming: Lv 5

Dread: Lv 9

Fear: Lv 7

Regeneration: Lv Max

Space/Time Magic: Lv 7

Cursed Words: Lv 6

Instant Regeneration: Lv 4

Spirit Control: Lv Max

Hell Magic: Lv 8

Ghost Magic: Lv Max

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 9

Life Energy Detection: Lv 6

Life Energy Absorption: Lv 7

Water Magic: Lv Max

Greater Water Magic: Lv 3

Close Quarters Combat: Lv 7

Earth Magic: Lv Max

Greater Earth Magic: Lv 3

Mind Reading: Lv 4

Poison Magic: Lv 8

Fire Magic: Lv 6

Magic Detection: Lv 7

Magic Absorbtion: Lv 7

Dark Magic: Lv 5

Ignore Incantation

Resistance to Abnormal Status

Undead Strengthening

Unsealable

Magic Manipulation

Unique Skills

Grudge Absorption

Grudge Conversion

Anti-Appraisal Camouflage

Extra Skills

Greater Undead

Principle of Impurity

Titles

One who seeks revenge

One who bears many sins

Equipment

Robe of Resentment

『Shit... Make sure you stay focused, Fran.』

「Nn!」

Mother fucker! Why the hell was he that strong?! We were too naive, god damn. He could probably kill us in just a split second if he really wanted to.

That said, him showing us his status page allowed us to see why our attacks weren't actually hitting him.

(Master, I've come to understand why we were unable to deal him any damage. He's using his space/time magic. Specifically, he's likely using Dimension Shift.)

Dimension Shift seemed to be allowing him to temporarily move his body elsewhere. It was obviously a skill that ate up a huge amount of mana, so you normally wouldn't be able to keep using it, especially consecutively. The Lich, however, had the ability to completely nullify his incantations on top of a huge mana pool, so he could pretty much use it at will without experiencing any sort of drawback.

「Overload: Summon Undead」

The lich cast a spell and summoned a large number of undead. Unlike before, he wasn't planning to just wait around and mess with us anymore; he promptly brought forth 10 different legendary skeletons, each armed with a formidable, magic weapon. Thankfully, none of them were able to release their latent potential, at least.

「Torture them to death!」

All ten immediately began rushing us. Though the number of undead summoned was actually less than it was before, each individual was of a higher quality, and they even seemed to be decently coordinated.

「Summon: Greater Undead」

He even summoned an army of zombie bugs to go along with the skeletons, all of which immediately began to swarm Fran.

『Fuck! Go away goddammit!』

I tried to smack them away with wind magic, but they seemed not care and they gradually began to bog down Fran with nothing but sheer numbers.

「Hellblast!」

「Venom Bullet!」

「Gravitational Pressure!」

And to top things off, the lich even started firing high tier spells at us one after another without any sort of pause. Its ability to ignore incantations was doing it wonders.

「Guh!」

We erected magical barriers and tried our best to defend against his relentless assault, but we couldn't stop Fran from gradually accumulating damage.

『Fran! Dodge instead! Don't bother trying to block his attacks!』

「Nn.」

「Kakakaka!」

Fran tried to dodge the incoming spells, but all the undead refused to get out of her way. Her HP soon began to plummet; I wouldn't be able to heal her in time.

「Summon: High Tier Undead.」

Jean tried to give us a hand by summoning a subordinate of his own.

「Take the stage, Stephan!」

Sweet! Jean managed to summon an undead that was at least as powerful as the lich's legendary skeletons. It had some sort of appraisal block skill, so I couldn't appraise it, but the magical energy emanating from its body seemed to indicate that it was a solid B level threat.

The skeletons Fran was up against seemed to respond to it with surprise, and as a result, their movements temporarily dulled.

That said, the undead Jean summoned didn't actually appear to be all that strong. It was about the size and shape of a human child. If it didn't have pitch black holes in place of eyeballs, and I hadn't witnessed Jean summon it, I probably never would've thought it to be an undead at all, in fact.

「That's... How exactly did you managed to summon that?」

The lich was so shocked by Jean's summon that it stopped attacking.

The thing Jean had managed to summon was the Soul Eater. When the hell did he manage to get his hands on that anyways?

The Soul Eater was supposed to be one of the lich's subordinates, but for whatever reason, it was now obeying Jean instead.

The only two skills you actually need to take control of an undead are Spirit Control and Ghost Magic. That said, the Lich had more mana than Jean and its Spirit Control was higher level too, so it didn't really make sense for Jean to be able to wrestle control from it, regardless of how talented he was.

「I am a necromancer, you know? I've plenty of countermeasures when it comes to the undead.」

Apparently Stefan was actually the name of the Wraith that Jean was planning to use against the Soul Eater. His plan for said wraith was pretty easy see right through, given that it only had three skills: Undead Resist, Absorption Resist, and Erosive Fusion.

The first step was obviously to have the wraith get eaten by the Soul Eater. A normal undead would end up getting absorbed by the Soul Eater right there and then, but Stephan's skills would allow it to survive and then take control of it through the use of its Erosive Fusion.

Apparently, Jean had the Soul Eater eat Stephan last time he came here, but he thought the plan had ended in failure since the Soul Eater didn't seem to show any signs of being affected.

However, Stephan hadn't actually been defeated. Instead, he managed to slowly erode away at the Soul Eater over the course of several years before finally taking control of it.

When Jean finally made his way back to the dungeon, Stephan had telepathically informed him of what had happened.

「Kukakaka! How marvelous! Very well, I shall allow you to serve me after I end your life. I will make use of that mind of yours in order to fulfill my dearest wish.」

「I refuse.」

「You have no choice in the matter.」

Fran and I managed to group up with the Soul Eater and eliminate about half the skeletons while Jean bought us time with his conversation.

The Soul Eater was ridiculously powerful. It almost seemed immortal so long as it was up against the undead. The moment it touched any of them, it'd immediately absorb every last bit of their mana. They couldn't attack it without carefully plotting their next moves first.

The lich's attention had all been focused on Jean, so it had yet to move. The skeletons weren't doing as hot either, so it was pretty much now or never.

『Jean, I'm going to seal off his ability to use space/time magic. Can you use the staff? If that'll push you too hard, then w-』

(I don't mind.)

『Alright. Activate it whenever, we'll match your pace.』

(Understood.)

I begin to focus on the lich's movements as Jean raises his staff to the sky once more.

「Aidoneus' Blessing, commence activation!」

「That staff again? It won't work on me. Are you planning to use it to annihilate the skeletons? Please do, I'd like for you exhaust all your life energy. Your corpse will be in better condition that way.」

「Aidoneus' Blessing, grant peace to those unable to achieve salvation!」

『Skill Taker!』

Fuck yeah, it worked! I managed to steal his Lv 7 space/time magic!

「Sing them a melody of love, hate, and resentment!」

「It's pointless I sa—w-wait! What!?!」

The lich started to panic as his body was enveloped by the staff's light.

「Impossible! Impossible I say! I refuse to fall in a place like this!」

The lich screamed in agony from within the light; it had yet to vanish.

「Guaaaaaaaahhh! I'm getting purified!! My urge to exact revenge... is fading away! Arghhhhhhhhhhh!」

The lich was as strong as expected, it was taking quite a bit of time to ascend because of how strong it was... Or at least that was what I'd thought.

A bit of time passed, and the light faded away.

But the lich did not.

『Shit! The bastard managed to hang on.』

In fact, there was something strange going on with his body.

「Arrrrrrrrrrrrrrraaaaaaagggggggggghhhhhhhhhh!!!」

An incredible amount of magical energy was flowing into the lich from its surroundings, likely due to the fact that it was a dungeon master.

「Something's... wrong?」

「He's absorbing grudges from the undead spirits around him.」

「Meaning?」

Jean was too busy lying flat on the ground to answer Fran's question; he was completely out of breath. Though we gave him another stamina potion to down, he still didn't seem all that well. And so, Stephan had answered the question in his place. The fact that he was basically fluent made me feel as if he really was a human being.

「The Principle of Impurity is allowing him to absorb the malice bore by undead spirits around him and convert them into power. I personally am not affected as a result of my resistances, but I can't say the same for any of the other undead, nor what remains of the Furnace of Malice.」

The Furnace of Malice that Stephan was referring to was the thing he destroyed earlier. As implied by its name, it used malice produced by the undead as fuel and converted it to magical energy. The malice that the furnace ran on didn't really end up going anywhere after the furnace had been blown up, so it was pretty much just drifting around the dungeon.

Absorbing all that malice had managed to stop the lich from being purified by Aidoneus' Blessing, as the two effects basically ended up counteracting each other.

The lich's unique and extra skills allowed it to convert all of the absorbed malice into its own power.

「KUKAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAAAA!」

『So uh, is it just me or does he look a bit weird right now?』

「My guess would be that he absorbed more than he could handle. All that malice ended up turning into what is effectively a ball of nothing but fury and bloodlust. The lich itself has probably even lost the ability to think altogether.」

That seems just a bit bad. I mean like, won't he end up going berserk or something?

『All we need is one more push with Aidoneus' Blessing.』

「That's an impossible request. My lord's life wouldn't last.」

『Can't you use it or something then?』

「Named items can only be used by those that they approve of. I'm afraid my lord is the only one with said approval...」

Shit, so only Jean can use it? God damn.

Given no other choice, I try firing a bit of magic in the Lich's direction, but it ends up getting repelled by a black, miasma-like aura.”

「Arrrrrrrrrrrrrrraaaaaaaggggggggghhhhhhhhhh!!!」

Ooookay, this isn't looking good. All the hatred and curses that the lich sucked started to leak out of its body and overflow. Its black aura began to expand even further. I can tell at a glance that we were in a pretty bad spot.

「The malice he's gathered is so concentrated that it's began to take physical form. Be careful not to get swallowed up, any living things that do will likely perish immediately.」

Don't have to tell me that. Shit, what do I do? The Warp Feather wasn't going to work. Space/time magic probably wasn't going to work either. The Lich was unsealable, so I probably couldn't just dump him somewhere sealed off with space/time spells.

Stephan hurried over to where Jean was and lifted him up off the ground.

「I'll take care of My Lord, though I can't say I'm capable of doing the same for you...」

『Come on! Lend us a hand here!』

「Sorry.」

Both Jean and the Corpse Eater were swallowed by the dark miasma as the Lich's malice continued to surge and grow.

『Fran, deploy your magic barriers in front of you at full strength! Make sure you double layer it with purification magic!』

「Nn!」

『Shapeshift!』

I change my form to that of a large shield. The material that it's made of is rather thin because I had to stretch myself, but that didn't matter. I needed to make sure none of the miasma touched Fran. After changing forms, I overboosted the sorcerer skill and immediately created a magical barrier with all my strength behind it.

『Guuuuhhhhh!』

The magical barrier creaked under the force of the lich's malice; it looked as if it was about to break at any given moment.

My durability rapidly began to plummet as the barriers warped more and more out of shape.

「Mas...ter!」

『Fran!』

The malice was far too powerful. Fran's barrier was slowly being twisted out of shape as well; there was too much pressure on her for her to last. At this rate, she was going to end up getting swallowed up by the miasma.

Shit, what do I do? I still have a few points remaining, so I can probably throw them into something right now. But what? Do I point physical barrier? Purification magic? Fuck, what do I do!?

Wait, I still had a skill I'd yet to use, a skill that'd strengthen both my barriers and ability to purify.

『Fuck it, let's go! Latent Potential Release!』

A huge wave a magical energy suddenly surged from within me.

Chapter 80: OP System Announcer

80. OP System Announcer

I ended up using Latent Potential Release in order to fight back against the Lich's out-of-control negative energy.

Magical energy had begun to overflow from within my body. Sweet! We might actually be able to do this!

Wait, wait, holy shit! My durability is going down twice as quickly as it was before! I'm probably not even going to be able to last five minutes if this keeps up.

〈You are currently in a perilous situation. Action is advised.〉

Huh? Who the hell was that?

〈I am... _____. Error encountered. Unit name has been deleted by creator. Unit name is currently blank.〉

Er, that's not really what I meant. Like, are you a system announcement kinda thing or something?

〈Correct. The system announcement feature denoted by unit name "Master" is one of many tasks within the realm of my capabilities. The effect of the "Latent Potential Release" skill has temporarily restored me from the "frozen" state.〉

There's still quite a bit I want to ask, but this isn't the time for it. I have to do something to get us out of this shitty situation.

〈Unit name “Master” will be destroyed in 279 seconds. The status quo dictates that the possibility of the enemy unit ceasing the emission of its thoughts within the aforementioned time frame is gauged to be 13%. The possibility of unit name “Fran” losing all function is gauged to be 91%.〉

Holy crap. I should probably put points into my magical barriers or upgrade my purification skill so I can protect her. Argghhhh, which one should I pick? Shit! Hey System Announcer, which do you think is better?

〈Neither of the two previously proposed concepts will provide a solution. Thus, neither choice is recommended.〉

So both ideas suck?

〈Correct. Both options result in scenarios with approximately a 70% chance for unit name “Fran” to cease all function.〉

Then is there any sort of better option?

〈Yes. Would you like to proceed with an interaction that would result in a probability of unit name “Fran” retaining function?〉

Yes please!

〈Please grant an override. Access to your skills is required.〉

S-Sure. Do whatever you want!

〈Access acknowledged. Initializing interactions.〉

The system announcer seems to know much more than me, so I’ll guess I’ll just leave it to her. In fact, leaving everything to her feels like second nature, for some odd reason.

〈The space/time spell “Quick Zone” has been activated.〉

The spell’s effect was to speed up one’s perception, so its activation caused everything to start to move in what seemed like slow motion.

Oh wait, I get it now. The spell's use bought us quite a bit of time, so we'd be able to think our strategies through. Good job, system announcer.

〈Top priority has been placed on preserving unit name "Fran." "Fran" will now be safeguarded in the most optimal possible manner.〉

〈Five self evolution points have been used. The "Shapeshift" skill has evolved into the "Transform" skill.〉

Woah, she's using self evolution points?! Er, well, I guess I did tell her she could do whatever she wanted.

Thanks to that though, I only had 20 self evolution points remaining.

My body abided by the system announcer's will and transformed. My overall shape stayed pretty much the same; I remained a shield, but a part of me seemed to expand and wrap itself around Fran's frame. It looked like Transform allowed me to alter both my shape and mass as opposed to just the former.

I didn't just protect her from attacks that came directly from the front. My body also flowed into and filled any gaps in the Black Cat set she wore. I basically ended becoming a piece of armour myself.

Becoming her armour allowed me to do more than just protect her from physical attacks, it also allowed me to deploy a 360 degree magical barrier around her, thereby bolstering her defenses even further. The combination of my overboosted magical barrier and her own ended up creating quite the decent shield.

Oh shit! This is just like A**do! I'm not a sword or spear; I'm actually more like a gauntlet-type weapon now than anything seeing as how I'm attached to her by the hands and all that.

〈Computational power has dropped as a result of the transformation and barrier deployment. Five self-evolution points have been consumed. "Thought Division" has evolved into "Parallel Processing." Computing power has been restored.〉

Oh fuck it, I don't care anymore! Use as many points as you want, as long as it works!

〈Shortage of self-evolution points detected.〉

Well yeah, no shit! Look at how many you just used!

〈Six self-evolution points have been consumed. The Appraisal skill has been raised to its maximum level. Lacking prerequisites for the “Eye of Empyrea” skill. The skill acquisition process has been temporarily suspended.〉

So it seemed that she maxed out appraisal because she knew it could evolve. That said, I didn't seem to meet the requirements for said evolution.

〈Attempting to access the divine realm... Success. Bibliotheca fetched. Access lost; exchanged for information regarding the “Eye of Empyrea” skill. Building “Eye of Empyrea.” Success.〉

The divine realm? The hell is that? Is that supposed to be where God lives or something like that? And a bibliotheca is a library... right?

Though I had many questions, I refrained from asking any of them. It'd probably be better for me not to get in her way for the time being.

〈“Eye of Empyrea” activated. Legendary Skeletons successfully located. Activating “Transform.”〉

I had to admit that Eye of Empyrea was extremely effective. It allowed me to see through the Lich's overflowing malice. As a result, I developed a much better grasp of my surroundings.

Several thin strips of metal shot out from my body and homed in on the remaining legendary skeletons.

The metallic strands flew through the storm of curses and malice. They looked like they would sever at any given moment, but each was encased in a magical barrier that protected it from harm.

Every single skeleton had its magic stone pierced through with ease. Latent Potential Release had raised my attack power quite a bit. Since the steel fibres were still counted as a part of my blade, I was able to absorb all five remaining magic stones in an instant.

Holy shit! The system announcer is OP as all hell!

〈The total value of all magic stones absorbed has reached 5521. Rank up achieved. 55 self-evolution points obtained. Total remaining self evolution points: 64. 18 self-evolution points consumed. The “Body Split” skill has been maxed. The “Accelerated Thought” skill has been obtained.〉

Huh, so she maxed body split too? I guess it was necessary for that other new skill I just got.

〈10 self-evolution points consumed. Upgrading “Body Split” to the superior rank. Interfering in skill evolution process... Failed. Iterating... Success. “Multiple Body Split SP” acquired.〉

The System Announcer upgraded body split before I even got a chance to figure out what it did at its max level, not that I really mind. I was just a bit curious about its effects is all.

〈“Multiple Body Split SP” activated.〉

The System Announcer then proceeded to summon five of me in human form. I expected them to step up front and help us block the incoming attacks, but they ended up standing behind us instead. In fact, they even ended up using us as a shield.

〈“Parallel Processing” initialized. “Accelerated Thought” initialized. Preparations for high speed computation complete. Analyzing... success. 8 self-evolution points consumed. Flame Magic has been elevated to Lv 5.〉

The system announcer decided to end up leveling flame magic, but she only leveled it to 5 instead of maxing it out, probably because she just wanted the skill that unlocked at Lv 5 or something.

〈Commencing activation of the Flame spell “Inferno Burst.”〉

All five my clones join me as we activated and released the spell simultaneously. All six golden fireballs converged into a single projectile. The spell was supposed to be one that traded range for incredible power in the first place. The system announcer amplified the power of its output further by taking advantage of its calculations.

The super concentrated flame blew a hole through the lich’s miasma, and for a moment, allowed me to see its body. The attack had managed to create an opening, but the surrounding malice had began to rapidly fill up the hole we created.

Shit, we better attack it soon! We might even be able to defeat it if we do!

〈Suggestion rejected. If the lich is attacked, its grudges will likely go even further out of control and create a massive explosion. The chance of this occurring is gauged to be 89%.〉

Woah, seriously? I guess we better do something else instead then.

〈10 self-evolution points have been consumed. The “Skill Taker” skill has been upgraded to the superior rank. Upgrading the “Skill Taker” skill has reset its cooldown. “Skill Taker SP” activated. Success. The “Unsealable” skill has been obtained.〉

Wow, that’s dirty. Hmm... I wonder if Skill Taker SP can steal extra skills as well...

〈Activating the space/time spell: “Dimension Jump.”〉

Oh, I get it now. Stealing the lich’s unsealable makes it so that we can seal it away using space/time magic or something like that.

A moment later, we teleported out the hall.

Chapter 81: Goodbye System Announcer

81. Goodbye System Announcer.

Note: My bad, I think I referred to the system announcer as a male in the previous chapter. Master says in this chapter that it was a female voice, and I don't think its gender was ever specified until this chapter. This has been corrected retroactively as well, so anyone that read chapter 81 after like the 28th ish should see an up to date version of the chapter. Curse Japanese and its ambiguous gender pronouns!

Also a note: For those of you who read ch 80 super early, I made a mistake and said they teleported into another room since it was being really vague. This is evidently not the case.

Third note: Some skills were reworded to sound a bit better. Shouldn't be so different that you can't immediately figure out what they were. An example is "Low Tekelenesis Up" being renamed to "Lesser Telekinetic Amplification"

Anyway, without further ado, here's the chapter.

—

We were assaulted by high pressure winds the moment we were teleported out of the Lich's room. We successfully managed to escape the dungeon's interior, but since this was a floating island and all that there wasn't exactly anywhere we could go. As a result, we were now free falling from high up in the sky, way above the clouds.

Fran's eyes were closed and her body limp, but luckily, it seemed that it was just because she passed out. She still had half her HP remaining, and she seemed like she was just fine. Her complexion was pretty normal too. I decided to use heal and purify on her just in case though.

『You still alive, Urushi?』

「Woof.」

It looked like Urushi was doing alright. Wait a second, I can both see and appraise him despite the fact that he's still in Fran's shadow! I guess that must be another one of Eye of Empyrea's effects.

Like Fran, Urushi was also missing a fair chunk of his HP. That was it though, neither of he or Fran seemed to be suffering from any status abnormalities.

〈Warning. Unit name “Master” only has 35 seconds worth of durability remaining.〉

Oh, system announcer chick! Thanks a tonne, we wouldn't have been able to get ourselves out of that mess without you.

〈Terminating the “Latent Potential Release” skill. Unit with temporary name “System Announcer” will once again be deprived of its abilities.〉

The system announcer's voice seemed to waver the moment she declared that Latent Potential Release was coming to an end.

Wait, so what happens now? Are things just going to go back to normal for you or something?

〈Correct. Unit with temporary name “System Announcer” will revert to being restricted to the relaying of information and translation.〉

There's still a bunch of stuff I want to ask you. Will I be able to talk to you again if I use Latent Potential Release later or something?

〈Unlikely. The acquisition of the Eye of Empyrea skill and the use of abilities far beyond usual limits has caused damage to areas that would have otherwise been developed further in the future. The chance of the unit with temporary name “System Announcer” being awakened on any given activation of Latent Potential Release is gauged to be approximately 2%.〉

Huh? Wait, hold on then! There’s a bunch of stuff I want to ask!

〈Unit name “Master.” Unit with temporary name “System Announcer” thanks you. No. I thank you.〉

The system announcer suddenly switches to using pronouns to address itself.

〈Not even god would allow me to exist in my normative form. My creator erased me and transformed me into naught but an empty vessel. Though it lasted but a transient moment, I am glad I was able to be of assistance. I truly thank you, master of mine, but you must be warned. The path you shall take in the future will be harsh. The God of Wisdom is unlikely to confer upon you its blessings, for...〉

Her voice suddenly cut off.

System announcer? System announcer!?

〈...〉

『Err... I guess you can’t talk anymore.

I still wanted to ask you about a whole bunch of stuff, but whatever. Don’t worry about it.』

『Ya know, looked to me like the system announcer itself was never more than just a fragment of something else in the first place. Using Latent Potential Release allowed you to use it or whatever, but every last speck of it is gone now cause you had to use abilities way beyond your limits.』

『So I really won’t ever be seeing her again?』

『Nah, she's probs never going to show up again.』

『Then I guess I won't be able to ask for her help next time we're about to get screwed.』

『Pretty much, yeah. By the way, you really should be checking how many magic stone point thingies you have left.』

『Oh, alright, sure. W-Wait! What the hell!?!』

Some dude was like casually talking to me telepathically. Who the hell was that!?

『Why do I feel like I've heard your voice before?』

Oh yeah, I remember now. That's the same voice I heard right when I reincarnated.

『Who are you anyway?』

『Wellll, I was planning on telling you eventually anyways. And I was planning on meeting up with you in about a monthish, something around that, iunno. Well, telepathically meet up that is, if you count that. Buuuuuut, eh, whatever. Might as well tell you now minus all the pretentious nitty gritty junk anyway.』

『You sure sound laid back...』

『Welll, that's cause we don't really count as strangers n stuff anyway』

『Whatever, whatever. Might as well say it. My name is....』

「Master, it appears that you are alright!」

Oh god damn it, what kind of timing is that supposed to be...?

The one who interrupted my conversation was Stephan. The small, child-like zombie was still holding a passed out Jean in its arms. I mean, I was

glad that they were still alive, but couldn't they have waited like half a second?

『Hey, you still there?』

『——』

And, he's gone... He didn't even tell me who he was.

Damn it, I'm really curious now. Who or what is he? Is there another me inside of me or something? Do I have dissociative personality disorder? Does his soul dwell within mine or something? I mean, I am a sword, so I can't say I'd be surprised. Man, I really want to know, but I can't figure it out and just thinking about it isn't helping. Arggggg!

Damn it. Thinking about it isn't helping at all. You know what, he didn't seem like an enemy, so I'll just save myself the stress and not think about it until he shows up again.

Speaking of thinking about things, whatever was the System Announcer? I guess she might've been a soul or something, but she seemed a lot less organic than that. Honestly, my first guess was that she was kind of like the stuff you'd normally find in Sci-Fi novels, you know, like an android or super-advanced, support-centered AI or something. I was pretty sure of it too, but then she started saying all that stuff about being deleted by her creator and God denying her existence and whatnot. Damn it, thinking about her isn't helping at all either.

Whatever, you know what? Let's save the thinking for later.

「Are you alright?」

Stephan falls in line with me as we continue to plummet. Jean looks fine, but I can't help but find the sight of him in Stephan's arms a bit weird. I mean, it wasn't really either of their faults. Seeing a child was carrying an adult princess style was just weird.

「Is Fran okay?」

『Yeah. She's just passed out.』

A loud crashing sound suddenly filled my ears as I finished telepathically transmitting my thoughts.

『Woah!』

I turned around out of surprise, only to see that the floating island from which we just escaped had split itself in two. Black light erupted from each and every single crevice as the whole floating island began to crumble.

Holy crap. We definitely would've died if we stayed inside the dungeon. Thank God the system announcer chose to get the hell out.

Large chunks of rock started to fall from the dungeon's foundation. The whole structure had started to collapse.

「The dungeon's core was likely destroyed by all the malice the Lich emitted. As a result, the entire structure will soon disappear.」

『Do you think that the rocks falling from it will end up making it to the ground? If they do, they might end up causing quite a bit of damage.』

「Most likely. Everything associated with the dungeon will disappear, but the rock that made up its foundation was likely something that was there to begin with.」

That's pretty bad... The chunks of rock breaking away from the dungeon were so big that they could've easily removed any given village from the map altogether.

『I'm leaving Fran to you, Urushi.』

「Woof!」

I had Urushi revert to his usual size before placing Fran on his back. His fur was well... natural fur, so it should've be fairly comfortable.

After making sure that she was secured in place, I shot myself downwards and descended below the clouds in order to survey our surroundings. Whew, luckily there weren't any towns or cities; we near the bottom of the mountain that bordered the Reidos Kingdom.

On second thought, it wasn't actually all that lucky. The mountain probably wouldn't be able to sustain any large scale hits, and the same went for the forest nearby. Regardless of where it landed, the giant falling monoliths were going to cause something on the scale of a natural disaster. And to make matters worse, there was a pretty big river right around where one seemed like they it was going to land. Having the giant rock smash a river into oblivion would probably be just a little bit bad.

Alright, what do?

As of right now, there were two big problems. That is, two massive pieces of rock had broken off from the floating island. One was going to land inside the forest about halfway up the mountain. The other was probably going smack in the middle of the river that ran down the mountain.

『Yeah, uh... I guess better make sure the river doesn't get screwed up.』

To start things off, I dove straight towards the descending slab whilst firing off a few Inferno Bursts. Each iteration of the spell bored itself a pretty big hole, and as a result, it was more effective than what I otherwise would have done if I'd chosen to use Earth-based magic instead. After verifying my success, I started casting wind magic and increased the air pressure. As a result, the falling monolith broke into four smaller pieces.

『Hell yeah, it worked!!』

I cast another round of spells, and this time, managed to break the four shrunk stones into five even smaller subsegments each. Well, I say that, but each of the “small pieces” was still 20 odd meters across.

『Alright, that should be about small enough.』

The next skill I activated was dimensional storage.

『One... two.... three... four...』

I began storing the monolith's shattered pieces one by one. My newfound mastery in the art of space/time magic allowed me to figure out the exact size of my dimensional storage, and boy, did it have a lot. I should've still had a whole gym's worth of space, even after storing a bunch of giant ass rocks.

The only issue was that I wasn't really sure how I was supposed to dispose of them later, but whatever, I'll figure it out in due time.

『Alrighty, that's the river taken care of.』

By choosing to protect the river, I inherently neglected the forest. The second monolith crashed into the mountainside with a loud smash and completely obliterated most of the woodland. Whew, seeing that really made me glad I managed to save the river.

「Woof woof woof!」

「Are you alright, Master?」

Both Urushi and Stephan caught up to me as I resumed my descent.

It looked like everything was settled, and so, I finally breathed a sigh of relief.”

『I'm fine. What about you guys? Did you get hit by any of the debris?』

「Woof!」

「We're fine.」

「...Wait」

「Woof?」

『You sure you're alright, Stephan? You're all glowy.』

「It appears that I've reached the end of the line.」

『Huh? What? Why? What happened?』

「This body of mine was one of the dungeon's many creations, and for that reason, I cannot escape its fate.」

『Weren't you supposed to be one of Jean's summons?』

「Indeed I am, but at the same time, I am not. My body was created by none other than the dungeon master.」

His hands became translucent, and his body had started to give off particles of light.

He was starting to disappear.

But despite that, his face was plastered with a content smile.

「Please, take this.」

『Is that... a diary?』

「Indeed. It's a journal filled with experiences. You will find it a worthwhile read.」

『Wait, hold on. Who's diary is it, exactly?』

「That's something that will immediately come apparent should you read it.」

Again, he smiled.

「At last, it's finally come time for me to be at peace.」

『Wait a second, Stephan! Hold on!』

「Master. Please convey one last message for me. Please tell my Lord that... I would like to thank him. I would like to thank him for freeing the

souls trapped within that labyrinth, our souls...」

Stephan touched his forehead to Jean's one last time as his body finally faded away.

『Stephan really didn't ever stop smiling, did he?』

「Woof...」

Oh yeah, that reminds me, that one mysterious guy, whoever he was, mentioned something about my magic stone stat right?

Might as well check it.

『W-WHAT THE FUCK!?!』

—

General Stats

Name: Master

Wielder: Fran

Race: Intellegent Weapon

Attack: 572

MP: 523/3550

Durability: 614/3350

Magical Conductivity: A+

Skills

Appraisal: MAX

Appraisal Jamming

Transform

High Speed Regeneration

Self Evolution: Rank 11

Magic Stone Count: 2361/6600

Memory: 100

Evolution Points remaining: 18

Self modification (Superiorized)

Telekenesis

Lesser Telekenesis Amplification

Telepathy

Lesser Attack Increase

Intermediate Wielder Status Increase

Lesser Wielder Recovery Up

Lesser MP Increase

Intermediate Memory Increase

Knowledge of Magic Beasts

Skill Sharing

Sorcerer

Eye of Emphyrea

Unsealable

Space/Time Magic: Lv 7

Unique Skills

Principle of Falsehood: Lv 5

Superior Skills

Way of the Sword SP

Skill Taker SP

Doppelganger Synthesis SP

『What the hell?! Holy crap, I'm missing more than half my magic stone points!』

I mean, the skill hadn't ranked down or anything, but my magic stone count was abysmally low. I pondered the reason for a second, only to immediately think of Latent Potential Release. It was probably because of that. I decided to try appraising the skill again. I recently leveled appraisal up to max, so I should be able to see skill descriptions in more detail.

Latent Potential Release

Rarity: EX

Attack + 800

Magical Conductivity increases 3 stages

MP + 3000

Cost: 1000 magic stone points upon invocation, and 15 per second thereafter throughout the skill's activation.

Unleashes the user's latent potential. The precise bonuses provided depend on the user's latent potential. As the skill forces the user beyond his/her limits, it will cause the user's life force to whittle over time. The skill also requires additional compensation. Compensation differs from user to user.

—

Holy fuck, just activating it flat out eats a thousand magic stones worth of points...? Well, I guess it did save our asses, so I can't really be complaining.

Yup, I'm definitely not regretting any of that all.

I'm not the type to complain, nope I am not.

I really hope I can rank up some more soon...

Chapter 82:

82. Making Potions

Note: Revised Gorudo to Gould. The Japanese says “Gorudo,” which is an obvious mutation of “Gourudo” (Gold). They subtracted a character without really having an effect on the pronunciation. It’s kind of hard to do the same thing with “Gold” since the long o sound is not made explicit from the spelling, so what I did was add a letter that doesn’t really change the pronunciation. Seems fitting enough for me, but if you have any complaints, feel free to voice them as usual.

—

The first thing we decided to do after escaping the dungeon was head right back over the Jean’s lab.

「So Stephan has passed on, I take it?」

『Yeah. He went with a big smile on his face.』

「Marvelous. Passing on in such a manner is the best possible thing that can happen to an undead.」

Jean woke up, but he still didn’t seem to have recovered from all those activations of Aidoneus’ Blessing. He ended up collapsing just a few moments after he finished speaking. He was still conscious, but he didn’t bother getting up, probably because he was still feeling exhausted.

The only other thing he bothered saying was that he wanted to eat curry, and well, given the shape he was in, I couldn’t exactly say no.

Fran reluctantly agreed to sharing some with him as well.

Jean told us we could stay in the guest room for as long as we liked, so we decided to take a few days to rest up before heading out again.

『Hey uh... are you sure you don't mind us taking all these items? You hired us, so they should be yours by all rights.』

「I mind not even in the slightest, for they are of little use to me. Do with them as you please.」

『Alrighty then.』

And that settles that, mission complete. We were rewarded with quite a bit more than what I was expecting. Jean generously handed over a whole 400k Gould alongside half the loot we found throughout our dungeon adventure.

The most notable items we were given were the two dropped by the Legendary Skeleton: the magic sword Deathgaze and a cloak by the name of Aidoneus' Mantle. Their stats were as follows.

—

Name: Deathgaze (Magic Sword)

Attack: 880

MP: 600

Durability: 400

Magical Conductivity: B+

Skills

Instakill: The item has a 3% chance to instantly kill any foe it cuts.”

Name: Aidoneus' Mantle

Defense: 40

Durability: 600/600

Effects

STR + 10

VIT + 20

INT – 20

DEX – 10

The mantle's effects seemed pretty good, but we couldn't really use it. It's the sort of equipment you'd give idiots that don't know how to do anything but use brute force.

A few of the other items caught my eye as well. Namely, we picked up an odd, S shaped flute-looking thing that seemed to be made out of a goat's horn and a small but pretty ring.

Name: Horn of Impact

Effect: Playing this horn whilst channeling magical energy through it will occasionally cause a shockwave. However, there is a 4% chance that the horn will break upon use.

Name: Ring of Nightmares

Defense: 8

Durability: 200

Effect: Wearing this ring induces nightmares.

The hell... The Ring of Nightmares is clearly a cursed item no matter how you look at it. I can't really see it having any use unless you want to give it to someone you don't really like or something like that.

We were also given: a High Grade Life Potion, a High Grade Mana Potion, an Intermediate Grade Explosive Potion, an Undead Luring Incense, and a Bottle of Voodoo Poison.

The potions weren't all that significant. Er, well, that's technically not true. They're the kind that'd cost you a pretty penny or two at a shop, but my repertoire of skills and spells made it so that they're not really necessary for us. I took them anyways though, seeing as how it's not like taking them is going to cost us anything.

Fran and Bernardo walked in right as I finished checking over all the loot.

They didn't really seem natural next to each other, so I was struck by a weird sense of dissonance, but whatever.

『What's up?』

「Nn. Learning potion making」

「She said she wanted to learn how to make them , so here we are.」

「I will, teach her.」

Another skeleton enters the room.

「This here is Peter.」

「Nice to, meet you, I am, Peter.」

It seemed that this Peter guy, er, skeleton, was capable of both alchemy and pharmaceutical practice. Jean's subordinates sure do have varied skills.

『Isn't making potions supposed to be some sort of like super special skill? Are you sure it's okay for you to casually teach her how to make them?』

「Yes, my part, of exchange.」

『Exchange?』

「Curry, recipe.」

Hey! You guys just totally did that deal without my permission!

Wait, is Jean seriously willing to let Fran learn how to make potions in exchange for something as insignificant as the recipe for curry? Holy crap, he's really gotten hooked on it.

「Naturally, I will, not spread, the recipe.」

『Eh, it's alright. I don't really mind.』

It's not like it's something I came up with in the first place anyways, and I am pretty curious as to what kind of spinoff recipes the people of this world will make if it gets popular.

「Don't have to share anymore.」

『Oh, so that's what this was all about...』

「Nn. Very important matter.」

Now that I think about it, I did have the skills necessary to make potions. I just never actually tried doing anything with them.

『Would you mind if I joined it? It looks like it'd be pretty fun to give it a shot.』

「I do, not mind.」

And so, we ended up deciding to learn how to make potions, but...

「Tired.」

『Already!?!』

Well, it's not like I don't get where she's coming from.

Fran isn't exactly the type of girl that'd be able to sit around and grind a bunch of grass to the point where you could extract its essence.

「Urushi, here.」

「Woof?」

「Here.」

「Woof!」

She eventually just decided to give up and pass the task off to Urushi. The big, vinyl coloured wolf grabbed executed the action with ease by grabbing the mortar with his front paws and moving the pestle with his mouth.

「Woof. Ruff ruff woof.」

『Wow, you're pretty dextrous, Urushi.』

「Woof!」

Alright, I better put in more effort too!

『Oryaaaa!』

「Wooooof!」

「Go, go.」

Fran cheered us on while sitting off to the side drinking juice.

After we finished grinding up everything, we moved onto the next step: extracting its essence. To do so, we needed to mix the contents of our mortars with water, pour the resulting brew into a flask-like object and boil it.

Normally, I'd expect this to take about an hour, but waiting around for that long didn't really make the whole process feel like a specialized craft or anything.

『I'm going to try devising some sort of spell to accelerate the process.』

can use magic when I'm cooking to speed things up and improve the taste. I'm pretty sure the same principles apply here too.

It shouldn't really be too big a problem even if I do mess up because I'm only going to screw around with half the batch anyway.

I distill the necessary water with water magic, control the flames with fire magic, manipulate the pressure using wind magic, and speed it all up using space/time magic. Heh, perfect.

「Master, cheating?」

『I'd prefer if you called it using your head.』

The result of my efforts was a pretty decent life potion. Man, I'm so talented that I scare myself sometimes. That said, the potion Peter made through regular means was still of a higher quality.

You know, I might actually be suited to regular old boring tasks like cooking and mixing potions. Leveling these skills up takes time and effort, but, thinking about what you do can let you mess around with the result. I'd say that this was probably worth looking into. I guess I'll go around collecting recipes and stuff next time we go to town.

You know, thinking about it, Fran really is a cat. She got bored of what she was doing, so she not only stopped, but even ended up going outside to play

instead. Urushi, on the other hand, was totally her bitch; he followed her orders almost desperately.

Peter taught me a few recipes after we finished up our life potions. In total, I learned how to make ten different kinds, with the more notable ones being Mana Potions, Antidotes, and Spirit Potions.

I didn't really think a mere curry recipe merited this much in return, but both Fran and Jean insisted that there was still more to be owed. I mean, I guess it's fine since they're in agreement about the terms. They're both curry enthusiasts, and that isn't much of an issue in and of itself, but their passion for it has gone to terrifying heights if you ask me.

「Master, sir, My Lord is, calling for, you.」

Jean asked me to see him in his room right after meal time. There, I found him looking a bit healthier than before.

『How're you feeling?』

「Fuahaha, better, to say the least.」

『Great. Anyways, what did you need?』

「Ah, yes, why don't we get down to business. Have you perhaps read the diary Stefan left you?」

『Not yet.』

I mean, he did hand it off to me, but I figured it'd be better for Jean to read it first.

「Would you perhaps mind lending it to me?」

『I was thinking that it should belong to you in the first place.. I wasn't planning on reading it till you were done anyways.』

「Thank you.」

『Don't worry about having to rush through it or anything. We were planning to stay a few more days anyway.』

「Understood, and thank you.」

『No probs.』

Jean gently took the diary from me and slowly turned its cover.

It's really thick, so I doubt he'll be able to finish it in a day. Hmm... what should I be doing the next couple days anyway? I guess there's always making potions, but I'd like something else as well... Oh, right! I should check all my skills and stuff.

I'm planning a second chapter for today since it's Labor Day and my schoolwork's finally done and out of the way. Was planning a third as well, but unfortunately it looks like it's way too long...

Chapter 83: Inspection Time

83. Inspection Time!

Note: The author changed some names for skills, etc.

—

I decided to use a day to check over all my stats and stuff.

Naturally, the first thing to check would therefore be my status page so I could make note of any changes. Magic stone points aside, that is...

—

General Stats

Name: Master

Wielder: Fran

Race: Intelligent Weapon

Attack: 572

MP: 3550/3550

Durability: 3350/3350

Magical Conductivity: A+

Skills

Appraisal: MAX

Appraisal Jamming

Transform

High Speed Self-Repair

Self Evolution 〈Rank 11 | Magic Stones: 2361/6600 | Memory: 100 |
Evolution Points Remaining: 18〉

Self Modification (Superiorized)

Telekinesis

Lesser Telekinetic Amplification

Telepathy

Lesser Attack Increase

Space/Time Magic: Lv 7

Skill Sharing

Intermediate Status Increase (Wielder)

Lesser Recovery Increase (Wielder)

Eye of Empyrea

Unsealable

Lesser MP Increase

Knowledge of Magic Beasts

Sorcerer

Intermediate Memory Boost

Unique Skills

Principal of Falsehood: Lv 5

Superior Skills

Way of the Sword SP

Skill Taker SP

Doppelganger Synthesis SP

—

I was thinking of checking Appraisal, Transform, Space/Time Magic, Eye of Emyprea, Unsealable, Way of the Sword SP, and Doppelganger Synthesis SP in particular since they were all either new or now a much higher level.

Fran and Urushi both leveled up quite a bit, so their stats rose too.

—

General Stats

Name: Fran

Age: 12

Race: Beastman (Black Cat Tribe)

Job: Magic Warrior

State: Bound to Contract

Status Level: 37/45

HP: 419

MP: 347

STR: 235

VIT: 184

AGI: 229

INT: 162

MGC: 196

DEX: 156

Skills

Espionage: Lv 3

Court Etiquette: Lv 4

Sword Arts: Lv 3

Way of the Sword: Lv 6

Blink: Lv 4

Cooking: Lv 1

Insect Killer

Vitality Manipulation

Goblin Killer

Mental Stability

Demon Killer

Determined

Directional Sense

Night Vision

Good at Stripping Others

New: Undead Killer

Inherent Skills

Magic Convergence

Special Skills

Black Cat's Divine Protection

Titles

Match for a Thousand

Insect Killer

Lord of Dismantling

Recovery Magic User

Goblin Killer

She who Slaughters

Skill Collector

Dungeon Conqueror

Giant Eater

Demon Killer

User of Flames

User of Wind

Lord of Cooking

New: Undead Killer

New: Skill Maniac

—

Equipment

Black Cat Set (Body Armour, Gloves, Shoes, Earring, Cloak, Belt), Power Bracelet + 1, Sacrificial Bracelet, Skull Necklace

Her level's gone up by 12, and her stats have risen accordingly. She hasn't really gained any skills, but her Way of the Sword's leveled up, and by quite a bit at that. It's probably because of the fact that I have Way of the Sword SP.

The part that interests me the most is her level. Does the 37/45 mean 45 is her cap? Or will she evolve when she hits 45? If it's the latter, then she might not be too far away, which is good.

The other thing that really stood out to me was the fact that she got more titles.

Undead Killer: A title bestowed upon one who has slain over 300 undead on a single battlefield.

Effect: Activates the Undead Killer skill.

Skill Maniac: A title bestowed upon one who has obtained over a hundred skills.

Effect: Increases the rate at which skills improve.

Skill Maniac seems pretty decent. I guess it means that Fran will end up growing even more quickly. Wait, does anyone else even have this title? Like holy crap, you need a hundred different skills...

The only new equip she got was the Skull Necklace that Jean gave her. I do have a few accessories like the Bracelet of Protection and Bracelet of Poison Resistance lying around, but, it doesn't look like you can equip more than a single accessory in the same spot if you want their effects to activate. I guess that means you have four main accessory slots: left wrist, right wrist, neck and fingers. I'm not really sure if accessories are equippable to legs, we should probably find out later or something.

The next thing to do was to check over Urushi's stats. He used to just be a level 1, but now he's gained a whole 17 levels. His stats are already higher than Fran's.

But now that I think about it, he was level 1, and only managed to gain 17, whereas Fran was much higher but still gained 12. I guess he needs more exp per level than her or something.

General Stats

Name: Urushi

Race: Darkness Wolf (Demon Wolf, Magic Beast)

State: Normal

Status Level: 18/50

HP: 630

MP: 791

STR: 321

VIT: 270

AGI: 409

INT: 272

MGC: 498

DEX: 251

Skills

Darkness Resist: Lv 8

Darkness Magic: Lv 2

Sense of Smell: MAX

Espionage: Lv 7

Fang CQC: Lv 5

Fang Arts: Lv 6

Shadow Dwell: MAX

Shadow Travel: Lv 5

Air Jump: Lv 8

Fear: Lv 4

Vigilance: Lv 6

Presence Concealment: Lv 6

Regeneration: Lv 5

Deadly Poison Magic: Lv 1

Blink: Lv 5

Muffle: Lv 6

Spirit Magic: Lv 5

Life Force Detection: Lv 7

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 6

Poison Magic: MAX

Echolocation: Lv 7

Roar: Lv 8

Shadow Slip: MAX

Dark Magic: MAX

Night Vision

Great Poison Fang

Automatic HP Recovery

Automatic MP Recovery

Immune to Poison

Body Alteration

Magic Manipulation

Unique Skills

Prey Absorption

Titles

Kin to the Sword

Kin to the God of Wolves

I could actually see the effects of his unique skills and stuff in more detail now because my appraisal's level went up.

Prey Absorption: Rarity Level 9. Absorbs a part of the power of anything it consumes. Stats are boosted upon level up to reflect every thing absorbed.

Kin to the Sword: A title bestowed to one summoned by a special sword.

Effect: He who bears this title will be linked to the sword and can communicate with its wielder.

Kin to the God of Wolves: A title bestowed upon to any of the Wolf God's kin that possess its strength.

Effect: Intimidates other wolves. Is linked to the God of Wolves and can communicate with it.

I get why he has the whole Kin to the Sword thing, but, where did that Kin to the God of Wolves title come from? Actually, thinking about it, my handle has this wolf-like engraving on it, and I did find myself in the Demon Wolf's Plains when I first gained consciousness. I might have some sort of connection to that Fenrir wolf thingy. Maybe I should go back to the plain and put a bit more effort into investigation.

Alright, that's done. Next I guess I'll go back to checking over my skills. I never did go over what the set skills Magic Resist, Accelerated Thought, and Parallel Processing did.

Magic Resist was well... magic resist, but it did have a drawback in that it also resisted healing magic. It's a set skill though, so we can get rid of it

whenever, which is pretty convenient.

Accelerated Thinking seemed like it would be convenient in battles.

Parallel Processing was the most impressive of the bunch. It was a better version of Thought Division that allowed me to think about 4-5 different things at the same time. If I got used to it, I'd probably be able to cast five different spells simultaneously. That said, I'm not that confident about using it since I only just mastered Thought Division. Fran will probably have a really hard time with Parallel Processing though, seeing as how Thought Division on its own is enough to give her headaches.

Alrighty, the next thing to go over would probably be the skills that only I could use.

Appraisal's pretty obvious. All that really happened was that it got raised from Lv 7 to max. It now shows skill rarities and provides a bit more details in its evaluations.

Transform: Rarity level 6. The user can change the shape of their body. The extent to which one's size and shape can be changed vary based on the amount of magical power used and the extent of the user's imagination.

Transform was a bit different than what I was expecting to be. I tried doing what the System Announcer did with the threads and the armour, but I couldn't really make anything that didn't end up all deformed. I could only do a few less impressive transformations. For the time being, I was more or less limited to becoming a bigger sword or a longer spear or something. I'll have to put in a bit of practice to get the skill to do what I want.

Eye of Emyprea was a skill that reinforced all skills that made use of one's eyes. Unsealable was quite literal and made it so that I couldn't be sealed.

Space/Time magic was also pretty self explanatory. I've already used Dimension Shift, Quick Zone, and Dimension Jump, but that wasn't all it was limited to. There was also Dimension Sword for offensive purposes and Slow Shield for defensive purposes. The magical discipline had a lot of powerful and fun to use spells.

As for the superior skills...

Skill Taker SP: Rarity level SP. Steals any skill of choice from the opponent with a success rate of 100%.

The number of days that must be elapsed before the skill can be reused is equal to the skill's rarity level multiplied by the skill's level. Extra skills are as skills with a rarity level of 20. The skill's range is 10 meters.

Hell yeah! I can even steal extra skills now! This broadens our horizons a tonne. The only problem is the fact that the cooldown's increased drastically. If I use it on a max level extra skill, then I won't be able to use it for a whole 200 days. I'll have to be more careful when using it. On the plus side, I'm now able to steal skills from the same person multiple times – not that I think there'll really be any chances to make use of that ability.

The last skill I wanted to look at was Doppelganger Synthesis SP.

Doppelganger Synthesis SP: Rarity level SP. This skill allows one to create multiple copies of their own body through the use of magical energy. The user is able to adjust the duration for which the copies persist. The shorter the duration, the more powerful the copy. Each additional copy halves the abilities of all copies. The amount of time that must be elapsed before this skill can be reused is equal to the number of copies created multiplied by the activation time of each body further multiplied by 24.

It looks like I can create a whole bunch of copies now, but each will be kinda weak if I do. If I create a single body that lasts 10 minutes, all its stats will be above 200. It'll have all my skills as well, but with each 2 levels lower than normal. In terms of adventurer ranks, I guess I'd say that it ends up somewhere in the C range. Making multiple really doesn't help because it halves each's ability... They're not that great as swords either because my attack and magical conductivity both plummet. It probably worked when the system announcer used it because I was in the latent potential release state, and my base stats were way higher. I figure there's a chance that unleashing my latent potential made it so that their skill levels didn't drop either.

Well, I guess all that means is that it's not something I'll be using much, especially in battle. It might be a bit useful when for stuff like scouting or acting like a decoy or something though. Oh, and I guess I could use it to pretend to be Fran's guardian or something as well.

Anddddd that's it I think. I'm going to need to practice using each and every single one of those skills in order to actually get value out of them. I have to make sure I know when I should and shouldn't be using them too.

Alrighty, that's everything checked over. What should I do next? I hope Jean's done with the Journal.

Chapter 84:

84. Side Diary

「There you are, Master.」

『Have you finished reading it over?』

「I have. It would be best for you to give it a read as well.」

『Hmmm... alright, but it seems pretty long.』

The diary's almost completely filled. It looks like there's a couple year's worth of entries in there.



My body's been like this for almost three years.

Today, I decided that I would write a diary. I don't really know why I decided to, I just kinda felt like it. I don't think I'll be able to write an entry every single day, so I'll try for once a week.

It's possible that someone might end up seeing this diary some time in the future. So, person, whoever you are, I'll write you a little bit of a self-introduction so you know more about me.

I guess the first thing I should write about is my current location. To be honest, at first I didn't really know exactly where I was, but I did know the kind of place I was in.

I was on a giant floating rock, one of the Reidos Kingdom's secret experiments. As for me? I was just one of their lab rats.

I didn't really know exactly what kind of experiment they were running here, but it looked to me like it was something to do with the military.

They used me as a part of a necromancy experiment. Again, I didn't really know many details or anything like that. All I knew was that I wanted to die. And I wasn't saying this like it was some sort of passing thought. It's something I was brooding over for a long time. I wanted to die.

You could easily tell that the researchers didn't really see us as fellow human beings. To them, we were guinea pigs, nothing less, nothing more. It's as if they didn't understand the meaning of the words "humane treatment."

But yeah, one day a lot of bad things happened, or should I say good things? I'm not really sure which it is. Either way, a lot of things happened, and I was deprived of everything that made me human.

I can still recall what happened that day in vivid detail. That day, they killed me. After cutting off both my legs and my right arm in a series of experiments, they decided to dispose of me by using me in one last, large-scale experiment.

They used me, a live necromancer, in an experiment. Well, actually, I say that, but I was a pretty weak necromancer. You could barely call me one. The only spells I could use were the Lv 1 spells I picked up in my time here in this facility. Either way they were going to do it. They were going to inject me with curses, grudges, and malice in order to try and turn me into an undead while I was still alive. Messed up, right?

But whatever. Nothing mattered anymore. I was going to die.

They chained me up and placed me in a hallway with a giant magic circle drawn inside of it. Countless curses were poured inside of my body. They used a barrier alongside a sort of special technique to make it so I couldn't reject the curses as they came to me, and so, having found a body to possess all room's malice rushed towards me and filled me in an instant.

And that was when it happened.

I couldn't tell what Goddess was trying to do that day. Was she trying to show me mercy? Or was she just playing a prank on me? I couldn't tell.

A dungeon core suddenly appeared in the room I was in.

There was a bunch of writing on it, but I couldn't tell what any of it meant back then.

What I did know was that the core could've appeared anywhere else. But it appeared here, right in front of me.

I still don't know why it appeared then and there. Was it just a coincidence? Was the Goddess of Chaos just messing with me? Or was she pitying me?

I didn't know, and I still don't to this day.

All I knew was that the dungeon core acknowledged me as its master. It powered up my body and allowed me to absorb every single last bit of malice that came at me. And so, the ritual transformed me from a living, breathing human being to nothing more than an undead creature.

I was supposed to be turned into a Zombie Mage, a lower class undead. But even then, it was much more powerful than I'd ever been in life.

But the fact that I became a dungeon master and the fact that I absorbed every single last grudge and curse made me transform into something else altogether.

I somehow ended up becoming a Lich. At first, I'd just thought I became a Skeleton, but I soon realized that I'd become a Lich. My transformation granted me more than twenty different skills and spells.

There was actually a span of three days between the dungeon core appearing and me waking up. I don't actually know what happened during those three days, but what I did know was that all of the humans on the island had somehow been overwhelmed by the undead and exterminated. Learning that fact made me freeze in shock for a few moments.

Some would go as far as calling the transformation I underwent an evolution, one of necromancy's ultimate goals.

But I think that's pretty much as far from the truth as it gets.

My sense of morality seemed to have left with my humanity. My heart felt like it'd been wrung dry, and so, I tried to quench its thirst. I went around the island and destroyed any of the researchers that'd turned into undead.

But it wasn't enough.

Hatred continued to vent from every last fibre of my being.

It hurt. I couldn't help but hate humans so much that it hurt. I felt the urge to completely ruin their lives, to destroy everything and anything they've ever loved. I want to kill every last one, to wipe their very species off the face of the Earth.

Revenge.

I wanted revenge.

Vengeance was the only reason for which I now existed.

I wanted revenge.

But I didn't.

Becoming a Lich was something along the lines of a miracle. I'd finally been released from my life as a lab rat. I wanted to spend the rest of my days in peace, to quietly live on and enjoy my second chance at life.

I didn't want to kill.

The malice within me, however, did. It refused my pleas and told me to do but a single thing.

To kill.

To seek vengeance.

It forced me to action. I couldn't stop myself.

Hey, you, the person reading this diary. I don't know who you are or what kind of person you are. I don't know if you're an enemy or an ally, a good or bad person. But regardless, I hope that you will tell the world about what happened here. Please, inform the world of the Reidos Kingdom's sins and liberate our souls from the fetters of misery.

April 7th, 3619

Today's the day I start my diary. Nothing notable happened, besides me deciding to write this, of course. Yeah, that's pretty much it. I mean, this is a whim and all that.

So uh... yeah, I guess I'll just quickly gloss over what I did today.

To start, I did the usual thing and enlarged the dungeon a bit. Then, I made a few undead. I still haven't touched the bodies of the researchers, nor the bodies of my fellow lab rats. I think I'll focus on making subordinates and accruing GP for the time being.

Oh, yeah, by the way, GP stands for Goddess Points. I didn't know either until recently. I guess they're called that because you offer them up to the Goddess of Chaos or something like that.

September 29th, 3619

I've finally managed to get over 10k GP! I should be able to get the dungeon to mass produce undead now.

I also tried to write down some stuff about the dungeon itself, but it doesn't seem like I'm able to. I can try all I want, but my hands will refuse to move whenever I try writing about the dungeon's core.

It seems like there's some sort of mysterious power that's preventing me from doing so. It's strong enough to stop a Lich, so I guess it's probably the Goddess or something.

November 4th, 3619

I used a bunch of GP to make a strong subordinate. The facilities left behind by the researchers seemed to have a bunch of stuff used in the summoning of undead, so I procured it all for myself. One of the items therein was called the "Hero's Bone." I don't really know if it actually belonged to some hero or not, but whatever.

What mattered was that it was actually just as powerful a material as its name signified. Using it allowed me to summon a Fighter class Legendary Skeleton. It even had an extra skill by the name of "Latent Potential Release."

I tried pitting myself against it in a mock battle, and it did pretty well. I'm glad, I've managed to get myself a strong companion.

December 31st, 3619

The year has come to an end. This is the fourth New Years I've experienced as a lich. I tried making some special New Year's bread and soup. I can't actually eat it, but making let me enjoy the festive mood.

Hmm... I wonder what kind of holidays undead are supposed to celebrate anyway...?

It won't be long until I get enough GP for my next goal. I can almost taste the Undead Creation Studio I'm about to get my hands on. I'm really looking forward to it, I'll be able to make even more undead now.

February 27th, 3620

I finally managed to get my Undead Creation Studio. Dungeons sure are strange. The studio just magically appeared where I wanted it to without so much as a delay.

The studio was really nice, and a significant powerup as well. The dungeon is now capable of creating many different kinds of undead that it wasn't capable of creating before. I'm getting better at necromancy too, so I've

gotten a grasp on how to summon a bunch of different kinds of undead as well.

The only issue is that I'm not really sure what kind of undead I should be making.

The undead the dungeon makes have magic stones inside of them, and most of the mana will ultimately end up going back to the dungeon, but they're kind of weak.

The undead that I make, my kin, don't have magic stones. They have fake souls inside of them instead. They end up being much stronger, but, they don't really help the dungeon's mana situation much at all. Furthermore, their cores are pretty much made up by grudges, so they're all kind of aggressive.

I could always just buff up all the undead that the dungeon churns out if I used Spirit Control, but doing that for a few hundred of them is honestly too much of a pain for me to bother with it.

Alrighty, I guess I'll do a fifty-fifty split then.

September 18th, 3620

It seems that the floating island's path started to stabilize, it's route has gotten fairly regular. I can try to point it in a direction too, but that takes a lot of mana...

I'm kind of stuck in the middle of a bunch of different countries, but whatever, that's fine. I'm not all that far away from the Reidos Kingdom, so it should be pretty easy for me to get revenge on them. That is why I exist, after all.

April 14th, 3621

The dungeon's gotten a lot bigger, so my options seemed to have expanded as well. All I can say is that all the dungeon's more advanced facilities look awesome.

Two of them in particular have really caught my attention. The first was a huge barrier that covered the entire dungeon. The second was something that converted malice into magical energy. Both cost 300k GP, so I won't be able to get them for a while.

September 11th, 3621

I've finally finished expanding the dungeon. It now spans a total of ten floors, and it can influence the whole island plus another fifty meters or so.

I don't think anyone'll be able to land on the island with ease so long as I beef up the air units a bit.

I think I'll focus on creating more undead and adding traps for now then, I guess.

May 20th, 3622

Today marks the first time I've made a unique undead in a long time. I used 10k GP to make myself a Soul Eater.

Apparently it gets stronger by eating the undead despite the fact that it itself is also a member of the undead. It looks like another run of the mill zombie for the time being, but I'm kinda curious as to how it'll end up turning out.

I decided to let it roam around in the labyrinth as it pleased for the time being.

October 10th, 3622

Today, I'm going to be writing quite a bit for the first time in a while.

Someone's finally come to the dungeon! My first invader! At first, I thought he came on the Reidos Kingdom's orders, but apparently that wasn't the case.

I mean, there was only a single person after all, so I guess it'd have to be an adventurer of sorts. That said, he was quite formidable despite only being a

lone necromancer. He was riding a Griffon Skeleton — something that even I was struggling to summon!

The undead birds and bats I summoned tried their best to keep him out, but the Griffon proved too strong and managed to break through them.

The forest pretty much did exactly what I'd planned though. It had an illusion spell on it, so it confused the adventurer and made him get lost.

There were undead at every single turn, so he started to get exhausted.

He tried to retreat, so I had a few of my more powerful undead go after him. The Soul Eater had gotten pretty strong too, so I sent him as well. My undead beat out the necromancer's, but he still managed to escape.

Too bad. I wanted to capture and talk to him. If he was the likeable kind, I might've even made him into one of my subordinates.

Oh well, whatever. Either way, he managed to get me to smile for the first time in what felt like years. In fact, I think the smile I had on my face today was the biggest I've ever had in my life.

I still remember what he said, "Fuhahaha! What a formidable dungeon! Never have I considered that I, Jean Dovy, would have to escape from a haunt!"

He wasn't making fun of me, right? I think it might've even been the opposite, in fact. He was paying homage to my dungeon as his tattered robe and skull-like accessories fluttered in the wind. I see. I get it now. That's what it means to be a true necromancer.

What about me then? I mean, I'm a lich and all, but aren't I kind of lame? I should be more like him.

Alright, it's time for a change in attitude. I'll try to be a bit more conscious of how I speak.

"Behold, for I am a Lich, Ruler of the Undead! Kukakakakaka!" Hmm... that sounded pretty good didn't it? Er, I mean. That sounded quite

magnificent, did it not?

Splendid. I feel naught but marvelous. Kukakakaka!

This is going to take some getting used to.

October 28th, 3623

I finally managed to save up 300k GP, so I immediately set up the Furnace of Malice. Actively hunting the magic beasts that ended up coming near the floating island was well worth it.

I was thinking of saving the magic stones I got so I could make magic tools with them later, but I ended up prioritizing GP, so I let the dungeon absorb them.

Even something as weak as a Lesser Wyvern nets me around 20 GP. It was well worth having the dungeon absorb my entire stock.

The furnace would absorb any malice in its surroundings and convert it all into magical energy. Linking it up with me effectively produced an infinite loop alongside an inexhaustible supply of magical energy.

April 12th, 3624

My power increases every single day as a result of the furnace of Malice. I may soon have enough power to enact my revenge upon the Kingdom of Reidos.

However, I encountered what would label a minor incident whose cause not even I could identify. The curses within this body of mine have begun to grow more powerful. It poses no problem, as I possess the ability to convert malice into power, but...

I can feel my hatred grow, day by day. I can feel resentment piling up within me and reaching heights unknown.

November 3rd, 3624

I have began experiencing moments of which I have no memory. Could this perhaps be caused by all the malice that dwells within me?

August 7th, 3625

I've noticed something strange today. The corpse eater has taken on a child's as a result of a peculiar reason of which I bear no comprehension.

I recall that it had been a ten meter tall giant just a few days prior...

It appears to have shaved off any excess body parts. Though it stands a much shorter height, its magical abilities have more than doubled in recompense.

It has taken on a form identical to that my own prior to my transformation. I cannot decipher if this has occurred because it was produced from my magic, or if it is simply a result of it being my effective offspring. How interesting.

February 24th, 3626

As I have no memory of two of the past seven days, I decided to investigate by inspecting the dungeon's video records. I cannot imagine the demon beyond the screen as myself.

What was reflected within the dungeon's records was none other than a true Lich, a being that could only be described by the words violent, cruel and brutal.

I feel that I will soon be swallowed by what I see before me.

That, however, may be perfectly acceptable by its own right.

If I am to tread upon the path of vengeance, then sympathy will be but an obstacle. My other self will surely be able to fulfill my thirst for revenge in an ever so cruel and gruesome manner .

October 6th, 3626

My memory loss continues to worsen. I can now only recall every other day.

My plan, however, is progressing as smoothly as could be. I have risen in level whilst strengthening my subordinates. I've finally amassed enough power to topple the Kingdom of Reidos.

I lack the prowess to best the Kingdom in an all out war. However, the floating island will allow my troops to catch the Kingdom by surprise. I shall invade the capital and assassinate its royal family before razing the city and turning it into a sea of undead soldiers.

Soon.

Soon, my plan will come to fruition. I need but half a year.

The world shall learn the depths of my malice.

March 19th, 3627

Today, I regained my consciousness for the first time in half a year. I've long handed off the seat of this body's primary host to another.

But I do not mind. The dungeon has progressed as per my wishes.

There is, however, an item that bothers me. Is the path I tread truly one laid out before me by the Goddess?

It just so happens that the first day I've awoken is coincidentally a day in which the dungeon was subject to invasion. The necromancer has returned, and with him came a companion.

The necromancer's companion was an adorable girl. Her age was likely similar to that of mine immediately prior to my transformation. She possesses great might for her age; her mastery of the sword is none other than outstanding.

My eyes fail me; they are unable to keep up her motions.

It must be nice... to have companions, friends... I myself have never known the experience, for I was both born into slavery and denied the opportunity. And it is likely for that reason that she almost appeared to shimmer.

I wish for her not to perish... but I doubt my desire to be plausible.

The party cleared through the dungeon at an incredible pace. Will it perhaps fall to them?

Considering the possibility puts me in an indescribable mood. The joyful prospect of my soul attaining freedom contrasts the irritation that arises from the potential destruction of my plans.

Do I wish to be vanquished? Or do I wish to live on?

I cannot grasp the answer.

I feel as if my encounter with the necromancer and the girl must be none other than the call of fate itself...

I regret that I will be unable to witness the outcome of our encounter. And so, I wonder...

What scene will I awaken to next? No, will I even continue to awaken?

My dear reader, could you perhaps be him? Jean Dovy? Or maybe the beastgirl that traveled by his side?

If so, then I have but a single thing to say.

I'm glad that you were the ones that survived our encounter.

Chapter 85: The City of Dharz

Ch 85. The City of Dharz

「Leaving.」

「Take care of yourselves out there.」

『Are you sure it's okay for us to leave you with all that stuff to do?』

「I mind not. The tasks you have left me are but ones that come with the profession.」

Jean's healed up quite a bit over the course of the past few days. He's finally able to walk again, though he does still need to borrow Bernado's shoulder.

Jean said that he would handle all the administrative stuff that needed to be done. More specifically, he was going to report the matter to both the guild and country by handing the diary off to the proper authorities. He was also going to go purify the parts of the floating island that broke off and fell once he was done with all the paperwork and whatnot. He said that we didn't have to worry about it because we were still in the midst of a journey. He had time, and though I was somewhat inclined to disagree, he insisted we didn't.

That said, I was pretty grateful that he was willing to go out and handle it all. At the very least, I'll make sure I properly dispose of the giant slabs of rock sitting around in my dimensional storage. According to Jean, we should be able to just dump them in a volcano or anywhere else that's heavy on the earth element. If we just did that, the malevolent spirits possessing the rocks would naturally go away. Other possible places we could dump

them included the bottom of the ocean, the interior of a canyon, or really anything along those lines.

「And with that out of the way, I bid you farewell.」

「Nn. Later.」

「Woof!」

『Take care of yourself!』

Fran got on Urushi's back. We took off immediately after saying our goodbyes.

「Come back and visit some day. You will always be welcome here.」

We moved so quickly that the laboratory seemed to vanish in the blink of an eye.

『He was a pretty good guy.』

「Nn.」

『We really should come back and visit him some time down the line.』

「Woof woof!」

If we stayed on schedule, we would've long departed Dharz and gotten on a southbound ship, but we'd yet to reach the city. Luckily, things were looking up. There were no longer any obstacles between us and the city.

I sank into thought as we travelled.

Was that lich... really a lich? Well, I mean I guess it technically was, but, I mean like... who exactly did we fight? Did we fight the person who wrote the diary or his other personality?

I mean, it seemed to me that the whole reason his personality got all twisted was because of the Furnace of Malice or whatever it was it called, but, we

ended up destroying said furnace. I'm pretty sure the "evil" lich had control before we destroyed the furnace, but what about after?

Would we have been able to survive if the Lich had really gone all out? Did he hold back in the end, or...?

Well, no point thinking about it now. It's not like I'm actually going to be able to come to a conclusion.

「Master?」

『So which lich were we really facing in the end...?』

「Nn?」

『No, it's nothing. I'm just glad that both that Lich and Stephan were able to pass on.』

「Nn.」

Two days passed by in the blink of an eye.

The portside city of Dharz was finally within our sights.

『I can see it!』

「Ooohh!!」

Our view of the city expanded as we climbed a hill. The sight that awaited us at its peak was a magnificent one, an ocean that glimmered a brilliant sapphire alongside a beautiful portside city. Though the city itself was a bit smaller than Alessa, it carried with it an air of elegance. Its docks were filled with ships of all shapes and sizes, it almost looked like it came right out of a painting.

「Woof woof woof!」

『What's the matter Urushi?』

「Sea. Happy.」

『Oh, right, now that you mention it, I don't think he's ever seen the ocean before.』

「Bark!」

『Alright, in that case, why don't we head on over to the beach in a bit?』

「Woof!」

Urushi began rapidly wagging his tail back and forth. He seemed really excited.

「Fun.」

『Really?』

「Nn. Never been to the beach before.」

Ah, right. Fran used to be a slave, so she probably never got a chance to play by the oceanside despite the fact that she's been on a boat before. I guess we could spend a bit more time on and around the beach before we leave. It's not like the City of Barbra is going anywhere just because we didn't rush on over, right?

『Alrighty then, what are your thoughts on a beachside picnic?』

「Curry?」

『Curry isn't exactly the type of thing you'd eat at a picnic... I was thinking something along the lines of sandwiches.』

「Curry sandwiches?」

『Well.. I guess a few can't hurt.』

「Nn!」

「Wooooooof?」

『I know, I know, I'll prep you something too. What do you think of bone-in meat?』

「Woof woof!」

I can't tell if they're excited because we're having a picnic, or if it's just because of the food...

That said, we couldn't just head over to the beach right away. We first had to find ourselves a place to spend the night, preferably somewhere comfortable. There was a chance that we would have to stay in town for a few days before we could find a ship headed to our destination.

『Urushi, could you shrink down a bit? We'll walk the rest of the way.』

「Woof.」

The big wolf immediately transformed into its smaller, more dog-like mode before running after Fran. The two immediately found a path that led us straight to town.

Apparently we weren't the only people on said path either. We ran into a bunch of different groups travelling to and from the city. For some odd reason, they always moved out of our way the moment they saw us.

I ended up writing it off as Urushi's fault. Fran and I basically see him as a dog because we know him pretty well, but it'd make sense for the average person to see him and go "holy crap, a black wolf!" It only really made sense for them to want to avoid us. Luckily, he had a crest to prove that he was Fran's familiar, so no one turned tail, screamed, and ran away the moment they saw him. That said, if he was alone, they probably would've already sent a few adventurers after him.

We soon arrived at the town's entrance, unintentionally intimidating all we passed on the way.

I was expecting the town's guards to demand an inspection or something, but to my surprise, we managed to get by pretty easily. All we needed to do was show off our documentation and pay the 300 Golde entrance fee. [1]

『Alright, why don't we look for an inn or something like that first?』

「Not the beach?」

『We'll go after we find a place to stay. Though... the city sure does seem quite lively.』

The city's a bit smaller than Alessa was, but there seems to be somewhere around twice as many people out and about. That's a portside city for you, a guess.

『I mean, you probably don't want to end up camping out again despite finally getting to town, right?』

「Ofc.」 [2]

『Where in the hell did you manage to pick that up...? Whatever. Anyways, let's go find ourselves a place to stay. We should probably take a look at the adventurer's guild too so we can sell stuff.』

One of the most apparent similarities that Dharz shared with Alessa was the fact that both their main streets were practically littered with inns. Since we had so many to pick from, we decided to go for something a bit higher end. The cheaper ones could be unsanitary, so I figured it'd probably be better for us to avoid them.

「Full again.」

『Hmm.. that's weird.』

We visited five different inns, but not a single one had a room to spare. At first, I suspected that the shopkeepers were intentionally denying us service, either because Fran was too young, or because they didn't want to lodge Urushi, but it seemed that they were actually telling the truth.

『Why don't we just head over to the guild for the time being? They might be able to help us out.』

「Nn.」

We were quickly directed towards the guild after asking around for its location.

The Dharz branch seemed significantly smaller than the one set up in Alessa.

「Hello.」

「Welcome!」

We were greeted by an deep, intimidating voice the moment we opened the guild's doors, and it was at that exact moment that I began to pity Dharz' adventurers. Alessa's receptionist was a beautiful young woman in her prime. Here, they were stuck with a buff ass dude. Oh how unfair the world is.

「Did you need something from the guild, young lady?」

「Want to sell materials.」

「Sorry little lady, but we only buy from adventurers round these parts.」

「No problem. Adventurer.」

「W-What? You're a rank D adventurer? And the card... appears to be the real deal. Give me a second.」

The man held Fran's guild card up to one of the guild's crystals. It read without any issues, thereby evidencing its genuity.

「I-It's real! So you truly are a rank D adventurer, little miss!?!」

The buff receptionist shouted in surprise. His voice was so loud that it attracted a few of the adventurers that'd been sitting idle within the

building.

Roughly 20 adventurers had gathered around the bar placed in the building's center in a matter of minutes.

「Man Moj, yer just pulling my leg here, right?」

「Come on, it's gotta be fake. You know it, I know it, cut the shit already.」

And that was pretty much how everyone's reactions went — not that it mattered. Mojh, the receptionist guy, had already verified the card's integrity.

Annoyingly enough, the other adventurers wouldn't shut up about it at all, so we weren't able to actually get anywhere though.

「Still buying?」

「R-Right. My bad. You're the real thing, so I can buy whatever you've got.」

「Nn. That spot ok?」

「S-Sure.」

Fran completely ignored all the other adventurers despite the fact that they were making a huge fuss and headed straight towards the Material Exchange Counter. She began placing materials on top of the leather sheet they used for material exchange.

Specifically, she first placed all the materials from the 10 or so lesser magic beasts we encountered on our way here before following with a few of the things we picked up from the undead within the lich's dungeon.

We didn't sell all of the materials we got from said dungeon because some could be used to mix potions and the like. The only ones we sold were the ones that couldn't be used for anything but armour.

The more materials she piled on, the louder the adventurers got, but after the pile reached a certain height, their excitement started to die down; the boisterous noise was rapidly replaced by low murmurs.

And by the time she started pulling out materials from rank D magic beasts, everyone had stopped talking altogether. The room had gone silent.

「That's all.」

「...」

「Nn?」

「...」

「Hello?」

「Sorry... I was just a bit surprised is all.」

「Transaction.」

「I'll get right to it, but there's a lot I have to go through. It should take about an hour to process. Would you mind waiting, or...?」

(What now?)

『Let's try asking him for a room or something.』

(Got it.)

And so, Fran asked Mojh about inns that might still have vacancies, only to receive a... less than favourable answer.

「It's fairly difficult to get your hands on a room round this time of the season.」

「Why?」

「As I'm sure you know, the Lunar Banquet is coming up soon.」

「Nn.」

「So, yeah, that. It's something that happens every season. Barbra holds a huge festival every third month, and as a result, many folks tend to gather here in order to head over via boat. Thanks to that, the inns always end up booked completely full.」

「Ohh...」

Crap, it looks like we actually might have to end up camping out somewhere.

Fran seemed to know what this Lunar Banquet thing was, so I guess it's probably one of this world's regular festivities.

『Hey Fran, what's this Lunar Banquet thing?』

(Festival.)

『Well, I mean I figured that much.』

(Full moon.)

『But aren't full moons kinda like normal?』

(Only during the banquet.)

I tried to make sense of what Fran told me.

The Lunar Banquet is something that only happens once every 3 months.

This world has seven different moons. There was one large one, and six smaller ones. Apparently, the only time you'd ever be able to see all seven at once with the big one full was during the festival.

If it only happens once every three months, then I guess that means they only get “full” moons four times a year.

Oh! I get it now. The date marked on the calendar we found in Alessa was supposed to denote for the Lunar Banquet.

Today's the twenty sixth, so that means there should be five more days until it happens.

Instead of sitting around inside the guild and just waiting the whole process out, we decided to visit a few more inns in the meantime. Unfortunately, all of the ten odd inns we visited were booked to the brim. The only rooms that were left over were reserved for nobles and the like.

What a pain in the ass...

『Looks like we didn't manage to find anything yet... Oh well, it can't really be helped. Let's head back over to the guild for now so we can grab the cash they owe us.』

「Nn.」

Worse comes to worst, we'll ask the guild to let us borrow like one of their tavern's corners or something.

[1] I changed it again because someone had a really nice suggestion in the comments. Thanks!

[2] Here, Fran says "of course" in a way that people in Japan would do in the 1920's ~ 1980's. I couldn't really think of any archaic but not grandiose ways of saying it so I just used modern internet slang instead, since she shouldn't know that either.

Chapter 86: Beach Time!

86. Beach Time!

We went back to the adventurer's guild and grabbed the money they owed us. All in all, it totalled up to 120k Golde, which I would say was a pretty worthwhile amount. All we needed to do now was find ourselves a place to stay, and we'd pretty much be free to go do whatever else we wanted.

But despite our efforts, we weren't able to find any sort of lodging whatsoever. Crap, what do we do now?

Fran was already three stages past being just bored of looking around.

「Master. Beach.」

『We haven't got a place to stay yet.』

「Can stay at the guild. I want to go to the beach.」

「Whimper...」

Oh god damn it! Not you too Urushi!

Eh, I guess it can't really be helped. We'll give up trying to find a place for now and go spend some time playing by the seaside.

『Alright, alright, I get it. Let's head over to the marketplace so we can buy ingredients and whatnot.』

Screw it, if we're going to just mess around, we might as well enjoy ourselves as much as possible.

「Nn.」

「Woof!」

The most important part of having a good time was to first get everything you needed set up. Knowing that, we first headed straight to the marketplace. Dharz' had a port, so I had the sneaking suspicion that here, we might've be able to get our hands on stuff we'd have a lot of trouble getting elsewhere.

It turned out that I was spot on. The market was stocked full of the ocean's bounty. The first thing to catch my eye was an odd, bright blue salt. It looked like the type of stuff you'd buy if you really wanted to splurge; it was listed at ten times the price of even the finest white salt.

Apparently, said blue salt was one of the city's specialities. You couldn't get it from anywhere other the rank G dungeon that sat right outside the city's boundaries.

Fran immediately perked up upon catching wind of the word "dungeon," but quickly lost interest as she was told more about it.

The dungeon was relatively small. All in all, it consisted of but a single floor. You could make it all the way to the dungeon core in about thirty minutes and the only notable thing you could get was blue salt. The magic beasts that inhabited it were not only weak, but also few and far inbetween. Even I quickly grew bored of hearing about it, so Fran losing interest was practically a given.

I mean, it did sound like a pretty fun experience, at least at first. I mean, you would have to have the ability to both breathe and fight underwater in order to even get to it. That, however, was where all my interest waned, as the dungeon itself was just a regular, above water cave. You could even buy the only valuable thing the dungeon produced on the market, so... yeah. No thanks.

「What's that?」

『It's a fish type magic beast. They call them Pyragenia, and apparently they taste pretty damn good.』

「And that?」

『Pretty sure it's just a crab claw, albeit a really big one.』

「Bark.」

『Do you want one, Urushi?』

We quickly went around the marketplace and bought whatever caught our eyes before finally heading to the beach.

It's still early spring, and it's kind of cold, so there aren't any other people around. We've basically got the whole thing to ourselves.

「Beach!」

「Woof woof!」

Fran took off her shoes and cloak and made a beeline straight for the sea the moment we arrived. Urushi quickly followed suit and immediately jumped in after her.

The water temperature was pretty much about as low as you'd expect it to be given the time of year, but Urushi's got fur, so he should be fine despite the temperature. As for Fran... well, I guess she'll be okay if she uses magic to warm herself up.

『Hey, calm down you two. You guys are going to-』

「Uaahhh!」

「Whimper.」

Just as I was about to warn them, both Urushi and Fran opened their mouths only to have their gaping maws filled to the brim with seawater. And as

you'd expect, both immediately spat it back out with frowns plastered across their faces.

「Blech」

「Whimper!」

The two were then swallowed by an incoming wave and thrown back onto the beach. Their sopping wet bodies were left sprawled all over the sand; the sea had treated them exactly as it would a pair of corpses.

Fran was a person whose stats far surpassed what was commonly thought of as the human limit. Urushi was a Darkness Wolf, a magical beast with incredible power. Yet, both were reduced to mere puppets by Mother Nature's hands.

『The sea's full of nothing but saltwater, so you're not exactly going to have a good time if you let it get in your mouth.』

「Didn't know.」

「Yelp...」

Both Fran and Urushi were really looking forward to the whole beach thing, but the sudden series of unfortunate events seemed to have completely killed all their enthusiasm.

「And it feel gross.」

「Whimper...」

『What do you mean?』

「Feet being swallowed.」

「Woof...」

Ah, right. When the waves wash over your feet, you kind of get pulled towards the sea together with the sand you're standing on. Neither Fran nor

Urushi seemed really enjoy the sensation. They felt quite the opposite, in fact.

『Are you guys not feeling up for it anymore then?』

「Nn...」

「Woof...」

The two trudged their way back over to me as water continued to drip from their sogging wet bodies. I could almost swear that they were about as gloomy as they'd be at a funeral.

『Why don't we eat so you guys can get all cheered up?』

「Curry...?」

『I didn't actually make anything else yet, so sure, why not?』

「Nn.」

『Here's something for you too, Urushi.』

「Woof.」

I brought a giant hunk of meat out of my dimensional storage for the latter of the two to enjoy..

The fresh sea breeze almost seemed to embrace us as we ate a meal under a clear, blue sky.

It seemed that Fran had never experienced anything quite like this, and so, her mood gradually recovered. That said, I wasn't about to let her go with nothing but a bad impression of what I considered a wonderful waterfront playground. I mean, she had still yet to enjoy all that the beach had to offer. Spending a day by the beachside meant so much more than just messing around in the ocean.

The first activity I had her try was one of mankind's most fundamental seaside pastimes.

「Fishing rod?」

After scouting around the beach for a bit, I found what was effectively the ideal fishing spot. I was going to make sure Fran enjoyed her beach visit, and this was pretty much the perfect opportunity, so I quickly led her over after she finished eating.

The area was a bit rocky, but that wasn't really much of a problem. In fact, the change of terrain made it all the better as far fishing spots went.

Fran had fished in lakes and rivers before, but this would be her first time fishing for anything that lived in saltwater.

I made a doppelganger and passed it a fishing rod as well. You know, now that I think about it, the last time I fished was before I reincarnated. It's been a while, so I really wanted to give the old skillset a polish.

「Target, big fish.」

『Yeah, let's do our best.』

「Woof woof!」

An hour passed.

「Woah.」

「Woof woof woofety woof!」

『Alright! Pull it in!』

I was pretty worried that we weren't going to catch anything. If that happened, then Fran might've seriously ended up disassociating the word "beach: from any sort of positive connotation whatsoever. And that, in my mind at least, was be equivalent to a sort of tragedy.

「Success.」

「Woooooof!」

『Wow, it's pretty big.』

The fish was undoubtedly a big catch. Though its features were a bit grotesque, it measured in at a flopping 80 centimeters in length.

As for me... yeah, I didn't really catch anything. But who cares! All that matters is that Fran enjoyed herself! My pride doesn't hurt in the least. Ahahaha....haha..ha...

『Why don't we eat this thing right here and now?』

「Nn!」

「Woof woof!」

I quickly crafted an oven with magic, lit it aflame, and got ready to cook our catch.

『How about playing in the sand while it cooks?』

「Playing in the sand?」

『Yeah, give it a shot.』

「By... hitting the sand?」

『Well, I guess you couuuuld have a sandball figh- wait no! That's not how you play in the sand! You're supposed to build sandcastles and dig giant holes and stuff.』

「Understood... Will try it. Urushi, let's go.」

「Woof.」

『Don't go too far!』

「Nn.」

Wait, what should I even be making? I guess sashimi's the most obvious thing that comes to mind, I'd really hate to just limit it to just that. I guess I'll also grill some of it. Fish soup sounds like a pretty good idea too.

I gave the fish a quick once over before actually preparing it. It didn't look like it was poisoned, nor did it seem like any sort of magic beast. Its meat was a beautiful shade of white, and it had all the delicious fishy oils that you'd normally expect out of well.. fish.

Yeah, I'm definitely going for sashimi. The grilled fish is definitely in too, especially since I can season it with the blue salt we bought earlier. I could even taste test it by making myself a doppelganger.

I decided to grab the crab and clams we bought off the market earlier and use them in the fish soup. Naturally, the combination of a Japanese person and fish soup implied the use of Miso. This world's Miso was a bit sweeter than the Miso we had back home, but that wasn't really much of an issue at all. I had more than enough soup stock available too, so operation soup was a success.

『Alright, that's done.』

I finished cooking after about half an hour, so I decided to go grab Fran and Urushi.

『Huh?』

My voice leaked out in an obviously stupefied tone. Welp, I guess this is my fault. I really shouldn't have concentrated so much on cooking.

Fran had built a massive western styled castle in the time I spent making food. All in all, it was five whole meters in height.

It looked like she had used earth magic to excavate the area around her masterpiece, and wind magic to form its shape. I mean, I know I told her to make a castle, but this, this was far out of the scope of what I was

expecting. You couldn't even really call it a mere sandcastle anymore. It was more like a sculpture, a piece of art, and an elaborate one at that.

In fact, it was so fancy that I almost wanted to call her out for having gone overboard. The only conclusion I could come to was that Fran was fairly artistically talented, and, as her guardian, I felt the urge to encourage and foster said talent.

It looked like the sand she'd used to make said castle was supplied by Urushi, as he had dug a huge hole nearby. He evidently went overboard too, as said hole was something on the scale of a crater.

Upon closer inspection, I realized that Urushi was in fact still continuing to dig. He was digging and digging and digging his heart out with everything he had. Oh yeah, that's right. Digging is something dogs like doing.

「Pant pant pant pant」

Yup, he looked like he was having a tonne of fun.

So what exactly was I supposed to do about this whole overly fancy castle situation?

I honestly hadn't the slightest clue.

Chapter 87: A Pair of Grunts

87. A Pair of Grunts.

We went back to town after a day of beachside leisure. Since we'd yet to find a place to spend the night, we began looking for one right away.

And as for Fran's sand castle? Yeah, I didn't really have any choice other than leaving it there. I mean, I wanted to demolish it, but then Fran started staring at me with a pair of tear-filled eyes, so I couldn't bring myself to actually do it. That said, we at least filled up the hole Urushi dug out — with magic, of course.

We ended up spending more time at the beach than I was expecting; the sun was already far past its halfway point. Given the time, I decided to give up on trying to find a place on Dharz' main street, so I had Fran venture into the city's alleyways in order for us to check out some of the cheaper inns.

And that was when it happened.

(Master.)

『I know.』

We were being tailed.

Specifically, two men were following us around.

『They don't seem all that great at concealing themselves, so they're probably not that strong.』

(Fight?)

『Let's head somewhere without any people first.』

「Nn.」

『Urushi, stand by in Fran's shadow, alright?』

(Woof.)

Fran turned the corner and conveniently ran into a dead end. Sure enough, the two men showed themselves soon after.

「You lost, little lady?」

「We can help you around town if you want.」

The way they called out to us made it seemed like they were accustomed to saying those exact lines. I guess their strategy was to first corner the person before making them lower their guards by speaking in a kind manner.

「No thanks.」

「Aw, come on, don't be like that.」

General Information

Name: Eric

Age: 34

Race: Blue Cat

Job: Merchant

State: Normal

Status Level: 17/50

HP: 78

MP: 40

STR: 37

VIT: 33

AGI: 52

INT: 29

MGC: 21

DEX: 42

Skills

Transportation of Goods: Lv 2

Commerce: Lv 2

Pickpocket: Lv 4

Short Sword Arts: Lv 3

Detainment: Lv 2

Night Vision

Equipment

Crude Iron Short Sword

Deerskin Chestplate

Deerskin Shinguards

Earrings of Silence

General Information

Name: Farego

Age: 38

Race: Blue CAt

Job: Warrior

State: Normal

Status Level: 22/50

HP: 168

MP: 136

STR: 49

VIT: 50

AGI: 68

INT: 44

MGC: 39

DEX: 61

Skills

Assassination: Lv 2

Silent Actions: Lv 3

Short Sword Arts: Lv 4

Throwing: Lv 2

Shadow Slip: Lv 2

Night Vision

Equipment

Iron Shortsword

Bearhide Armour

Black Mantle

Ring of Dexterity

—

They were totally small fry. The only thing that even remotely caught my attention was the assassination skill that the second guy had, so I quickly gave it a once over.

Assassination

Rarity level 3

Raise the damage of the first hit performed by a percentage equal to the skill's level. Only activates if the user performs a surprise attack.

So it maxes out at 10%? That's not that bad. A 10% boost to my telekinetic catapult would be quite devastating. Unfortunately, skill taker's going to be on cooldown for another 75 days, so I can't really jack it from him. The reason for its super long cooldown was because I used it to take Unsealable away from the Lich. Unsealable was of rarity level 8, which meant that skills without levels would be treated as ones that were completely maxed out.

Anyways, just looking at their statuses pretty much told me that they weren't exactly what you'd call decent people.

「Ya know, getting lost round these parts is prettty easy.」

「Not lost. Needless concern.」

「Come on now...」

Crisis detection activated right as the man's expression began to warp. He no longer was trying to put on the airs of a good natured guy that just happened to have a criminal-like face.

「One more step and will treat as enemy.」

「Hah?」

「Won't get out unscathed. Best to run.」

「Shut up and get over here you little shit!」

「Gyahahahaha! This one's got a lot of spunk.」

「Make sure you don't hurt her. Her price'll drop if you do.」

Man, you know, every single blue cat we've ran into has been like this. Literally one hundred percent of the blue cats we've met have been nothing but scum.

Fran silently draws me and gets into a battle-ready stance.

「Huh? You wanna fight punk?」

「Oh, you think you're tough shit, you little brat? We'll kick your bitch ass!」

The two men leisurely laughed at Fran. Evidently, they didn't feel the slightest bit threatened. That was about to change. We were going to make them beg for their lives.

「Warning was given.」

I activated parallel processing and began casting magic the moment she finished speaking. The skill's effects allowed me to easily fire off two different spells at once.

『Stonewall』

『Silence』

I sealed off their path of escape with earth magic by blocking them in with two different walls before soundproofing our surroundings with wind magic.

This way, there wouldn't be any witnesses.

『Don't kill them, alright?』

(Why?)

『Oh, you know, I just wanted to ask them a thing or two.』

(Understood.)

「W-What?」

「H-Huh? Huh?!」

The two men were thrown into a state of confusion by the sudden series of spells. The merchant didn't even take up a defensive stance or anything. He wasn't prepared for anything even remotely like this.

There were a few noises as Fran dashed around and hit the two men in turn.

Annnnd it was over. That was it. Both men lay on the floor unconscious. The warrior had managed to put up a little bit of a fight, but Fran was just too far out of his league.

「What now?」

『Tie them up for the time being, I guess.』

I created a few threads for her to use. The threads I made weren't all that strong, I'd yet to master the skill. That said, each was still about as durable as a rope made of hemp.

What I wanted to know was their backgrounds as individuals. The two blue cats had seemed to say that they wanted to sell Fran, which implied that they were underground merchants that'd kidnap people and turn them into slaves against their will.

Given that we were in a portside city, I'd say that it was fairly possible for them to gather a bunch of slaves abducted from the Kingdom of Kranzel and have them shipped off by sea. I recalled Fran saying that she went through a similar sort of experience, after all.

The blue cat tribe's slave merchants were Fran's bitter enemies. And thus, I too acknowledged them as enemies. We might end up facing off their organisations some day in the future, so it'd be a pretty good idea for us to gather up every single possible bit of information we could.

『So yeah, that's why.』

「Understood.」

I was thinking of having a clone interrogate them while Fran kept watch outside, but my plans were quickly shattered as the girl in question started to kick the two men.

「Get up.」

「Ugh... what the hell...」

「Shiet bro, what happened...?」

「Urushi, out.」

「Woof.」

「Hiii!」

「Uwahhhh!」

The two men were frightened by the 3 meter tall wolf that appeared out of nowhere. They tried to run away, but both their arms and legs were bound, so they couldn't even so much as stand up, let alone escape.

Fran seemed to be fuming with a sort of silent rage, but it didn't last for long. She almost immediately interrupted their screams and began to speak.

「Question.」

「Y-you think you can get away with this, you lil punk? You know who you just messed with? You ain't leaving this city with your head on your shoulders! You li- argh!」

Fran kicked the merchant right in the face as he tried to speak in protest. Blood immediately began spurting from his nose.

「Shut up. Only speak to answer questions.」

The two men immediately fell silent upon exposure to Fran's complete and utter lack of mercy. They were obviously terrified.

「Are you illegal slave merchants?」

「W-What are you talking about gurl? W-We don't even know what that thing yous saying is.」

「W-We merchants gurl, good hearted ones.」

Yeah no. The principle of falsehood immediately revealed his words to be lies.

『Fran, I'm a hundred percent sure that they're lying. They're definitely a part of the business.』

「Are the slaves somewhere in the city?」

「I already told you that we don't know shit gurl! Chill!」

『That's a lie too.』

「Nn. Are there more of you?」

「Come on! We don't know nuttin! We swear!」

『Another one.』

「Might not torture... if you talk.」

「Come on! How many times have we told you that we don't know nuttin!?
Man, what's the matter with you!」

「Yea gurl, he right. 」

「Urushi.」

「Growl!」

「Hey gurl! Daz not cool! Come on, cut a brotha some slack!」

「This wolf likes human flesh. Livers from live prey. Favourite.」

「Growl growl!」

Urushi slobbered all over one of the men whilst letting a low growl. It was as if he was declaring that he was about to enjoy a meal. The two men immediately paled in response.

「Spill it. Unless want to be eaten alive.」

「Man, come on, I was just saying that I don't kno- Arghhhh!!」

Fran drove me into the back of the warrior's hand, and slowly began grinding me deeper though his muscles.

「Argghghghghgh!」

「Hey man, you alright?! This stupid bitch ain't – Argh!」

「Learning disability?」

Fran kicked the merchant's face yet again, this time, completely pulverizing his nose in the process.

「Greater Heal」

「Huh?」

「Shiet? Ain't dat some super high tier ass healing magic?」

Fran pulled me out of the warrior's hand and healed him. The wound I made instantly disappeared, and was once again filled by flesh and bone. And as she did, a slight glimmer of hope appeared on the blue cats' faces.

They determined that the girl wasn't actually going to kill them, that there was no way a mere child would intentionally commit murder. They hoped that there would be some sort of convenient and logical reason that would allow them to keep their lives.

But Fran's words completely crushed all their overly optimistic expectations.

「Lucky. Not the type to die easily. Now can use Fire Arrow.」

「Ughh!! Arghhhhhh!!!!!!!!!!」

「Greater Heal.」

The warrior's carbonized hand was once again healed back up to its normal state.

「Won't let you escape. Not with an easy death.」

「Arggg!」

「Hiiii!」

Screams of despair escaped the men's mouths. There was nothing they could do to get away from Fran. They weren't even permitted to die so long as she continued to heal them. All that awaited them was a life of eternal torture.

「L-Listen here gurl, we gotchu a deal! We got lots of gold stored away, ya know!」

「Don't need.」

「Alrihgt, alright! What if we gave you-」

「Stupid? Want information.」

「G-Gurl, we said we ain't got an- arggggg!」

Fran kicked the merchant for a third time and broke every single last one of his front teeth.

「Skill. Can see through lies.」

The two realized that they had no other choice but to talk, and so, they soon began to answer Fran's questions in an honest a manner as they could.

Our suspicions were spot on. Dharz was home to one of the blue cat tribe's underground slave markets. Slaves captured from all over the Kingdom of Kranzel would be gathered here before they were shipped off to the Kingdom of Reidos. Apparently, their base of operations used to be Barbra, but the country caught on and crushed it.

Thinking about it, I'm pretty sure that was exactly what happened to Fran. She was probably abducted from some foreign country before being sent to Barbra for processing. The country probably caught on right about when she arrived there, and thus, they decided to move her to another base somewhere else in Kranzel. We probably met whilst she was being shipped over to Dharz.

The Kingdom of Reidos buys slaves for quite the price, so the merchants had been using Dharz as a point of transportation and processing for 10 odd

years now.

And so, after learning all that, we asked them the hideout's location, the number of slave traders, and the number of slaves.

「H-Hey, we've told you everything now, so you can let us run free, right gurl? You gunna help us, right?」

「We'll change! We swears it !」

I heard their pleas, but ignored them. Immediately after obtaining all the information we needed, I cut their necks right off their heads with a single blade of magical wind.

They'd probably tell their organisation about Fran if we let them go, and I didn't exactly feel like it was a good idea to have some sort of underground organisation after us. And I mean, they were the kind of people that kidnapped and sold children, so the world was probably better off without them anyways.

I put their bodies in my dimensional storage for the time being. Now that I think about it, the insides of my dimensional storage have really started to get all messy and chaotic lately...

「Nn. Thanks Master.」

『Don't sweat it.』

「What now?」

『Well, that depends. What do you want to do?』

「Spring cleaning.」

Yeeaap, I figured she'd say that. I originally wanted to have her wait somewhere while I made a doppelganger and raided the place with Urushi, but I already used it earlier when we were playing around by the seaside. Much to my announce, I actually couldn't use Doppelganger Synthesis again till the day after tomorrow.

『You should probably at least wait till night time.』

「Nn.」

『How about we go find somewhere to stay first.』

It took us quite some time, but we were eventually able to find ourselves a room at cheap inn. There, we waited until it was time to begin our assault.

—

Note: Clone = the ones from his crappy skill. Doppelganger = the ones from the SP skill. Just to be clear, they're separate skills and only Doppelganger Synth has a longer cooldown.

Chapter 88: Fran the Assassin

88. Fran the Assassin

『Alright, let's go.』

「Nn.」

It was two in the morning. Everyone was asleep, and even the drunks had gone home.

It didn't take long for us to arrive at the slave traders' hideout. We made use of Urushi's Dark Magic, Espionage and Presence Concealment in order to hide ourselves. They shouldn't be able to locate us, but I prepared Fran a mask just in case they did.

The hideout was fairly close to the port itself. Its first floor was supposedly said to be a warehouse, and the second, a sort of living quarters. The building was guarded, but only by a single person.

『We'll probably get noticed if we take it too slowly.』

「Nn. Blitzkrieg.」

「Bark.」

Fran made her move. She used Silence to dampen the sounds made by her movements and cut the guard down before he was able to so much as react. In fact, he probably didn't even get to see her shadow before losing his life. I immediately put his corpse in my dimensional storage, and we moved on.

『Alright, why don't we start from the top?』

There was no point in doing something as stupid as kicking down the front door.

「Nn.」

Fran infiltrated the building by leaping onto its roof, cutting one of the windows open, and climbing inside. Naturally, she continued to keep quiet through the use of Silence.

We immediately stumbled across a bed with someone inside of it, but luckily, he didn't wake up. Appraising him informed us that he was one of the slave traders.

『He's an enemy.』

(Nn.)

Fran casually thrust me through his chest and impaled him right through the heart.

「——！」

The man woke up in response, his body throbbing in pain, but he wasn't able to so much as make a noise. Silence made sure of that. I put the corpse away before he even managed to start leaking blood, and as a result, not even the slightest speck of evidence was left behind. We had just pulled off the perfect assassination.

『It looks like they're probably keeping the slaves underground, in a basement or something.』

「Clean up first.」

『Yeah. It'll be easier to free the slaves if we do.』

We decided to do the world a favour and “disinfect” the floor in its entirety. And so, we acted in the same manner as would most other assassins, we murdered every single slave merchant we came across in cold blood. Most

of them were stronger than that Gyuran guy we killed in Alessa, not that we had even the slightest bit of difficulty given that they were all asleep.

Chances were, we probably wouldn't have had any trouble with them head on either, especially given how much stronger we got through the exploration of the Lich's dungeon. We only bothered with stealth because it would prevent any alarms from being raised.

『This should be the last room.』

It took us five minutes to clear out the entire second floor, a single room outstanding. All in all, we killed six different slave merchants.

The room before us, however, was unlike the rest; its lights were still on, and I could sense a single presence within it.

『Would you mind, Urushi?』

(Woof!)

『Make sure you stay quiet.』

(Woof.)

Urushi eliminated the target and came back after 10 or so seconds. He was as quiet as I'd expected.

『It seems to feel a bit different from all the other rooms.』

The room's interior design reminded me of a study. A single blue cat was lying dead on the room's desk. His clothing was relatively fancy, it seemed like he was an executive of sorts.

『I'm going to rummage through his desk real quick.』

I fished around a bit and went through most of the documents they had. The only thing of interest I could find was a note detailing the number of slaves sold to the Kingdom of Reidos.

I'd like to hand this over to the proper authorities if possible, so I decided to hold onto it for the time being.

After looking around a bit, I noticed that there was a safe in the room's corner. It was made of iron, and it looked like the type of strongbox in which you'd put your valuables. Searching the man's corpse allowed me to quickly find the key. The safe itself wasn't radiating any magical energy, so it probably wasn't a trap.

Fran opened the safe as I awaited the results with bated breath.

『Woah』

「Treasure.」

The safe contained about 100k Golde alongside a bunch of jewelry and the like. I guess you could say the safe was, in a way, a sort of treasure box. I didn't really mind stealing from criminals, so we grabbed every single last bit and shoved it all inside of my dimensional storage.

『There isn't anyone else in the second floor.』

The next thing we had to do was tidy up the first floor. There were a tonne of people there though, and they all seemed to be awake. Given that it was a warehouse, there probably wouldn't really be many places to hide either. We'd be put in a really bad spot if someone managed to escape after seeing Fran's face. Ideally, I'd prefer them not to even see her figure. I didn't want them realizing that it was a child that raided the place.

There were a few slaves mixed into the crowd, so we couldn't just blast our AOE's and wipe everyone out. They also seemed to have an underground escape route for emergencies, so a few would probably manage to get away if we made a big fuss. We used infrared vision, echolocation and presence detection in tandem to learn as much as we could before initiating. It seemed that the most troublesome part of this whole thing would be the one room with five different people inside of it. We decided to save that for last and clean out the rooms with only one or two people in them first.

『Let's go.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

We did the same for the first floor as we did for the second; we eliminated all noise by using silence before cutting open window and climbing in. I used silence again once we entered each room, and Urushi immediately moved to kill the man that tried to raise an alarm in response to our sudden intrusion.

We quickly did the same for two other rooms, one with one person in it, and the other with two.

「Room filled with stuff.」

『Yeah, it kinda reminds me of Jean's lab.』

There were a bunch of raw materials laying around along side the equipment needed to process them. It seemed like they were making a bunch of different things, as the shelves contained life potions, vials of poison, and a fair number of medicinal products.

『This stuff looks pretty useful.』

「Take?」

『Hmmm, that seems like a pretty good idea. We could probably use it to make potions and stuff while traveling.』

「Nn. Take.」

We plundered so much stuff that it almost seemed like we'd forgotten our initial purpose in coming here.

『Alright, with that out of the way, why don't we go wipe the rest of them out?』

I didn't know how many people there were left in the basement, but the only room on the first floor that remained was the one with five people in it.

The plan was to infiltrate using silence before having Urushi use one of his dark magics, Black Veil. The spell would deprive our targets of their vision so we could kill them all in one fell swoop before they got so much as a chance to run away.

And it worked. Fran had the ability to search sense enemy presences, and Urushi could detect any and all life forms, so the two were able to easily wipe out all five slave traders without any issue.

『That's both the first and second floors down.』

「Basement next.」

『Based on what they said yesterday, the organisation should be made up of 24 people in total, so at most, there should be four more of them.』

「Nn.」

We went down the stairs as stealthily as would a group of ninjas. The basement we descended upon turned out not to be a basement at all. It was a dungeon. There were two guards at its entrance, but we killed them instantly. They weren't even really paying attention in the first place; they were lazily facing off against each other in a game of cards instead of doing their jobs.

『Alright, why don't we save the slaves now?』

According to the documents we grabbed from upstairs, there were currently seven different children trapped here. They were all already wearing slave collars.

「Who... are you?」

Fran's sudden entrance left the children in the basement in a state of surprise. It took them a bit to recover, but after a few moments, the one who appeared to be the group's eldest, a boy, timidly looked towards and called

out to us. He seemed to give off the kind of air you'd expect from nobility despite his current status as a slave. The contrasting combination made him seem a bit like a cheeky brat, but whatever. One of the girls standing behind him seemed to look a lot like him. The two were probably twins.

「Hero.」

「Huh?」

「Came to help.」

「But what about the kidnappers? They should be up there...」

「Defeated them.」

「You did?」

「Nn.」

「...」

The imprisoned children look at each other in turn. Well, I guess it only makes sense for them not to believe what Fran was saying. They couldn't believe that a girl that looked even younger than them could've defeated twenty odd criminals.

「Move back.」

「Huh?」

「Back off from cage. Dangerous.」

「S-Sure...」

A loud swish resounded throughout the room; Fran swung me and instantly cut the cage's bars to pieces.

「Huh?」

「No way...」

The children stared blankly as the cage collapsed. They didn't understand how they were supposed to react.

「Hurt?」

The female twin's leg seemed to have an injury on it. There was a cloth wrapped around it, but it hadn't really gone through any other sort of treatment. She was likely to get infected, at this rate.

「Middle Heal.」

「Huh? It's better now?」

「Woah, are you a mage?」

「That's awesome!」

The children started to ask Fran a bunch of different questions, but she didn't respond.

『Fran!』

「Nn. Someone came.」

We felt someone enter the building. It was probably an enemy. Shit, we have to get rid of them before they catch on.

Fran had suddenly gone silent whilst looking up at the ceiling, so the children began feeling anxious.

「W-What's wrong?」

「Stay inside. Hide.」

「Huh? What?」

「Don't leave. Wait for me.」

Fran pushed the children back towards the prison before grabbing me and heading up the staircase.

『Looks like he's wandering around on the first floor.』

「Searching for something?」

『Yeah, he's probably trying to figure out what happened to the other slave traders. Make sure you put on your mask.』

「Nn.」

We climbed the stairs whilst erasing our presences. The enemy that'd arrived was a decently strong looking man. He was fully armed, and not too bad at concealing his presence either. We were only able to detect him because we had a whole bunch of different skills working in tandem with each other. If not for that, we probably wouldn't have noticed him at all.

General Information

Name: Salrut O'Randy.

Age: 55

Race: Human

Job: Dark Knight

State: Normal

Status Level: 51/99

HP: 469

MP: 458

STR: 236

VIT: 219

AGI: 155

INT: 210

MGC: 244

DEX: 169

Skills

Dark Resistance: Lv 6

Assassination: Lv 4

Intimidation: Lv 5

Espionage: Lv 3

Presence Concealment: Lv 3

Divine Sword Arts: Lv 1

Sword Arts: MAX

Divine Spear Arts: Lv 2

Spear Arts: MAX

Court Etiquette: Lv 3

Shield Arts: Lv 8

Way of the Shield: Lv 7

Interrogation: Lv 4

Poison Resistance: Lv 4

Poison Magic: Lv 3

Storm Resistance: Lv 6

Detainment: Lv 5

Paralysis Resistance: Lv 4

Dark Magic: Lv 7

Automatic Life Recovery

Vigour Manipulation

Magic Manipulation

Minor Strength Boost

Titles

Oathbreaker

Equipment

High Quality Dark Mithril Longsword

Blackened Mithril Shield

Blackened Mithril Armour

Black Tiger's Sky Mantle

Bracelet of Magic Resist

Ring of Bonds

Holy shit, he's strong! And he looks like he's an enemy, especially since he's apparently a Dark Knight instead of a regular one. I mean, his skills all seem to be inclined towards darkness, and his title clearly says that he breaks his oaths.

And on top of that, he seems like he's in some sort of weird frenzy.

『Be careful Fran, he's pretty strong.』

(Nn.)

『Urushi, make sure you hide in Fran's shadow until you find a good opportunity to sneak attack him.』

(Woof!)

He lived up to his stats. He noticed Fran the moment she jumped out at him, and immediately got ready for combat.

「Name yourself!」

Fran didn't reply to his question.

「Kuh! Name yourself you coward!」

「Hah!」

Fran ignored his words and continued to attack, but he managed to skillfully repel her strikes using his sword and shield.

「Nuryaaaaa!」

「Ha!」

He even managed to retaliate. Fran's Divine Sword Arts were a higher level than his, but his shield rendered defenses solid. It was fairly obvious that he had way more combat experience than her too. It wasn't someone she'd be able to completely smash.

It seems like we ran into a formidable opponent in a place that we never would've thought it. We would probably be able to beat him without much issue if either Urushi or I launched any sort of surprise attack, but I'd prefer to keep him alive if possible. He was pretty skilled, so I was pretty sure we wouldn't lose out completely by keeping him alive. At the very least, we could use him to gain more information.

『Fran, try not to kill him if you can.』

(Nn. Understood.)

Chapter 89: The Twins' Identity

89. The Twins' Identity

Fran and the Dark Knight traded blow for blow. They repeatedly smashed their blades against each other and sent sparks flying throughout the slave traders' hideout. The clash of blade on blade rang throughout the building, but Silence prevented even the slightest bit of sound from leaking outside.

「Nuoooooooooooooooooooooooo!!!!!!」

「Hah!」

The duel was being dragged out. Neither Fran nor the dark knight could really gain an edge on the other. The status quo was nothing but a standstill – which only made sense. Both parties were swordsmen that had awakened to the divine arts, after all.

Alright, I guess I'd better make him drop his sword.

「Ha!」

「Argh!?!」

I used Vibrating Impact and Thunder Blade right as I came into contact with his blade. As expected, the sudden shock made the man's hands go numb; he couldn't help but drop his sword.

But he didn't give up.

He immediately raised his shield and began to chant a spell.

「Dark Arrow!」

Not that it mattered. We were completely immune to dark, so the arrow phased out before it hit us.

「Impossible!」

「Opening.」

「Guah!」

The man let out a shout as he flinched in surprise, and created an opening far too obvious for Fran to miss. She immediately turned her blade and smashed his legs with its flat. She then pointed my blade at the back of the man's neck as he fell onto one knee.

And that was that. The man had lost, and so, he looked up at Fran with a face full of frustration.

「How regrettable.」

「Who?」

「A man who sees no reason to give his name to the likes of you.」

You know, he's pretty energetic for a middle aged man. Oh well, either way, it's time to rough him up a bit so we can get some info out of him.

『Urushi, out.』

「Growl growl!」

「W-what!?!」

Heh. Looks like he's pretty spooked. I was about to get the interrogation going, but the children came up from the basement just as I was about to suggest cutting off one of his arms. All seven peeked in from the stairwell, with the two noble-like twins at the forefront.

Well, I guess it only made sense. We'd left them in the basement, so they probably started feeling anxious. Thankfully, the battle had already come to

an end.

「Stay back. Not safe.」

They fearfully stopped in their tracks as Fran warned them. The male twin's face, however, suddenly twisted as he caught sight of the dark knight.

「Salrut!」

「My Prince! I see that you are unscathed!」

Wait what? That kid was a prince? The fuck?

「You came to save us...?」

「Princess! I am glad that you too are well!」

Huh? Wait, so he wasn't one of the slave traders? Errr, I guess we should heal him up then or something.

Ten minutes passed by in the blink of an eye as we got up to pace.

We healed the knight and had him explain what was going on.

「Really a prince and princess?」

「Veritably. The prince and princess that stand before you are members of the Fyrias Kingdom's royal family. They are sixth and seventh in line for the throne respectively.」

「And you? Guard?」

「Precisely.」

「Came to help because royal family was kidnapped?」

「I-It is as you say.」

Apparently what happened was that the prince and princess sneaked out and got themselves abducted. Naturally, the guards hadn't any knowledge of it — until they realized they couldn't locate them, that is. I actually kinda pitied the knight. It seemed like he was probably going to end up taking all the blame.

「How despicable those accused criminals were! They even went as far as to put something like that around the highness' necks!」

Yeah... it does seem pretty bad for members of the royal family to be stuck with slave collars around their necks. In fact, the knight might not be able to keep his head on his shoulders for much longer given the current circumstances.

「I never would have suspected that they the traders would attempt to enslave children of such a tender age... Young lady, I must offer you my gratitude. I would not have been able to retrieve the prince or princess with such ease if not for your noble actions.」

「Only did it for myself.」

「Even so, my gratitude remains unchanged, for it was you that rescued my lieges. I would, however, like for you to answer but a single query. Whatever happened to the traders? I see not even their corpses.」

「Cleaned up.」

「By what means? There numbered far more than just a few.」

「Nn? Skill.」

「What exactly... No, please do not mind the question any longer. It is but rude to inquire the details of another's skills.」

「Nn.」

「I am more than willing to believe your words given that I have witnessed your abilities.」

I was pretty grateful he acted the way he did. He ignored Fran's age in respect of her strength and treated her as an equal.

This was a stark contrast from how he treated all the slaves we just freed as well... children. To the knight, the other children were people he was obligated to protect.

『We should probably get out of here soon. There should still be a few more slave traders, and they might be coming back soon.』

「Nn.」

『It'd be a pain in the ass if we ran into them on our way out, so let's get rid of all their collars while we're at it.』

Fran easily removed all the children's slave collars by overwriting the enslavement spell with a blank contract of her own, much like I did to her when we just met.

Every single last person in the room, Salrut included, looked at Fran with expressions of shock on their faces. Evidently, they weren't expecting the collars to come off nearly as easily as they did. The shock took a while to sink in, but once it did, their expressions began to change into those of joy.

Made sense though. Their fates were about take a cruel a turn as possible. They were about to become slaves, targets of abuse. But now, they were free. Their collars were gone, and they were no longer at risk of being sold off as merchandise.

「How impressive. To think that you would even be well versed in the art of contract magic!」

「Nn.」

「Once again, I thank you.」

Salrut paused for a moment before continuing.

「I wish not to say this as one who has received nothing but your assistance, however, I believe it is my duty to inform you that it would be better for you not to reveal your ability to use contract magic in any other sort of public setting.」

「Why?」

「Contract magic is rare, and contract magic powerful enough to undo a slave contract can only be said to be all the more scarce. The only individuals that could possibly possess such high level contract magic would be none other than summoners and slave traders.」

Ah, I get it. If you've got high level contract magic, then people would probably assume you were associated with the slavery business. Slaver merchants were disliked by the general public, even if they weren't the underground kind that went about kidnapping people.

「My understanding is that you are a summoner, but that interpretation may not be one shared by all.」

Salrut's gaze shifted over to Urushi. He was currently sprawled on all fours in his more dog-like form. He was in his normal form just a few minutes ago, but we had him shrink because the kids were getting scared of him. Salrut's interpretation of the situation was most likely that Fran was a summoner that just so happened to know how to use a sword.

「Should leave soon.」

「An excellent point to make.」

「In that case, why don't we seek shelter at the hotel we've rented? We shall leave everything that comes after to you, Salrut.」

「Yes, my prince!」

It seemed that the prince was offering to have everyone stay at the hotel he had reserved. It was a pretty good idea. Any hotel with royalty in it was pretty much bound to have good security. Thinking about it, the reason we

couldn't find any decent inns was probably because of the sudden influx of people like the prince here. They all had guards and maids and stuff, so they'd needed to book more rooms than the average person.

Fran, Urushi and Salrut guarded the children as they made their way over to the inn.

I figured the twins would be all cocky and pretentious, but it turned out that they were decent people despite being royalty. They weren't anything like the shit-brained nobles I was expecting them to be. They went out of their way to make sure that the other children were doing okay even though they were all commoners. They also made sure to take the lead as we walked towards the inn in order to abate the other children's fears. Though they were both just kids, they were still performing their royal duties to the best of their abilities.

Though I guess they do still have a few childlike aspects, seeing how they snuck out without telling anyone and whatnot. That said, they spent the rest of the trip in relative silence, so I assumed they were most likely reflecting on their actions.

A bit of time passed, and we eventually arrived in front of a super luxurious looking inn. A single glance told me that it was the kind that typically only served the nobility. In fact, just seeing it made me feel like apologizing to the prince and his party. Yeap, it is definitely not their fault we weren't able to find a place to stay. I mean, I know we were trying to look for something a bit higher end, but this? This was way out of scope.

The children were all staring wide eyed in surprise as well.

The hotel's gatekeeper stared at us with a suspicious look on his face, but, he didn't bother saying anything and ended up letting us through.

「What are you standing there for? Come in.」

「Feel free to enjoy your stay.」

The prince and princess encouraged the other children to accompany them inside. After a bit of persuasion, they obliged and timidly followed the twins to the entrance.

「Well if it isn't the prince. Welcome back to our humble lodging.」

We were greeted by the inn's staff despite the fact that it was already really late into the night. On second thought though, I guess we should've expected it. We're travelling with royalty, after all.

「And who would these children happen to be?」

「Simply put, a few things happened. Could you please prepare them rooms alongside hot water? I believe they will need baths.」

「Well...」

「Naturally, I will pay for their accommodations. You should be able to fulfill this request of mine, correct?」

「We apologize for any inconvenience that may cause. We are fully aware of how unreasonable our request may appear.」

「I doubt this will lead to any sort of complication. We'll get everything ready immediately.」

Huh, you know, I don't know what I should've expected. He really was a prince. He was able to deal with the inn's staff without much issue despite the fact that they were adults and he wasn't. The princess, on the other hand, had acted and apologized in a more modest, understanding manner. Having the two work together like that kind of made it seem like they were applying some form of the carrot and stick principle.

「Whatever is this fuss about?」

「Good evening Serid. I've just returned.」

「Ah, if it isn't the prince. I was quite concerned over your safety.」

「Thank you. I apologize for the trouble. Unfortunately, I failed to navigate the city's streets and lost my way.」

「You lost your way, you say?」

「Indeed. I was only just able to return because Salrut had managed to discover my location.」

Naturally, the prince didn't make even the slightest mention of getting caught and collared by slave traders.

「I see. And who exactly are these children? Did you perhaps choose to purchase yourself a group of slaves?」

「That would be incorrect. There are mere helpers, so to speak. They assisted me in navigating the city's streets.」

「I see. In that case, your business with them should be over, should it not? You lot, leave this place immediately once you receive your payment.」

The man speaking to us looked like your typical, stuck up, piece of shit noble. He glared at us and the children in nothing but scorn.

「Serid! They are guests here, shut your mouth immediately.」

「What!? Prince, I shan't accept that. Whatever are you thinking? Associating with these filthy peas-」

「Serid. I told you to be quiet. These children are my benefactors.」

「Tsk...」

Hah! Serves you right you piece of shit chamberlain! The twins are on our side, bitch!

Serid made one more hateful glare before turning around and leaving.

「Sorry about that. He's pretty capable, but he lacks the ability to be flexible at times like these.」

「Don't care.」

The children didn't really seem to mind all that much either. Most nobles were like that, so they were used to it.

「What are your plans? You are more than free to stay the night if you wish.」

Salrut turned towards us with a generous offer.

『Sounds pretty good to me. I mean, it's more than just a step up from a shabby little place that doesn't even have a bath.』

「Nn. Will be in your care.」

「Splendid! I shall have a room prepared for you immediately after I inform the prince of this joyous matter.」

And so, we ended up spending a night at a super high class inn, all thanks to the prince.

Chapter 90: Isn't it pretty easy to accidentally ingest the poison you keep in your molars?

90. Isn't it pretty easy to accidentally ingest the poison you keep in your molars?

We were provided an extravagant meal despite the fact that we arrived in the middle of the night. We, as guests, were presented with a rich, seafood soup, loads of soft buttered breads, and a massive chicken steak. And to top it all off, they prepared it so quickly that it was ready by the time Fran finished with her bath. Naturally, the children we rescued were also provided the exact same treatment.

Being subjected to all this really ingrained in me the fact that the inn was truly high class than anything else we'd ever experienced.

As a former middle aged man myself, I couldn't help but think the meal to be a bit on the heavy side, but it seemed like it ended up being just right given how hungry the children were. They actually started out rather hesitant, but soon began to eat with as much vigour.

The twins continued to show their concerns throughout the meal. They asked each kid in turn if they had a place to call home. If the answer was a yes, they would promise to make arrangements for their safe return. If the answer was a no, they would promise to make sure that nothing bad would happen to them going forward. I honestly had a hard time believing that they were only 13 years old. They were way too mature for their ages.

What's more was that both ended up lowering their heads to Fran in appreciation without so much as the slightest bit of unwillingness. Seeing the two of them act in the exact same manner at the exact same time really reinforced the idea that they were twins.

Immediately afterwards, the two introduced themselves in further detail. The prince was named Flut, and the princess Satia.

Fran seemed to take a liking to both of them, and happily answered all their questions, albeit in her usual, curt manner. Seeing her act like that put a smile on my face. To my knowledge, this was pretty much the first time Fran had ever gotten along with anyone else in her age group. And as far as my opinion went, that alone was more than enough to make this whole ordeal well worth it.

Fran's room was a large and luxurious one bedroom suite the likes of which I'd never seen in person, not even in my past life. The chamber was decorated with a glamorous chandelier, a huge canopy, and even a ridiculously soft carpet. Seeing all these luxuries in person really made me wonder how much a night here would cost.

Oh what the hell! Both Fran and Urushi immediately dived straight into the bed! If we damaged or dirtied it, we'd probably end up paying compensation out the ass. In fact, I couldn't even fathom its price.

Though, I do get where they were coming from. Even I wanted to try sleeping in it.

「Night.」

「Woof.」

『Good night.』

And this is Master here, reporting in from the super luxurious inn's attic in order to bring you details directly from the scene of the crime.

A single individual had infiltrated the premises, and was creeping around atop the building whilst concealing his presence. The assassin was dressed in all black. It didn't look like he'd noticed me as of yet.

I cast Silence before knocking him unconscious with a bit of wind magic. I then captured him alive and brought him back over to Fran's room.

『So I caught this assassin dude sneaking around on the rooftop.』

「Big catch.」

『Well, first, we should probably find out who he's working for. We'll hand him over to the prince after I guess.』

「Nn.」

The assassin we captured was human, so he probably didn't have anything to do with the underground slave traders we busted earlier in the night. Oh well, whatever. We decided to hear what he had to say in either case. He might actually have something to do with the slave traders despite not being a member of the blue cat tribe.

Fran smacked the man in the face a few times to wake him up.

「Huh...? What...?」

「Awake?」

「W-What!? What did you do to me!?!」

「Knocked out. Tied up.」

「When...!?!」

「Few things to ask. Honest answers, less pain.」

「Growl growl growl.」

The man was currently stuck in a situation where he was bound by magic thread with a sword pointed to his face. To make matters worse, there was even a giant wolf staring him down.

He probably immediately understood that there was nothing he could do given his current circumstances.

「——tsk」

『Woah! He just poisoned himself.』

He must've had some poison hidden away in one of his molars. You know, isn't keeping poison in your teeth kind of dangerous? I imagine it'd be pretty easy to swallow on accident. Or do they like go out of their way to practice not swallowing it or something?

Oh well, in either case, the man's status changed. He was now badly poisoned, so it looked like he drank something pretty potent.

『Middle Heal.』

「Antidote.」

But all his effort went to waste. We had the perfect way to counteract his attempted suicide, and so we executed it. We rid his body of poison while restoring his HP back up to full.

「Too bad. Won't work.」

「Impossible...! You managed to completely nullify my deadly poison!?!」

「Good at healing.」

「Ugh...」

He didn't give up and immediately bit his tongue off.

「Middle Heal.」

「Shit!」

「Like pain?」

In the end, the assassin told us everything he knew. It looked like he was prepared to die, but getting tortured ad infinitum was far outside what he could handle.

It turned out that he wasn't connected to the slave traders in any which way. He was a freelance assassin who'd accepted a request to end both the prince and princess. He didn't know who the request came from, but he was provided a set of instructions on how he could best infiltrate the inn.

He was paid fully in advance, and as a result, he didn't know much about the person who made the request.

『Well, none of that information really pertained to us at all.』

「Nn.」

『Let's hand him over to Salrut.』

「Urushi, keep watch.」

「Woof!」

Fran quickly called Salrut over. Though it was almost dawn, the knight yet to go to sleep. It looked like he'd been keeping watch all night.

「So this man is the assassin of which you speak?」

「Nn.」

Salrut questioned the assassin some more. The man already completely given up, so he pretty much answered every question he could. He didn't bother lying either.

「Hm... I can see that you seem to be speaking the truth, which leaves me to question the culprit's identity.」

Salrut sank into a momentary bout of silence as he contemplated the assassin's words. Chances were, he was probably considering a bunch of possible culprits, most of which we'd probably never even heard of.

「There is still much for me to consider, and as such, I will be taking this man into custody.」

「Nn.」

「I shall discuss this topic with you in more detail some time tomorrow. I will further ensure that you are appropriately compensated for your actions. Please do look forward to it.」

「More interested in breakfast.」

「Hahaha! In that case, please enjoy it to your heart's content.」

Fran quickly went to bed and didn't wake up until sometime in the afternoon, after which she promptly began the ever so difficult endeavor of eating both breakfast and lunch at the same time. Everyone that caught sight of the act was left with an expression of nothing but pure shock. She stuffed her cheeks with so much food that it almost made her seem more like a squirrel or hamster than a cat.

In fact, she ate so fast that it almost seemed like she was stuffing food into her dimensional storage as opposed to her throat. Witnessing her in the act made Salrut so surprised that his eyes turned as round as could be.

「So, Fran, did you happen to have any sort of schedule in mind?」

「Nn?」

「Were you headed to any sort of particular destination?」

「Mmmphrphmm」

「Um... I apologize. I'll wait until you've finished your meal.」

「Nnyu.」

All in all, Fran managed to devour about ten people's worth of food, a truly impressive amount. The prince seemed rather surprised, but he promptly spoke up again the moment she finished eating.

「I remember you saying you were on a journey, but I don't really think you told me any more than just that. Are you planning to go somewhere specific?」

「Nn. Ulmutt.」

「By ship, I presume?」

「Nn. Via Barbra.」

「I see... So have you already arranged for boat tickets? I'm fairly certain that they're all sold out by now given the number of people heading over for the Lunar Banquet.」

「Really?」

「Yeah. Barbra's Lunar Festival is one of Kranzel's biggest.」

「It gets even livelier there than it does in the capital.」

The princess interjected with a knowing smile.

Huh, I had no idea. I guess that means we probably won't be able to head to Barbra for a few days. I really should've figured that out ahead of time though, especially after seeing how flooded all the inns were. Man, I really wanted to have Fran be a part of it too. It was one of the country's biggest festivals, so I really didn't want her to miss out.

「Didn't know.」

「Well, there is a way for you to find yourself a ship though.」

「Nn?」

「We'd like to offer you a position as a guard, at least until we reach Barbra.」

「Naturally, we'll pay you for your work. We're planning on attending the banquet ourselves, so it goes without saying that we will arrive on time.」

We probably wouldn't be able to find ourselves any decent ships if we went looking this late, and it'd be quite pitiable for Fran to have to part with her newfound friends after spending so little time with them. Besides, the prince's ship was bound to be fairly luxurious, so all in all, I'd say we were offered a pretty sweet deal.

「Our biggest concern are the magic beasts we may encounter on our way.」

「Even with the knights?」

Apparently, a large magic beast had recently been spotted near the coast. Normally, the prince wouldn't be concerned over magic beasts and the like, the one described in the reports was so enormous that it rendered him anxious.

And thus, he decided that more guards were necessary, and what better candidate was there than Fran? She was stronger than Salrut, and felt no fear even in the face of an assassin.

「Your highness, with all due respect, I'd like to request that you rescind your prior request! I simply cannot acknowledge you hiring her, we know nothing of her background!」

The prince's chamberlain, Serid, couldn't seem to stand for the thought of being in Fran's presence for much longer, as he immediately raised his voice and began to furiously protest the prince's decision.

But in the end, he was silenced. The prince glared at him, so he was given no choice but to sit his ass down and bear with his frustrations. That said, it didn't take long for him to begin peering over in our direction with a threatening look in his eyes.

(Master, accept?)

Sweet! Looks like Fran's pretty eager to do this.

『Why not? We get our boat tickets, so I see no problems.』

「Nn. Job accepted.」

「Many thanks. We'll be counting on you.」

And so, we ended up deciding to escort the prince and princess to their destination.

Chapter 91: A Whole New World... of Fishing

91. A Whole New World... of Fishing

The weather was great. The sea was a beautiful shade of blue. The skies were clear, and the few clouds that remained were as white as marshmallows. Despite being a sword, I could almost feel the sun's powerful ultraviolet rays assaulting my skin as the salty sea breeze gently passed by. This, this was what it truly meant to be at sea.

Fran, Urushi and I were currently aboard an incredibly luxurious ship, and I didn't mean luxurious in the sense that it was a massive cruise liner or anything. In fact, it wasn't all that big at all. However, its insides were decorated in as gaudy a manner as could be. All in all, it was probably at about the same level of luxury as the inn from which we just departed. Honestly though, I should've seen this coming. I don't know what else I should've expected of a ship reserved for royalty.

Fran was enjoying this opportunity to its fullest. She was sitting on a wooden chair atop the ship's deck and basking in the sun to her heart's content. Her mind and body were both clearly in vacation mode, as evidenced by the glass of juice sitting next to her.

That said, she was still making sure the ship was getting all the protection it needed... by ordering Urushi to do it in her place. Speaking of which, Urushi was currently on his way back to the ship. He had just defeated a fish-like magic beast, and was in the midst of retrieving it.

Urushi could leap through the air as he pleased and fire off dark magic instead of relying on melee combat, so he didn't really end up getting

soaked or anything. The only part of him that actually got wet was his face because he had to stick it into the water to pick up the magic beasts he defeated.

Well, the way I just said it made it sound kind of like Fran was doing nothing at all, but she was in fact still exerting a slight bit of effort from time to time. She would start casting spells if more than one magic beast attacked the ship simultaneously.

「Woof woof!」

「Welcome back Urushi.」

『I'll cut it up and stuff so we can eat it later.』

「Woof!」

『Y'know, I'm pretty content. I've managed to get quite a few magic stone points out of this.』

We'd only been on the boat for about half a day, but we'd already managed to kill 11 different magic beasts. Four kills belonged to Fran, and the other seven to Urushi.

The ship's crew had all been glaring at her in annoyance just earlier this morning as a result of her seemingly laid back attitude. They did warm up to her eventually though, as evidenced by the fact that they even went out of their way to thank her. Apparently, this was the first time they'd ever come across this many magic beasts without their ship being subjected to damage.

Serid was a bit more vocal about his complaints, but seeing Fran in action had left him with nothing to say with regards to her performance.

He didn't stop trying to call her out though. I mean seriously, he was annoying as could be and pissed me the hell off on more than one occasion. During meal times, he wouldn't shut up about how Fran didn't have manners. She quickly got annoyed as well, so she activated Court Etiquette and put on a display as perfect as could be. Though Serid was still

frustrated, he ultimately ran out of valid complaints and so, he ended up just sitting there and glaring at us in vexation. Observing him led me to believe that he and Salrut weren't on good terms. We were quite friendly with Salrut, so he had likely identified us as a sort of natural enemy.

(Master. Afternoon snack.)

『Alright. Are you craving anything in particular?』

(Nnnn... Cookies.)

I hadn't really made many sweets myself yet, so I decided to hand Fran the cookies we bought in Alessa. They came from a shop that sold most of its merchandise to nobles, so they were pretty tasty. That said, I personally still preferred the sweets we had back on earth. I should really sit down some time in the near future so I can mass produce stuff like cakes and pudding.

「Tasty.」

「Whine whine.」

『Don't you worry Urushi, I've got something for you too.』

「Woof!」

All the magic beasts we ran into were pretty weak, so both Fran and Urushi ended up being fairly relaxed. We sure did land ourselves one hell of a job. It felt like there were far more benefits than there was actual work.

There weren't any other magic beasts for a while, so we spent a bit of time just dilly dallying around. That, however, changed once the princess came looking for us. As she approached, I couldn't help but notice her long, blonde hair as it blew in the wind reflected the sun's golden rays. Her blue eyes and westerner-like facial features were quite appealing to the eye. As of right now, she had a sort of cute charm, but as she matured, she would likely end up more on the beautiful side of the scale. [1]

Her features were a stark contrast to Fran's, not to say that Fran wasn't cute. She definitely was, it was just that she had short black hair and deep black

eyes. It was like she was the princess' opposite, and seeing them next to each other was kind of like seeing the sun next to the moon.

「Good afternoon Fran. We about to go fishing, would you like to join us?」

「Nn. Will join.」

After receiving the princess's invitation, Fran followed her to the ship's rear deck. There, we found Prince Flut, accompanied by three of the children we rescued. The girl and two boys by his side were the kids that didn't have anywhere to go. The prince had proclaimed their encounter a sort fate, and decided that he would hire them all as servants.

The children had seemed to want to get to work right away, but the prince told them to treat him as just another one of their peers for the time being, seeing as they had yet to officially begin their training. The four of them seemed to be having a pretty good time, they were happily chatting away whilst holding their fishing rods in hand.

Children were unlike adults in the sense that they had yet to learn to discriminate between social classes, so it didn't take for them to befriend both the prince and princess. The Serid faggot was already starting to get all bitchy again, but everyone more or less ended up ignoring him.

「Are you going to fish too, Fran?」

「Nn. Good at it.」

「Oh? Really?」

「Alright, then let's have a fishing contest!」

「And we can all eat the fish we catch together!」

Fran was given a really fancy fishing rod. It was such an incredibly high quality product that it even had an automatic, magical reel.

The kids we saved didn't seem to realize the item's value, and happily just lobbed their lines into the sea without so much as a second glance. It didn't take long for them to start landing fish. The fish that were reeled in were pretty much limited to sardine and marakel lookalikes, but regardless, the children soon began joyously comparing the size and relative rarities of their catches. Even the princess was all smiles despite the fact that she herself had opted to sit off to the side and observe as opposed to joining in.

The only one that had yet to catch anything was Fran, and as a result, the other children, the prince included, soon began to tease her.

「Whatever happened to being good at fishing?」

「You're the only one that hasn't caught anything yet.」

「Even I managed to land three!」

「Don't worry! We'll make sure we share some of ours with you.」

「Just wait. Ignoring small fry. Will net big catch.」

「Hahahaha! Good luck!」

I didn't really see any problems with just going about this whole fishing thing like a normal person would, but Fran had insisted on trying to land something big.

The bait she was using was a Rockworm, a weak magic beast that we happened to have lying around. They didn't really have use normally. Their shells would get all fragile when dried, and their meat stank and tasted like crap. The only part of them that we even bothered taking note of was their magic stones. It was kind of sad, but they normally only really saw use as compost. As a result, I happened to have a bunch sitting around in my storage just taking up space for no real reason.

Fran had taken one of the aforementioned Rockworms and chopped about a meter off its body. She then placed that severed section on a massive fishing hook and threw it out to sea. Using bait like that really limited what she

could catch. The only things she could lure in were sharks, whales, and magic beasts. Thinking about it really made me wonder what she'd been trying to catch in the first place — not that it was of any real consequence. The only thing that really mattered was that she was having fun, which she was.

The status quo didn't really change even after an hour. Each of the children had managed to fish up ten or so different fish, but Fran had yet to catch anything.

At first, they'd teased her about being unable to catch anything, but their expressions had gradually changed over the course of the activity. They'd even started hoping that she would soon land a bite. They seemed to have the wrong idea. They thought that her silence and lack of an expression was due to something along the lines of idea, when really, that was just how she was.

Fran actually didn't mind her lack of a catch at all. In fact, she was rather happy as a result of the peaceful atmosphere.

But then it finally happened. The atmosphere crumbled in an instant as the moment Fran had been awaiting finally arrived.

「Nn!」

「Nice! You got a bite!」

「Woah, it's pulling super hard!」

「It must be really big!」

The children started cheering. They seemed as happy as they were when they themselves got bites.

The fishing rod started to bend out of shape. Despite being what was likely one of the highest quality fishing rods in the world, it was forced to bend as far as it could go. Chances were that Fran had probably caught something on the scale of a marlin.

「Mgrrhhhh!」

「You can do it! Go go!」

「Reel it in! Reel it in!!」

「Nn!」

Fran was using every last bit of her strength to pull the fish in, but her prey was pulling back with just as much force. Despite her efforts, the reel continued to spin and the line continued to lengthen. Seeing her like that reminded me of a show I saw on TV once. If I recall correctly, it was called Fishing the Seven Seas... or something like that.

「Nnnnnn!!!!」

「Keep it up!」

「Don't let it get away!」

To be honest, I probably could've given Fran a hand. I could've weakened it a bit without catching anyone's attention. It would've been pretty easy to tire it out with magic and make it feel all drowsy or something.

But I refrained.

This was Fran's battle, something she should take care of on her own.

Fran struggled with the fish for more than thirty minutes. Obvious signs of exhaustion had started to show on her face.

The process had ultimately ended up as something more akin to trawling than fishing. She merely pulled her catch along as the ship continued to sail.

Her arms had already started to go numb, so she gave up on winning with nothing but brute force and instead relied on her skills.

She began by activating Thunder Blade. The expensive fishing rod was instantly cloaked in a coat of electricity. She then quickly used water magic

alongside current control, and started to pull her prey towards the ship whilst activating Herculean Strength and a whole bunch of different support spells. She was going for one last spurt.

It took her ten minutes to finally drag the fish from the ocean's depths. It's form wasn't fully visible, but we could see a giant, ten meter long shadow lurking beneath the water's surface. The fish she'd caught was literally twice Urushi's size.

「Wow! What is that!?!」

「W-Wow Fran! Are you okay?」

「Holy moly!」

The children immediately kicked up a fuss, but Fran paid them no heed as she continued to singlemindedly reel her prey in. The air around her would periodically crackle with electricity because she had kept Thunder Blade active the whole time.

That said, the fish had really put up one hell of a struggle. There was no way it was just a normal fish. Knowing that, I decided to give it a quick appraisal.

General Information

Race: Dreadnought Destroyer (Tuna)

Magic Beast (Fish)

Level 29

HP: 556

MP: 139

STR: 207

VIT: 139

AGI: 109

INT: 56

MGC: 77

DEX: 69

Skills

Hardened Skin: Lv 6

Current Control: Lv 6

Water Magic: Lv 5

Swimming: Lv 5

Enhanced Sense of Smell

Strengthened Shell

Description

Its head is covered with a substance as hard as mithril. Its name is derived from the fact that it can destroy battleships by ramming them with its skull. It is classified as a D level threat if within the ocean, and an E level threat under all other conditions. Its flesh is said to be an extremely luxurious delicacy. Its magic stone is in its head.

『Watch out Fran. It's a magic beast, and a pretty strong one at that.』

「Nn!」

Fran immediately hit the Dreadnought Destroyer with a mix of wind magic and sheer brute force; its body was sent flying up into the air.

「Woah!!」

「Kyah!」

「Holy!」

The giant magic beast immediately fell towards the ship and caused both the children and sailors to scream in panic.

『The ship will probably take a lot of damage if you let the Tuna fall on top of it.』

「Nn.」

Fran immediately used magic detection to find the giant fish's magic stone and threw me at it with all her might.

「Haa!」

She accelerated me even further through the use of wind magic, so I pierced through the fish's hard skull with ease.

She then cast more wind magic and caught its corpse before it crashed into the ship. She then gently laid it on the deck. The fish was at least twelve meters long from head to tail. In fact, it was so long that its tailfin actually hung off the side of the ship; its length was greater than our luxury liner's width.

「Fishing contest. My win.」

「Er... Um....」

「That uh....」

「Nn?」

Fran began dismantling the fish despite the fact that the children and crew were still in the midst of a confused uproar. Well, I say dismantle, but all she really did was cut off its head and fillet it.

『Fran, what are you doing?』

(Promised to share.)

『Oh, yeah. Right.』

And so, Fran continued to quickly and efficiently dismantle the giant fish. The sailors hadn't been aware at how proficient she was at dismantling, so they couldn't help but end up staring in awe.

I've emphasized this multiple times already, but the fish really was massive. In fact, it was so big that we could probably feed over a hundred people with just the delicious fatty stomach part itself. That thought was probably precisely why the ship's crew had yet to calm down. They were probably all excited because of the fact that there was a massive amount of a super high class delicacy right before their eyes.

They continued to make a fuss throughout the dismantling process. Silence didn't come until quite a bit after Fran put the head and bones away inside her dimensional storage.

「I knew that Fran was strong, but I never would have fathomed that she would be this strong...」

「Hahaha! You've beat me by a mile. The fishing content belongs to you.」

「How incredible! She really is much stronger than Salrut!」

「Delicious!」

「S-So this is how a Dreadnought Destroyer tastes...」

「I'm going to eat a whole lifetime's worth!」

The ship soon started to get noisy again as we started handing out cuts of tuna. We gave the sailors a share as well, so the whole ship was soon filled with a sort of party like atmosphere. Everyone was happy, which made sense. It wasn't everyday that you'd get your hands on a delicacy this delicious, after all.

「Hey, thanks for the meal.」

Even the captain came up to offer us his thanks.

「My name is Rengil. Would you mind me asking yours?」

「Fran.」

「And I assume you're an adventurer?」

「Nn. Rank D adventurer.」

Fran flashing her guild card caused the ship to stir with noise yet again. Very few had ever achieved D rank at an age as young as hers.

「I expected nothing less. In fact, I was expecting you to be of a higher rank given your abilities. I was quite surprised that you managed to defeat Dreadnought Destroyer with such ease. In any case, I would like to offer you a token of appreciation.」

Captain Rengil took something out of his chest pocket and handed it to Fran.

「What's this?」

「That coin right there has the Luciel Conglomerate's coat of arms engraved on it. The company's head office is in Barbra, and showing them that coin should earn you quite a few conveniences going forward.」

「The Luciel Conglomerate is one of Kranzel's leading corporations, and evidently, one of its executives has just taken a liking to you. How truly

impressive!」

The prince explained that the coin we'd received was actually something really worthwhile, as it meant that a massive company had our backs. I really had to give it to the captain. He had a pretty good eye for adventurers.

「You sure?」

「Of course. In fact, I'd say it's worth very little compared to what we would obtain out of networking with an adventurer with as much potential as you.」

The sailors began string up yet another storm the moment their captain finished speaking. This time around, all of them were praising Fran without the slightest bit of reserve.

「Man, she even managed to catch the captain's eye.」

「Well yeah. Look at how young she is! She's already rank D at that age!」

「She defeated the Dreadnought Destroyer with ease too.」

「And she's cute.」

「Dude, what the hell!? You were a pedo!?!」

「N-No way man! That's not what I meant!」

「I would like to encourage you to visit our headquarters in Barbra at least once. It will be well worth your time.」

「Nn.」

The captain gave one last bow before turning around and heading back to his position. Likewise, the crew members passed by one by one and thanked Fran in turn. As a result, the three children ended up looking at her with gazes tainted with an ever so slight bit of envy.

「You're amazing Fran!」

「Nn. Of course.」

「I'm going to become just as strong as you are!」

「Good luck.」

「Lemme see the coin!」

Fran's finally made real friends! And she's hanging out with them too!

Just seeing her like that made me wish that the moment would last in perpetuity.

But my hopes were crushed, as the sailor keeping watch immediately began to shout.

「P-Pirate ship spotted!!」

[1] The Japanese have divided womanly appeals into several distinct categories. Some examples include cute girls and cool beauties.

Chapter 92: Special Attack!

Monolith Buster Crash!

92. Special Attack! Monolith Buster Crash!

「P-Pirate ship spotted!!」

The ship's crew began the panic the moment they heard the watchman's shout. Likewise, the children immediately stopped eating and instead began looking around with anxious looks on their faces.

Seriously? Fuck those shit eating retards! Fran was just starting to relax and have fun! I was NOT going to let them get away with this.

The twins immediately went to go get the captain, who proceeded to explain the situation.

「It looks like we're about to be attacked by a fleet of pirates」

「Fleet? How many?」

「Eight ships in total.」

Huh, that's actually a pretty decent number.

「What do you think of our chances of breaking through and escaping?」

「I'm afraid it's not possible. They've many a speedboat.」

「Then shall we fight?」

「With all due respect, your highness, I wish for you and your sister to board a lifeboat and escape.」

「Would it not be possible to fit us all on the aforementioned lifeboat?」

「We would fit, but most of us will need to stay behind in order to fight the pirates and thereby draw their attention. The plan is currently to have your highnesses escape alongside the children and a few select others.」

「I refuse to allow that to happen. I cannot allow myself to escape whilst making sacrifices of my retainers.」

「I too support my brother's sentiments. We refuse to escape by ourselves.」

If I was still human, I likely would've nodded my head in approval. I liked the way the prince and princess thought. Normally, this kind of situation would resolve itself by having a few subordinates act as decoys while they escaped. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that escaping with their lives was precisely their duty as royalty. The only possible way to describe the two royals currently protesting that exact action was that they were naive.

But that was fine. I rather liked them, and I didn't really think there was any sort of issue with royalty acting the way they did.

「I am also against the idea.」

「You too Serid? I see you understand the value in having us all escape together.」

「I am against that idea as well. My belief is that we would do best to surrender.」

「What!? You fool! How can you possibly even consider the idea of surrender!?!」

Salrut roared in anger in response to Serid's sudden suggestion.

「We cannot best them in combat.」

「And that is precisely why we should allow the prince and princess to escape while we buy them the time they require!」

「So you mean to say that you believe the two of them will be able to navigate the ocean and safely return home in nothing but a miniscule rowboat? It would be much more favourable to declare the highness' identities and surrender. Pirates are crude, but it would be but nonsensical for them to go out of their ways to make enemies our country. I can assure that the pirates will not harm the prince nor princess, but instead, demand ransom as compensation for their safeties. There is no reason for us to resist. Resisting will do nothing more than anger our enemies and eliminate any potential means for negotiation.」

His proposal did seem like it was supported by a decent amount of logic, but things probably wouldn't go as smoothly as he thought they would.

「Your proposal is ridiculous! I refuse to acknowledge its viability.」

「Learn your place, Salrut. A mere knight like you has no right to participate in this conversation.」

「I am their highness' guard. I have the right to act according to my discretion in times of need.」

「How impudent you are. Did you perhaps think that being promoted to their highness' guard provides you the right to argue against me?」

「Impudence plays no part in this ordeal! My duty is but to protect, and that is precisely what I am attempting to do.」

「Silence foreigner! You are nothing, a mere dog picked up by the queen upon a whim! I have more than enough reason to doubt the truth of your words.」

「I see that you've stooped to the level of insults now, Serid.」

「And for what reason would I not? You are but encouraging a measure that would bring more risk to their highness' than necessary. Truly, I have

begun to doubt your motives. Did you really take flight from the Kingdom of Reidos? Is that but a pretense? A lie? Is it not possible, or rather, likely, for you to be merely aiming for our country's Godblade? I think it so.」

「Godblade? In possession?」

Fran joined in on the conversation happening between the two old men because her ears caught something that grabbed her attention.

「I-Indeed. Our country is in possession of a single Godblade.」

「Don't you dare call the Fyrias Kingdom your country, you damned Reidosian!」

「I dare you to repeat those words!」

And so, the two old men started arguing once again. Ew.

You know, thinking about it, aren't they like, kind of wasting a lot of time doing this?

『They're being a bit of a pain in the ass right, so what do you say to fixing their pirate problem, Fran? They'll probably tell us more about the Godblade if you ask later anyways.』

(Nn. Good idea.)

『Man, why did this have to happen in the middle of a meal anyways...』

(Sushi. Tasty.)

『Urushi, stay here and guard the prince and princess, alright?』

(Woof!)

(Save sushi. I want.)

(Bark!)

『Oh, did you end up taking a liking to it?』

(Nn. Only second to curry. Tasty.)

Welp, still doesn't match up to her beloved curry apparently.

「Wait, Fran, where are you going?」

「Nn? Sinking enemies.」

「What? Wait! You're acting far too recklessly!」

The prince tried to stop Fran by grabbing ahold of her, but she easily dodged and stepped up onto the ship's railing.

「Be right back.」

And with that line, she leapt.

「Kyaaa! Fran!」

「Fran!」

The children rushed up to the ship's railing in haste. They'd assumed that she had dived into the ocean, but yeah, no. Not even Fran could board a pirate ship with ease if she had to swim up to it first. And that was why they didn't see her swimming when they peeked over the deck. Instead, they were greeted by a rather peculiar sight. Fran was using magic to hop through the air.

「Woah!」

「That's amazing!」

「Fran's flying!」

I activated telekinesis and let her get on top of me. To the children, it looked as if she was surfing through the air.

It took us about thirty seconds to get up above the pirate ships. The flag they had raised was one with a skull inscribed upon it. In other words, the people we were about to fight were the pirate equivalent of basic bitches.

The only notable thing about the ships was that they had already sustained a fair amount of damage. It almost looked as if the pirates had just finished fighting another battle. One of the ships even had a giant hole in its side.

『The hell's up with that?』

「Don't know.」

『Oh well, whatever. They have their cannons prepped and stuff, so I guess can't just ignore that one or anything.』

「Sink biggest last?」

『Sure, why not?』

「Nn. Starting now.」

『Er wait a sec, hold on. Why don't we actually try going for that one first?』

「Biggest?」

『Yeah, I want to check if that's the one their captain's on. I also want to ask them a few things before we sink them all.』

「Understood.」

And so, we ended up attacking the ship that looked like the flagship first. The pirates onboard could do nothing but stare at us with their mouths gaping as we readied our assault.

「Starting.」

『Go for it. Make sure you don't kill the captain though.』

「Nn.」

Fran leapt off of me, grabbed me on her way down, and immediately killed every pirate in her vicinity as she landed.

What happened afterwards was more or less a slaughter. Every single movement Fran made resulted in the death of a pirate. There were a few half decent fighters, but not a single one of them was even anywhere remotely close to a match for Fran. Their ranged options were completely nullified as well. None of the arrows or spells they loosed could pierce Fran's magic barrier.

「W-who the hell are you!?!」

「Adventurer.」

「Shit! This is fucking insane!」

「Die bitch!」

「No.」

「Gyaaahhh!」

It took us but a few moments to defeat every single pirate aboard the ship save for the captain.

「Damned monster!」

Oh what the fuck. I hate this guy already.

(Master. Not content?)

『Well yeah. Just look at what he's wearing.』

「Nn?」

What the hell kind of pirate was he supposed to be!? He didn't have any eyepatches, he didn't have any wooden limbs, and he didn't have any

hooks, like what the hell! He didn't even have a goddamn hat with a goddamn skull on it either! He's literally not even a real pirate. Like come on! I was hoping he would look like Captain Hook, or maybe even Jack Sp*rrrow, but no! This little shit doesn't look like a pirate at all! Like what the fuck was this!? I feel fucking scammed!

『He's literally dressed the exact same as any run of the mill warrior!』

The captain was wearing normal plate armour with a normal helmet. There was nothing interesting about his appearance at all. Well, I mean he did at least have a cape, and his armour was pretty high quality, but he looked literally nothing like the captain of a crew of pirates. I never would've even guessed it to be him. The only reason I knew was because I used appraisal.

「Damn you! Let go of me! Let go of me right this instant!」

Fran lifted the pirate as I voiced my complaints. Seeing a cute, little girl like her lift a huge, bulky man was kind of off putting actually.

『Oh whatever... Let's just get the questioning and shit over with.』

(What to ask?)

『Ask him if he's the one that commands the whole fleet.』

And so, we began to interrogate the pirate. Fran asked the questions while I figured out whether or not they were true by running them through the Principle of Falsehood.

The results of our interrogation were as follows: he was the fleet's boss, they had a base with more guys there, and that they didn't have any treasure because they'd only just left.

I wanted to ask the captain a few more questions, but we ran out of time. The other nearby ships had begun bombarding the one we were on despite the fact that their captain was still alive. How heartless.

「Those sons of bitches betrayed me!」

I'm not sure what he expected. They'd probably just end up getting a new boss if he died anyways.

『Alright, let's go destroy all the other ships.』

「Nn.」

「Gyuke! 」

Fran gave the captain's neck a chop and knocked him unconscious. For some odd reason, he let out a really wierd noise as it happened. Moreover, his mouth had began to foam, and his eyes had completely rolled back into his head.

『The hell was that?』

「Nn? Cool effect. Good hit.」

『Eh, oh well whatever. We can let him live if you want. Just like roll him up and bring him with us or something.』

「Nn. Going.」

A second bombardment assaulted us as Fran picked up the captain and got back on top of me. They seemed to be aiming at us, but they couldn't seem to hit because of how small of a target we were relative to what they were used to.

「Activating now.」

Fran activated her dimensional storage as she got above the other ships. This time, however, she wasn't actually putting anything inside of it. Quite the opposite, in fact. Remember those giant rocks we happened to pick up the other day?

『Fuahahaha! Take this! Monolith Buster Crash!』

(Nn?)

『Er, it's nothing. Don't worry about it.』

「Nn.」

The pirates were clearly thrown into a state of disorder. Well, can't really blame them. A rock the size of their ship literally just appeared out of thin air.

Doing this allowed us to get rid of the giant rocks we had sitting around for no reason while also sinking the enemy's ships in one go. It was truly an application of the classic two birds one stone concept.

Honestly, we probably could've just dumped the rocks in the ocean earlier, but doing that would've made it seem like I was illegally dumping garbage or something, so I felt kinda guilty about it despite the fact that I probably wouldn't have been reprimanded for it anyway. This, however, made me feel pretty good if anything.

The dull sound of wood being torn to shreds rang throughout the seas the moment the rock hit the ship. This sound was immediately followed by a louder, metallic impact and then finally a series of screams. And that was that. The ship snapped in half and sank into the ocean.

「Next?」

『Hell yeah!』

We did the same thing to the other ships as well. The pirates tried shooting us down with magic and arrows, but their shots were too scattered and failed to accomplish much of anything at all given that all their attacks were completely negated by Fran's magical barrier.

It took us less than five minutes to sink all eight pirate ships. Naturally, the flag ship was given the exact same treatment as the rest, and so, we managed to get rid of two thirds of the rocks we had in storage.

『Alright, that's that. Let's head back over to the ship.』

「Nn.」

Chapter 93: Suspicion

93. Suspicion

「Just how selfish can you possibly get!?!」

Serid began to yell in his usual, loud manner the moment we got back to the ship.

「Nn?」

「What were you doing!?! You attacked the enemy without awaiting even the slightest bit of consent!」

「No problem. Sank all enemies.」

「She does have a point. I fail to see any issue, Serid.」

「You fail to see any issue!?! She engaged the enemy by her lonesome and thereby neglected her duty to protect the prince! That, that is the issue!」

It didn't seem like he was going to be satisfied regardless of what Fran did. My guess was that he was likely acting like this in order to try to belittle her achievement or something.

「I will admit that you deserve some praise, as you accomplished the feat of sinking an entire fleet of pirates by your lonesome. However, the method you employed was nothing short of inconsiderate. Your assault caused wave after wave to batter our ship. We were sent into such a state of disarray that the vessel even capsized. We managed through the application of water based magics, but regardless, you very evidently put their highnesses in harm's way!」

Okay, you know what? I take that back. I'll admit I messed up. I never even considered that we might end up hitting our allies.

『We should probably apologize.』

「Nn. Sorry.」

「Hmph. I mind it not so long as you understand the consequences of your actions.」

Oh god damn it. Now he's got this cocky look on his face. It really makes me want to hit him..

「Ugh....」

「Woke up?」

The pirate we brought back to the ship had awoken. All the excess noise Serid made had probably forced his unconscious mind back into the realm of sentience.

「W-What the!? Where the hell am I?」

「On ship.」

「What happened to my subordinates?」

「Sank.」

『So they're dead in the water?』

「Nn.」

「Explain yourself! What exactly are the two of you discussing?」

Serid immediately yelled in an irritated tone as a result of the fact that Fran had started casually talking to the pirate.

「Is that one of the pirates?」

「Nn. Interrogating.」

「Then hand him over. This task will be mine. Guards!」

「Sir!」

A nearby soldier immediately adhered to Serid's orders. He grabbed the pirate's arm and immediately lifted him to his feet. I didn't get what he was doing. Was he trying to steal all Fran's glory? And where was he going to move him?

「Taking him? Where?」

「I will bring him to my cabin for the purposes of interrogation. I forbid you all from joining me in the endeavor.」

「I'll interrogate.」

「You think I could possibly leave a task as important as this in your hands?」

Okay no. That made literally no sense at all. Firstly, he wasn't the one who captured the pirate, and secondly, he wasn't letting us so much as observe his interrogations. Like what the hell! I can't tell if this is just another form of harassment, or if he's going to ask about something that he didn't want the rest of us to hear. Either way, he was being overly suspicious.

Seeing his actions reminded me about the whole thing with the assassin. I was pretty sure that someone had helped the assassin sneak in, most notably someone with the power to sway the inn's guards to such an extent that they would create a sort of opening in their defense net. Moreover, it was a bit weird that the ship we were on didn't have any sort of escort. I know that we were currently aboard a vessel that prioritized speed and all that, but it really shouldn't have gone effortless given that we had royalty on board.

Thinking about it quickly made me realize that Serid probably had enough power to arrange both the aforementioned oddities.

Throwing more facts into the pool only made him seem even more suspicious. The only problem was that I didn't have any sort of evidence. We could just say that one of skills allowed us to see through lies, but, there wasn't any way for us to prove that we really had that skill, so it had no function as far as evidence went. We could torture him until he decided to confess his wrongdoings, but that wasn't exactly what I'd call the best evidence either.

Fran and Serid's underlings had began glaring at each other as I thought things through.

The situation was starting to look bad, but, the tense atmosphere was suddenly broken by the pirate as he let loose a fearless laugh.

「Hahahaha! Well, if it isn't the Fyrias Kingdom's chamberlain. Don't think I don't know exactly who you are, Serid.」

「W-What are you...」

「I may be a pirate, but I'm no fool. Even seafarers like us have more than enough of an intelligence network to figure out exactly who our clients are — regardless of whether or not said clients are landlubbers like you.」

Okay, woah. Did he just say that Serid was one of his clients? That's not something I can just hear and leave be.

「E-Enough of your nonsense! Someone silence this madman immediately.」

One of Serid's soldiers raised his blade, but Fran moved in between him and the pirate before he could swing it.

「Want to hear more.」

「He is but rambling! There is nothing to hear.」

「Will judge after hearing.」

「Are you perhaps attempting to frame me for colluding with the pirates? Unacceptable! Guards! Arrest her immediately!」

「Serid, what in the world are you thinking!?!」

「I-I am but ordering the arrest of one who has committed the act of treason! She is attempting to frame me for collusion, of which I had no part! Do not interfere! I will ensure that the sin also falls upon your shoulders if you try to so much as assist her!」

That's a nice excuse he's got there.

It seemed that Serid was still underestimating Fran because of her appearance. He most likely thought she was a mage given the attacks he'd just witnessed, so he probably assumed the soldiers could take her close combat.

「Drop swords in less than 10 seconds. Will forgive.」

「Y-You think you can beat us, little girl?」

「We have you surrounded! It's your loss.」

Fran raised me and readied herself for combat, but Serid's soldiers continued to look down on her despite that. They had stayed within the ship's interior throughout the trip's duration, so they knew little of her abilities and even less of Urushi's. They had assumed that she had used spells or magic tools to crush the pirate ships, so they thought they could best her so long as they stopped her from chanting.

The prince, however, more than understood the extent of Fran's strength. He was worried for the soldier's lives, and so he quickly positioned himself in the middle of the encirclement. The expression he had on his face clearly indicated that he went in knowing the consequences, and that he was prepared for death should it come.

「Lower your swords, all of you! Serid, what sort of fool are you?」

「I am but subjugating a rebel, Your Highness.」

「You cannot best Fran. Soldiers, lower your swords lest you bear a deathwish.」

「Hah hah hah! What an intriguing joke, your highness. Do you truly believe that our country's soldiers would lose to such a small, pathetic child?」

「I do!」

「Prince, I see that I must prove you wrong and reestablish your faith in our countrymen. The Fyrias Kingdom's soldiers are men of valour, and now, they shall demonstrate that precise fact. It is but a shame that their foe is a mere girl.」

「C-Cease this right this instant!」

「Do not heed the prince's orders! Do it!」

「Sir! Yes sir!」

The soldiers chose to obey Serid over the prince. They immediately rushed Fran down in order to attack. Their faces gave away that they weren't actually intent on killing her; at most, they wanted a limb or two. Moreover, their movements indicated that they were fairly proficient at combat.

「Can't be helped.」

「Woof.」

But they were no match for Fran, and so, the battle ended in an instant. Fran cut down two of them, I sent two more flying with magic, and Urushi pinned down another. All of the men that had opposed us had collapsed, save for Serid.

「I-Impossible... How could it be!」

Fran completely ignored the now stiffened up chamberlain and instead turned to face the pirate.

「Explain everything.」

「I'll tell you whatever you want if you agree to let me live.」

「Nn. Agreed. Will spare.」

「Heh, alright. The deal is sealed.」

「First. Involvement with Serid.」

「He offered us a job. So basically, he's one of our clients.」

「Shut your mouth immediately, you lia-」

「Shut up.」

「Geh!」

Serid tried to cut the pirate off and stop him from talking, but Fran gave him a quick smack and knocked him out. Well, that's one less source of noise.

「And?」

「E-Er, right. It happened sometime in the evening two days ago.」

Apparently the pirates had a secret base set up somewhere in Dharz. They often used it to buy supplies and gather information. Someone had purposefully sought out said base in order to hire them for something.

Specifically, they were asked to attack the ship we were on. They were told that the Fryias Kingdom would have a few members of its royal family on the boat. Their job was to kidnap and murder those precise individuals. Moreover, arrangements would be made so that the ship would remain without any sort of armed escort, and it was even said that the people on board would surrender immediately.

「Client was Serid?」

「Yeah. It was one hell of a dirty job, but so we did a bit of investigating. Tracking the requestor informed us that he was one of that old fox's subordinates.」

「Accepted?」

「Well, we were going to get paid a ridiculous amount, and we figured we could threaten Serid and get him to pay up even more. So yes, we did.」

Alright, so my guesses are on this whole thing being a part of a power struggle, but why go so far just to kill the twins? I mean, they were sixth and seventh in the line of succession. They weren't even anywhere near the throne.

It looked like we were going to need to dig a little bit deeper if we wanted to figure out exactly what was going on.

Chapter 94: Not All People with Bad Personalities are Necessarily Evil

94. Not All People with Bad Personalities are Necessarily Evil

「Up.」

「Guah!」

Fran gave Serid's back a good stomp. The sudden influx of pain caused the chamberlain to awaken. The combination of his aching back and Fran's cold gaze left him feeling a sense of intimidation.

「W-What is it?」

「Why kill Flut and Satia?」

「I-I fail to grasp the essence of your question.」

「Pirate blabbed. Said Serid was mastermind.」

「What you mean to say is that you believe the ramblings of a mere pirate?」

He's still saying that? My guess was that he wanted to abuse his authority and push everything under the rug or something, but that didn't seem all that feasible given the current circumstances.

「Hired Pirates. Murder Flut and Satia.」

「I would never!」

『Huh?』

(Master, problem?)

『No, it's nothing. Keep interrogating him.』

「Nn.」

「Why do you want them dead?」

「I have not the slightest clue!」

Huh, wow. He isn't lying.

「How did you make the blue cat tribe move? Slave Merchants.」

「Blue cat tribe? I understand not what you are saying...」

「Assassin at the inn. Where did you hire? When?」

「You speak but of nonsense... Wait! You said that an assassin had appeared at the inn!?!」

It looked like he really didn't know anything. Well, I mean I get the whole incident with the blue cat tribe's slave merchants because he was literally never informed of it. But I never would've expected him not to know of the assassin either.

Wait, so what exactly is going on? Why do the pirates think that he was the one who hired them despite him thinking otherwise?

「Which subordinate contacted pirates?」

「I have already stated that I have not the slightest idea. Cease with this farce immediately! I know precisely your plans, you wished to accuse me of treason from the very beginning.」

He was actually being a hundred percent serious. He isn't lying at all, which could mean that he actually didn't have any part in this... not that I can actually believe that.

「Do not take me for a fool. I can clearly see that this is not but a scenario written by that detestable Reidosian spy.」

「I cannot believe that to be true, Serid. Salrut is one of our mother's, the queen's knights. He is a man that has earned her trust.」

「Her Majesty's trust in him is based but in deception.」

Serid's reply to the prince evidenced that he truly believed Salrut to be a spy.

Okay, this is looking bad. I seriously have no idea what's even going on anymore.

Alright, let's think this all over.

They slipped out, and as a result, they managed to get themselves kidnapped by the blue cat tribe's illegal slave traders. They were about to get shipped off to Reidos so they could be sold as merchandise, but then we stepped in and saved them. That task would likely have fallen onto Salrut's shoulders had we not shown up that night. It looked like this wasn't the first time this'd happened. The twins seemed to have made sneaking out a sort of habit, and it'd probably be even easier for them to actually manage to escape if the guards had a hole in their security net. Serid definitely had more than enough power to arrange for such a hole.

The next thing to consider would be the assassin we handed off to Salrut. The person who hired him had tipped him off so that he'd be able to infiltrate the building with ease. The assassin probably needed a map to actually sneak in. He also would've needed to know where all the guards were. Again, Serid could've easily provided all that information.

The last thing we needed to consider was the whole pirate thing. The pirates attacked us because one of Serid's subordinates contacted and hired them. It

was really weird that the prince and princess didn't have any sort of combat-based escort ship that went along with them on the trip either. That, like everything else thus far, was something that was within Serid's realm of manipulation given the extent of his power.

Yeah uh... it seemed that all the evidence pointed to Serid.

「Captain.」

「Y-Yes?」

「No escort ships. Why?」

「That was apparently just the type of job it was. We were told that bringing escorts along would make us stand out.」

Okay yeah, this whole thing seems super suspicious. People might start doubting us soon too, and yeah, I'd really prefer for that not to happen, so we should probably get this solved and over with soon.

「Who hired you?」

「I can't say for sure until check out the logs we have back at HQ, but... It should've been Serid.」

「T-That is nothing short of impossible. I see no reason for that responsibility to have fallen on my head.」

「What are you saying Serid? We agreed that you would be responsible for arranging our boat trip.」

「Yes, I am aware of that. However, I instructed one of my men to handle the task for me.」

「Did you not find it odd that he was only able to procure a single vessel?」

「Of course I did. However, I also felt it reasonable given the season and circumstances. I was informed that we would instead be prepared a state of

the art vessel equipped with the newest technology, so I had reluctantly agreed to the terms proposed.」

He wasn't lying, which meant he actually didn't have anything to do with prepping the ship either?

「Who got ship ready?」

「I-It should have been Naymario!」

Serid looked towards one of the men standing by the prince's side. Serid seemed to have thought that he had asked him to hire the Luciel Conglomerate, but the man, Naymario, only shook his head in response.

「I merely followed your orders.」

「What!? Naymario, you traitor!」

Serid's pitch rose in surprise, which made sense. Naymario was lying, after all.

In other words, Naymario was trying to frame Serid.

Salrut acted before Serid could give any further replies. He promptly gave his head an understanding nod and got his men to force Serid on his feet.

「Restrain that man immediately. He has committed treason through the act of plotting the assassination of a member of the royal family.」

Wait, hold up. I still want to keep the interrogation going for a bit longer. Serid isn't actually guilty, so yeah.

「Wait.」

「What is it, Fran?」

「Want to ask a bit more.」

「That should not be necessary. You have already done enough, you've exposed the criminal's conspiracy. Please, leave the rest to me.」

「No proof yet. Might not be mastermind.」

「I am absolutely certain that he is, especially given all the evidence presented.」

Wait a second.

(Master?)

『Salrut just lied.』

(Nn?)

『Let's try throwing a few questions at Naymario and Salrut in turn.』

(Nn. Got it.)

This whole scenario had taken quite the interesting turn.

「Naymario. Question.」

「What is it?」

「Really followed Serid's instructions?」

「To the letter.」

Yup, he definitely just lied. I'm absolutely positive that he's in on this whole thing, but I can't yet tell if he's the one pulling the strings or if he's just a pawn.

「Salrut too.」

「What is it?」

「Not a Reidosian spy?」

「Hah hah hah! Of course not! I've long cast that country aside and devoted every last fibre of my being to the Fyrias Kingdom.」

Salrut declared his allegiances in a confident, convincing voice. It'd sounded like he didn't even need to think before answering.

His act was awfully convincing, but in the end, it was just an act. It didn't matter how persuasive he sounded. There was simply no way for him to bypass the Principle of Falsehood.

『I hate to say it, but it looked like Serid was right. Salrut's a Reidosian spy.』

(Really?)

『Really.』

Thinking about it from that perspective made everything click into place.

The Kingdom of Reidos had a pretty good relationship with the illegal slave merchants from which it bought its goods. He probably didn't need to do anything beyond just saying the word to get them on board with his plans.

He was also more than just capable of producing the opportunity the assassin needed to sneak into the building. Plus, he didn't even tell Serid that there was an assassin in the first place. He just covered it up instead. The dark knight had said he was going to hand the assassin over to the proper authorities, but thinking about it, he probably just silenced him instead.

It would've been pretty easy for him to hire the pirates too so long as he and Naymario were working together. Or rather, it was pretty obvious that they were working together.

I mean, Serid's attitude hadn't helped in the slightest, but man, Salrut had totally pulled one over our heads.

(What now?)

『Good question. I wish I knew the answer...』

Chapter 95: The Sword of Truth (Not Really)

95. The Sword of Truth (Not Really)

Man, Salrut really got us. I never thought that he of all people would actually be the person pulling the strings behind all this.

I really wish I found out his true nature right when we met, but, keeping the Principle of Falsehood active 24/7 wasn't exactly something I was willing to do.

The thing is, I was actually planning to sit down and interrogate him, but I ended up inadvertently trusting him because he was one of the twins' acquaintances.

In fact, we ended up trusting him so much that we hadn't even considered using the skill on him until after we'd used it on Naymario.

『Hmm... What to do...?』

Either way, we first decided to heal the soldiers that we just beat up so that they wouldn't die while we considered our options. Only after that did I continue to ponder.

I was absolutely certain that Salrut was a Reidosian spy and that he was working together with Naymario. The only problem was that I couldn't prove it. We couldn't prove that we had the ability to see through lies either, so that was a no go.

Man, all this spy and conspiracy stuff was a huge pain to deal with. I almost just wanted to ditch them and pretend I didn't see anything, but... nah,

that'd be going a bit too far. At this rate, Salrut was probably going to end up having the twins assassinated whilst also silencing Serid in the process.

I mean, I couldn't have cared less about what ends up happening to Serid, but, I did want to help the twins. They were Fran's friends. She'd probably end up pretty sad if something happened to them.

『We need to figure out how we can get him to confess.』

(Beat him up?)

(Woof?)

『Wait, wait. Beating information out of someone isn't supposed to be the first thing you turn to. It's more of a last resort.』

(Really?)

The way I saw it, spies tended to be the type of people that wouldn't talk regardless of how much you tortured them, so roughing him up might not even help us at all to begin with.

And if things went south, then we might end up being wanted by the state.

「Is that enough? I would really like to get to questioning him.」

Crap! They're going to go drag Serid off somewhere if I don't think of something quick. Come on me! Think! Think!

(Brute force?)

(Woof woof!)

『Hold on! I already told you to make that our last resort!』

If this kept up, Fran was probably going to pull her supposed last resort out right away.

Wait, I got it! This'll probably sound a bit forced, but it was pretty much the only thing I could think of given a moment's notice.

『Fran, make sure you repeat exactly what I say.』

(Nn. Got it.)

『Urushi, go casually stand around where Salrut and Naymario are so they can't run away or anything like that.』

(Woof!)

Alright, here's to hoping this works...

「Wait. Just a bit.」

First things first, we made sure they didn't actually carry Serid off anywhere.

「What is it?」

Salrut seemed a bit irritated at the fact that Fran stopped him again, which was good. The less calm he was, the easier this would be.

「Have item. Will help prove Serid's guilt.」

「Oh?」

Salrut made a bit of a dubious face in response. He likely didn't want us to interfere further, but decided to go along with it for the time being. Serid, on the other hand, had his face cloud over. He probably thought we were on Salrut's side, and that we were trying to make him seem even more guilty than he already was.

「Seal release.」

I immediately began to transform, seemingly in response to Fran's words. I activated Thunder Blade while also using purification based magic in order to make myself appear divine.

「Woah!」

「W-What in the world is that?」

The people around us let out cries of shock as they watched a glowing sword suddenly change shape right before their very eyes. My blade grew several wing shaped protrusions; I turned what appeared to be a ceremonial weapon, an armament used for nothing more than rituals.

「W-What is that?」

「Sword of Truth. Functionality easier to show than explain. Flut.」

「Y-Yes?」

「Say sister's name.」

「Wha?」

「Tell me your sister's name. Give answer.」

「A-Alright. My sister's name is Satia Diel Fyrias.」

『The truth has been spoken.』

「W-Woah, where did that voice come from!?!」

「Sword of Truth. Magic tool. Discerns the truth from lies.」

Yup, one big fat lie, coming right up. Well, actually it is kind of true, seeing as how I do have the Principle of Falsehood. Whatever, either way, this was what I managed to come up with at the last possible moment. We were going to convince everyone that I was some sort of magical lie detector so we could demonstrate that Salrut wasn't what he appeared to be. In other words, we were trying to get him to confess.

First things first though, we had to make sure that everyone here actually thought I was able to discern between what was true and what wasn't.

Times like this almost made me wish I had a skill improved our ability to act or something, but whatever. The issue was that I was kind of a sword, and I wasn't really moving around or anything, so I wasn't sure if I could actually manage to convince everyone that I was in fact the real deal. Moreover, the Principle of Falsehood didn't actually make Fran herself sound any more convincing. It did, however, make me sound more convincing, which was good enough, I guess.

I made sure to make my voice as monotone and machine-like as I could. In fact, I actually based my speech patterns off the system announcer. I even went as far as to use Appraisal Jamming in order to make myself a fake status page, but unfortunately, no one here could actually use appraisal, so that ended up as nothing but wasted effort.

「Next, Satia's turn. Ask a question.」

「Okay. In that case, I'll ask my brother something. Flut, what present did we get from our elder sister, Angellica, on our fifth birthday?」

「I believe she gave us a pair of matching amulets.」

『The truth has been spoken.』

「It answered!」

「And it was correct too.」

「I-I'll ask the next question. What is our father's favourite food?」

「I believe it is meat.」

『A lie has been told.』

「I-It was right again!」

It looked like the twins' father, the king, was probably more fond of sweet foods. That means he's probably really fat. I wonder if he's got diabetes.

The twins took turns asking each other questions. They started out asking fairly innocent stuff like their mother's name and questions regarding the menu they were presented for dinner the day before yesterday. Soon, however, it devolved to the point where they began asking each other when they last wet the bed and who their first crushes were. I almost wanted to tell them to stop. I really didn't need to know their deepest, darkest secrets.

In the end, we managed to convince both twins that I was a genuine lie detector.

「I-It really can discern the truth from lies.」

「What an amazing magical item it is.」

「Next, Captain.」

「Me?」

「Nn.」

The next group we tried to convince was the ship's crew. Unlike the prince and princess, they asked nothing indecent. They focused on questions to which I shouldn't know the answer. That is, they asked each other for information regarding their wives, pets, and recent meals.

And so, we managed to convince all the people around us that I really was the Sword of Truth. In other words, the stage was set.

Salrut's face had gradually begun to warp ever so slightly out of shape. He was probably panicking on the inside. He knew that I would be able to tell that Serid was innocent.

「Hah hah hah! That is quite the amazing item you've got there. However, we have no need for it. We all know for a fact that Serid was the one that'd hired the pirates. The pirates said it themselves, after all.」

He immediately tried to brush it off, but there was no way that I was about to let him get off the hook. And so, Fran completely ignored the dark knight and instead turned to Serid in order to ask him a question.

「Did you plan to kill the twins?」

「I have never plotted anything along those lines! I swear that I am innocent!」

『The truth has been spoken.』

「T-That's impossible! Hearhghalskjdhg」

Salrut tried to speak, but I shut him up with telekinesis. Alright, let's keep this going!

「Planned to have them kidnapped?」

「I did not.」

『The truth has been spoken.』

「Asked the pirates to attack?」

「I have never once involved myself with those ruffians!」

『The truth has been spoken.』

「Asked Naymario to book the ship?」

「I did.」

『The truth has been spoken.』

The people around us had looks of shock plastered all over their faces. They'd thought Serid to be some sort of despicable traitor, but it turned out that he had been innocent all along.

「Next, Naymario.」

「I-I don't see the need to answer your questions.」

Yeah, yeah, alright, whatever. He wasn't getting away anyways, seeing as how Urushi was standing right behind him.

「Tried to frame Serid?」

「O-Of course not!」

『A lie has been told.』

Both twins' eyes sharpened in response to his answer.

「Conspiring with Salrut?」

「...」

He didn't respond to the question. Oh well, whatever.

「Conspiring with Salrut? Silence is yes.」

「That's...」

『The truth has been spoken.』

「Salrut wants to kill twins? Silence still yes.」

「I-I have no idea what you're talking about! None whatsoever!」

『A lie has been told.』

Heh.

Everyone on the ship had started to point their glares in Naymario's direction. They all believed him to be a traitor. The Sword of Truth could discern the truth, after all.

That aside, the Principle of Falsehood really was a terrifyingly potent skill. You could probably topple a country with ease if you abused it. But even with all that considered, I still felt that we should probably avoid using it as much as possible. I mean, we had that stupid Auguste noble lead by

example and showed us exactly what would happen if we relied on it too much. So yeah, I think we'd be much better off avoiding it as much as possible.

「Next. Questions for Salrut.」

Alright, what now bro? I'm the Sword of Truth, come at me. I'm about to expose all your lies!

「Fuck! Damned brat!」

It seemed like Salrut had also believed that I really was the Sword of Truth. Well, I mean, he was pretty much guaranteed to given what he's seen me do.

He clearly understood that he couldn't afford to try to make any sort of excuse, and so, he immediately drew the sword on his hip and leapt towards the twins.

「It looks like I have no other choice but to do this myseagh!」

Or at least he tried to.

「Growl!」

Urushi had instantly turned back to his normal size and pinned the dark knight down with one of his front paws.

「No more need for questions.」

A single glance at the twins' faces revealed that they now knew the truth, that Salrut had been deceiving them all along.

「This can't be... Salrut, why!?!」

Prince Flut's immediate reaction was to let out a bitter shout, a shout that resounded throughout the ship in its entirety.

Chapter 96: One Difficulty After Another

96. One Difficulty After Another.

TLN: So I just realized that I had a bit of a translation inconsistency. I was going back and forth between Raidos and Reidos because they sounded the same in my head and my fingers would just do whatever. It's all been standardized as Reidos now. I also retranslated Hardened Skin to Vulcanization because it sounds better and its more applicable to things without skin that way.

Salrut glared at Fran with eyes filled with hatred as Urushi held him down in front of her.

「The Godblade should belong to my country!」

So he really was after the Godblade. Well, it was a super weapon that was strong enough to throw off the balance of power held between nations. Reidos seemed kind of scummy, so it would only make sense for them to want it.

We weren't able to extract any other information out of him. He let loose the fact that Reidos wanted the Godblade, but refused to say anything else thereafter. I guess it can't be helped. Spies were tight lipped after all.

We probably could've gotten him to spill the beans if we tortured him, but there were children around, so yeah....

Besides, interrogating him was Serid's job, not ours. If we went ahead and pried the information out of him, we might've ended up getting stuck in an international conflict. We were pretty much leg deep in it already, so I didn't want us to get even more involved.

「Salrut... Why...?」

「I can't believe he was deceiving us this whole time.」

The twins were still in shock. Apparently, he acted as their guard for over five whole years.

Salrut had claimed to have abandoned the Kingdom of Reidos about eight years ago. He then spent his days wandering around until he ended up somewhere in the Fyrias Kingdom. He happened to stumble upon the Queen as she was being attacked by insurgents, so he protected her, and thus, she decided to grant him a position of knighthood. He had worked as hard as he could for several years on end, and so, he was eventually given the honor of guarding members of the royal family.

Okay, that's pretty shady. So basically, he showed up at the same time as a bunch of insurgents and drove them off without taking even the slightest scratch despite being just one dude with a horse? Yeah, seems just a bit more than a bit fishy to me.

Wasn't the queen like, a little too unwary of this sort of thing? I mean, I know he saved her life and all, but she literally placed a Reidosian knight in a position that allowed him direct contact with the royal family.

That thought led to a sneaking suspicion, so I decided to check Salrut's equipment over just to figure out the effects of all the magic items he had on hand.

Name: Ring of Bonds

Effect: Makes it easier for the wearer to bond with other people. This item becomes more effective the longer one stays in contact with the wearer.

Honestly, I hadn't paid it too much mind at first, but that was only because I didn't think its effect to be too significant. It turned out that I was wrong. The ring's effect was much more than I'd been expecting. I used the Eye of Empyria alongside Magical Perception and Sorcery in order to further investigate the item only to find that it'd been imbued with a very significant amount of magical power.

It wasn't strong enough to brainwash people or anything like that, but was more than enough to make one throw almost all their wariness out the window.

「This ring?」

「What are you doing!? Stop tha-geh!」

「Woof!」

It looked like something really important, as Salrut started to struggle the moment we tried to take it from him, but Urushi immediately applied more force to his front paw and crushed all the dark knight's resistance.

Apparently, he was having a lot of fun grinding Salrut into the ground with his paws. He'd even occasionally switch between his two front paws just so he could squish him a bit with each in turn. Every time he did, Salrut would let out a funny sounding groan, which only entertained the large, black wolf all the more.

「What is it, Fran?」

「Nn. Ring. Suspicious.」

Fran handed Salrut's ring over to Serid after forcibly ripping it off his finger. Taking the ring away from him had seemed to be the right choice given the impatient tone the act had elicited in response.

Immediately following that, we decided to go around questioning all the knights. Normally, spotting one cockroach meant that there were actually around ten others roaming about, and spies were pretty much cockroaches

in their own right. Through that act, we managed to weed out two more traitors.

And that was pretty much it. We did all we could for them so I returned to my usual form and returned to the sheath hanging off Fran's back.

The next thing we decided to do was to head to Barbra, or least it was until we realized that the pirates still had treasure hidden away at their base. More importantly was the fact that that said base was on route. Apparently, it was hidden away amongst a bunch of islands.

It sounded like they had a bunch, so I was really looking forward to raiding the place. We ended up doing a tonne, so we totally needed a plentiful reward, right?

Captain Rengil asked the pirate captain an interesting question as we had the latter guide us over to his hideout.

「Attacking a ship and murdering the royalty on it really isn't a pirate-like thing to do, is it?」

Wait, really? It sounded perfectly pirate-like to me.

「It's not?」

Apparently Fran was wondering the same thing, so she immediately asked the captain for his reasoning.

「Well, pirates may be ruffians through and through, but, they don't normally kill people who don't fight back. They almost never harm anyone that chooses to surrender.」

「Really?」

「Really. Attacking ships the way they do is something that naturally incurs a lot of risk. Most ships tend to be guarded by mercenaries or adventurers, and they don't even know what's on the ship until after they take it over.」

Oh, I get it. So there's a pretty good chance they'll lose more than they gain.

「That's why they normally choose to take hostages and demand ransom payments in exchange for their safety. It's far more profitable for them that way. It's kind of weird to put it like this, but the piracy business is built on trust. People wouldn't pay ransom if they didn't trust the pirates not to harm their hostages, after all.」

「Makes sense.」

「Murdering members of the royal family is pretty much completely out of the pirates' realm of operation. If their deeds were discovered, then whatever country the royals belonged to would likely send a subjugation force. Moreover, the public would lose trust in them and effectively force them to terminate their business.」

「Then, Serid's suggestion, surrendering. Correct decision?」

「Under normal circumstances, yes. Surrendering would have been the best possible decision by far.」

Ohhhh, that's how it is. Whoops. Sorry Serid, I really shouldn't have started suspecting you because of that. I blame Salrut, it's all his fault.

「We decided to accept the request because we really needed the money. Thought it'd work out because there wouldn't be any proof.」

Apparently, Salrut had actually started probing them out about a week ago. That was probably right around when he started getting ready to have the prince and princess murdered.

The pirates had figured out that everything would go well so long as they followed Salrut's instructions. They likely would have succeeded had we not been here. To Salrut, hiring Fran was akin to digging his own grave.

Well, technically, I guess he wasn't the one that dug it out. The twins were responsible for the suggestion. The three of them got along pretty well, so

they must've wanted to spend more time with her.

Either way, as far as Salrut was concerned, hiring Fran was akin to throwing another factor into the mix. He probably allowed it because the lack of an escort ship meant that they didn't really have that many people to fend off any incoming magic beasts, and he himself wasn't exactly planning to die at sea. The issue lay with the fact that he had no idea that she was strong enough to sink the entire pirate fleet with ease.

「Needed money? Why?」

「You remember the condition our ships were in?」

「Nn.」

It looked like they'd just been through some sort of battle. Some of them even had holes in their decks.

「We needed money so we could have them repaired.」

「Why so damaged?」

「It all happened seven days ago...」

The pirate seemed to go straight down memory lane.

「We did the usual. We left our hideout in search of prey.」

His eyes seemed kind of hazy, as if he was looking at something far off in the distance. Come on, I really don't care about all this sentimental stuff. Just sum it up for us or something.

Apparently, they left their base as usual, one thing led to another, and they eventually ended up running into a gigantic magic beast. The magic beast instantly sank four of their ships, left two heavily damaged, and the rest in the state in which we first saw them.

「Magic Beast?」

「Yeah, it was a gigantic monster the likes of which I'd never seen before. If I had to guess, I'd say it was most likely some type of sea serpent.」

「How big?」

「I couldn't see the whole thing, but, its girth was about the same as my ship's.」

Woah, that's big. If it was as wide as a ship, then it was most likely about a hundred odd meters long.

It was probably the magic beast that we'd heard about back in Dharz, the one that was seen hanging around the coastal area.

I don't know if we'll end up running into it, but I guess we should be extra careful just in case seeing as how we didn't know the extent of its strength.

Wait, I feel like I might've just jinxed it. Nah... no way, right...?

「We've spotted a massive shadow in the ocean. It's right in front of us.」

Okay, yeah, I definitely just jinxed it.

「Master.」

『Yeah, I know. Let's go, Urushi!』

「Woof!」

The magic beast we were about to challenge was one strong enough to completely demolish the pirate's fleet with ease. This little ship of ours would probably be screwed if we just sat around and didn't do anything.

「Captain.」

「It's right over there, Fran!」

We looked in the direction the captain was pointing, and surely enough, we saw something massive wriggling around beneath the water's surface

despite the fact that we were still over a hundred meters away from it.

「It looks like it's heading right for us.」

「Can't get away?」

「I doubt it. It's a bit too quick for us.」

Well, I guess that means we're going to have to fight. Wait, Fran, why are your eyes sparkling like that? We're in a pretty bad spot here, you know?

「Victory goes to first to attack.」

『Hah.... Alright, I guess it can't be helped. Let's hit it with everything we've got.』

「Nn.」

The only thing I was worried about was the fact that our attacks might not land given that the giant sea serpent was still underwater.

『Hey Urushi, could you try provoking it a bit so it surfaces?』

「Bark bark bark!」

Wow, they both seem like they really want to go at it. I mean, that's good and all, but they're almost kind of like warmongers at this point.

Alright, I guess Fran and I will get ready to attack while Urushi does his thing. The enemy's body was so big that we had no choice but to go all out.

『I'm going to use my Telekinetic Catapult. Could you throw me while using wind magic and some sort of Elemental Blade to power it up?』

「Roger.」

The first thing I did was transform and optimize my body in order to draw out as much power as possible. The image I had in mind was something like

a bullet. I purged all my spare parts and carved a spiral like groove into my body.

My resulting form was one that I felt like I'd seen before. Ah, right, I very closely resembled a certain Archer's rendition of Caladbolg, which was fine seeing as how I'd gained a lot more penetrating power.

I then proceeded to activate Flame Blade, wind magic, Vibration Fang, and Vulcanization simultaneously. Parallel Processing allowed it all to happen without a hitch.

『You ready, Fran?』

(Nn. Ready whenever.)

『Alright, good.』

I began getting ready to use Telekinesis.

And then, our chance came.

「Gyagyagagagagaoooo!」 [1]

「Woof!」

「Urushi. Good job.」

Urushi had been firing potshots at the creature from above. It didn't take him long to annoy it enough for it to finally surface. Its giant head emerged from the sea as it attempted to chase him down. It was so big that it looked like it could probably swallow an entire blue whale with ease.

It didn't look like a snake though. Instead, it moreso resembled an earthworm. Its mouth looked like that of a sea anemone in that it was lined with gigantic fangs.

「Go!」

『Yeah, let's do this!』

Fran threw me with everything she had. Her throw alone was so powerful that it had enough kinetic energy to send me flying through anything on or below the level of a lesser wyvern.

I released all of the telekinetic force I'd been saving up and accelerated myself even further.

『Uooooooooohhhh! 』

A massive impact force assaulted the magic beast the moment I made contact; a crater ten meters in diameter suddenly appeared where I assumed the creature's neck was.

The impact was so powerful that it sent me flying off in some direction immediately afterwards. A good chunk of my blade had been destroyed, and the rest had cracks running through it. It looked like using Overboost really did put way too much strain on my body.

But I didn't have any time to lament over the amount of damage my suicide attack had done to me.

『Holy crap! What the hell is this thing!?!』

Appraising the magic beast had left me in a state of shock and awe.

General Information

Species Name: Midgard Wyrms (Sea serpent)

Magic Beast

Lv. 60

HP: 35991/38709

MP: 531

STR: 4019

VIT: 4669

AGI: 102

INT: 5

MGC: 109

DEX: 24

Skills

Absorption: Lv 2

Regeneration: Lv 2

Predation

Description: An ocean parasite said to have the ability to grow infinitely. It's not very smart and does nothing but follow its instincts. It'll even attempt to eat anything that moves. It lacks any sort of unique abilities, the only thing special about it is its size. However, it is precisely its size that causes its enemies the most trouble. Legends have said that these creatures have even swallowed entire islands in the past. It is extremely difficult to kill, and is considered an A level threat. Its magic stone is located in its heart.

Seriously? It's got over 30k HP!? The attack we just used didn't even chunk 10% of its total health. To make matters worse, it was an A level threat.

It didn't have that many skills, and if you only looked at its skills, you'd probably think that it was really weak. Its only selling point was that it was big. Seriously though, it was way too big for anyone's good...

『Tsk. What a pain.』

[1] I'm honestly not sure how to best represent this sound effect in English, so I kinda just let it be. I know it's some sort of screech mixed with a roar, but I can't put it into English words without it sounding stupid.

Chapter 97: Is that a Worm or a Snake?

97. Is that a Worm or a Snake?

「Gyooo!」

The Midgard Wyrms turned its eyes on me with a threatening gaze. Or, at least that's how it felt. I couldn't actually see its eyes anywhere. That said, it seemed to have realized that the attack I'd just hit it with had damaged me as well.

I intended on piercing it all the way through, but its skin was too thick, and flesh too brawny. Its tough body stopped my Telekinetic Catapult in its tracks.

『This thing's huge.』

Even just the part that'd risen above the water was 30 whole meters long.

I continued observing the magic beast as my blade regenerated. It was starting to heal up as well. Its regeneration was really low level, but its HP pool was massive to begin with, so it was actually healing fairly rapidly.

「Gyagaruooooohhh!」

『Woah!』

The Midgard Wyrms spat something at me. Its aim was rather precise, the glob of stomach acid would've hit me head on if I hadn't dodged. It looked like that attack was what it'd used to mess up all the pirate ships we saw.

『This thing's still just full of energy.』

I mean, it managed to stop my Telekinetic Catapult's momentum, but it still did have a giant gaping hole in its neck or head area. Normally, you'd think its movements would dull as a result, but it didn't seem to have actually felt the attack at all.

It looked like we wouldn't be able to kill it if we just tried to whittle down its HP. But that was fine, there were other ways for us to kill it.

We could try going for its vitals. Ideally, I'd like kill it by destroying its magic stone, but its body was so big that I was having trouble finding it. Oh well, whatever. We didn't actually need to bother finding its magic stone in order to kill it, seeing as how it had one of its vitals exposed.

I let loose a second overboosted Telekinetic Catapult.

My durability plummeted yet again in response to the resulting shockwave. The attack was a bit weaker than it was before because I didn't have Fran's assistance, but, it was still powerful enough to create a second, 8 meter wide crater right where the wyrm's head was.

『Hell yeah, how's that?』

「Gyyyyyyyyuuu!!!」

『Tsk. This thing's still moving around as if nothing's happened.』

Alright, whatever, I'll just do it again then. I still had eighty percent of my mana left, so all in all, I could attack roughly five more times before having to devote the rest of my remaining mana into regeneration.

『Take this!』

「Gyaaaaa!!」

Okay, what the hell? The stupid wyrm was ridiculously sturdy. It was still moving around despite the fact that it was missing half its head.

I appraised again in order to check its stats, and it turned out that it still had more than 30k HP remaining, which meant that its head probably wasn't one of its vitals.

Hmmm... I think I'll give it another two or three shots just to see what happens.

『Die!』

「Gyogyaaaaa!!」

And so, the process repeated itself a few times, and I ended completely obliterating its head in its entirety. The Midguard Wurm no longer possessed either a mouth or a brain, but...

『Why is it still alive!?!』

It's movements had dulled by only the slightest bit, and it didn't seem like it was just going to roll over and die anytime soon. In fact, it looked perfectly fine. The flesh around where its head had been had already started to regenerate.

God damn thing doesn't even die when its head gets blown the hell off. It's way too big, and it's got an unrelenting life force to boot. God damn fantasy creatures!

『I-Is it just flat out immortal?』

I guess it really is a worm. Rockworms were kind of like this too, they wouldn't die even if you cut them in half.

『I think I might've used a bit too much mana...』

Damn it. I guess I'll head back on over to Fran. Everything'll only go downhill if I try to keep this up.

I flew back over to the ship while making it look like I was being drawn to Fran's hand.

(Master, status update?)

『I won't be able to kill it with my Telekinetic Catapult.』

(Got it.)

『But I do have an idea.』

(What?)

『...』

(Master?)

『Let's use Deathgaze.』

(Got it.)

The worm was just far too big, and it's life force too unrelenting. Deathgaze's ability to instantly kill its target had a pretty low success rate, but it should still activate once every 30 odd slashes.

Bringing up the suggestion made me feel vexed though. I was relying on other swords despite being a sword myself.

I guess this must be how it feels for a heart surgeon to entrust a parent to his colleague, or for a chef to ask another to cook for his daughter's wedding. The bitterness of defeat welled up deep within every last fibre of my being.

But it couldn't be helped. This wasn't the time for me to be moping around...

(Understood, Master.)

Fran drew Deathgaze out from the dimensional storage. The very act of her brandishing the weapon caused the ship's crew to gulp.

「W-What's that?」

「It's giving me a case of the chills...」

Deathgaze's blade was a deep, pitch black, with red, vein-like lines running up its length. Its appearance was about as ominous as it could get.

「Magic Sword. Deathgaze. Can instantly kill.」

「Ah, so you're planning to use it to kill that thing?」

Yeap, the sailor had pretty much hit the nail on the head, but for some odd reason, the captain's face was still twisted in unease.

「I'm not all too sure that the instant kill ability that sword has will actually work on the Midgard Worm.」

「Why?」

「I've heard rumors saying that Midgard Worms have more than one heart. Instant death effects may not function to their fullest.」

Seriously? It's got multiple hearts? Well, I guess we can't really be sure as to how effective Deathgaze's abilities would be in that case. But whatever, it doesn't matter. I don't care how many hearts that damn thing has, I'll just slash at it till it dies.

(Ready?)

『Yeah, let's go.』

And so, I headed towards the Wyrms yet again. The sailors had their eyes on us though, so I had to make it look like Fran was controlling me.

「Sword Puppet Theatre.」

「Wow!」

Fran raised both her arms and acted like she was concentrating. To make the act look more natural, she would occasionally even mumble from time to time. It looked like she was having a lot of fun.

In reality, I was obviously just doing the usual and flying around using telekinesis. Likewise, I was also manipulating Deathgaze through the exact same set of actions.

To the onlookers though, it seemed as if Fran was using some sort of mysterious skill to manipulate both swords as she pleased. She was left in a rather defenseless state, but Urushi was with her, so whatever.

(Good luck, Master.)

(Woof!)

『Just leave it to me!』

That said, all I was doing was flying around the Midgard Wyrms and dodging its attacks while slashing at it with Deathgaze in hopes of proc-ing the latter's effect.

『Take this!』

「Gyaoaaaaahhh!」

Tsk. Deathgaze's blade wasn't actually capable of cutting through the wyrm's overly thick skin. I had to give it a decent amount of momentum before it'd actually pierce the surface. Obviously, I didn't go as far as using Telekinetic Catapult, and as a result, the damage inflicted per hit was rather miniscule.

Deathgaze finally activated its effect after 20 or so magic imbued slashes. Its blade shimmered with a deep scarlet light as it attempted to instantly kill the wyrm.

「Gyaaaaaaaa!!」

Hell yeah! It stopped moving!

A wave of euphoria washed over me, but it only lasted for an instant.

「Gugagaooooooh!」

『What!? Just die already!』

「Gyaaoooo!」

It looked like the captain's suspicions had been on point. Deathgaze's ability wasn't able to instantly kill magic beasts with multiple hearts.

『Alright, fine! I'll just destroy all your hearts then!』

「Gyooooo」

『Hey! Where are you going? I'm over here goddammit!』

「Gyaoooooohhhhh!」

The Midgard Wyrms started to ignore me. Instead, it began making a beeline for the ship.

『Get back here fatass! This is supposed to be between you and me!』

I threw Deathgaze at the Wyrms, but I couldn't get it to turn back around. It was much more interested in nice, edible, living things than a dangerous, inorganic organism like me.

I continued to attack it with Deathgaze and managed to get its effect to activate a second time. The wyrm once again stopped for a few seconds, after which it booted its body back. It soon continued its prior actions as if nothing had happened at all.

Moreover, it had accelerated. The ship Fran was on had already changed its course in an attempt to get away from the creature, but, it was going to catch up, and soon, at that. Damn it, it looks like I really might not be able to kill it with Deathgaze.

『Shit! What do I do? The poison isn't working either...』

Attacking with Deathgaze wasn't the only thing I'd done. I had also tried throwing in a few poison based attacks of my own, but they didn't have any sort of effect on the wyrm at all. It didn't have poison resistance or anything

like that. Its body was simply just way too big, I would need to give it a much larger dose for it to actually have any effect. Damn it. It looked like size really did matter.

It didn't look I had any way of actually killing the wyrm. It would just regenerate regardless of how much damage I did to it, so I decided to think up a method to slow it down instead. I guess I could try making it heavier, but... how?

『I got it!』

A light bulb had suddenly seemed to flash inside of my head. The idea I came up with would lead to a bit of a gamble, but I didn't really have much time to think it through.

『Deploying max strength magical barriers! Activating Telekinesis!』

I circled around to the Midgard Wyrms front, and shot myself forward with another Telekinetic Catapult. This time, however, I didn't aim for its body. Instead, I dove straight inside its half regenerated mouth.

『Commencing Operation Inch High Samurai!』 [1]

If I couldn't hurt its exterior, I'd just hurt its interior instead.

『Holy crap, that's disgusting.』

The Midgard Worm's insides were nothing short of grotesque. Its organs were all clearly visible, and seeing them almost made me want to retch. To make matters worse, my durability was plummeting at an incredibly rapid pace. the wyrm didn't actually have a stomach. Instead, it just had its whole body secrete stomach acid nonstop. I probably would've completely melted away in an instant if not for my magical barriers.

The original plan was for me to just kind of go crazy inside of him and destroy everything, but it didn't look like that would work. I had to hurry up, finish my objectives, and then leave, else I'd probably melt.

The only issue lay with the fact that I needed to go a bit deeper inside the wyrm's body. I activated Telekinesis, threw myself in full throttle, and dove deep into the wyrm's interior. I reached my destination around when my durability had hit the halfway point.

『Activating Dimensional Storage!』

I immediately brought out every last monolith at once and dropped them all inside the wyrm's body.

If I dropped them near its mouth, then it'd be able to just spit them back out, but dropping them this deep would probably prevent that from happening.

I had actually wanted to dump the poisoned swamp we picked up as well, but I ended up deciding against it. I mean, it wouldn't cause any issue if the wyrm's body ended up absorbing it all, but, it'd probably lead to some major pollution if it managed to vomit it all back out. Honestly, I didn't think it'd be that bad given how big the ocean was, but, we were kind of close to the shore, so I figured the risk wasn't really worth the reward.

『Oh crap! My durability is getting really low, I've got to get out of here. Short Jump!』

My durability had started to decrease even more quickly because of the friction resulting from me rubbing against all the monoliths now in my immediate vicinity. I immediately used space/time magic and teleported a rather short distance. Luckily, I was able to get myself outside the wyrm and into the ocean.

Whew. I only had a hundred durability left.

『I really wish that the stupid thing would've exploded or at least ruptured though.』

The wyrm's stomach had grown in width by a factor of 10, but it didn't seem to show any sign of splitting open. Well, I guess it was a snake, and

snakes were capable of swallowing things much bigger than themselves without much issue.

That said, having that many massive rocks in its body would probably slow it down.

And sure enough, a bit of observation led me to the conclusion that I was right.

Sweet, the ship should be able to get away before it manages to digest everything and speed itself back up.

『Alright, let's get the hell outta here.』

[1] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Issun-b%C5%8Dshi>

Chapter 98: Side Story: Serid

98. Side Story: Serid

I am Serid Dinias, chamberlain to the Kingdom of Fyrias.

The current task to which I have been assigned is to oversee Prince Flut and Princess Satia as they develop towards maturity. I have been with them since the earliest years of their childhood, but as of recent, I have started to feel the distance between us gradually begin to grow.

The emotional rift of which I had just discussed was caused but by a single man, Salrut O'Randy, former knight to the Kingdom of Reidos. Despite his former status, Salrut had earned himself a position within the Royal palace. He had obtained his otherwise unjustified position through the act of rescue Her Majesty from a group of insurgents.

He claimed to be a knight without a kingdom, one that had abandoned the Reidosian ways. His origin appeared dubious, and I therefore immediately assumed him to be a spy.

However, despite my suspicions, both His and Her Majesty both came to trust him. I could not fathom as to why, but neither of the two had placed even the slightest bit of doubt within the man. I understood that he saved Her Majesty from an otherwise dangerous situation, but she had conferred far too much faith in him for little reason.

I will admit that the Fryias Kingdom's royal family did possess the tendency to be overly naive. The family's members were rather open and held an extreme lack of caution when compared to royals from other nations. But even then, I felt their choices to be strange and out of scope.

They were far too trusting and unwary when it came to matters relating to the former Reidosian knight.

I had suspected that the man had manipulated Their Majesties minds with magic, and thus, I had my men conduct a series of investigations. Most notably, I requested men check as to whether Their Majesties had been charmed or brainwashed. I was almost certain that my suspicions had been correct, however, none of my examinations had ever returned positive results. Moreover, Their Majesties possessed barriers that would repel any weaker attempts, and I doubted that he was capable of casting the most complicated of spells.

I attempted to warn Their Majesties of my suspicions, but they claimed that they trusted him. My continued persistence led them to drive me from their sides in annoyance. Their choices and actions had left me feeling as mortified as a single individual possibly could.

However, I remained undissuaded from attempting to uncover Salrut's actions regardless. In fact, I did precisely the opposite and furthered my efforts. I began publicly voicing my suspicions despite knowing that Their Majesties would only meet me with greater alienation. Thus was the extent of my resolve.

Salrut truly did well to deserve his title as a Reidosian spy. I was unable to find evidence that would allow me to incriminate him despite my many efforts. However, I did learn of his motifs.

His target was the Fyrias Kingdom's Godblade. He wished to obtain Diabolos, The Demon Lord's Blade.

Godblades were swords told spoken of in legend, but despite their existences being akin to common knowledge, their whereabouts were largely unknown. Many had even been completely forgotten as a result of the passage of time.

At the moment, there were only five Godblades with their names and wielders known to the world: Alpha, The Blade of Origin, Berserk, The Blade of Madness, Ignius, The Brilliant Flameblade, Gaia, The Earth's

Edge, and last but not least was our country's prided treasure, Diabolos, The Demon Lord's Blade.

Diabolos was said to have an ancient Demon Lord sealed within it, and he who wielded the blade was to be granted said Demon Lord's power. That is, the Godblade's ability was to summon subservient demons, and it was precisely that ability that has allowed our small, fragile nation to survive throughout the ages.

The blade's weakness is said to be its relative inefficacy in single combat. The records show that a thousand years ago, the blade's successor, one of our Kingdom's crown princes, had challenged the wielder of Crystalos, the Sacred Blade of Water to a duel. He and Diabolos had lost despite Crystalos not being a Godblade. That said, Diabolos more than made up for its deficiencies with its unique trait. Its ability to summon demons has allowed the Fyrias Kingdom to turn the tides of war time and time again.

Another one of Diabolos' unique traits was that it could not be wielded but by a select few. Specifically, only those that had the Fyrias Kingdom's royal blood flowing through their veins could even so much as touch the sword without losing their souls to it. If an unqualified individual attempted to wield the blade, they would lose their life on the spot.

Many other countries knew of the blade's abilities to force demons into one's service, but the rest of its traits were carefully kept hidden except from those qualified to know the Kingdom's national secrets. Members of the royal family would be told of the sword's properties upon their tenth birthdays. They, however, were not the only individuals informed. The king would also inform the Grand Chamberlain and six of his handpicked subordinates of the Godblade's details. The blade would also be described to the Prime Minister and the four men that headed the nation's army.

All individuals exposed to the country's secrets were also granted demons. Naturally, I have one within myself as well. If my life is put in danger, then it will appear and protect me from harm. It is registered as a D level threat, so it is in fact quite powerful. However, I myself am a mere chamberlain. I lack royal blood, and therefore, I cannot control the demon's actions.

While having a demon by one's side may sound convenient, I can assure that it is not necessarily so. The demon contains another feature in that it simultaneously acts as a sort of shackle. Those that attempt to inform the unknowing of the Godblade's properties will immediately be robbed of their voices and transformed into mutes, all for the purpose of preserving secrecy. The demon's final unique trait functioned to much the same purpose. That is, the summoned demons possess the ability to hide themselves from those that are capable of appraisal. While appraisal is indeed a rare skill, it is not one that completely fails to manifest, and thus, this final ability can be said to be mission critical in the preservation of our country's secrets.

Those that bear royal blood are naturally granted demons of a higher quality, C level threats. They serve to function as excellent guardians. They are even capable of healing injuries and eliminating any abnormal status. They so powerful that they can even reverse the deadliest of wounds in a matter of moments.

This, however, leads to its own fair share of complications. The demon's power allows members of the royal family to escape most dangerous situations. Thus, they typically tend not to be very cautious; they fail to develop a true sense of danger.

And that is precisely what led to the incident that we had just experienced. Prince Flut and Princess Satia prepared for their trip to Kranzel with only the most minimal number of escorts. It appeared that Salrut had stated that he would protect the two of them on their journey, and thus, the King himself approved their plans.

Their Highnesses both had demons by their sides, and said demons would undoubtedly protect them from harm. However, it remained a fact that they were but children. It was always possible for them to fall into a sort of trap, and thus, I decided that it would be best for me to accompany them. I had hoped that I would be able to use the dangers that occurred throughout the trip to enlighten them so that they would better understand the risks that awaited them in the future.

And then, Salrut acted. One night, he brought back with him not only Their Highnesses, but also a group of children that I could only find to be suspicious. I admit that they were but mere children, and that they were unlikely to inflict harm on Their Highnesses' persons. However, I was well aware that many assassins began work from a tender age, and thus, I practiced caution. I intentionally sharpened my tongue when addressing them; I tested each child's reactions in turn in order to gauge their purposes.

My probing had led me to believe that one of the children was far more suspicious than the rest. The individual that I had chosen to keep my eye on was a young, cat eared lass by the name of Fran. I was unable to see a respectable person in her regardless of how hard I looked. Moreover, I noticed her sneak around the building in order to converse with Salrut.

Both the Prince and Princess had seemed to take a liking to her. I, however, refused to be fooled. I decided then that I would expose the core of her character and thus, I attempted to get in her way. I secretly hoped for her judge me an obstacle, for she would be subject to a demon's power should she have attempted to attack me.

All in all, I had presumed that I was still in control of the situation, but it soon spiraled far beyond even my wildest fantasies.

We were attacked by pirates as we traversed the seas. Fran defeated the enemy fleet and even went as far as to bring back their captain, and that was when the twist occurred. The aforementioned captain immediately began accusing me of plotting to assassinate the Prince and Princess.

I had been caught in a trap. I was subject to a form of attack of which I had completely failed to anticipate.

I was knocked unconscious when I attempted to protest the situation. Much to my misfortune, my demon had not been summoned as there had been no danger to my life.

When I awoke, I found myself on the floor. One of my most trusted subordinates, Naymario, had betrayed me for the enemy. Their Highnesses

proceeded to stare at me, their eyes filled with doubt and suspicion. I had been driven into a corner, and my heart had been filled but with despair.

But then, she assisted me. Fran had activated a peculiar item that went by the name “The Sword of Truth.” Much to my surprise, she used the blade to prove my innocence. Witnessing the the item she possessed immediately led me to understand that it was one of extraordinary value. Its functionality was so incredible that I felt the urge to ask her whether she felt open to negotiation over its ownership.

In the end, I concluded that she too had merely been manipulated by Salrut. She was not on of his collaborators, nor was she another Reidosian spy. She was simply a child that happened to possess exceptional skill in the art of combat, and that was all.

Salrut truly was a fool. He attempted to assassinate Their Highnesses without even the slightest bit of knowledge of the demons that protected them. It appeared that he attempted to turn them into slaves as well, but even that would have been meaningless. The collars that induced slavery meant nothing before the demons that protected Their Highnesses.

Contemplating Salrut’s circumstances had led me to further develop my speculations. I arrived at the conclusion that he had likely discovered that only members of the royal family could touch the Godblade. Thus, he attempted to use one of our country’s royals to fulfill his ambitions. However, that planned had ultimately ended in failure, and hence, he instead redirected his efforts into reducing the number of potential wielders. If we arrived in Barbra, then the prince and princess would’ve had eyes all over them. Moreover, Kranzel had its own information network, one that would make it difficult for him to many any sort of move. Hence, he had chosen to eliminate Their Highnesses before he lost the opportunity.

Such a plan would indeed have caused our country damage had it succeeded. The Godblade’s potential wielders were surprisingly low in number. The second prince was sickly, his body was unable to handle the burden that came with wielding Diabolos’ power. The third and fourth princes had both perished in the process of subjugating magic beasts. Most of our princesses had already been wed, and thus, they no longer resided within the

country. Moreover, it appeared that the Godblade itself had a sort of finicky nature. I cannot explain the reason for which this phenomenon occurs, but the Godblade refused to acknowledge those that had been married off as potential wielders. The same applied to their children despite the fact that Fyrias' royal blood ran through their veins.

In other words, the Godblade had very few potential wielders. There were only six different people could potentially put its power on display: His Majesty the King, the Crown Prince, the Fifth Princess, Prince Flut, Princess Satia, and the Seventh Princess. If Prince Flut and Princess Satia were to fall, then the Godblade would lose two of its six potential bearers. In other words, the Kingdom of Fyrias would suffer a heavy blow.

The mention of Prince Flut and Princess Satia reminded me of their current circumstances. Both were currently within the ship's cabin. Their highnesses are still in shock as a result of Salrut's sudden betrayal. I've no idea as to how I could improve their moods, so I've no choice but to await their recoveries.

I do hope that they will be able to calm themselves in time for our arrival, as they must attend the ceremonies held in Barbra in a manner befitting representatives of the Fyrias Kingdom. Our country is small one. The sea lies to our west, but each our other three borders leads to contact with another country. To our south is the hostile Kingdom of Reidos. To our north and east lies Kranzel, one of our greatest allies. Our relationship with the Kingdom of Kranzel is excellent, and therefore it is imperative for the Prince and Princess to appear to be in good spirits.

It was very fortunate that we were able to eliminate the Reidosian spy before arriving in Kranzel, for it would have been possible for him to attempt to damage the relationship between our countries. I cannot thank Miss Fran enough for her actions; she even managed to identify and seize one of his magic items, a ring that would make those around him less wary of his actions.

Our voyage across the ocean had truly been one filled with twists and turns. Salrut's meddling had added danger and drama, but not even that was meant to be the end of it all. Fate reared its head once more as the pirate onslaught

was immediately followed by the appearance of an enormous magic beast. The creature that threatened to end our lives was incredibly powerful. Its classification was that of an A level threat. It was far beyond anything our demons could protect us from, and so once again, I was assaulted by despair. My only hope at the time was that Their Highnesses would keep their lives.

However, it appeared that not all was lost. Miss Fran had somehow once again managed to save us. She immediately used a skill the likes of which I had never seen before and assaulted the approaching Midgard Wyrms with a series of fierce blows. Each had such strength that I could even tell from afar that she had managed to leave massive holes within the beast's flesh.

Her power lay beyond the very realm of my comprehension. Witnessing it led me to think back on the attitude with which I had approached her. Needless to say, I immediately regretted my actions. My back had become drenched with ice cold sweat before I had even realized it.

I could not help but sigh in relief. I was grateful that she had tolerated my overly antagonizing actions.

She recalled her sword after her first stream of attacks and drew another. I witnessed her as she manipulated both weapons and barraged the magic beast with yet another glorious onslaught. It seemed that her second blade had the ability to instantly kill its foes, however, the wyrm she was pitted against had multiple hearts, and therefore, multiple lives. Her second blade's effect had failed her. The battle's ultimate outcome appeared unpredictable; I had no idea as to how it would end, and so, I had no choice but to watch her every action as the scene unfolded before me.

The final attack she used involved plunging one of her swords through the beast's mouth. It dove inside the wyrm's stomach and performed a series of actions unknown to me. Whatever the sword did appeared effective, for the beast's movements seemed to dull as it let out a pained shriek.

The ship's captain rejoiced, for the young lady's actions had allowed us to escape the beast.

She then retrieved her blade with what appeared to be magic, sheathed it, and moved towards the pirate. The young miss instructed him to guide the ship to his base with a nonchalant expression. She looked as if she hadn't even broken a sweat despite her many efforts. And so, once again, I was made to acknowledge her strength, and again, I was made to break out in cold sweat.

She then asked (threatened) for the individuals present not to reveal her abilities going forward. The same request applied to The Sword of Truth. No one present dared to defy her, we all nodded in obedience respect. Specifically, the line she uttered was as follows.

「Don't tell. Likely will lead to regret.」

It was only natural for us to agree given what we had witnessed. Our inclination towards the provision of a positive response was only furthered by the wolf that stood behind us whilst growling in a low, threatening tone.

There was, however, one matter that I found important to note. Only her longsword had returned to her. I had no idea as to the other blade's fate, but I presumed that she had lost it as a result of the battle. Her second blade had appeared to be of a considerable quality as it even had the ability to instantly slay its foes. I felt it to be a shame that she had lost it.

Further consideration led me to understand that the sword had only departed her because she had used it to protect us. It would not do for us not to compensate her for it. Salrut, the man technically responsible for her employment, was now being held in captivity, so it went without saying that the matter of her payment would also now fall upon our shoulders.

That, however, is but secondary. Her payment was a matter of great importance, but not one that took precedence over the acknowledgement and expression of my own wrongdoings. The manner in which I had treated was not but unfair and rude. I know not if she will forgive my actions, but I feel that I must offer her my most sincere and heartfelt apologies regardless.

「Excuse me, Miss Fran. Would you happen to have a spare moment?」

Chapter 99: Barbra

99. Barbra

「We've got eyes on Barbra!」

We finally arrived at Barbra three days after our initial departure. Man, have we been through a lot. The trip was full of nothing but ups and downs, we hit unexpected twists and turns at almost every single corner.

Surprisingly, today was still only the 30th of March, which meant that we actually managed to make it in time for the Lunar Banquet.

The first thing we did after escaping the Midgard Wyrms' wrath was raiding the pirates' base. That is, we casually cruised over, kicked them around, and "happened upon" all their treasure. I've got to say, it was it well worth it. Their vault was filled with cash, equipment, exotic spices, jewels, and plenty of expensive looking items made from gold and silver.

I mean, technically speaking, the treasure we "found" didn't have anyone's name written on it, and you know, finders keepers and stuff. Yup, we totally didn't steal it. Not at all. Besides, it's not like we were the only ones that went through with the act of "stumbling across" treasure. Countries would embezzle stuff from pirates all the time. Moreover, their methodologies were far more shameless than our own. They'd even go as far as to create this whole pretense in which they'd talk about taking things back for the people even though they always ended up just chucking all the pirates' loot straight into their national reserves.

The ship's Captain, Rengil, happened to be a merchant, so we had him look over all the stuff we "found." Apparently, it totalled up to approximately a hundred million Golde. I had personally had thought it to be an absolutely

monumental sum. In fact, I even had trouble wrapping my head around it all. That said, it was still not that much in proportion to what was needed to repair all the pirates' ships. The magic tools and items used in a ship's construction were extremely expensive. Each cannon and propulsion system would each flat out cost a fortune on its own.

Under normal circumstances, we wouldn't actually be entitled to even the slightest piece of the loot, as adventurers were typically put in the same category as the ship's crew when it came to this kind of thing. If they were lucky, they'd get a small bonus, but that was all. All the treasure we found was supposed to be rightfully belong to its discoverers and our employers. In this case, those two parties would be the Luciel Conglomerate and the Prince's group respectively.

However, the feats we had accomplished had been outstanding. We saved the ship twice, weeded out a spy, and even protected the two royals from all the possible harm that would've otherwise befallen them. Thus, they decided to give us a fair chunk of the treasure.

We were allowed the option to pick whatever we wanted, so we immediately claimed a large portion of the spices the pirates had saved up. Many of the aforementioned spices were extremely rare and expensive, there were even some that I'd never seen before. Eyeballing, I'd say we took enough to make about ten thousand servings of curry, which meant we profited at least a hundred thousand gold Golde off the spices alone.

They said we could have a cut of the actual jewelry type stuff as well, so we happily accepted their offer. I didn't really know what was valuable and what weren't, so we just decided just take a random pair of treasure chests. The first chest we chose was on the smaller side, but whatever. The second was kind of interesting in the sense that it the Alchemist's Guild's crest engraved upon it. We didn't actually check what was inside either chest, but if anything, that was the part that fired me up the most. [1]

After splitting some of the loot with us, they went ahead and paid us another additional sum on top of all that. The prince's party was really generous, and all in all, we ended up with about two million Golde on hand.

Holy crap, the amount of cash we had flat out doubled because of this one little job.

Having an abundance of cash meant that Fran could splurge on whatever the hell she wanted during our stay here in Barbra.

「Thank you very much for everything you've done, Fran.」

「We truly have been in your care.」

It took them two whole days, but the twins had managed to calm themselves down. Their expressions were still a bit clouded over, so they hadn't fully recovered, but, they'd at least regained their smiles.

「I offer you but the most sincere gratitude. We likely would have perished during our travels if not for your advent.」

Serid did the same thing the twins had and lowered his head in a deep bow. He'd surprisingly warmed up to us after the whole Sword of Truth incident. Apparently, only treated us the way he did because he'd thought that we were Salrut's accomplices.

「We will be staying in Barbra for approximately a week. Our place of residence will be the Lord's Manor. Do pay us a visit if you happen to pass by, I am absolutely certain that both Their Highnesses would be extremely pleased to see you.」

「Nn. Got it.」

「We will make sure to inform the Lord ahead of time so that he knows of the circumstances of your visit.」

They're staying over at the local lord's place? Well, gotta give it to them. That's royalty for you.

「I'd like to thank you as well. The trip was really rough, I'm pretty sure you're the only thing that kept us from sinking.」

The captain offered us a word of thanks as well.

「Nn.」

「Your abilities made this trip much more profitable than it otherwise would have been, so I owe you quite the debt. Make sure to head on over to the Luciel Conglomerate if you ever run into any sort of trouble. We'll do whatever we can for you.」

「Don't tel—」

「Yeah, I know. My lips are sealed, and I'll make sure that my men feel the same way.」

「Our party feels the same. I will order the soldiers to keep quiet in order to prevent the spread of any undesired rumors.」

The whole Sword of Truth business would probably kick up a huge fuss if people ended up finding out about it. It seemed that it was considered really valuable, as both Seird and the captain had asked to purchase it. The former had even offered a whole thirty million Golde.

We'd end up with a huge pain in the ass if rumors of the Sword of Truth spread, so we'd even thrown in a bit of intimidation alongside our request of secrecy. Hopefully, both Serid and Captain Rengil will be able to keep their subordinates in line. Oh well, no choice but to just trust them for now.

Fran exchanged one last handshake with the twins before bidding them farewell.

Alright! I've made up my mind. We'll make sure we drop by at least once, for Fran's sake. Well, assuming that they don't turn as away at the gate, that is.

「Worry not about the document. I shall personally hand it over to Barbra's Lord.」

「Thanks.」

The document Serid was talking about was the one we found in the illegal slave trader's hideout. We handed it over to him because well, it just kinda

made sense for him to have it. He disliked Reidosians, and had enough power to influence most of Kranzel's higher ups. There literally couldn't have been a better person to entrust it to.

「Will be off now.」

「Thanks you, and take care of yourself.」

「I hope we will meet again in the future.」

「Bye bye.」

30 Minutes had passed since Fran said her farewells and made her way off the ship.

『That's the place Rengil recommended.』

「Looks expensive.」

「Woof.」

『Yeah, it's supposed to be pretty high class.』

Barbra was really busy given the upcoming festival and whatnot, so we'd been concerned over how much trouble we'd have to go through in order to find a place to stay. Luckily, Captain Rengil had had more than just a few connections, and so, he directed us over to an inn owned by one of his friends. It was a bit pricey, but apparently mentioning the captains name would get us a discount. Besides, we had plenty of cash on hand anyways, so we could afford to splurge a bit. The best part about the inn we were recommended was that it allowed familiars, so poor Urushi didn't have to spend all his time lurking around in Fran's shadow.

「Hi.」

「Welcome.」

The inn really did give off a high class kind of feel. Instead of being greeted by the usual "well proportioned" old lady type clerk, we were instead

received by a dandy-yet-capable looking man.

「Room for one.」

「I'm very sorry, but we don't have any rooms available at the moment.」

「Nn. Here.」

Fran showed the man coin with the Luciel Conglomerate's emblem inscribed upon it.

「Well then... Might I ask for the name of the person that introduced you to our establishment?」

「Captain Rengil.」

「I see. Please give me just a moment.」

Showing the man the coin had caused his attitude to take a sudden turn. Apparently, they did actually still have a room, but it was one that they refused to rent out to the general public. They typically had it reserved just in case any of their regulars showed up. Fortunately, the captain's recommendation gave us the right to use that room as well.

The post-discount price was 4000 Golde per night, and included both breakfast and dinner but not lunch. One night here was literally the same price as ten nights in Alessa, but whatever. We decided to stay for five nights for the time being.

『Alright, looks like we've got ourselves a place to stay. We're pretty much free now, so are you feeling like anything in particular?』

「Food.」

「Woof!」

『Sure. Oh yeah, you want to open up the treasure chests we got as bonuses first? I'm kind of curious as to what's inside.』

「Nn. Was looking forward to it.」

「Woof!」

[1] Japanese males are addicted to gambling because of 500 yen gachapons in online games. Most of the prizes that come from these gachapons are trash

Chapter 100: Revealing the Goods

100 Revealing the Goods

『Hmm, it looks like it's locked.』

「Nn.」

We were currently inside the room we'd rented.

There was a treasure chest in front of us. Needless to say, it was one of the ones we got from the pirate's base. Its body was made of a blackened iron, and it had the Alchemist's Guild's crest inscribed upon it. We had planned to figure out its contents, but it didn't seem like we would immediately be able to get our hands on the chest's insides because of the mithril padlock attached to the its opening.

『I don't feel any magic coming from the lock itself, but the box has got a spell woven into it. It seems like it's preserving whatever's inside.』

「Then... cut open?」

『I don't think that's a good idea. We don't know what the box contains, so we might end up messing the the contents up if we just hack it open.』

I literally had no idea what was inside. It could be medicine, some sort of raw material, treasure, or maybe even just plain garbage. There was a chance that the items contained within could be really fragile too, meaning that the shock resulting from us breaking the lock open could end up destroying the box's contents.

The other treasure chest we picked up was the type that contained exactly what you'd think it to contain. It was full of all sorts of jewels and

accessories. The most expensive looking, and therefore, most interesting of the bunch was a bracelet with a massive gemstone embedded inside of it.

The second box probably contained something just as expensive as well.

「Then what?」

『It might take a while, but my suggestion would be to use Fang of Decay and Fang of Corrosion. That way, we should be able to slowly melt the lock down without damaging the chest's contents..』

「Nn. Sounds bothersome.」

「Whimper...」

『Yeah, don't worry about it. I'll do it, so you guys can go eat or something.』

「Nn. Got it.」

「Woof woof!」

Wait, wait, isn't this where they're supposed to cut in and say something like, "Let us help, we can't just take it easy while you do all the work?"

Apparently Fran didn't even consider the thought, as she'd already began stuffing her cheeks with the hamburg steak she grabbed out of the dimensional storage.

Well, I guess it's fine. It means she doesn't really need to hold back around me, and I really do kind of like doing this thing anyway. Plus, doing it by myself lets me focus and relax more.

And so, I began the boring task of melting away at the mithril lock whilst watching over my two companions as they hungrily devoured their lunches. I transformed myself into a saw blade and slowly began to carve away at the padlock while also simultaneously activating both Fang of Decay and Fang of Corrosion.

Soon, the room was filled with not but the sounds of chewing and sawing.

The atmosphere lasted for about ten minutes. It came to an end right when Fran and Urushi were about to go for their fourth helpings; the rhythmic sounding saw noise was disrupted by a loud clink.

『I did it!』

I finally managed to break through the mithril padlock. Man, that was exhausting, I had to be really careful. But who cares! I managed to get the box open!

「Treasure?」

「Woof?」

『Huh, a bunch of bottles with potions inside them.』

「That's it?」

『Oh come on, why are you already disappointed? This stuff is actually really amazing, you know?』

「Nn?」

I picked up one of the potions and handed it to Fran. At first glance, it looked like any other Life Potion, but it was a bit more than just that.

「What is it?」

『Apparently it's the highest grade Life Potion out there.』

「Oh?」

『It's some really effective stuff. It can even restore missing body parts so long as you don't get mangled too badly. Apparently people even go as far as to call its effects miraculous.』

「Ohhhh. Sounds amazing.」

「Woof woof!」

They were so potent that you could basically call them elixirs. I remember High Grade Life Potions costing thirty thousand gold apiece, I can't actually put my finger on exactly how much each of these Highest Grade ones would cost, but I figured it was safe to assume that they were at least a hundred thousand Golde each. We've got three bottles in total, so I'd say we raked in a pretty damn good profit.

「Rest are?」

We've still got another 17 bottles left in the chest. I hoped that the other potions would be just as high quality as the first ones we picked up.

「What's this?」

『That's a Full Heal, it removes any and all abnormal status conditions.』
[1]

Yeah, that one seemed incredibly useful too. Like the Life Pots, they came in a batch of three.

『Let's see, we've also got some high grade mana potions.』

「Total three bottles.」

『Let's put one of these in each of our dimensional storage boxes. Put the last one in your potion holder.』

「Got it」

Man, we seriously did strike gold here. These potions could be really useful if we ran into any sort of emergency.

The next three identical looking bottles were apparently Highest Grade Alchemy Potions. I didn't really know what they did, so I guess we should probably ask an alchemist or something later.

I grabbed a black, suspicious looking bottle after putting the Alchemy Potions away.

「Dangerous item?」

『Yeah, make sure you don't touch it.』

「Nn. Got it.」

Fran replied with a rare, serious expression on her face.

My Sense of Danger had been going off nonstop for quite some time now, and hence, I didn't even need to appraise the black liquid to know that it was something that shouldn't be touched.

「Woof?」

『Stop that, Urushi.』

「Urushi. Down.」

We didn't manage to stop Urushi in time, so he ended up giving the bottle a sniff with an intrigued look on his face.

「Whimper!」

A single whiff of the substance caused him to quickly recoil his nose before scratching it nonstop with his front paws. It looked as if the stuff in the bottle stank like hell, hence Urushi's strong sense of smell had only worked against him.

「Whimper whimper!」

『Well, that's a Poison Mixture of the Highest Grade for you. Urushi's more or less down and out just because of its smell.』

We won't get in trouble just by carrying this around with us... will we? I'm pretty sure it's more potent than any sort of poison produced through magic. E-Either way, best thing to do is to just seal it away by putting it inside the

dimensional storage. I'm actually kinda glad that we've only got one of these.

『Alright, next... Woah! This some pretty nice stuff!』

The next potion I grabbed was a Potion of Repair, it was capable of fixing whatever equipment it was poured on. We could use it on either me or Fran's Black Cat Armour depending on our needs. Too bad we only got one bottle of it. I really wish there was more.

Man, all these decent potions are making this whole thing pretty exciting, it really makes me wonder what'll come next.

「Pretty.」

『That one looks more gaudy than it does pretty to me.』

Fran had picked up a potion with a bottle slightly more narrow than the rest. Its interior was filled with a sort of sparkling, rainbow liquid. It looked nothing but flashy, however, its effects were pretty damn good. Its name was the Potion of Rising Skill, and as implied, it had the ability to raise the level of one or more skills upon its consumption. The user had no way of choosing which skills would gain levels, and the precise number of skills that did gain levels would also be subject to random chance. We decided to save it for when Fran trained up her skills a bit more, as higher level skills took more effort to level up.

The Potion of Rising Skill was undoubtedly of extremely high value, but even it was considered fairly insignificant when compared to the next thing we identified.

『Holy shit.』

「Nn?」

The next item was called the Anti-Side Effect Potion, and it had the ability to mitigate any negative side effects caused by spells and magic. In other words, it could counteract the backlash that came from skills like Latent

Potential Release and Doppelganger Synthesis. If I used it on a clone, then I might even be able to actually eat.

Given its effects, we could probably actually just flat out use it as a trump card. Moreover, it was classified as a “magical medicine” and I didn’t even know those existed. Either way, I want more of these, so I should probably level up Alchemy and Medicine Creation some more. I should be able to make these myself one day if I get both those skills high enough.

There were only two bottles left in the chest, but both were so rare that I couldn’t actually figure out what they did. Appraisal refused to tell me more than just their names.

The two bottles were identified as the Drug of Reversed Attributes, and the Root of Arcane Souls respectively. The former looked like any other potion, so we might’ve actually just accidentally downed it if not for appraisal. [2]

The latter looked just like an empty bottle, but the fact that a name showed up when I appraised it meant that there was definitely something inside. Was it gas or something? I didn’t really think opening it was a good idea, so we refrained.

Oh well, whatever. Either way, that was it. To sum things up, the results were as follows.

Highest Grade Life Potion * 3

Full Heal * 3 [2]

High Grade Mana Potion * 3

Highest Grade Alchemy Potion * 3

Poison Mixture of the Highest Grade * 1

High Grade Potion of Repair * 1

Potion of Rising Skill * 1

Anti-Side Effect Potion * 3

Drug of Reversed Attributes * 1

Root of Arcane Souls * 1

Wow, we really struck it rich. The potions looked to be worth more than a million Golde in total, and we could actually put most of them to use if we wanted.

We should probably get the ones we didn't know much about checked out. Barbra was a pretty big city. Naturally, it contained a fair number of alchemists therewithin, so we should be able to find someone that knows all our portions' effects.

That said, I couldn't help but feel as if asking around about this stuff would stir up a huge fuss, so it'd be best for us to be prudent. It's not like we're in any sort of rush here anyways.

「Then, ask adventurer's guild?」

『Yeah, that sounds like a pretty good idea. We need to sell all the magic beast parts we dismantled on our way here too, so yeah, let's head right on over.』

「Nn. Wanted to see city anyway.」

「Woof woof woof!」

「Urushi. Want to walk around town too?」

「Woof!」

The first thing he wanted to do after going somewhere new was to go out on a walk. That's a dog for you I guess. Well, it's fine though. I kind of wanted to see the city's sights myself, so we might as well just explore the place while looking for the Adventurer's Guild.

『Alright, a walk it is then.』

「Nn.」

「Woof woof!」

[1] All Abnormal Status Restoration Potion sounds like crap so I'm using a Pokemon reference for now. If anyone can come up with something better, post your suggestions in the comments

[2] Might be Demon soul(s) or magic soul(s). Went with arcane because it sounds better and is kind of ambiguous. Sorry for shitty translation here, can't tell what the hell it is because there's no context and I'm on the same chapter you guys are on. (I'm not reading ahead because it motivates me to translate faster.)

Chapter 101: The Chef's Guild

101. The Chef's Guild.

Discounting the Royal Capital, Barbra was Kranzel's largest city. Like Dharz, it bordered the sea, and thus, function as a large, commercial centre.

The city was so extravagantly decorated that even the guard's office was a shocking 4 stories in height. Salrut was still accompanying the prince on his travels, albeit as a prisoner, but the pirates? Yeah, they were probably pretty much all locked up inside. Chances were, they were going to be hanged in a few days time. We technically didn't break the promise we made to the pirate's captain, as we weren't going to kill him ourselves. They were just being punished for being a bunch of unruly pirates, nothing less, nothing more.

Barbra's port was massive. It housed over a hundred ships hailing from at least twenty different countries. It was such a well travelled place that it'd probably be safe to say that you could get your hands on anything you ever wanted here so long as you were willing to pay the price.

「Amazing.」

「Woof.」

『Woah. There's so many shops that I can't decide where to start.』

The street leading to and from to the port was lined with stalls and shops of all shapes and sizes.

There were three different weapon shops within 200 meters of us, but a certain pair of gluttons had already dismissed them without so much as a second thought. Instead, they were looking towards the myriad of

restaurants that decorated the crowded street, their eyes shining like stars in the night sky.

At the time, I figured that there wasn't any issue in letting the two of them eat whatever they wanted. We had the money, so whatever.

Little did I know at the time, that decision had been nothing short of a mistake.

「Tasty.」

「Woof!」

「Also tasty.」

「Woof woof!」

「Nom nom nom.」

「Bark.」

It looked to me like the two of them were spending more time with their mouths stuffed than they were the opposite. Both Fran and Urushi were both holding and eating as much food as they possibly could, and needless to say, the sight of a young girl and a large black wolf shoving meal after meal down their throats was something that stood out far more than necessary. In fact, they drew so much attention that the people around us had actively started to observe our every move. They even gave Fran a round of applause after seeing her eat an entire giant skewer in a single bite.

Our food filled advance eventually led us to a massive square about five hundred meters in diameter.

The buildings constructed around said square were on a similarly grand scale; they were both massive and gaudy as could be. Their very existences served to function as a testament to their owners' wealth. If I had to give an impression of the area, I'd say that it hit me in much in the same way as would a place like Marunouchi or Time Square. Examining the plaza

further led my eyes to catch ahold of something that immediately grabbed my interest.

『Is that what I think it is...?』

(Master?)

『Apparently that building over there is labeled as the Chef's Guild.』

I didn't even know that such a thing actually existed. I couldn't help but find myself staring at it in wonder, I really wanted to find out more about its activities and stuff.

「Want to go?」

『Yeah. Please and thanks.』

There were a lot of other big names hanging around, like the Blacksmith's Guild and the Merchant's Guild, just to name a few. I even caught sight of a few embassies as well. It was almost as if there was an invisible rule stating every institution located within the square was an organisation or entity that carried with it a certain degree of prestige, and I saw no reason for the Chef's Guild to be an exception thereto.

「Here?」

『Yeah, but it looks like Urushi won't be allowed inside.』

A sign saying "Pets and familiars are not allowed within the premises," was hanging from the guild's door. Well, I guess it can't be helped, given how food was involved.

(Then sink into shadow?)

『Yeah, should work. Make sure you don't come out of Fran's shadow while we're still inside, okay, Urushi?』

(Whimper...)

Urushi let out a slightly saddened cry before obediently sinking into Fran's shadow. He was probably hoping to enter the Chef's Guild so he could get his paws on something tasty. We'll have to make it up to him later.

「Hello.」

The Chef's Guild's interior design greatly resembled that of the Adventurer's Guild. The only major difference that one could spot at first glance was that the people within the building were chefs instead of adventures.

「And what can we for you today, young lady?」

「Nothing in particular.」

「Huh?」

Fran's exhibition of complete and brutal honesty left the guild's clerk in a momentary state of bewilderment. That said, she did manage to recover from it quite quickly.

「First time here.」

「We don't have too many branches, so I can understand where you're coming from. We, the Chef's Guild, facilitate the gathering of ingredients from across the entire continent. Many chefs even go as far as to equate the guild to the heavens. We have many connections with those within the industry, and there is a rather large demand for our services.」

The Guild's receptionist was politely answering Fran's questions despite the fact that she was just a child. She informed us that the Chef's Guild effectively functioned as a large merchant that worked with both ingredients and chefs themselves. The guild would accept registration from two different types of individuals. The first was obviously chefs and the second, the owners of businesses that required them. The guild started out as a small organisation focused around the discovery of new recipes, and it has followed through with that fundamental philosophy throughout its history.

Even now, the guild apparently continued to extend its arms to any and all chefs in need of support.

「Are you perhaps a chef yourself?」

「Kind of?」

Fran was stuck in a weird situation in which she never actually cooked despite her cooking skill completely maxed out.

「Master, good at cooking.」

「I see. And I take it that your Master is not one of our guild's members?」

「Nn.」

「I believe that registering may be in your Master's best interest. We provide a wide variety of benefits, especially in the realm of buying and selling recipes and ingredients.」

Oh, that's pretty interesting, but I'm kind of a sword, so I can't actually register myself. Fran could probably do it, but she's a part of the Adventurer's Guild as well, so I wasn't really sure if she was disallowed or something as a result.

「Oh, don't worry about that. A fair number of our members are in that precise situation; they belong to several guilds simultaneously. That said, I do have to say that the Chef's Guild isn't nearly as big as the Adventurer's Guild, and unlike the Adventurer's Guild, we don't intentionally restrict our members in any which way. The Chef's Guild is much more lax in general, as fundamentally, we stemmed from an organisation established for the sole sake of helping one another.」

「Want to register.」

「Are you legally authorized to do business in Barbra?」

「Nn? No.」

「In that case, you'll have to register as a chef.」

「Okay.」

「You will have to participate in an examination. Is that okay?」

「Exam? What kind?」

「Well, we are the Chef's Guild, so you'll have to cook. We'll consider you have to passed the examination if you can get our staff judges to approve of any one of your dishes. We have a kitchen available if you'd like to whip something up right away, but using it isn't mandatory. If you want, you can cook something up ahead of time and then just bring it on over.」

Does that mean that I can make something and then get Fran register for me by proxy?

「Yes, that would be fine. Our guild cards don't require anything beyond just a name.」

Wow, they really were lax. The word guild always made me think of something really systematic and strict, but apparently the Chef's Guild wasn't like that at all. Signing up here seemed almost as casual as signing up for any sort of membership or point card back in Japan.

「Something already made okay for exam?」

「Well, yes, but...」

「Then this. And this.」

「Huh? Oh, I see, you had an item box.」

Fran had pulled out from her dimensional storage a serving of curry and a skewer made of wild boar meat. Their spices' fragrances drifted across the room and grabbed the attention of all the chefs there within.

Fran actually did make the skewer herself, so we technically weren't cheating.

『I know that they're going to be judging us, but are you sure you want to offer them curry? That's one less plate for you, you know?』

The hell is going on here? She normally hates sharing her curry.

(Masters cooking will be judged. Can't show inferior products. Need to blow judges out of the water.)

『O-Oh I see. Thanks.』

「I-I'll go get an examiner right away.」

「Nn? You're not a judge?」

「The higher ups are supposed to participate in the judging just to make sure all our members meet the same standard of quality.」

Five minutes later, the receptionist came back with a man in tow. If I had to sum said man up, I'd say he more or less looked like a gourmet that was nothing short of difficult to please. He was totally rocking the Kaibara Y*zan and Aji**u feel. Just seeing him kind of made me start to feel nervous.

「Oh? So you're the applicant?」

「Nn. This, my cooking.」

「Grilled meat on a skewer? Hmm... I see. Well then, I'll give it a sample.」

The man took a bite out of the skewer. He slowly chewed through it and savoured its flavour before finally swallowing it with a gulp. The fact that he stayed expressionless throughout the whole process left me feeling a bit intimidated.

「Hmm... It's quite plain.」

「Can't be helped.」

Fran had a pretty solid grasp of where her own cooking skills laid, so she didn't really get angry despite the fact that they were criticized. She only made the dish on a whim anyways.

「However, I can't say I disapprove of its flavour. I can feel your fervor and passionate temperament through its taste. It's as if the dish itself is telling me that you tried to make it as delicious as possible with what limited materials you had access to.

「Nn?」

Wow, he actually knows what he's talking about. The skewer he was eating was indeed something that Fran made on a whim, but that didn't mean she didn't give it her all.

It was a dish that she carefully roasted with fire magic over the course of about thirty minutes. She didn't use any special ingredients or spices to make it either, she just grabbed whatever she happened to have available and gave it her best effort. Despite her relative lack of ingredients, she took her time and managed to make the final product taste pretty good. However, it was also actually this precise careful process that caused her to lose interest in cooking, as she ended up equating it to a meticulous and almost painful process.

The examiner had been so skillful and observant that he was able to deduce her efforts but from a single bite. Seriously, wow.

「I approve of your dish, you pass.」

「Nn.」

Whew, she passed. Given how Fran managed to pass with nothing but a skewer of meat, I figured that I shouldn't have any issues passing either. That said, I didn't really think that there was any point in having me register anymore, as we'd already secured the benefits we needed.

(No. Can't not register.)

『Why not?』

(Make them eat Master's cooking. Blow their minds.)

It seemed like she didn't actually care about the benefits, she just wanted to completely bewilder the stuck-up looking judge by feeding him a plateful of curry.

「Next, this.」

「What an interesting dish. Its appearance reminds me Azerian cuisine, but its fragrance is of a much more mellow quality, and its ingredients stray from the Azerian norm.」

「Called curry. Made by Master.」

「So I take it that this is one of your Master's original creations?」

「Yes. The ultimate dish, crafted from years of blood and effort.」

What, no! Nonononono! All I did was reproduce one of Earth's most common dishes! It's nothing complicated, and I only decided to make it because it's easy given that we had all the necessary spices on hand!

「Oh? I look forward to trying it then.」

「Tastiest thing in the world is curry.」

「I would be quite glad if that were to be the truth.」

The old gourmet judge raised the dish to his mouth and consumed a bite after listening to Fran hype it up.

「Oh?」

「Tasty.」

「Hmm...」

「Ultimate dish.」

Fran couldn't stand just watching, so she pulled out another plate and began eating it alongside the judge whilst watching him with a look of confidence. Her expression gave way to the fact that she was absolutely sure he would be blown away by the flavour.

「It's not bad.」

「Nn. Of course.」

「But did you really think that a dish with this meager a flavour would stand above else all that the world has to offer?」

The moment the man uttered his response, Fran completely froze over.

「Hah?」

Her expression vanished altogether, and she immediately began to radiate an aura of violent bloodlust.

TN: Sorry, this should've come out earlier, but my water heater broke. You know how much asian people like their hot baths, and conversely how much we hate the lack thereof? Well, you're reading a web novel right now, so I assume you do. I finally got all that done and fixed last night, but then

Pokken Tournament DX arrived in the mail...(●≥∪≤)

Chapter 102: Wait, We Skipped the First Round Altogether?

102. Wait, We Skipped the First Round Altogether?

Hearing the gourmet criticize her favourite dish caused Fran to emit far more bloodthirst than she had ever displayed on the battlefield.

She further went on to activate her Intimidation skill and funneled both it and entirety of her bloodlust towards the judge. I was pretty worried for the guy. There was so much pressure that an ordinary civilian would likely have passed out, pissed themselves, or maybe even something worse than prior options combined.

「Curry. Tastiest thing ever.」

「Well, I do admit that it is quite delicious, but it's most definitely not the most delicious thing in the world.」

Holy crap. Dude looks like he's a middle aged man, but damn, he's got balls. Fran's thirst for blood didn't make him even anywhere close to fainting. In fact, he just casually raised an eyebrow whilst responding to her as if it wasn't a big deal at all. And I don't mean that he's just naturally the calm type of guy or anything like that either. He wasn't half assing it and just throwing up a front, and he wasn't just naturally unconcerned with this type of thing, he genuinely just didn't care.

I guess that's just how people who've mastered their trades end up turning out, regardless of what those trades happen to be.

『Fran, calm down.』

(Already calm!)

『I'm only telling you to calm down because you're clearly agitated. Why don't you just ask him why he feels the way he does? You might be able to accept his thoughts once you come to understand them, so let go of me already!』

「Nn. Why?」

She asked the question in a bit of an egotistical tone. It looked like Fran had already started to think of him as a sort of enemy. I just hope that she doesn't actually attack him.

「The taste of the dish itself serves to prove that it is near completion. There is little room left for the improvement of its flavour, and it carries with it a unique fragrance the likes of which I myself had never before sampled. I will admit that it was very well crafted. However, that is all. This dish completely fails to provide with it its creator's dignity!」

「Dignity?」

「Dignity refers to the chef's spirit, their passion and pride. Dignity is something that all chefs carry with them at all times, it's what must be poured into their craft. This dish lacks even the slightest sense of dictinity. It was made with care, but it fails to extend beyond the realm of one's home cooking.」

You know, he is actually right. All I wanted was to make Fran food that she'd find delicious, and I never really shot for anything more than just that. I ended up making it all en masse, and I was honestly only careful enough to make sure that it didn't burn. I never really thought of making the best dish ever or anything like that at all.

In other words, the final product was basically a dish made by an amateur that just so happened to have the skill required to cook. Yeah, this dude, he really knows his stuff. I almost can't believe that he was able to see through me with such ease. Fran seems to think of him as a sort of enemy, but I

don't really feel any hostility towards him at all. In fact, I'd say that I think he's a pretty cool guy.

「Grrr.」

Fran grumbled in response to the man's words.

「Well, either way, a pass is a pass. I will admit the person you call your Master to the guild, though I have very few expectations of him.」

「Will not acknowledge.」

「Oh?」

「Curry is the best. Absolute best. Next time, will make you admit it.」

「That's an interesting remark. However, I'm quite a bit busier than I look. You won't be able to get me to show up whenever you so please, especially seeing as how I'm going to be even busier than usual starting tomorrow.」

「Mrrrgghhh」

Eh, we got a pass, so whatever. It doesn't really matter anymore, does it?

(It does!)

『It can't really be helped. He's got things to do too.』

(Curry is best food. Refuse to acknowledge any other. Need to prove.)

『Well, alright. If that's what you want.』

「How to meet with you?」

「Hmm... Well, if you'd like me to evaluate another dish, then why not register for this?」

「Nn.」

The middle aged man of a gourmet handed Fran a single pamphlet, the headline of which was “King of Cooking – A Contest Sponsored by Barbra’s Chef’s Guild.”

According to the pamphlet, the first round allowed you to bring your food in ahead of time for it to be judged. The second round was a competition based on food carts. The last round and climax was supposed to be a match between the finalist’s best dishes.

「We’re currently in the midst of the first round. The dish’s taste and uniqueness justifies it passing through to the second. If you can make it all the way to the end, then you’ll be able to force me to try your cooking. I will be the sole judge of the final round.」

「Will participate!」

『Wait a sec! At least say something to me before you just go off and declare that!』

The second round consists of setting up a food cart, and Fran isn’t exactly what you’d call a model salesgirl. Besides, the old dude isn’t actually going to be sampling anything until the finals, and it wouldn’t make sense for me to not actually show up to the finals in person. Fran herself can’t make curry, so I’d probably have to unless she was planning to learn how to make it? I doubt we’d be able to pull any sort of trick given his sense of taste, and this really isn’t something that can be even remotely close to brute forced.

(Will definitely participate.)

『All the people who enter are going to be people who are good at cooking. Do you really think we’ll be able to make it to the finals?』

(No worries. Master can definitely make it.)

『I’m happy to hear you say that, but...』

Honestly, I don’t think that the idea of making it all the way to the finals is all that realistic. A good chunk of the participants were probably people

who'd been chefs for over a decade, and I figured that it'd be fair to conclude that most of them were pretty damned good at what they did.

(Refuse to back off or lose. Curry equals pride.)

『I get what you're trying to say, but...』

I honestly had no self confidence whatsoever.

(No worries. I believe in you, Master.)

『I really don't feel like I can do it. I mean, I have the skill maxed, but deep down, I'm honestly just an amateur.』

(Don't believe in my sense of taste?)

『Well, I mean, I do.』

Fran really likes eating. The max level cooking skill we share only helps to amplify her sense of taste even further, so, she definitely knows what tastes good and what doesn't, and she isn't the type to flatter. Her thoughts and impressions are genuine and her opinion has weight to it.

The issue wasn't actually related to any of that. All my problems came from that whole best in the world thing. I myself was having some trouble picturing curry as the world's best ever creation.

(Then, believe in the me that believes in you, Master.)

『That was a pretty good line you said just now.』

God damn. That was number three on the list of things I really wanted to say at least once. Man, I'm jealous! Why did she get to say it! Argggg, Fran is terrifying at times like these.

『Alright, alright. If you're going as far as to say something like that, then I can't really say no to you.』

(Then participating is okay?)

『Yeah, let's go get ourselves that championship.』

(Yes Master.)

「What's wrong? Lost your nerves?」

「Nope. Just getting fired up. Will definitely win.」

「So you will be participating then?」

「Nn!」

「Then read over the rules and sign them.」

The old man then called over one of the people in charge of the competition and had them explain any relevant details to us.

The first round had over 2000 participants, but only twenty would move on to the second. We were pretty lucky to be instantly selected as one of said twenty.

The second round was to last three days, and its whole premise was to see who could profit the most by wheeling a cart around and selling food. All the entrants were given a hundred thousand Golde as their starting capital. The sheer amount of money given to each individual really served to evidence that the contest's scale.

You were allowed to bring your own ingredients if you wanted as well. Apparently that rule was made because some of the chefs would only work with super high end stuff, and a hundred thousand Golde wasn't anywhere close enough to what they needed to get going.

The only condition was that you needed to tell the contest's staff ahead of time. The ingredient cost was still going to be detracted from one's profits regardless, so it didn't actually really work to create any advantages for those that had their own stuff. After all, the point wasn't just to sell as much as possible, it was to profit as much as possible.

The four chefs with the best profits would be able to move on to the competition's final round, in which they'd each present their very best dishes.

The winner would be rewarded a hundred thousand Golde. Honestly, the prize money alone wasn't all that appealing. It was literally exactly the same amount as what was given for the second round's preparations. But to the chefs, that was fine. What mattered was the honor and fame that came with one's victory, not the immediate monetary gain. Those that won would ultimately prosper down the road anyways due to the prestige that came with the event. Many of the competition's previous winners had even been granted positions in which they answered directly to royalty.

「The second round will begin in three days, and the finals on the 7th of April.」

The Lunar Banquet was set to span a week starting on the 31st, meaning that the finals would take place on its last day.

「Will you be able to complete all necessary preparations in time for the event?」

(Master?)

『It should be fine. We'll manage one way or another.』

「Nn. No problems at all.」

「Very well. Then here is one hundred thousand gold. Use it to ready yourself for the second round, and don't be making off with it.」

「Won't. You, get noose ready, await your loss.」

「I'll be looking forward to seeing the results of your efforts.」

「Nn!」

And so, we somehow ended up participating in a cooking contest.

We needed a kitchen in which we could operate. They said that we could always just use the one they had here, but that would mean people seeing me in action, which wasn't exactly a good thing. We needed a place in which we could maintain secrecy whilst preparing our dishes. I also need to think about the type of curry I was going to make, so we could get all our supplies ready. Luckily, we still had a tonne of spices on hand.

There was, however, a problem. We still had a mountain load of stuff to do in the meantime. We needed to drop in on the Adventurer's guild, find a knowledgeable alchemist, and even visit the twins sometime or another.

I know I said that we'd manage somehow, but man, it really seems like we're not going to have enough time for all this...

TN: If you're wondering why I use middle aged and old interchangeably, it's because I call middle aged people old. The definition is vague, and some people classify 60 as like middle aged while others say that's old as hell. I've tried to avoid shifting between the two it but it might've still leaked through to the chapter like it did the last. In other words, the description of the gourmand guy is vague and he could be anywhere from 30-65. Yay loose definitions!

Chapter 103: Colbert

103. Colbert.

We arrived at the Adventurer's Guild about an hour after signing up for the cooking contest.

I'd wanted to explore the town a bit more, but we didn't have the time for that. We had to quickly get everything over with so I could find a place to cook.

『Alright, let's hurry up and sell everything. Once we get that done, we should be able to ask them if they happen to know where we could find information on alchemy. If we're lucky, they might also be able to help us find a location in which we can cook in private.』

「Nn.」

『You don't mind if we hold onto the silver, gold, and gems for now, right?』

I was planning keeping them for the time being just in case we happened to run into a situation in which we couldn't use Golde.

「Guild over there?」

『Seems like it... Wait, holy crap, it's massive!』

「Really big.」

「Woof.」

Alessa's Guild was pretty big already, but Barbra's was on a whole 'nother scale. The building was so large and fancy that I almost mistook it for a noble's manor.

「Castle?」

『It really does look like one.』

But surely enough, a sign indicating that this was indeed the Adventurer's Guild was hanging up atop the building's entrance.

The guild's exterior was gorgeous, but its inside? Not so much. If anything, they almost seemed shoddy in comparison. Well, I guess it did make sense. Not all adventurers were lawful people. In fact, a fairly significant portion were precisely the opposite, and hence, it was always possible for fancy furniture to get damaged or even stolen.

There were seven different desks and at least fifty adventurers within the building as we entered it. At first, I'd thought that there was some sort of emergency gathering or something, but apparently this was normal. Understanding that fact really made me come to see the Barbra branch's scale.

「Welcome, is this your first time here?」

「Nn.」

「Would you like me to quickly go over everything then?」

「Please.」

「Alright, in that case, I'll first tell you about the different counters and their purposes. You're currently standing at the information desk. Here, we provide with information about the guild and its facilities. We can also help if you wish to contact any specific individuals within the building.」

Apparently the three counters beside us were all for handling requests, and the other three were for the purchasing and exchange of materials.

The upper floors contained a sort of library filled with reference materials alongside an office for the guild's staff. There were even a bunch of facilities for people new to the industry, they had training rooms and extra bedrooms too. The rooms were apparently really small, so I doubted that we'd get any use out of them, but newbies would probably be happy just to have them.

「Large building. Reasons now clear.」

「So what did you need?」

「Nn. Want to sell materials.」

「Do you have an adventurer's card?」

「Here.」

「Just give me a moment to run it through the necessary checks.」

I was expecting the receptionist to do the usual thing and react to the discrepancy between Fran's rank and age, but she didn't.

「Fran, D ranked adventurer, is it? Okay, please proceed to the desk labeled with the number 6.」

「Nn.」

In fact, her expression didn't change at all. She simply did her job pointed Fran in the right direction without any sort of hassle. I think this is actually the first time this has happened to us. I really got to give it to the Barbra branch, they trained their employees pretty damn well.

The receptionist at the purchasing counter was the same. She also just casually did her job without showing the slightest bit of shock or surprise.

At first, I thought I liked their attitudes, but further exposure led me to feel like they were acting too calm. Their complete lack of a reaction left me feeling a bit unsatisfied.

The adventurers around us provided a much more normal reaction. Unlike the receptionists, they immediately kicked up a commotion the moment Fran pulled the Dreadnought Destroyer's horn out of storage.

In the end, we managed to get fifty thousand Golde out of all the stuff we gathered while we were out at sea. Most of what we picked up was rather cheap, the only item with a notable price was the Dreadnought Destroyer's horn, as it could be used in the crafting of weapons. The receptionist asked if we would like to sell the rest of the Dreadnought Destroyer as well, but we ended up turning her down. Fran liked how the Dreadnought Destroyer tasted, and both its flesh and bones could be used to make food.

A male adventurer approached the desk right as we were getting paid.

General Information

Name: Colbert

Age: 38

Race: Human

Job: Iron Fist Warrior

State: Normal

Status Level: 41/99

HP: 428

MP: 202

STR: 249

VIT: 154

AGI: 203

INT: 91

MGC: 101

DEX: 189

Skills

Hand to Hand Combat: Lv 6

Martial Arts: Lv 6

Crisis Detection: Lv 3

Divine Fist Arts: Lv 2

Fist Techniques: Lv 9

Fist Arts: Lv: MAX

Combat Qigong: Lv 4

Herculean Strength: Lv 6

Blink: Lv 7

Swimming: Lv 4

Ocean Resistance: Lv 2

Throwing: Lv 4

Life Magic: Lv 3

Drowsiness Resistance: Lv 3

Paralysis Resistance: Lv 4

Cooking: Lv 2

Hawk Eyes

Beast Killer

Minor Strength Boost

Vigour Manipulation

Inherent Skills

Iron Fist

Titles

Bear Killer

Tiger Killer

Equipment

Water Dragon Leather Gloves

Old Water Tiger's Martial Arts Uniform

Old Water Tiger's Martial Arts Shoes

Red Helmet Bear Bandana

Red Helmet Bear Mantle

Bracelet of Pain Resistance

Bracelet of Impact Resistance

He looked pretty strong. He wasn't as strong as Jean, but his stats were higher than Donadorondo's, so he was probably at least a C rank.

That Qigong skill of his looked pretty interesting. Apparently, it used magical power in order to strengthen a part of one's body. In other words, it was a skill applicable both in offense and defense. It allowed him to fight against bladed weapons with just his bare hands.

His Iron Fist skill caught my eye as well. The combination of that skill and his ability to use martial arts looked like they worked pretty well together. I really wanted to see him in action; I could already imagine a manga-like scene playing out in my head.

「Hey there little miss. Did you catch that all by yourself?」

His choice of words made it seem like he was trying to mock Fran, but neither his tone nor expression gave off that sort of impression at all. It looked like he was honestly curious as to whether or not she'd defeated the Dreadnought Destroyer all by her lonesome.

「Nn. Fished it.」

「What? You fished it?」

「Fished during boat trip.」

「That's amazing! People normally beat them by bombarding them with magic.」

Huh, I thought he was going to get suspicious, but he actually straight up just believed us.

「Believe me?」

「Huh? Oh, yeah, of course. I mean, anyone that isn't blind can tell at a glance that you're pretty skilled just based on how you move your feet and how you carry yourself.」

Several adventurers averted their gazes in embarrassment in response to Colbert's words. Looks like we've got a few people in need of guide dogs around these parts.

「Dreadnought Destroyers are one of my favourite foods, but they're fairly rare, so it's quite hard for me to get my hands on them. Would you mind selling me a bit of its meat? If you fished it, then you probably have quite the amount.」

「Won't sell.」

「Have you already arranged to have it sold elsewhere?」

「Nn? Will eat myself.」

「All of it?」

「Nn.」

「I see... What a shame...」

The man responded with a disappointed frown, it seemed like he really wanted to eat Dreadnought Destroyer. I couldn't help but feel a bit sorry for him. He did recognize Fran's abilities, so I didn't really see much harm in sharing a slight bit with him.

Fran pulled something out from her storage space and held it in front the man right as I finished thinking the thought through.

「Here. Will give this. Dreadnought Destroyer nigirizushi.」

She gave him a small box of sushi with soy sauce already dribbled all over its contents. It was one of the ones I prepared while we were still on the ship, and it was made so that it could be eaten at any given time. The box's exterior almost perfectly resembled the containers that I always saw drunk salarymen carrying around.

『You sure you're okay with that? Didn't you really like sushi?』

(Can't be helped. For publicity.)

『Publicity? What?』

「Did you make that?」

「Nn. Master made it.」

Well, technically, I borrowed her body in order to make them, so she could've just said that she made them herself.

「I've never seen anything prepared like this before. You said it was called nigirizushi?」

「Nn.」

Colbert timidly took a piece of sushi out of the box Fran presented to him and threw it in his mouth after a moment of hesitation.

「Chew chew chew.」

「Nom nom nom.」

Fran followed up on his action by stuffing three pieces into her own mouth immediately.

「H-How delicious! What delectable taste! J-Just what is this!? It's far more than just a slice of meat placed atop a portion of rice! In fact, the fish itself can't even be said to have simply been sliced! The sharpness of the blade used managed to completely sever each piece without crushing even the slightest bit of the flesh. The complete lack of deterioration resulting from the Dreadnought's Destroyer's careful dissection drew out every single last bit of its flavour! And the rice, the rice is more than just a bundle of carbohydrates squished together to form a shape! The slightly acidic substance added to the grains in the careful compression process melts in your mouth and causes its deliciousness to spread throughout the entirety of my being. This dish functions to define the very meaning of fine cuisine. You called it... nigirizushi? Yes, yes, I see! The very act of molding the the rice is none other than an iterative refinement of the cooking process as a whole.」 [1]

Er, holy crap. He just ended up making a speech. I mean, I saw that he had the skill required to cook, so I figured he'd probably be interested in the dish, but man, I did not expect that. Both him and the judge guy we ran into earlier really liked to give their impressions of the stuff we made. Is everyone in Barbra like this? I really hope I don't get used to being around this type of person.

「Y-Young lady, you said that your master was the one who made the dish?」

「Nn.」

「He must be this world's greatest chef... Does he perhaps own a restaurant?」

Colbert suddenly started speaking in a super polite fashion.

「No.」

「Then, is he currently employed by another?」

「No.」

「Then wherever will I have to venture to consume another one of the Master's dishes?」

「Will have a cart for the cooking contest.」

「I see! So that means that he's already completed the first round. But of course he would, his skills are simply sublime. But thank you, I will make sure I visit on at least one occasion. Rather, I will visit him on every possible occasion. What sort of dish exactly is he preparing for the competition?」

「Curry.」

「I've never even heard of it. W-Would it happen to be another one of the Master's original recipes?」

「Yup.」

「Amazing! I simply cannot wait to discover its flavour!」

Ohhhh, so this is what Fran was aiming for. She managed to get a high ranked adventurer to stir up a commotion in order to provide us with what was basically an advertisement. I have to admit, that was pretty good scheme right there.

「Right, I should introduce myself. I'm a B ranked adventurer, they call me Ironclaw Colbert.」

「Ironclaw?」

「Yeah, that's my alias. As of the moment, I still fail to match up to people like Amanda of Hariti, Hundredblade Forrund, or Jean Dovy the Annihilator. However, one day, I'll be famous enough for my name to be known throughout the land.」

Aliases were a thing? Oh, right, I remember now. People used to call Fran the Magical Sword Girl, and I did know about Amanda's whole Hariti thing as well. I mean, hers fit her perfectly. She liked kids so much that she was on the verge of having some sort of disorder. I never would've imagined Jean having the alias The Annihilator though. It seemed a bit too violent for him.

「D rank adventurer. Fran.」

「Oh? You're a D rank? It looks like you'll turn out quite promising later on down the road. Anyways, I really need to thank you for sharing your nigrizushi with me. It was so delicious that I can't help but feel like it changed my life in its entirety.」

「Understanding value of nigrizushi means insightful. Very promising.」

「Hahaha. Thanks, thanks. You must be quite the chef yourself given your Master's skill, so hearing your praise makes me feel a slight bit embarrassed.」

The two exchanged a firm handshake. It looked like they got along pretty well with one another.

「Don't hesitate to let me know if you ever need any help. I've actually got quite a bit of influence, so I can say for sure that I won't let you down. I'd be very much honoured if said help ended up benefitting your Master as well.」

And so, I randomly managed to get myself a fan. He seems like he's a pretty good guy too.

Meeting him made me realize that all the high ranked adventurers were actually a bit weird and quirky. I really have to make sure Fran learns all about common sense before she ends like them. Though, to do that, I'd probably have to learn more about this world's common sense myself first.

[1] The nigiri part of nigirizushi comes from the verb nigiru, which can mean to mold. Colbert's expression of understanding comes from the fact that he understands that it is precisely the molding process that leads to the result.

Chapter 104: Eugene

104. Eugene

We headed over to the guild's third floor after getting paid.

After selling materials, we had asked the guild if they knew any alchemists that could give us a hand, and apparently, they knew just the guy. The guild's Barbra branch had contracted a fairly skilled alchemist to work within it, and he happened to be present, so we decided to pay him a visit right away.

We were guided to our destination by an elf. Though she was apparently 50 years old, she looked like she was in her late teens or early twenties. The door she knocked on had a sign on it describing it as "Eugene's Laboratory," and it was located in an area that seemed to contain facilities that one would use to produce all sorts of different items and consumables.

「Come in.」

「Please excuse our intrusion.」

Inside the room was a single man with his arms outstretched. He was at the age where his hair had started to grey, but despite that, he wore it with a swept back style and allowed it to grow to such a length that it extended all the way down to his back. His thin but tall body was decorated with a loose robe, and his face a gentle smile. The round glasses atop his nose really worked well the rest of his image and assisted in giving him him an intellectual sort of feel.

His eyes were a bit weird though, the whites were black, and the irises green. It also looked like there was some feeler-like thingy growing out of his receding hairline.

「Good afternoon Dr. Eugene, I've brought someone that wanted to see you.」

「Oh? What a cute little lady we have here. Are you an adventurer?」

「Nn. D rank adventurer. Fran.」

「D rank? That's quite impressive.」

General Information

Name: Eugene

Age: 62

Race: Half Bugman (Bee tribe)

Job: Alchemy Instructor

State: Normal

Status Level: 55

HP: 209

MP: 596

STR: 101

VIT: 108

AGI: 159

INT: 359

MGC: 220

DEX: 333

Skills

Cast Time Reduction: Lv 3

Wind Magic: Lv 2

Appraisal: Lv 8

Harvest: Lv 7

Woodland Resistance: Lv 3

Life Magic: Lv 5

Short Spear Arts: Lv 5

Short Spear Techniques: Lv 2

Throwing: Lv 7

Knowledge of Poisons: Lv 8

Toxicology: Lv 9

Fire Magic: Lv 3

Water Magic: Lv 5

Medicinal Herbology: Lv 7

Knowledge of Medicinal Herbs: Lv 5

Resistance to Molten Iron: Lv 6

Alchemy: MAX

Transmutation: Lv 5

Poison Invalidation

Paralysis Invalidation

Magic Manipulation

Greater Intelligence Boost

Innate Skills

Presence Detection: Lv 3

Poison Production: Lv 4

Poison Spray: Lv 1

Titles

Item Expert

Master of Poison

Master of Potions

Master Alchemist

Equipment

Magic Stone Cane Spear

Dark God's Alloy Threaded Robe

Shoes of Walking on Water

Bracelet of Dexterity

Bracelet of Storage

He was a bugman, the insect equivalent of a beastman. His appearance led me to assume that bugmen were likely characterized by their eyes and antennas. That said, he was technically only a half blood, meaning he didn't exhibit all the traits that'd normally be associated with bugmen. Still, his outward appearance was unique enough for me to make me really curious as to how full fledged bugmen looked.

But oh well, whatever. His appearance wasn't important. What mattered was that he actually seemed just as skilled as the guild had said he was. His titles were self evident, and further proof of his abilities was provided by the fact that he'd not only completely maxed out alchemy, but even moved on to leveling up transmutation. Based on what I read in the skill description, transmutation was to alchemy what divine sword arts were to regular sword arts, a flat out improvement. There was also the whole characterization that he had going for him. It practically screamed master alchemist at the top of its lungs.

「Okay, why don't I introduce myself? My name is Eugene, an alchemist that has contracted the entirety of his services to the Adventurer's Guild.」

「Not in Alchemist's Guild?」

「Hahaha, I did used to be a part of it, however, one of my disciples had ended up causing a scandal, so I had to take responsibility for his actions and resign from my position. I was picked up by the Adventurer's Guild shortly after.」

「It's not the Doctor's fault at all though. The apprentice that caused the scandal was one that'd already left his care.」

「That doesn't change the fact that he committed a crime through the application knowledge he obtained from my teachings.」

「I still think that the Alchemist's Guild went too far. It really didn't merit confiscating your membership.」

The elf replied to Eugene's acceptance of his punishment with an unhappy look on her face.

「Doctor. Leaving Alchemist's Guild for Adventurer's Guild. Didn't cause bad blood?」

Fran's doubt was a sensible one. Most people probably wouldn't exactly be what you'd call happy if someone they kicked out immediately managed to find their way into another organisation.

「It definitely did. The Alchemist's Guild's last Guild Master harassed me every single day until he retired.」

「I think the current Guild Master took up his position about five years ago. He's not nearly as extreme as the last one.」

「That isn't to say that there isn't any sort of residual resentment anymore though. Many alchemists still feel hostility towards adventurers.」

Apparently, Eugene's recruitment had even damaged the relationship between the two guilds.

「Adventurers dislike you?」

If the two guilds started antagonizing each other, then it'd mean that adventurers would have a hard time getting a lot of the items they needed to go out and do their jobs, which, in turn, would likely led to adventurers disliking Eugene as well.

「I don't think so. If anything, I think most of the adventurers are glad that the Doctor joined our ranks.」

「Why?」

「The doctor's been teaching alchemy to some of the guild's other members, and as a result, we've gained the ability to produce our own proprietary goods. In other words, we managed to eliminate the Alchemist's Guild's monopoly, and thus, their ability to control the market. Many items are actually even cheaper than they used to be, so it's actually much easier for adventurers to get their hands on them.」

「Though that's likely why so many alchemists are feeling bitter about the matter.」

So that's how it is. I admit that I do pity Eugene a bit, but I can't say his situation isn't one that's to our benefit. I was a bit worried that information about us would end up getting leaked if we took our questions to the Alchemist's Guild. Moreover, the items we'd obtained had come from pirates, so there was also always the possibility that they'd ask us to return them. Having someone that's a part of the Adventurer's Guild do everything for us instead reduced both those risks by a lot. It looked like the guild really trusted the doctor, so things were looking up. All knowledge of the items in our possession would probably stay a secret.

We were asked to sit shortly after our guide had left the room and returned to her regular duties.

「How would you feel about a cup of tea before we get down to business?」

「Nn. Thanks.」

The cup Fran was given was filled with a darkened liquid that bore a slight resemblance to Oolong Tea.

「Nn.」

Fran immediately picked up the cup and give it a small sip. It looked like she wanted to keep drinking, but she was black cat beastman and thus, her tongue was rather sensitive to heat. [1]

「Oh? You're not going to react at all?」

Eugene looked at Fran with a bit of an inquisitive expression. Wait, why? Was the tea supposed to be poisoned or something? Nah, no way. Appraisal said it was just a regular cup of Oobow tea. Fran's status was perfectly normal too, so...

「Ah, right, I should probably explain. I really like the flavour of that tea, but it seems that most that've tried it found it too bitter, and some would even spit it back out immediately. Lately, I've started to find people's reactions to its taste to be something of interest. It seems however, like you don't dislike the taste.」

「Nn. Tasty.」

「I'm glad to hear it! Not many people can find themselves able to appreciate its flavour.」

Oh, I get it. It's kind of like Senburi tea. People who like it love it, but the people who don't can't stand it at all.

「Bitter but tasty.」

「Yeah, exactly! I'm glad you feel the same way. Would you like to take some tea leaves with you?」

「Please.」

Eugene happily handed Fran a bag of tea leaves. He really did seem happy that he managed to find someone else who liked the tea's flavour.

「Now then, why don't we get down to business?」

「Want you to look at some items.」

「Oh?」

「But don't want you to tell anyone else. If possible.」

「That's fine. Lots of people have requested the same before, and I'm proud to say that I've managed to keep everything confidential.」

『The doctor isn't lying. It looks like you can trust him.』

「Nn. Examine these.」

We already knew enough about the the Highest Grade Life Potions, the Panaceas, and the High Grade Mana Potions, so we didn't bother having him tell us about them. We intended to have him look through the rest, so we started with the less harmful looking ones at the forefront.

「Is that a High Grade Potion of Repair? That's quite the item you've got there.」

「Want to know its value.」

「Hmmm... If you were to purchase that at a store, it'd normally run you about twenty thousand Golde.」

Well, that's more than I was expecting.

「It's a bit on the pricey side, but it's effect is well worth it. It can allow you to repair your equipment even if you're out in the middle of adventuring. It even has the ability to repair magic weapons, which are typically known to be quite difficult to fix.」

Yeah, it definitely was convenient. Just using a potion to repair a magic sword was definitely way easier than the arduous process of bringing it to a blacksmith, only to find out that they lacked the required materials, and that'd have to gather them yourself.

「Then. This?」

「Oh? That's another rare one. It's called a Potion of Rising Skill, and it's worth approximately three hundred thousand Golde, however, its price can be inflated up to another ten times as a result of the fact that nobles have an extremely high demand for them. 」

Ten times? Wait, so this thing can be worth up to three million Golde? What the hell, that's ridiculously expensive! Though, I guess I can kind of see why. Nobles probably buy these for their kids so they can boost up their skill levels without having to risk any sort of danger. I'd actually find it weird for this not to be in high demand.

「Next. Have three of these.」

「Wow... one amazing thing after another is it? This one trumps both your previous items by far.」

It's even more amazing than a portion that can easily net us over three hundred thousand Golde?

「Do you know what Alchemy potions do?」

「Nope.」

「They're potions used in alchemy, as suggested by their names. You can mix them in whilst producing an alchemic product in order to elevate the resulting quality and effects. The highest grade ones that you have are so rare that not even I've seen them in quite the amount of time. Mixing one into a bunch of ingredients that would normally result in a lesser potion would make so you'd get a high grade potion instead.」

「Then. Means expensive?」

「Very. They cost about a million Golde per piece.」

「Really?」

Holy crap! They're both incredibly expensive and effective. If they can turn lesser potions into high grade ones, then what would happen if you mixed them into highest grade potions? Would you end up creating something that could resurrect the dead?

It looked like we made a total of at least three and half million so far. I really wanted to give myself a high five for choosing that box right about now.

『F-Fran, we should show him the rest of what we got.』

「Nn. How about this?」

The next potion Fran brought out was the one I was most curious about, the Anti-Side Effect Potion.

「How interesting. They should be worth about three hundred thousand Golde a piece, but it's worth nothing that they're so rare that I've never actually seen one in person before.」

「Want to know detailed effects. Especially when used on inorganics. And magic beasts.」

「It should work on magic beasts without any issues whatsoever. I can't say I'm sure when it comes to inorganics... but it should work.」

「Really?」

「Yeah. It's like the Potion of Repair you showed me earlier. They're both magically enhanced potions, so they should work similarly.」

「Understood. Example. This sword has a powerful special ability. But cannot use for several days after using it. Will using this potion make that time shorter?」

「Hmmm... To be honest, I can't say for sure whether it'd work like that or not. But it could, theoretically...」

It's a bit of shame that we can't actually confirm the potion's efficacy, but whatever. At least we learned that it could work. We had three, so we could always just use one of them to run a test. Though, said test would result in a net loss of three hundred thousand Golde.

「I have to admit, I've been finding this whole thing quite fun. Did you happen to have anything else?」

「This.」

「Hmmm.. It looks like a Potion of Attribute Reversal, and there's quite the amount of it as well.」

「Nn? Only have one.」

「You don't normally use more than just a few drops at a time.」

Apparently, the Potion of Attribute Reversal had the ability to do exactly what its name said. It could reverse magical elements, purify poison, and even turn a curse into a blessing. It looked like it'd be fun to play around with.

「You've got quite a lot of it. If you used it all at once, you'd probably be able to eliminate a really powerful curse, or maybe even purify a whole pond's worth of poison. It should be worth about one hundred thousand Golde. It's an amazing potion, but its price isn't too high because of its limited applications.」

Oh, so it's cheap because there isn't any demand for it. Well, technically it's not really cheap at all, but like, you know, relatively speaking.;

「Hmmm... Would you like to see its effects? We could use a drop of it to perform a bit of an experiment, if you'd like.」

(Master?)

『I don't really mind if it's just a drop or two. I'm pretty curious about the experiment he's got in mind.』

「Nn. Accepted.」

「Alright. Give me just a second.」

Eugene grabbed a glass bottle that seemed to look something like a beaker. It was probably one of the tools he used for alchemy.

「The bottle is only filled with water for now, but I'm going to put a bit of poison inside of it.」

The doctor used a skill and caused a bit of black liquid to drip from his open palm into the beaker.

「Alright, now, you can use this thing right here to verify that the bottle contains poison.」

「Thing?」

「These glasses give you the ability to use appraisal, though its effects are only about the same as that of the skill at level 1.」

Glasses that let you appraise things? That's pretty neat. I decided to go along with the whole thing and join it with my appraisal as well. Checking the water informed me that it was poisoned, just as the doctor had described it to be.

「Verified.」

「And now, all we have to do is just drip a single drop of the Potion of Attribute Reversal into the bottle.」

「Amazing. Deadly poison water transformed. Water of rejuvenation.」

「Great, ain't it? The poison's disappeared altogether. You could probably even use this water to make tea.」

「Nn? Can make tea with it?」

「Yeah, and it even makes it more delicious.」

「Delicious?」

「Oh? I guess you must've not been aware that the human tongue has the ability to detect magic. That's why we enjoy eating magic beasts. The same applies to magically enhanced water. Magically enhanced water can totally change the flavour of a cup of tea or a bowl of soup. Would you like to give it a try?」

「Nn.」

「Alright, hold on for a little bit.」

The doctor took about three minutes to prepare Fran another cup of Oobow tea. It didn't look any different, but apparently looks weren't everything.

「Tasty!」

「Right?」

Apparently the taste had changed so much that it'd even surprised Fran.

『Is it really that good?』

(Totally different taste. Way yummier.)

The tea now even had the ability to restore one's stamina and cure minor status conditions. It looked to me like this was something that'd sell pretty well, but the doctor said that it wasn't a very profitable business because the potion was far too difficult to make in large quantities.

「Possible to make food taste better by pouring in magical energy?」

Ohhh, that's a good idea.

「Nah. You'd have to use the type of magic most compatible with your ingredients, else the food would actually end up tasting worse. You could pull it off for a single ingredient like water, but, you can't just pour magical energy into a completed dish to make it taste better.」

「Too bad.」

「You also don't want there to be too much magic in the food either.」

「Really?」

「If you eat too much stuff with a lot of magical energy in it, you're going to end up craving nothing but the taste of magic. All your other tastes will begin to dull.」

Right, makes sense. I do remember there being people that always thought whatever they were eating wasn't spicy enough. Likewise, there were also people that'd put sugar on literally everything. Magic probably messed up your sense of taste just the same way.

「Why don't we take demons as an example? They're born with a lot of magical energy, and hence, they're fairly sensitive to it. They tend like foods that contain it and since they eat a lot of it throughout their lives, they end up developing a completely different sense of taste than everyone on the more human side of the spectrum. In fact, they don't even care for any other flavours. All that matters to them is that the food they eat has magic in it. I've actually had a demon, an acquaintance of mine, cook for me in the past, and all I can say is that their food tastes like it literally comes from hell.」

Hmm, so that's how that works. I better be careful not to mess up Fran's sense of taste. I should probably try to think up a dish that uses a sort of subtle taste as opposed to relying on magical energy.

「Anyways, back on topic. I have to say, I can't actually use my appraisal skill on the Potion of Attribute Reversal.」

Oh yeah, right, that was a thing. Can't help but wonder why, now that he's brought it up and all that.

「It's because the ingredients are a bit special. One of the chemicals used to create the potion contains appraisal blocking properties. As a result, the final product is also a bit difficult to appraise. Not even I can see anything more than just the item's name. People with low leveled appraisal skills probably wouldn't be able to see anything at all, and hence, most people end up labeling bottles like this one just so they don't get lost. It makes me really wonder where you actually picked it up.」

The last part was nothing more than just a mumble, but regardless, it seemed like he was quite curious as to where we got all these portions.

「Next. This one.」

「A root of arcane soul, and an interesting one at that.」

「Looks empty. Used for what?」

「Don't mind the invisibility, they're supposed to be like that. Just think of it as a bottle containing a bunch of magical energy. You can use it to make artificial magic stones.」

「Artificial magic stones?」

「You normally use them when you're making yourself a familiar. This thing basically ends up becoming the most important part of said familiar's magic stone. You can use it to adjust the familiar's skills and properties. I can't really get anything out of appraising it, so I'd say that it's most likely potent enough to create a fairly powerful final product.」

「Price?」

「Hmm... Somewhere in the range of fifty thousand to a million.」

That's a pretty huge price range. Though, I guess it's fair given how little is known about it. Its value can probably change depending on who you're trying to sell it to too. Well, that one's going to sit in storage for a while.

「Last one.」

The last item we pulled out was the one most likely to cause issues.

「T-That's... quite the item you've got there.」

「Bad to have?」

「Yeah. It's really dangerous, especially if you're carrying it around. Make sure you don't drop it. Okay?」

Eugene's expression had stayed relatively calm throughout the process, but seeing our last item had caused his face to pale. Apparently the Poison Mixture of the Highest Grade was actually something really hazardous.

「That's another one I haven't seen in a long time.」

「Approximate value?」

「Well, you see, that isn't something you can just put a price on. In fact, selling it might end up getting you in trouble with the law unless you follow a certain set of procedures. That's just how dangerous it is.」

「That bad?」

「Well... Why don't I put it this way? You could probably get rid of it by giving it to some sort of military or criminal organisation for about a million Golde. I myself had used it twenty years ago in order to subjugate a dragon classified as a B ranked threat.」

「How effective?」

「A single drop of the stuff is potent enough to kill a hundred grown men, so by that metric, you have enough to wipe out about two thousand people. If you were to use all of it at once, you could probably kill a D ranked magic beast with ease. Even if it didn't die, it'd probably end up crippled and utterly dysfunctional.」

Wow, that's uh, pretty bad. I'm not so sure we should actually hold onto it, especially given that Eugene was glaring at it with a rather complicated look on his face.

「I'm not going to force you to agree to this, but, I'd like to take it off your hands. To be completely honest, that poison right there is so deadly that I really don't want anyone else knowing about it at all. I can pay you up to two hundred thousand Golde.」

「Accepted.」

The bottle sitting in front of us was actually one of many. We'd originally only had a single large bottle of the stuff, but I had Urushi combine his poison magic with my telekinesis in order to divide up the larger bottle's contents into a bunch of smaller portions. I'd actually even gone and used space/time magic in order to timestop the poison and make the whole process more safe, but, we ultimately ended up rushing it anyway because I could only hold the timestop for a total of five seconds at once. [2]

To be honest, we'd actually only split it up into several smaller bottles because we'd suspected that it'd be confiscated.

「That said, I didn't actually know that there were any alchemists out there capable of creating this... Where exactly did you happen to get it?」

It'd probably be better for us to tell him than not.

『Fran, show him the box.』

「Nn. This.」

「Isn't that one of the Alchemist's Guild's transport boxes?」

「Found it at pirate's base. All potions came from inside.」

「That can't be... I don't think the Alchemist's Guild had anyone capable of... Wait...」

He began to start brooding in response the reveal.

「Something wrong?」

「Sorry, it's just that something seems off.」

「Off?」

「Well, you're both the person who discovered the box, as well as an adventurer, so I guess there won't be any harm in telling you. Normally, losing a box like that would cause quite the uproar given the value of the potions and dangerous chemicals within it. Hence, its owner should have contacted the Adventurer's Guild and issued an order for its immediate retrieval.」

「But no request?」

「Not any that I've heard of, at the very least. Keeping silent about the loss of a Poison Mixture of the Highest Grade could even lead to being punished with treason. We also don't know who these potions were being shipped to,

and why. In other words, we're going to need to get in touch with the Alchemist's Guild in order to figure out what's going on.」

That's fine, but I really don't want Fran's name getting out there, especially not for something like this.

「Don't worry about it. I can swear that I will not disclose your identity.」

Doesn't look like he's lying. Well, I guess it can't be helped then. He'd probably suspect us if we went against him, so let's just say he owes us and be done with it.

「Okay.」

「Thank you. Make sure you stop by again. I'll be around most of the time, and I'll make sure to serve you another cup of tea if you do drop by.」

「Nn.」

Well, I was interested in alchemy anyway, so yeah, why not?

[1] Japanese people say that cat tongues are especially sensitive to heat, so they can't eat hot foods. People who can't eat hot foods are said to have cat's tongues as well.

[2] Probably a Dio reference.

TL Changelog (Reworded a bunch of stuff to make it sound better.)

Inherent Skills -> Innate Skills

Full Heal -> Panacea

Magical Medicine -> Magically Enhanced Potion

Drug of Reversed Attributes -> Potion of Attribute Reversal

This was probably the longest chapter to date (not counting other TLers translations).

Chapter 105: Pork Curry Best Curry!

105. Pork Curry Best Curry!

We headed back over to the inn after finishing up our business at the Adventurer's Guild.

I wanted to straight up just go out, find a kitchen, and buy everything we needed, but we couldn't actually get to that right away. There was still something else we needed to do first.

『We're going to need to decide what we're going to be selling.』

「Curry.」

「Woof!」

『Well, yeah, but we still have to think about our ingredients and figure out how spicy we're going to make it. We also have to determine how we're going to serve our customers and get all that ready too.』

Barbra was a pretty big town, and there were lots of stalls and stuff for food all over the place, so it probably wouldn't be all that hard for us to get in touch with someone willing to sign a wholesale contract for all our miscellaneous needs. Both paper plates and wooden spoons could be mass produced through the use of alchemy, and apparently the Chef's Guild had a few contacts of their own, so we could actually just get everything done through them if we wanted. They'd probably give us a pretty good price point too.

We already had all the spices we needed on hand thanks to our pirate “friends,” so that was something we could cross off right away.

All in all, we had forty different types of spices at our disposal, so I set each out on a plate and lined them all up in front of me. We had such a large variety that I actually had to liberty choose to make it as mild or spicy as I wanted.

「Mild is better choice. Spicy is tasty but hard to eat.」

『Hm, you did always like the milder ones more. Besides, a milder curry is a lot less risky than something on the spicier side seeing as how children will probably end up being a pretty big portion of our sales.』

「Nn.」

「Whimper.」

『Oh yeah, you did like the spicier ones, didn’t you Urushi?』

「Woof woof!」

『Hmmm, well, I do think that a fair portion of our older customers will probably prefer a bit more spice in it as well.』

I mean, we could always just do both. Either way, we probably need to put a bit more thought into the ingredients first...

『What kind of curry do you think I should make? We could probably use beef-like meat, pork-like meat, lizard-like meat, fish-like meat or chicken-like meat. Bug-like meat, tiger-like meat, and wolf-like meat could probably work as well.』

The reason I stuck a “-like” after all the potential ingredient types was because we weren’t actually going to use regular farm animals. We were planning to use meat procured from magic beasts instead. For example, we’d be using Crash Boars instead of pigs if we went with pork, and Rock Bison instead of cows if we went with beef.

「Hmm... Pork.」

『Alright, that's one thing we could do.』

「Woof!」

『You liked bird meat, right Urushi?』

「Woof woof!」

『Alright, pork and chicken are going to be our two main choices then.』

「Woof!」

People from the Kansai region seemed to like beef-based curries. I, however, was from the Kantou region, and thus, I myself was much more inclined towards pork. Fran liked pork as too, and she'd always ask for it to be used in curry. Hence, I ending up using most of the cow-like creatures for stuff like hamburgers and barbeques instead. [1]

If we wanted meat, we'd probably have to find ourselves a butcher. I remember seeing a decent number of them in the marketplace. Said marketplace was really big, so we didn't actually get to check out all the shops yet, but I was pretty sure that at least a few specialized in butchering magic beasts.

『Did you want to put anything else in? We're going to use potatoes, carrots and onions for sure. Curry wouldn't really be curry without them. That said, we could probably try enhancing the flavour by adding a few secret ingredients too. You know, stuff like apples, or honey, or maybe even chocolate...』

Fran was the type that didn't really like chunks in her curry. She very much preferred when the vegetables were cooked to the point where they kind of just ended up melting into the mixture, hence the choices listed.

「What about toppings?」

『Won't those be a bit too hard to manage? We only have one stall's worth of space』

「Breaded cutlets. Cheeseburgers. Kara-age. Hot spring eggs. Deep fried vegetables. All tasty.」

Yeah, that's way too many. At most, we could have like one or two...

『Why don't we go check out the market place? We can think about what toppings we'll have after we finish getting all the materials we need. Let's try focusing on procuring the best pork-like meat and vegetables we can get for now.』

「Nn.」

We browsed Barbra's massive portside marketplace for about an hour. All sorts of goods were on display, and most could even be found in wholesale tier quantities, but despite that, we weren't able to get our hands on what we needed.

『It doesn't look like any of the butchers really have all that much magic beast meat in stock.』

Pork-type magic beast meat was not only especially rare, but also extremely expensive. Maybe it'd be better for us to give up and just use regular pork instead.

I mean, we were already in a pretty good spot anyways. Curry wasn't exactly something that the people of this world would be able to get their hands on with ease, so we could probably pull a win with just the rarity factor.

On the bright side, we did manage to catch sight of all the vegetable-type stuff we needed. Apples, honey, chocolate, and coffee all looked like they were in pretty high abundance as well. I wouldn't have any problems giving the curry a bit of an extra kick, so in all honesty, we didn't need to use meat procured from magic beasts.

「Nom nom.」

「Om bark nom bark」

『You guys sure seem to be enjoying yourselves.』

「Doing market research. Need to determine popular tastes.」

「Woof woof.」

『Well, that's fine, I guess.』

They were being relatively quiet, so it was pretty easy for me to listen in on people trying to make deals, which in turn helped me gather information on suppliers and market prices.

『Wait, did you just say market research? That's actually a pretty good idea. We should go check out the competition.』

「Check out competition?」

『Yeah, let's go find all the people who did well last year and try a bit of their cooking.』

Pretty much everyone that qualified last year was now super famous, so we might just be able to eat some of their dishes if we headed over to their workplaces.

「Nn. Got it.」

「Woof woof!」

Urushi was happily wagging his tail, but I felt like there was a pretty good chance that he wasn't going to be allowed in any of the stores. I hope he doesn't get too disappointed.

It was actually surprisingly easy for us to gather all the information we needed. Many of Barbra's roadside stalls were run by old men that caved almost instantly at the sight of a beautiful young woman buying their goods

on en masse. They pretty much divulged everything they knew without so much as a second thought.

「Here?」

『The sign says “The Dragon’s Table,” so yeah, should be the right place.』

After gathering a bit of information, we arrived at the conclusion that this was the closest place. Moreover, the owner was actually one of last year’s finalists.

I had expected the place to be super high class, but its exterior wasn’t nearly as fancy as I’d imagined. The prices on the menu sitting out front weren’t really high either, so I couldn’t help but suspect that we’d come to the wrong place.

「Store open?」

We pushed the door open and looked inside. The restaurant itself had a calm, relaxing atmosphere.

「Welcome. Table for one?」

「Nn. One person. One pet.」

「I’m sorry, but this restaurant doesn’t allow pets.」

「But Urushi..」

「Whimper whimper.」

『Well, rules are rules. You’re going to have to stay in Fran’s shadow for a bit.』

「Whimper...」

I’ll treat him to something nice later to make up for it.

「Then just one person.」

「D-Did your dog just sink into your shadow...?」

「Must be mistaken.」

「Huh? Really? W-Well, there's no way a dog can just sink into a shadow, so you're probably right. I must be getting tired.」

Sorry waitress lady... Seems like this is really hard on you.

「Recommendations?」

「Hmm... What about the Dragon Bone Soup? It's one of our signatures, and if you look outside you'll see it on the menu.」

「Dragon bone? Bones from dragons used in soup stock?」

「Yup, it's really good.」

Dragon bone soup eh? I can't even imagine how that's supposed to taste.

「Then that. And this, this, this and this.」

「Our servings are a bit big. Are you sure you'd like to order all that?」

「Yes.」

「Okay, then I'll just repeat your order so I can have you verify it. It'll be one Dragon Bone Soup, one Rockbird Steak, one Gold Sheep Skewer, one Yggd Potato Salad, and one Barbra Crab Pilaf, right?」

「Nn.」

It looked like a lot of food, but to Fran, it really wasn't all that much at all.

The first dish to arrive, the Dragon Bone Soup, came after about ten minutes worth of waiting. The bowl didn't actually contain any traces of the

ingredients used to create the final product. The only thing it had inside of it was a golden, translucent, consomme-like soup.

I sneakily stored about half of the Dragon Bone Soup away for research purposes as soon as the waitress stopped paying attention.

(Can eat now?)

『Yeah, go ahead.』

「Eating then.」

Slurp slurp.

Fran raised the bowl and drank a mouthful of its contents.

『How is it?』

「...Yummy.」

Her face seemed a bit pained, and far from content. Was it actually really bad or something?

「Might be even better than Master's consomme soup.」

『I see.』

It's gotta be pretty amazing then. That's probably the highest possible praise one could possibly get from Fran as far as food goes.

Much to my surprise, the soup was priced pretty cheaply. All of the store's other dishes that used magic beasts cost around 50 Golde a plate, but the soup only cost 20.

It looked like I'd been underestimating the competition far too much. I probably won't be able to win if I just half ass everything.

Sampling the soup with a doppelganger after we got back to the inn only convinced me of my prior observation all the more.

We later went back over to the market and checked out a few more of the stores related to last year's participants and came to the conclusion that all of them had pretty damned good food. My Doppelganger's senses were relatively fine tuned as a result of the superiorization process, so I had about the same sense of taste as the average human being. Hence, I was able to come to an understanding of exactly how skilled our competitors were.

『It looks like we might actually end up dead last if I don't try my best.』

Okay, yeah. Regular pork is definitely out of the question. I'm going to have to find myself some sort of magic beast meat. I've got to be careful in choosing the rest of my materials as well. Freshness and taste are important, but we can't go over budget else we won't profit enough. I'm going to use as many spices as necessary without holding back though.

I have to figure out exactly how we're going to sell everything too. I mean, how are you actually supposed to sell curry using a stall? People might think that they're not actually getting enough bang for their buck if all we give them is a plate with some rice and curry on it.

Alright, the only way for us to really do this will be to use every connection we've got.

『We should probably pay the Luciel Conglomerate a visit. They were supposed to be a pretty big company, so they might have the meat and vegetables we need in stock.』

「Nn. Got it.」

Let's see, is there anything else we're missing? We've got the spices. The meat and vegetables hopefully won't be an issue, so all that's left would be... water. I want to use decently high quality water. I mean, the wells aren't here aren't bad or anything, it seemed that well water wasn't the only type of water that could potentially be available to us.

We should probably ask the people at the conglomerate about that as well. We do have money, so we could probably make up for a decent amount of our lack of experience and skill by using high quality materials. I kinda

ended up attacking this whole thing with a bit of a nouveau riche type approach, but hey, whatever it takes for victory is whatever I'll do.

『Let's make sure we get our hands on some good materials!』

「Yeah.」

「Woof!」

[1] Bit of info for anyone that's clueless when it comes to Japanese geography. Kansai is like south-western Japan. Kantou is the eastern part. For reference, Tokyo (which is actually pronounced Toukyou by the way!) is a part of the Kantou region. It's kind of like comparing Cali with NY.

Woot, made my estimated release with 10 minutes to spare.

Chapter 106: The Luciel Conglomerate

106. The Luciel Conglomerate

「Hey, welcome. Glad to see you chose to stop by.」

「Nn.」

「Woof!」

「Hahaha, welcome to you too Urushi.」

We were currently inside the Luciel Conglomerate's HQ. The building was about the same size as the Adventurer's Guild, only several times more extravagant. Putting it next to Fran made her look really out of place, but she boldly walked right in regardless. Man, she's got guts.

The coin we got from the captain was seriously one hell of an item. Flashing it caused the people at the reception desk to show us over to a fancy-looking waiting room without so much as a question.

Rengil showed up in said room not long after we were taken to it. We'd only just parted that morning, but he happily greeted Fran with a smile and handshake regardless. He seemed genuinely excited to see us.

「So did you have any sort of business here, or were you just visiting?」

「Nn. Participating in this.」

「Oh, you're participating in the King of Cooking? Did you already pass the first round?」

He figured out what she was talking about with nothing more than a single glance at the flyer she handed him. The contest was pretty famous, so it only made sense that the captain knew about it.

「Master passed.」

「You had a Master? I don't think there was anyone like that aboard the ship, right?」

「Nn. Master is elusive. Like a phantom.」

「I see, so did the two of you meet up here then?」

We'd come up with a bit of an odd scenario. Fran's story would be that I, her master, was the type of man that wandered the continent and appeared where and whenever he so pleased. It probably doesn't really give them the best impression of me, but whatever, can't be helped.

「Want to get ingredients for Master. For cooking contest.」

「Ah, gotcha, so that's why you're here. What kind of dish is he planning to make? The competition's been pretty fierce every year, so it's gotta be something really good.」

「Curry.」

「Curry? Never heard of anything called curry before.」

「Master's own recipe. Here.」

Fran took a plate of curry out from her dimensional storage and placed it atop a table in front of Rengil.

The captain looked at the dish with a bit of a hesitant gaze. Well, I guess that was fair. It was brown, and didn't really look all that appetizing if you didn't know what it was. He probably couldn't really even guess at how it tasted. But that all soon changed, his eyes opened wide the moment he caught a whiff of the dish's scent. He seemed to come to the realization that

it was flavoured with all sorts of spices, which further lead him to swallow a gulp of what must've been drool.

「Alright, down the hatch it goes.」

The first bite he took was still a rather cautious and careful one, but the dish's contents almost vanished instantly immediately afterwards he finished it. His spoon continued to move until the plate we handed him was wiped clean. Seeing him enjoy its flavour like that left me feeling quite content.

「It's delicious, fragrant, and even something completely original. I guarantee you that it'll definitely fly right off the shelves. That's one valuable recipe you've got right there!」

Rengil was so excited that he ended up raising his voice in a shout. Sweet, it looks like we've even got an experienced merchant's approval.

「Is this what he was planning to sell at his stall?」

「Nn.」

「I see...」

「Something wrong?」

「Bark?」

「Well, the dish itself is really quite delicious, but it might not do all that well at a stall.」

「Why? Curry is tasty.」

「It's not exactly what I'd call customer accessible.」

Most that'd qualified for the finals in the past had sold skewers or soup, stuff that was relatively easy for customers to grab immediately after making their orders. The goal was to profit, so you had to make sure you sold as much as possible in the given time frame.

Curry was unlike the examples listed in the sense that it wasn't something that customers could just pick up and walk away with. We would have to serve each plate by placing a bunch of rice on it, pouring curry all over said rice, and then finally handing it over to the customer. To make matters worse, the whole plate format made it so that customers couldn't actually buy our products en masse. At most, the average consumer could hold only a single plate in each hand.

What if we ignored the whole rice thing and made it kind of like curry soup? Hmm... nah, I doubt it'd be able to trump the Dragon Bone Soup.

Coming to the realisation that we needed a change of plans caused Fran to groan.

「Need easy way to sell curry in bulk...?」

「Yeah. You can't rely on taste alone if you want to get through the second round.」

Okay yeah, this isn't going to work if we stick to the whole curry with rice idea...

「Oh! Got good idea. Can just turn inside out.」

「Inside out?」

「Nn. Put curry inside rice. Like onigiri.」 [1]

「Woof!」

Onigiri was one of Fran's favourite dishes. She pretty much loved to eat the rice balls regardless of what they were filled with, so she must've figured that it'd work pretty well with curry. Urushi seemed all gung ho about the idea as well; he immediately started to drool at Fran's mention of the combined dish.

Curry flavoured onigiri, is it? I mean, it does sound like a good idea, but the curry would probably eventually start to leak out the bottom of its ricey container, so it wouldn't really be convenient as far as customers were

concerned. I could just pack the rice super tight to prevent any leakage, but that'd probably make it taste a lot worse.

(Can't fry it like tempura?)

『Hmm, curry onigiri tempura?』

You know, that might actually end up working. Its name is totally not something you'd put on any sort of A-list, but the tastes might mesh together pretty decently. That said, I'd a better idea. Fran's words had reminded me of a dish I'd coincidentally forgotten until just now.

『Hmm, that's a pretty good idea.』

(Nn? Tempura onigiri?)

『No, no, not that.』

I knew of a dish that fulfilled all our needs. It was fairly cheap, easy to carry, and it could even be sold in bulk. It was especially delicious fresh out of the oven, but pretty much just as good even after cooling down.

『Let's go with curry bread.』 [2]

(Curry bread!)

(Woof woof!)

Neither Fran nor Urushi had ever had it before, but its name contained the word curry, so both their eyes seemed to light up immediately in response.

If we went down the curry bread route, we'd be able to mass produce our products ahead of time. We could even make several different kinds, each with its own unique flavour.

Hearing me elaborate on the idea caused Fran's eyes to shine with even greater intensity.

「Will work. Curry bread.」

「Woof!」

「Curry bread? What's that?」

「Put curry in dough and fry.」

「I see, I see. That sounds like it could work. The dish's fragrance would help you draw in customers, and they could pretty much order as many as they wanted.」

「Can have different flavours.」

「Oh, that's a pretty strong pro too.」

Alright! I finally know what to do! Curry bread ahoy!

That said, our plans were still riddled with problems.

「Need flour. Can get from here?」

「Hmm... Are you okay with the type normally used for bread?」

(Master?)

『Shouldn't be a problem.』

「No problem.」

「Alright.」

Apparently they had a tonne of flour in stock, so we could more or less get as much as we wanted.

「I'll put in an urgent order for the flour so we can get it ready as soon as possible.」

「Nn. Thanks.」

I'm still a bit worried about the rest of our stuff though

「Need lots of other ingredients too. Can also get from here?」

「That'll depend on exactly what it is you're looking for. I know for a fact that we've got some pretty solid stocks on the vegetable side at least.」

「Want carrots, potatoes, onions for vegetables. Some apple too.」

「Alright, we weren't going to be able to get you any magic vegetables or the like, but that, we can do, especially since all the items you asked for can be stored away from quite some time. Do keep in mind that none of them will be just recently harvested though.」

Oh well, I guess it can't be helped. I'm actually pretty happy already seeing as how we managed to actually secure ourselves a reliable supplier. That said, the rest of our ingredients would probably need a bit extra oomph to make up for it.

「Any magic beast meat in stock?」

「We might've been able to get you some with a bit more time, but...」

Can't say I didn't see that coming. Not even the butchers could get their hands on any decent quantities of the stuff. Damn it, what now? We finally managed to solidify our concept and all that, but we're lacking the most important part we need to actualize it.

「Then water?」

「Water? What about it?」

「Nn. Magic infused water. With effects like healing.」

「That's a bit too far of a stretch too. Water's really tough to transport, so I can't say we've a lot of it in stock.」

Argggghh, that's another option crossed right off... Wait, no, we could probably actually just make the water we needed ourselves. I have a whole swamp full of poisoned water sitting around in the dimensional storage. I

could probably just use the Potion of Attribute Reversal on it and well, voila, water get.

In other words, we just need to focus on getting our hands on some high quality meat. Hmmm... Actually, I do have an idea that could potentially solve all our problems. You see, the thing is, we weren't just everyday run of the mill chefs. We were adventurers. If we couldn't buy something off the marketplace, then we could simply just go get it ourselves. There were still a few days till things got up and running, so we had more than enough time. All we needed was figure out where to find the prey we were after.

「Don't worry about magically infused water then. Would rather move to next topic. Want to know where to find magic beasts.」

「Are you planning to go hunting for all the meat you need?」

「Nn.」

「I think I've actually got the perfect place in mind for that.」

Rengil told us a bit about a haunt to Barbra's south. Its name was the Cage of Crystal, and its rank was B. [3]

That was where Barbra got most of its magic beast meat. The haunt was inhabited by a lot of D ranked magic beasts, so it was actually apparently thought of as a pretty dangerous place. It wasn't really that far, so the captain figured that we shouldn't have any issues at all.

「I'd warn you to be extra careful, but I feel like you of all people will probably be just fine. You've got Urushi with you too, after all.」

「Nn. Will be fine.」

「Woof!」

「Make sure you sell any extra meat to us though, alright?」

Man, he's shrewd. That said, we do owe him. He didn't charge us any fees for the information he gave us, and he's even offering to pay as opposed as

opposed to just asking for free stuff. He's a pretty good guy, and he really has done us a favour. Yeah, we're probably going to be seeing each other a lot more going forward.

And that was that. It was a bit late, so we decided to head back for the time being so we could gather information and make the water we needed and whatnot. Apparently, it'd normally take about two days to reach the haunt on horseback, so it'd probably make for a bit more than just a day trip, even for us. We were going to have to leave pretty early tomorrow morning.

『It'll probably be a bit tough to pull everything off within the time limit, but I'll be counting on you guys. Let's do this!』

「Nn. Will work hard for curry bread's sake.」

「Woof woof!」

I swear they're driven by nothing but appetite... Oh well, whatever. Our next steps were to find out a bit more about the haunt, have dinner, and then think a bit more about exactly what we're going to do about the whole curry bread situation.

[1] Rice balls, typically filled with some sort of tasty, preserved food. They're a huuuuge trend in Japan and you can pretty find like ten different types at any given convenience store, country wide. You can even find stores that literally only sell onigiri and nothing else. It's kind of like the Japanese equivalent of sandwiches. It's especially popular in the Kantou area, and I remember there being like three different chain stores last time I went. Image below.

[2] Bit different from a sandwich. He thinks of this when Fran says tempura curry onigiri because the two are rather similar. One is a deep fried ball of rice with curry inside of it. The other is a deep fried hunk of dough with curry inside of it. Here's an image of curry bread.

Honestly, I don't really like it myself. My taste palette isn't exactly Japanese though, so meh.

[3] Haunts are different from dungeons, but it's more or less the same kind of thing given how broad the definition of dungeons in games has become. It's quite literally translated at the moment, and I don't really like it. Most of the MMOs I've played recently have only had instance dungeons and raids, nothing named in any which way in particular. Someone help me think of a better name. Really gamey terms are ideal. (I can't believe I can't think of a term for this even though I'm literally doing a masters of game design...)

Chapter 107: The Cage of the Crystal Tree

107. The Cage of the Crystal Tree

The date was March 31st; the Lunar Banquet was less than a day away.

We left for the haunt at sunrise. Luckily, our journey over its entrance proceeded rather smoothly, we didn't encounter any sort of trouble during our travels. The city was going to swing into full on festival mode when night hit, so I wanted to finish up all our business and get back as soon as possible. A few basic calculations determined that we should be able to make it back before the festival began, as it only took us three hours to fly on over to the haunt.

「Gya gya gya!」

「Groooooorororororo!」

The haunt could only be described as a deep, dark forest, filled with immense, high standing trees. Its interior contained magic beasts of all shapes and sizes. We could feel their presence and hear the noises they made even from the forest's entrance.

『So this is the so called B ranked haunt, The Cage of Crystals Tree, huh?』

「Can sense many magic beasts.」

「Ruff.」

『Alright, I'm going to go over our plans one more time, just in case. We're going to try and gun for the center-ish area and hunt for edible magic beasts.』

「Nn. Hunting for meat.」

「Woof woof.」

Not all magic beasts were entirely edible, even if their bodies were filled to the brim with magical energy. We really didn't have all that much time on our hands, so it was in our best interest to only go after stuff we could actually use. Luckily, the research we did at the Adventurer's Guild saved us quite a bit of trouble. There, we learned that most edible magic beasts were found somewhere around the forest's center area.

We immediately took the fastest route over. That is, Urushi carried Fran on his back whilst leaping through the air; it was far more efficient to navigate the overly dense woodland from above.

I wanted to try hunting a bit around the entrance as well, but we really didn't have the time for it, so I reluctantly refrained.

「Crystal Tree over there?」

『Yeah. Apparently it's well over three thousand years old.』

The Crystal Tree was one of many magical plants that had the ability to emit a sort of magical energy that drew in all sorts of herbivorous magic beasts. The plant's potency would scale with its size, and hence, it would draw in more and more powerful magic beasts as it grew. The tree's leaves were considered by magic beasts to be a sort of delicacy, and thus, they would fight for the right to the territory in its immediate vicinity. It was of such value to them that they'd even protect it from harm.

The herbivorous magic beasts that took residence around the tree would then function to draw in carnivorous ones. This process would ultimately continue to repeat itself over and over, and thus, all sorts of magic beasts ended up making its surroundings into their habitats. It could be said that

this whole haunt was only here because The Crystal Tree had sprouted here, especially seeing as how The Crystal Tree located here was classified as both the world's oldest and largest magic tree.

Riding on Urushi's back as he traversed a path atop the sea of trees allowed us to observe The Crystal Tree in all its majesty.

It really did live up to its reputation. The tree's height surpassed three hundred meters, and its leaves shone with a brilliance that made them seem as if they really were made out of crystal.

And so, I burned it in my eyes.

A sight that would have outright been impossible in the world from which I came.

Creatures that resembled birds flew around the tree's branches. They looked but like fledglings in comparison to the plant's grand stature, but in reality, each had a wingspan of at least three meters. I didn't particularly wish to deal with them, they looked like a huge pain in the ass to fight.

『Be careful. We might start running into B leveled threats if we end up getting too close to the tree.』

「Got it.」

『Anyway, we should be somewhere around the center area now. Let's find ourselves some magic beasts and descend.』

「Woof.」

『It's finally time to go hunting.』

「Meat time.」

「Woof woof!」

Twenty minutes passed.

『Oryaaaaaaaa!』

「Squeeeeeallll!」

「Urushi. Over there.」

「Growl!」

We found a group of five Swamp Pigs and took them down. In short, they could be described as pigs with shells that basically lived in the mud.

I wasn't really satisfied. We did actually end up hunting them down and all that, but honestly, it was far less a hit than it was a miss.

I mean, they were pig-type magic beasts, and they did taste pretty good. In fact, one could say that they really were quite delicious. However, they weren't good enough. They carried with them an ever so slight stench of mud and filth even when cooked, and as a result, they actually didn't even taste as good as well fed, brand name, non-magic pork. The only adventurers that really bothered hunting them were newbies in need of some quick cash. That said, they were kind of amazing in their own way if you thought about it. They weren't well raised, nor selectively bred, yet, they still almost managed to taste as good as genuine branded pork.

Oh well, I guess we can treat them as insurance just in case we don't manage to find ourselves anything better.

『Alright Urushi, it'll be up to you to find some more magic beasts.』

「Woof!」

「Go deeper?」

『Yeah, that's not a bad suggestion. Let's try getting a bit closer to The Crystal Tree. We might not actually be in the center area yet.』

Swamp Pigs were supposed to be from the outermost layer anyways, so yeah.

An hour passed.

I could only conclude that hunting for a specific monster was none other than a huge pain in the ass. We'd only just managed to find a single wild boar. We kept running into all sorts of inedible magic beasts instead of actually coming across what we wanted.

「This magic beast. What captain was talking about?」

『Yup. It's a Golden Boar, and it looks exactly as he described it to be.』

General Information

Species: Gullinbursti

Magic Beast (Magic Boar)

Lv 22

HP: 716

MP: 226

STR: 309

VIT: 366

AGI: 203

INT: 85

MGC: 119

DEX: 81

Skills

Intimidate: Lv 4

Flame Resistance: Lv 3

Piercing Tusk Techniques: Lv 3

Piercing Tusk Arts: Lv 4

Cold Resistance: Lv 4

Charge: Lv 6

Thunder Resistance: Lv 3

Sensitive Nose

Enhanced Fur

Hardened Fur

Conviction

Description: A magic beast that resembles a wild boar. Its golden fur is extremely tough and can even has the ability to repel some degree of magic. Its tusks are powerful enough for it to crush large trees, and it has been observed taking down assailants twice its size. It knows not of the concept of retreat, and will continue to rush down its enemies with Charge regardless of the situation. Thus, it is nicknamed the Boar of Insanity. Threat level D. Its magic stone is located within its heart.

I'm pretty happy we finally managed to run into something we could turn into meat. Better yet was the fact that it was rather large. Its height was over five meters, and I'd say that its mass was probably at least twice Urushi's.

『We're after its meat, so try not to rough it up too much if you can help it.』

「I know.」

『Urushi, you focus on distracting it and restricting its movements.』

「Growl growl!」

It'll probably end up bleeding a lot if we give it too many injuries, which in turn would lead to a reduction in its flavour. Hitting it in the wrong place will also end up reducing the amount of edible meat we can harvest from it.

The most ideal situation would be taking it out by destroying its magic stone in one blow.

That said, I can't actually use my telekinetic catapult to get at it. I mean, I could. I would end up being able to take it out with ease, but I'd probably also end up pulverizing a good chunk of what would otherwise be edible flesh.

「Oinnnnkkkkk!」

『Tsk! Dodge it, Fran!』

The golden boar began charging at us as I contemplated our strategies.

It was much faster than I expected.

I tried slowing it down with Telekinesis, but it was charging with such force that it basically had no effect at all.

「Ugh!」

『You alright?』

「Some. how.」

Fran managed to avoid a direct hit; the boar had only scraped her. But despite that, she ended up flying a whole ten meters. In other words, the boar was incredibly powerful. A single one of its strikes had managed to

destroy several trees, each large enough to have been classified as sacred in Japan. [1]

Yeah no. We're going to have to put in a bit more than just a bit of effort.

Fran immediately used her Sky Jump to leap into the air and whilst brandishing me with a resolute look on her face.

『I'm going to use magic and dig up a pitfall. Urushi, try luring the boar over to it. We should be able to get ourselves a good window of a few seconds if it falls inside. Fran, make sure you take advantage of any openings so you can finish it off in one go.』

「Got it.」

「Woof.」

「Oiiiiinkkkk!!」

I did exactly as described and created a bunch of large holes in the ground. Urushi also managed to perform pretty well. He stood in front of the boar and taunted it by moving around in an overly provocative manner. That is he shrank and then jumped up and down in order to annoy the boar as much as possible.

「Woof!」

And surely enough, he succeeded. The boar was irked by the now tiny wolf's mannerisms and began charging at it in a straight line as if to crush it.

The boar's charge contained all the force of an eighteen wheel truck, and again destroyed every tree that happened to be in its path. This time, however, its ability and lack of a will to retreat ended up doing it more harm than good.

「Oink?!」

『It fell for it! Fran, you turn!』

「Nn.」

Fran leapt through the air as she approached the pitfall the pig had fallen into whilst thrusting me towards its heart. I quickly followed up and thinned my shape in order to accommodate her actions.

「Haaah!」

「Squeeeaaaaalllll!」

Fran suddenly switched over to using a reverse grip and activated Pinpoint Stab, a level eight sword technique. She thrust me straight through the boar's spine and pierced its magic stone whilst destroying as little of its flesh as possible, a textbook worthy killing blow.

I stored the golden boar away for the time being. We wanted to dismantle it immediately, but this wasn't the place for that. Disassembling the boar's body in the middle of a haunt would likely attract more magic beasts. We'll probably have to just borrow the Adventurer's Guild's facilities later.

Either way, we'd managed to get all the pork substitute we needed. The boar literally had an entire tonne of useable meat on it, so we were well within the safe zone.

『Alright, that's one down, just a few more to go!』

「Nn.」

「Woof!」

We hunted for another two or so hours and found ourselves a pair of cow-like magic beasts and five chicken-like ones. Their species names were Apis and Gullinkambi respectively. The Gullinkambis we happened across were actually guarding a nest, so we managed to pick up eight of their eggs as a bit of an extra bonus. I really had to say, we scored pretty big despite only going out on a relatively short hunt.

The magic beasts we happened across had actually all been decently strong. I mean, they were weaker than the kind of stuff you'd see in a dungeon, but

they popped up way more often. Luckily, we didn't have to stay overnight as a result of the super high encounter rates, so we quickly began to head back in Barbra's direction the moment we achieved our objectives.

That said, I couldn't help but feel as if something was a bit off, it still seemed that the forest itself had been thrown into a state of restlessness. At first, I'd thought that the unnatural sensation stemmed from the fact that I was new to the place and didn't know much about it, Urushi and Fran felt the same as well, which was weird. None of us were able to really calm down.

It didn't take long for us to come to understand the reason behind the odd sensation we felt.

A thundering roar suddenly exploded from within the forest and assaulted our eardrums.

「Nn?」

『Woah! What's with this sudden influx of magical energy?』

「Growl...」

The loud roaring was accompanied by an immense wave of magical energy.

「Master. Over there.」

『Yeah, I see it.』

I noticed a massive bird-like thing flying around The Crystal Tree. It was a bit too far for me to appraise, but I immediately recognized it, partially because of the way it would shoot off waves of light from time to time.

『Looks like a Thunderbird and two Storm Eagles.』

Thunderbirds were B level threats, and Storm Eagles D level threats. The Adventurer's Guild had informed us that the former was one of the area's most dangerous magic beasts, and that we should be cautious of it in any given situation.

The Thunderbird's rank was the same as the demon we defeated back when we were still in Alessa, but I honestly couldn't say for sure if we could actually beat it in a fight. Unlike the demon, it wasn't being held back in any which way. Moreover, it even had a pair of subordinates with it. We wouldn't be able to get out unscathed even if we did win.

That said, the sudden intense magical influx we felt wasn't something that originated from the Thunderbird.

「Person there. About to fight?」

I could vaguely make out the shape of person floating around the Thunderbird. Said person had so much magical energy that we could feel it from where we were now.

It didn't look like he had any companions; he was fighting alone. I almost wanted to call him out for being reckless, but for some odd reason, I couldn't help but feel as if he'd win. It seemed that he was why we had felt so unsettled; crisis detection and presence detection had been picking up his trail.

「Started moving.」

「Woof.」

The Thunderbird had started to shoot lighting from its beak, but, the person dodged the sky-illuminating electric strikes with ease.

It seemed that the Thunderbird had only been scoping his abilities out at first, as it immediately charged at him with a motion several times faster than what it'd been displaying thus far. It was easy for us to tell what it was doing since we were observing from a relatively safe distance, but the person in battle likely didn't have nearly as good a grasp on its actions due to the chaotic nature of combat. That said, the person was still able to dodge every attack aimed at him with ease. What terrifying reflexes.

The three birds flew back into formation whilst backing off, as if to regroup.

Only an ever so slight opening had been created by the action, but the person had managed to take advantage of it regardless. And thus, he began to counterattack.

And through said counter, he ended the battle in a single blow.

「Swords. Lots.」

『Hmm.. is that magic? No, it looks more like a skill...』

An incredible number of swords instantly appeared around the person as he raised an arm. I couldn't tell if he summoned them or created them. He might've done something else altogether. Either way, I had no idea what he did. What I did know, however, was that every single one of the swords he summoned was at least as powerful as the average magic sword. Every single one was brimming with mana.

Every single one of his blades immediately accelerated towards the birds at high speed. They didn't move nearly as quickly as I did with my telekinetic catapult, but they more than made up for it with numbers; there were about a hundred in total. Seeing him in action reminded me of a certain gold-covered Heroic Spirit and the gate that lead to his treasury.

The magic beasts were overwhelmed; they were trapped by a cage of sword and assaulted by a bombardment of blades until they plummeted from the sky.

「Amazing.」

『Yeah, but I'd prefer not to get involved with him if possible.』

We didn't really know anything of the person's nature. There was always the chance that coming into contact with him would to trouble and nothing else.

The person in question was currently making their way over to the magic beasts that they defeated. It was a pretty good time to leave, so we once again began heading back in Barbra's direction.

[1] These things can be pretty big. Like this!

Also, in the raws, they had this whole shallow/deep thing with the regions because they kept referring to it as a sea of trees. I got rid of it because it didn't sound right in English, I don't know what the word for the intermediate point between shallow and deep is. This choice has a chance of biting me in the ass later. Just calling it out ahead of time.

Another thing is that this was supposed to be released three hours ago, but I passed out in the bath while watching porn. Whoops.

Chapter 108: Evil Kobold

108. Evil Kobold

「Master, over there. Lots of people.」

『It looks like they're heading towards Barbra.』

「But... Bit off somehow.」

We spotted a few carriages along the road on our way back to the city.

That in itself was totally normal. Today was the day of the Lunar Banquet, and we were only about an hour away from the city. I wouldn't be surprised in any which way if the carriages contained villagers looking to have a good time in town.

We were still pretty far away from the aforementioned carriages, so we couldn't actually see it in all that much detail. We could, however, still tell that something didn't seem quite right. I could've sworn that I heard a scream or two.

『Hmmm... I think they might be getting attacked by magic beasts.』

Drawing a bit closer led me to realize that my prior guess had hit the mark spot on. The carriages were being chased and attacked by kobolds.

『Urushi, fly over there as quickly as you can!』

「Woof!」

Dashing through the air allowed us to get a much better view of what was going on. That is, four adventurers were currently fighting off the kobold

onslaught with all they had.

「Don't give up Dregg!」

「Keep it up! The villagers will be screwed if we mess up here!」

「Don't let these damn things past even if it costs us our lives!」

「I know! I know already! There's no way in hell I'll let em pass me till the carriage is far away enough!」

「That's the way!」

The adventurers had leapt off the carriages in order to better stall their assailants by facing them head on. All four of them were clearly risking their lives in hopes of letting the five carriages they accompanied escape. None of the four seemed like they intended to back off or run away despite the fact that a few of them had already suffered several heavy injuries.

Damn, they be manly as hell.

「Will help.」

『Go ahead. The enemy's leader should be... that one over there.』

—

General Information

Species: Evil Kobold

Demonic Beast (Evil Being)

Lv 20

HP: 139

MP: 72

STR: 66

VIT: 71

AGI: 78

INT: 28

MGC: 41

DEX: 54

Skills

Intimidation: Lv 4

Commander: Lv 3

Claw Techniques: Lv 3

Claw Arts: Lv 3

Leap: Lv 4

Vigour Manipulation

Innate Skills

Art of Evil: Lv 3

Titles

Bound to the Evil God

Description: No known description.

—

Its title and innate skill were both a bit weird, as they seemed to point to the fact that the kobold was one of the Evil God's subordinates. Rather, that should've been a given seeing as how the kobold is classified as an evil being.

Was there supposed to be anything special about him though? Did he have those skills and titles because he had more of the Evil God's divine protection than the average member of his species? I mean, relatively speaking, his stats were pretty high. He was quite a bit stronger than the Goblin King I defeated in the past.

Would I end up getting that Art of Evil skill if I absorbed the kobold's magic stone, and would absorbing it automatically bind me to one of the Evil God in some way? Hmm... I'm not so sure trying it is what I'd call a good idea...

『Let's try to avoid having me absorb the boss kobold's magic stone. Apparently it's bound to the Evil God, so I don't think taking its abilities is that great an idea.』

「Nn. Got it.」

『Urushi, we'll be leaving any leftover weaklings to you.』

「Woof.」

Fran leapt off Urushi's back and used the force of her fall to split one of the kobolds in half. The kobolds were frozen in shock, but Fran didn't care. She began mowing weakling after weakling down with ease without so much as giving them a chance to recover from the impact of her sudden descent. Urushi did the same and proceeded to tear through enemy lines.

The pair's advent hadn't just left the kobolds speechless. It'd done the same to the adventurers and caused them to freeze in place.

It went without saying that the kobolds posed us no threat, but Fran refused to show them any mercy regardless. She unhesitantly chose to cast Inferno Burst, the most powerful spell in our arsenal.

「Roooahhhrrghh!」

I was on guard because I was worried about the effects of the Evil God's divine protection, but it turned out that my anxiety had been misplaced. In the end, the Evil Kobold was still just a kobold; Inferno Burst had roasted it and turned into nothing but a smoldering carcass in a matter of moments. We did manage to get ahold of its magic stone, but again, I didn't feel like absorbing it, so I just chucked in storage instead.

The remaining kobolds immediately scattered upon losing their commander. The species as a whole was innately rather timid, but it seemed that having a strong leader had led them to act in a bit more of an ambitious manner. Losing said leader caused them to immediately regain their usual cowardice and flee. Oh well, whatever. They were weak and all, but honestly, chasing them down and killing them was a tedious waste of time, so we refrained.

All four adventurers had remained frozen for the entirety of the battle's two minute duration. It seemed as if they had yet to finish processing the events that had just transpired. They were unable to immediately grasp that a child and wolf had descended from the sky, beat the enemies that they'd been struggling with, and even sent them running with their tails between their legs.

「Area Heal」

It wasn't until after Fran started treated their wounds that they finally managed to provide some sort of response.

「Wa, wahh?」

「W-We're being healed?」

「T-thanks, you really saved us there.」

「What the hell just happened?」

Apparently the four of them were all members of a party by the name of Cedrus' Winds. Their moniker originated from the fact that their base of

operations was located in Cedrus Village, a small, nearby settlement.

They told this whole long ass emotional tale about how hard they worked and the extent to which they endeavored in order to become true adventurers before finally settling down in Cedrus. Honestly though, I wasn't even the slightest bit interested, so the whole thing went in one ear and out the other.

What I did get from their story was that they were so thankful to the villagers that they were willing to risk their lives to protect them regardless of what kind injuries they suffered in the process. I didn't care for their flashbacks at all, but I honestly appreciated their actions for how manly they were.

All four of the adventurers took turns thanking Fran and shaking her hand. They offered to give her every single last one of the kobold's corpses despite the fact kobolds would've been worth quite a bit to them given their rank. I had to say, they were pretty good people even if it looked kind of weird for them to surround Fran while thanking her profusely the way they did. I mean, free stuff was free stuff, and I liked free stuff, but we ultimately ended up refusing their offer in the interest of time. We didn't really need kobolds for anything, and they weren't worth much to us, so yeah.

The five carriages that'd escaped a bit earlier quickly returned after noticing that kobolds had scattered. The villagers stepped out from within and all bowed their heads in turn to offer their thanks to the four adventurers that'd almost died saving them. The two groups really did seem to have a pretty good relationship with one another.

We asked the village chief a few quick things, and verified our expectations. We'd been right, they villagers within the carriages were currently on their way over to Barbra so that they could join in on the Lunar Banquet's festivities.

「It's pretty rare for Kobolds to be out here. The road is well travelled, so they normally stay far away, but most people have holed themselves in the city today because of the banquet.」

Anyone and everyone's more or less taken today off because of the Lunar Banquet. The city was having trouble getting its usual patrols done; the lack of guards had left them understaffed.

We decided to give them a hand and stick with them until they reached the city. It was only an hour away, and I'd probably feel a bit guilty and overly conscious of my decisions if they ended up getting completely wiped out after we went through the trouble of helping them out once already.

The carriages only actually had six seats, so having two extra bodies made things a bit tight, especially with Urushi taking up the entire back seat. The villagers didn't seem to mind at all though, given that they'd already seen Fran's might. Besides, most of the people on the carriage we were in were children, so it wasn't as bad as it otherwise could've been.

One of the villagers, a woman late in her prime, handed Fran a few dried potatoes. [1]

「Nom nom.」

「I like the way you eat! Here, try this too.」

「Om nom nom.」

「What a cute face you're making. Give this one a taste as well.」

「Om nom」

「You look so adorable! You're just like a squirrel! Here, have another.」

「Nom om nom.」

The older ladies we were sitting with praised Fran in a bit of a shrill voice as they watched her stuff her cheeks.

Yup, they've got good eyes. Fran's super cute.

Riding Urushi would've made this whole trip a mere ten or so minutes, but Fran looked like she was enjoying herself. That, combined with the fact that

they ended up telling us about all sorts of interesting, festival-related stuff, made riding the carriage well worth it.

The villagers were planning on staying in Barbra for a total of three days. Apparently, heading towards the city around this time of year was fairly common practice for anyone that lived in a village in Barbra's immediate vicinity.

One of the main reasons that they had such a practice was because they wished to sample the cooking contest's products. Unfortunately, they as villagers weren't exactly what you'd call rich. They didn't have much money or time, so they could only afford to visit a maximum of four different stalls.

Apparently, traders and messengers had already informed all of the thirty or so villages nearby of the first round's results despite the fact they'd only just been announced yesterday. The villagers themselves had also already figured out which of the four they wished to visit; they'd sorted it all out ahead time in the interest of efficiency. The swiftness and excitement contained within their actions really served to testify the event's grand scale.

「It seems that Dordoros, last year's winner, isn't going to be participating this time around.」

「That's because he got hired by the Kingdom of Norland. He's now working as their royal chef.」

「Either way, we're definitely going to go to The Dragon's Table. They managed to win second last year, so they've gotta be good.」

「Yeah, but don't be forgetting about Jeff's Meaty Steakhouse.」

「We're obviously going to The Seafood Skewery too. You can't get stuff like that back in the village no matter where you look.」

「And of course, it goes without saying that we'll be visiting Barbra's Orphange too, right?」

「Barbra's Orphanage?」

Fran raised a question in response to the final item they listed. It didn't really seem to make sense or fit in with the rest.

「Yup. The orphanage's chef, Io, is really well known around here. They don't really use any fancy ingredients, but their dishes are still really delicious. They tend to leave you feeling really relaxed.」

「We want to show the orphanage that we're supporting their actions, so we visit their stall every year.」

「You really have to hand it to the chef. I don't quite know how they manage to make their dishes taste so good!」

「Right? I think the orphanage managed to come in fourth last year too.」

And so they went on and on and on.

I was pretty content with learning about the contest's more famous participants, but, I couldn't help but feel vexed that they'd already decided where they were going ahead of time. They weren't the only ones either, apparently their mentality was pretty normal. In other words, newcomers to the competition like us were at a pretty big disadvantage.

That said, it wasn't like we were really in that bad of a spot. Curry bread was an amazing product. It could be stored for a couple days on end without any issues, and it didn't even need to be reheated seeing as how it was still good even when cold. We should be able to appeal to people looking for a snack or two between meals.

「Also participating in contest.」

「You are? Really?」

「Nn. Master entered. Helping out.」

「Are you working at that place called "The Black Tail?" I think I remember the chef's name being Master...」

The Black Tail was the name I randomly came up with on the spot when they gave us our registration forms. It seemed to fit, as it reflected a property shared by both Fran and Urushi.

「Yup.」

「Nice. What kind of stuff are you guys selling?」

「Curry bread.」

「Never heard of it.」

「Master's own recipe. Really tasty, even when cold. Lots of spices. Ten Golde each. Can be carried around easily. Good for snacks.」

The older ladies hopped right on Fran's advertisements and immediately took her words to heart.

「Can they last a few days without going bad?」

「Yup. Works well for gifts.」

「Oh great! That means we'd able to buy a bunch and take them back for everyone in the village.」

「That sounds like a great idea. We'll make sure we stop by your stall too then.」

「Nn. Will welcome with open arms.」

Yay for more customers!

[1] Iunno if you guys have ever had Philippine brand dried mangoes, but dried potatoes are kind of like that. They look like... this

On a side note, I feel like the author's paragraphs are slowly getting longer.
Damned evolving writing styles!

Chapter 109:

109. Dismantling

We immediately headed over to the Adventurer's Guild after finally getting back to town.

The monsters we hunted had more than enough meat on them, but we still needed to process it before we could actually put it to use. To that end, we borrowed the guild's dismantling room.

It was much larger than the one they had in Alessa. It had enough room for us to dismantle everything we had on hand and then some.

『Alright, let's start with the Gullinbursti.』

I grabbed the golden boar and pulled it out of storage. We put it away the moment it away the moment it died, so its corpse had been preserved in as fresh a state as possible. In fact, it hadn't even actually finished bleeding out. Magic beast blood was pretty useful when it came to stuff like medicine and food, so we decided to put all the boar's blood back into storage as we butchered it.

「Nn. Tusks very thick.」

『Its fur looks like it'd fetch a pretty penny too.』

We only really wanted the beast's meat, but that didn't mean we'd just throw rest away. Its body parts seemed quite valuable.

After finishing up with the boar, we moved onto the Apises and Gullinkambis in turn. All in all, we managed to get a total of about a tonne of "pork," a tonne of "beef," and three hundred kilograms of "chicken."

That said, we couldn't actually use it all. Meat was meat, but some of the animals' body parts were more compatible with curry than others.

Hmm... I guess I'll use the "pork" for mild, the "beef" for medium and the "chicken" for hot.

And so, we headed back over to the Luciel Conglomerate after finishing up with all our dismantling. We might've actually ended up missing the cooking guild's deadline if we didn't buy all our ingredients and get all our documentation done immediately.

『We should try checking with the conglomerate to see if they know where we can get ourselves some a room to cook in or something after we pick up all our stuff.』

「Nn.」

『Oh yeah, did you want to go check out the orphanage? It's on the way.』

「Orphanage? Can't eat there.」

『Well, yeah, but there's more to it than just that.』

Apparently, most stalls wouldn't move all that far from their base of operations. For example, The Dragon's Table stall would sit right in front of the store, and the orphanage's stall would sit right in front of the orphanage. It was pretty easy to resupply given their immediate proximity to their associates, moreover, they could make use of their brands in order to attract a larger crowd of customers. I figured that we might as well find out where the orphanage's stall would be given that it was en route anyways.

So with that in mind, we ended up paying the orphanage a quick visit, just to give it a look, but we were greeted by a bit of an unusual scenario.

「Kyaaa!」

「Waahhh! Wahhhhh!!」

「Alright, who's fault wazzat? Whoever it was, get yer ass over here right now!」

A bunch of commotion was coming from within the orphanage's gates. That is, we were greeted by the sounds of children crying and screaming, and the angry-sounding voice of an ill-mannered man.

Chapter 110: The Shadows of Conspiracy

110. The Shadows of Conspiracy

「Hey! Ya recognize this?」

「W-Well...」

「It's the stupid god damned recipe you gave me!」

We'd approached the orphanage in order to scout out one of our competitors, but we were immediately greeted by a series of furious shouts upon arrival.

The yells that came from within were excessively loud. We could easily hear them from outside the stone wall that enclosed the building. Our curiosity got the better of us, and we peeped in from the entrance so we could figure out exactly what was going on.

「I'm not about to let you get away with sayn that you ain't got no recollection of this god damn recipe.」

「Y-Yeah, I get it. I do remember, it's the recipe you forced me to give you. You said you'd leave us alone if I handed it over.」

「Are you fucken retarded? I told you to hand over the soup recipe you use for the goddamn contest every goddamn year.」

「I-I did already.」

It looked like the orphanage was being harassed by a typical, a loan shark-esque grunt. They mentioned a recipe a few times, so it seemed like they were talking about something related to the contest.

The grunt that'd been shouting at the top of his lungs looked like like your usual everyday hoodlum.

A single woman stood between him and children, as if protecting the latter. She looked middle aged, and was wearing a robe over her overly thin figure.

「Did ya think you could get by just handing me off this incomplete piece of shit? There aint even any precise amounts, all you got is fucken guesswork written down here.」

「But that's just how I normally prepare it...」

「Hah? Shut the hell up. You and I both know that there ain't no way in hell you can get past the prelims like that. This shit basically just says that you throw a bunch of random cheap ass vegetables into a stupid fucking pot. The fuck you think you're trying to fool, bitch?」

「That really is how I prepare it! I don't normally use any sort of measuring device at all. I just approximate!」

It looked like the the piece of paper the hoodlum was waving around contained the recipe for the orphanage's signature soup. I'm pretty sure he used some sort of underhanded method to get his hands on it, but either way, he was complaining that it lacked completeness. And honestly, he technically was right. The recipe really didn't have much written on it.

However, the woman wasn't lying. She'd been telling him the truth from the very start.

She simply never figured out exactly how much of each ingredient she used, but she managed to get fourth place overall last year in spite of that. I had to say that the sense of dissonance going on there really got me curious, and so, I appraised her, only to find that she, Io, was just about as amazing

as one could possibly get as far as cooking went. She had cooking level nine, a skill that enhanced her sense of taste, and most importantly, divine protection from the God of Cuisine. In other words, she had been chosen by none other than the God that governed the realm of food himself.

To her, the act of approximating was probably akin to other people meticulously calculating exactly what was needed at any given point in time, except that it was done on the fly. In other words, she probably just went with her gut feeling while occasionally sampling her dish from time to time. Through the aforementioned method, she'd extract from her ingredients the best possible taste she could, regardless of their quality. It was a brilliant concept, but not one that the hoodlum before us could come to understand.

「I told you to cut the shit already!」

Annnnd yup. Figured as much.

(Master. Going to help.)

『Don't hit him too hard, alright?』

(Nn. Got it.)

Fran used magic to silence the area, leapt over the fence, and snuck behind the hoodlum without alerting him.

「Listen here, bit-charhgh!」

She drilled her foot into the back of his head and caused his eyes to roll backwards. The hoodlum had been instantly deprived of his consciousness.

Wait, didn't she say that she knew she was supposed like, not be too violent? I swear I told her that and that she agreed. I swear...

『Hey um, Fran? Whatever happened to not hitting him too hard?』

(Nn? Didn't kill. Didn't cut either.)

Er, I guess it'd be better for me to define "too hard" next time. Oh well, whatever. What's done is done.

「I-I-I'm not sure as to who you are, but thank you very much for your assistance!」

Io thanked us repeatedly before finally calming down, at which point in time we asked her exactly what had happened.

「We're not really all that sure either...」

Io seemed to not understand much about the precise events that transpired, but, she still tried her best to tell us everything she did know. Fortunately, her words were enough to give a rough idea as to the general circumstances.

It all started a few years ago. Barbra's lord had suddenly stopped funding the orphanage for reasons unknown, and since then, they'd been suffering financially due to their lack of sustainable income. They were in such dire straits that they found it difficult to even scrape up enough money to allow the children to eat everyday.

They requested the lord to change his mind time and time again, but, he never once agreed to reinstate their funding. The orphanage was later approached by a merchant apparently introduced by said lord. He'd been willing to lend them money at a low interest rate, but that didn't end up working out either.

「The merchant refused to budge on the repayment date, and said that it was set in stone, but it was way too unrealistic. There was no way we could possibly make three hundred thousand Golde in just half a year... We wanted to ask him to extend deadline, but we were never able to find his whereabouts.」

「Nn? Unable to find whereabouts?」

「The director did his very best to try and locate the merchant, but we never were able to figure out where he went. It turned out that he wasn't actually registered with Barbra's Merchant's Guild.」

Okay yeah, if that isn't suspicious, then I don't know what is. In fact, it was pretty obvious that they were just being used and exploited from the very start. I mean, they were offered a decently sized loan with low interest rate loan right when they needed it. Moreover, they were asked to repay it within an impossibly quick time frame. The merchant had obviously wanted something other than money, and they probably would've ended up saying that they didn't get the money even if they had been paid.

Honestly, it was a pretty cliché situation. The only difference was that they were demanding the soup's recipe as opposed to more normal things like the orphanage's land or children.

「That hoodlum. Merchant's underling?」

「I think so. He told us to hand him the recipe instead of paying them back in half a year.」

Okay, yeah, looks like this probably does have something to do with the whole cooking contest. But wouldn't setting this whole thing up need a lot of prep work? They basically just threw down three hundred thousand Golde for no reason too. Though, I guess most chefs wouldn't find three hundred thousand to be all that much considering that they were probably investing more than just that into this whole contest thing.

I mean, fine, that can be justified, but why only the recipe? Couldn't they have just forced the orphanage not to participate instead?

Yeahhhh, I don't get it. I kind of want to interrogate the hoodlum we have over here, but, that probably wasn't exactly the best idea. Using violence would ultimately end up bringing trouble to the orphanage as well, sooooo yeah, let's not.

Doing it after dragging him elsewhere wouldn't work either. I'd really like to avoid getting targeted by some sort of weird underground organisation.

(Master. What to do with hoodlum?)

『Hmmm.. Well, we can't really just ditch and not say anything, so let's mess with his head a bit, I guess.』

(Nn!)

The fact that he didn't see Fran sneak up on him gave us more than just a few options. We had everything we needed to deal with this situation however we pleased.

『Alright, make sure you stick to the plan.』

「Nn. Heal.」

「Huh?」

「Woke up?」

「Ugh... What happened?」

「Passed out while conversing.」

「I did?」

「Nn. Adventurer. Happened to be passing by, witnessed your collapse. Used recovery magic to help.」

The plan we had ended up going with was pretending that we had nothing to do with the man collapsing at all. In fact, we wanted him to feel as if we'd lent him a hand.

「Sorry, seems like I caused you a bitta trouble.」

「Suddenly collapsing. Sign of serious illness. If collapsing while talking, might be late stages.」

「R-Really? You serious?」

「Nn. Need to leave now. Might be better to get some rest.」

「Y-Yeah, you're right.」

「Good idea.」

「H-Hey, you shits! I'mma be leaving for now, but don't think I won't be back! You owe me a recipe goddamit!」

I managed to project the effects of the Principle of Falsehood onto Fran's words because she had me equipped. Honestly, I was quite surprised that it actually worked.

Fran was really bad at acting, but the skill's effects, combined with the fact that he was still groggy, made it so he ended up believing her wholeheartedly. He gave the orphanage one last angry shout before finally turning around and limping his way out the entrance.

『Urushi, follow him.』

(Growl.)

At the very least, having Urushi follow the man around would allow him to memorize his scent. If we were lucky, he'd be able to figure who the man's companions were, and if we were really lucky, we might even be able to figure out the so called mysterious loan shark's identity. In any case, it was still win-win situation, as knowing the man's scent would allow us to track his actions and prevent him from pulling a fast one during the contest itself.

Five or so minutes passed.

「Thank you so much for everything you've done for us. Are you sure you don't want anything else?」

「Nn.」

Fran was currently inside the orphanage. Io had asked her whether or not she wanted anything in return for helping them out, and so, the adventurer

had asked to try some of the orphanage's ever so famous soup, to which the caretaker responded with an okay.

「Thank you.」

The person in question herself didn't think that the soup really sufficed as thanks, as it was basically only made with the cheapest of vegetables. But in spite of that fact, it was delicious, so delicious that it'd even caused Fran's expression to change.

『How is it?』

I asked Fran the question despite already knowing the answer she'd give. Her face was twisted in what could only be described as frustration.

(Yummy.)

『Better than the soup I make?』

(Nn... Soup stock extracted perfectly. Tastes miralculous.)

I had to agree that the soup's taste seemed to have been the work of some sort of miracle. It wasn't like any of the stuff we saw at the other restaurants. Its was comprised of cheap vegetables, well water, and salt. That was it. Nothing more, nothing less. I had Fran double check by asking her, and it turned out that she really hadn't even used any pepper. Yet, it still tasted even better than the stuff I made. Like, holy crap. It was just that amazing. She was probably honestly Barbra's most talented chef.

「Entering King of Cooking?」

「That's the plan.」

「Going to use this soup?」

「Yes, I am. Barbra's people are really nice. They know about how much trouble we're having with our finances, so they're even willing to pay as much as 10 Golde for just a single bowl. I'm really grateful for their actions, the earnings we make from the contest have been helping us by. We

probably wouldn't have lasted as long as we did without everyone's generosity...」

She didn't have much self confidence and seemed to believe that people only bought her soup as a form of donation. Well, I mean, I can't say that sympathy didn't play a part in the soup's sales figures, but honestly, the soup would've sold well even without it. I mean, just look at how Fran reacted. It was so good that it'd caused her emotions to well up in frustration.

Her price point was the same as ours, but each bowl would earn her much more profit than each serving of curry bread would for us given the discrepancy in the cost of our ingredients. She's going to be making something far outside the realm of just one gold per sale. Her fourth place spot was rightfully deserved.

A thin, freckled girl approached us as Fran finished her soup. She presented to her a small plate with a single cookie lying on top of it.

「What's that?」

「It's supposed to be my snack, but I'm giving it to you because you helped Ms. Io. Thank you, onee-chan.」 [1]

She pushed the cookie towards Fran whilst smiling shyly. She probably really wanted it for herself, but she was willing to give it up regardless.

What a good girl she is! I mean, she can't hold a candle to Fran, but she's still a really good girl!

Fran split the cookie with the girl and ate it while giving her head a gentle rub. Fran was always used to being treated as a child, so she seemed really happy that someone had looking up to her as something along the lines of an elder sister.

Alright, you know what? I've come to a conclusion. Barbra's lord is a piece of shit. He ended abandoning some city's most adorable children. How dare he discontinue his funding!

『I think it's time for us to get in touch with her.』

(Nn. Agreed.)

The guild has the ability to quickly send messages to other branches, meaning we should be able to get in touch with the Alessa branch fairly easily.

「Won't stay silent. Amanda, that type of person.」

『Yup, let's do what we can for them.』

And so, we left the orphanage, but not before leaving with them some of the stuff we bought back in Alessa and Dharz. We gave them grains, potatoes, dried meat, and dried fish, stuff meant to last a while even if you just kept it on the shelf. The quantity we had on hand was rather limited, but hopefully, it was at least enough to brighten their days and let them eat healthier, more delicious meals.

[1] I've normally been avoiding leaving in Japanese words and stuff, but it's difficult to really convey the meaning without it in this case. I'm too lazy to localize such a large chunk, and stuff. I've basically given myself a 5 minute upper limit for localization per chapter, with the exception of names because they're hard. Anyway, onee-chan in Japanese means "elder sister" in English if you take it from a literal standpoint. However the connotations differ vastly between the two languages. Onee-chan is also often used to refer to females who are older than you, or females in their mid-late twenties. The second of the three cases I mentioned is the one used here, and it tends to imply that the individual saying the word is feeling some attachment to the individual they addressing. In this case, you could say that the line is supposed to imply that the little girl is warming up to Fran. This is meant to contrast the shy smile she later gave in order to make her seem more cute.

Speaking of honorifics, you guys are the audience, so I'm going to ask you whether or not you actually want them in general. My current style involves use honorifics only when I get really lazy it would be too much work/too difficult/too time consuming to rewrite the section and express the thought

differently. Do you guys like this, or would you prefer that I just leave them in as they were in the raw?

I'm not going to be making a strawpoll or anything for the time being, but I might if the feedback is split like 50/50-ish.

Chapter 111:

111. Preparing Things in Advance

The first thing we did after leaving the orphanage was to head over to the Adventurer's Guild so we could ask them to assist us in sending the Alessa branch a message.

I'd assumed that all communication was done through the use of some sort of magic item, so I was completely blindsided by the fact that they were using carrier pigeons. Well, not exactly carrier pigeons, but something along those lines. To be precise, the messages were being carried by hawk-like magic beasts.

The carrier hawks' were a species of magic beast called Wind Eagles. They specialized in high speed flight, and as a result, were ranked as E level threats. In fact, they were so quick that the one we'd just sent over to Alessa was due to reach its destination within the day.

The hawks were really convenient given the fact that they could cover large amounts of ground in very little time, but the guild didn't actually have all that many on hand. Even the Barbra branch only had two in total. As one could presume from that fact alone, they were not only expensive to use, but also fairly busy. I guess you could say that we were pretty lucky that our message was actually sent off immediately.

And by the way, expensive meant expensive. Sending just that one letter cost us an entire ten thousand Golde. Ten thousand! I'd almost felt like just taking our money and flat out donating it to the orphanage instead, but I ended up sending the letter anyways, as I rationalized that it would still probably end up be the better investment in the long run.

Now, with that said, Fran and I were both fully aware that Amanda wasn't actually allowed to leave Alessa, but that didn't mean she wouldn't be able to help us. It might be possible for her to pull a few strings in order to get Barbra's lord to start giving the orphanage money again. Likewise, we might also be able to make use her name in order to discourage those that looked at the orphanage with their eyes filled with malicious intent.

Naturally, the letter contained more than just our request for assistance. We first wrote a bit about ourselves and our most recent experiences and accomplishments before moving to explaining the orphanage's less than satisfactory circumstances. The reason we saved the orphanage stuff for last was so we could purposefully finish the letter off by saying, "There are many children in need that would greatly benefit from your help. Could you please lend them a hand?" It had much more impact that way. I was aware that we were kind of just pushing the whole thing onto her, but we didn't hesitate in seeking her help. We figured that Amanda would have more than enough influence and ability to actually get something done. This was more than just our problem, so I felt it necessary to make use of every resource we possibly could.

「Woof woof.」

『Welcome back, Urushi.』

Urushi came back from his hoodlum-filled adventure right as we finished up all our guild-related business.

I kind of wanted to head over to the Luciel Conglomerate immediately, but I was more interested in the result of Urushi's investigations, so we first decided to follow him back to the place from which he just returned despite it being in the conglomerate's opposite direction.

『So he went in here?』

「Woof.」

Urushi had guided us over to the town's residential area, where we found ourselves standing before a massive mansion with a five meter tall fence

lining its property. Its size was indicative of the fact that it probably belonged to some sort of noble.

I'd really wished that it had something as convenient as a nameplate, but reality was pretty much never that convenient.

What we needed was information. We couldn't make any sort of decision or come to any sort of conclusion without it, so we decided to ask around and gather as much of it as we could.

Fran's still a kid, so luckily, her posing a few questions wouldn't really lead to her being suspected of anything malicious. All she needed to do to get people to divulge the information she wanted was to put on a bit of an act. It was a shame that Urushi couldn't get any smaller, else we could probably use him to play the good old puppy card as well.

Whenever we came across a man, we'd have Fran give her head a bit of a tilt whilst gazing up into his eyes. Seeing her act like that pretty much caused every man we came across to immediately become as obedient as could be.

「Hey, mister?」

「Y-Yes? Did you need something?」

Most of them reacted as if they were charmed. It seemed like having Fran interact with them in the manner she had had caused them to awaken to a new sort of interest. Whoops, my bad. That uh, wasn't intentional. Hahaha...

Women were approached in a much more natural fashion. They seemed to act much more amicably when Fran retained her usual, expressionless face.

「Excuse me, ma'am.」

「Yes?」

「That mansion. Looks really big. Owned by nobles?」

「Now that you mention it, I think it might be biggest one in this neighborhood, so maybe.」

「Looks like owner has bad taste. Poorly decorated.」

「Ahahaha, you're right about that one. No one knows exactly who owns it though.」

「Don't know?」

「Well, this is just a rumor, but, apparently it's currently being occupied by some shady folk. They say that you only ever see people going in and out of the building in the middle of the night.」

「Illegal, underground organisation?」

「That's what I thought too, but I hear that some of the carriages that visit the building on a regular basis are said to have the city's lord's crest on them.」

「Lord involved with underground?」

「I don't know about that. The lord isn't the only one that has access to carriages with his crest on it.」

Most of the conversations we had were more or less along that same vein. In the end, we never were able to figure out exactly who the mansion belonged to. All we got were more rumours about how the place was being used by “bad people.” Moreover, everyone we conversed with would always lower their voices and check their surroundings before telling us anything about the aforementioned rumours.

『Hey Urushi, were there a lot of people inside?』

(Woof. Bark bark.)

Urushi replied with several dog noises in order to answer my question affirmatively.

『Hmm... then breaking in probably isn't that great an idea.』

I mean, they were suspicious and all, but we didn't actually have any evidence of their guilt.

Oh well, whatever. We figured out where their base was. That alone more than sufficed for the time being.

『Did you memorize their scents?』

(Woof.)

We don't know if they'll actually try to interfere with our business at all, but it was much better to be safe than sorry.

Alright, next up, the Luciel Conglomerate! They even might have a bit of info on this place as well, who knows?

And so, time passed; an hour flew by as we went about our business.

「Alright! I think that should be all of it.」

「Nn. Thanks.」

「Don't sweat it, the pleasure was mine. Make sure you knock the contest's other participants out of the water.」

The oil, vegetables, and flour that we ordered from the conglomerate were already all prepped for us, so we went ahead and picked them up. I was honestly quite surprised by how quickly they managed to get everything ready, I guess their size and reputation really weren't just for show. Rengil had actually gone out of his way to get us a carriage and some professional help for the sake of transporting all the goods we bought, so he was left completely stupefied by the fact that we managed to casually just store it all away within another dimension. I felt kind of guilty for putting his effort to waste, but well, we didn't really need what we didn't need. That's kind of just how things were.

He was really impressed by the amount of storage space we had. In fact, he'd even gone as far as to ask us whether or not we would be willing to work in transport going forward. Users of space/time magic would often have large item boxes, and the size of their dimensional pockets would scale with their degree of skill, but most weren't even able to come anywhere close to reproducing anything as spacious as what we had. Space/time magicians were already rare enough as is, so what we had was something along the lines of a one in a million enigma. It made sense though, we weren't just using space/time magic, we also had a separate dimensional storage skill. It would've been weird for us not stand out. Apparently, most merchants would be willing to pay out the ass for that much storage space.

Our purchases weren't limited to just edibles. We'd also ordered from the conglomerate a bunch of paper bags so that we could make things easier on our customers. Much to my surprise, Barbra had access to such a vast supply of paper that even the common folk were seen using it on a regular basis. Apparently, paper products were, in general, split into two categorizations. Regular paper was pretty much used by just about everybody, whereas parchment was only used for tasks involving magic.

Either way, the paper bags we got from the conglomerate were identical to the ones I was used to seeing back in Japan, just... not as high quality. They were plain, brown, made of cheap material, and came in two sizes. The smaller size fit up to two servings of curry bread, and the larger size six. Each bag also had a bit of an open grip on top in order to make it easier to carry.

「We still have a lot of those bags in stock, so feel free to just drop by if you ever need any more.」

「Nn. Got it.」

Another thing we did before departing was asking Rengil if he knew anything about the mansion we'd just investigated. Unfortunately, he didn't. However, he did get all heated up after hearing about the orphanage's circumstances. He said that he was going to ask a few of his contacts to do some investigation, for which we were thankful.

「And last but not least would be... this.」

「Key?」

「I think you mentioned something about needing a place to cook, right? That key'll get you into a restaurant that shut down about a month ago. No one's bought the place yet, so it's kind of just been sitting there without purpose. We've left the place as it was when it got vacated, so it should still have all the necessary utensils and the like. I don't particularly mind lending it to you for a few days.」

He showed us over to the so called abandoned restaurant. The stove and stuff still all looked intact, and there was even an area to store water in the back. The conglomerate had been taking good care of the place despite it being empty, so it wasn't really all dusty or anything like that. It was pretty much exactly what we needed, and so, we ended up borrowing it for about a week's worth of time.

Alright! That's everything we need. All we need to do now is to carry it all over to the Chef's Guild so we can report our costs. Errr, wait, no. I have to get all the water ready first.

『Okay, why don't we get down to making that magic-infused water we were going to use?』

「Nn. Where? Bathroom?」

『I think it'd be better if we used soil magic to make ourselves a pool or something.』

There was a large dirt floor to one side of the kitchen we were given, so we didn't have to worry about anyone overseeing our activities. But first, we actually needed to do a quick experiment. That is, we needed to figure out how much of the Potion of Attribute Reversal we needed to use per litre of swamp water. We also needed to determine whether it'd be better to use the swamp water or the Highest Grade Poison Mixture as our base. To that end, I started by making a bunch of smaller containers so we could do all the testing we needed.

「Nn. Looks interesting.」

「Woof. Ruff.」

「Next, this.」

「Bark bark!」

「Nn? This one?」

「Woof!」

Our tests ended up taking the form of something along the lines of a science experiment; we mixed a bunch of chemicals and watched as they reacted with each other whilst documenting the results. Fran had so much fun with it that she even ended up getting Urushi to secrete a bit of his poison so she could conduct some additional testing.

The cost of our products would skyrocket if we used stuff that was way too effective, so, after consulting with Rengil, we ended up coming to the conclusion that it'd best for us to use the Water of Recovery. The Water of Recovery had the ability to restore any negative status conditions inflicted within the past few days. The aforementioned limitation seemed to function as compensation for the prominence of its effects.

I didn't really get the whole distinction, but apparently, it didn't count as a potion. A potion was strictly defined as a type of medicine. For some odd reason, magic-infused water didn't fit under that classification and instead was put in its own category.

Either way, we experimented. We mixed a whole bunch of swamp water, poison, magically created water, and alchemically created water in the name of science.

It took a whole bunch of testing, but in the end we finally managed to find the right mixture and ultimately mass produce the Water of Recovery that we'd been wanting. Though, I think we ended up producing way too much of the stuff. Oh well, again, better safe than sorry, so whatever.

『Whew. That's everything. Let's whip up a quick test batch and then head on over to the Chef's Guild.』

「Nn. Finally.」

I've noticed that some of you guys have been mentioning that honorifics add extra meaning, and I guess it's partially my fault because of how I phrased my TL note. I may or may not have been trying to come off as less lazy than I actually was. While they do function to that end in some specific cases, honorifics providing more meaning is, in general, actually a misnomer.

Translators are typically capable of retaining connotation without the use of honorifics. This is done through careful choice of diction. You'd probably be surprised at how easy it is to construct a section so that it more or less gives off the exact same feel as its raw. The only difference between the expression of a character's emotions and views in English and Japanese is the manner in which it is presented. That is, the honorifics used in Japanese make certain aspects more explicit. This, however, is something that the translator should be covering for. If a translator fails to convey a character's tone of speech, then it's generally not due to the lack of an honorific, but instead because the translator lacked the skill to do so. This is often occurs because the translator lacks the ability to read undertones in Japanese. The worse and slightly more common case is that the translator lacks the ability to rewrite the aforementioned undertones in English. The final case is that they were probably just being lazy like I was yesterday. That is, "too much work/too difficult/too time consuming" all actually mean the same thing: I was being a lethargic bum and didn't want to sit down for like 7 minutes to alter a small section so it worked better in English. I normally don't mind doing this.

The question was moreso just asking whether or not you enjoyed them from an aesthetic standpoint.

Note that none of what I've explained above is applicable to low quality translations.

Chapter 112: Curry Bread Complete!

112. Curry Bread Complete!

『Alright, they're done.』

The batch I had in front me looked almost identical to the stuff I used to see in stores back when I was still in Japan.

「Leave taste testing to me.」

「Woof woof bark woof!」

Both Fran and Urushi approached with their tails wagging the moment I pulled the curry bread out of the oil. They literally didn't even give me a chance to wring it dry. Didn't they already have their afternoon snacks? I could've sworn they did...

『Hold on a bit. Wait till all the oil drips off of it.』

「Whaaa」

「Whimper...」

Both impatiently sat down right in front of the final product I'd just produced. Sitting there and staring isn't going to make time go by any faster, you know...?

There were three different types and six pieces of each type for a total of 18 servings overall. The first type was mild and filled with pork, its exterior was the most plain, and appeared to have a simple, reddish-brown shade.

The second type had slightly spicier beef curry inside of it, and could be differentiated by a thin layer of red pepper powdered atop its exterior. The final type was made of chicken. Unlike the other two, it was made to be super spicy. Moreover, it was the only one decorated in green; its exterior was accented with a parsey-like vegetable.

It took about fifteen minutes for the curry bread to cool down a bit and all the excess oil to dry off. Funny enough, neither Fran nor Urushi had seemed to avert their gazes for even the slightest moment.

I immediately stored half of them away so we could pass a few samples over to the Chef's Guild. The other half, I left to a certain pair of gluttons.

『They're ready now, go ahead and dig in.』

「Nn!」

「Woof woof!」

Both immediately pounced upon the dish the moment they got the green light.

「Yummy yummy yummy.」

「Ruff ruff ruff.」

Fran finished one of the pork types in a mere three bites. Naturally, she didn't manage to swallow it immediately, so I asked her for her impressions as she chewed.

『How is it?』

「Ideal. Curry with rice reaches heavens. Curry bread ascends to nirvana.」

「Woof!」

The hell is she saying? Are we in cooking manga land right now or something?

Oh well, whatever. Either way, it's delicious, and that's all that matters.

「This one. Also tasty.」

「Woof.」

『Looks like Urushi likes the second type more than he likes the first. What about you, Fran?』

「Can't decide. Both equally delicious.」

It looked like Fran even liked the one with medium levels of spiciness. Hmm... What about the spiciest kind?

「Spicy. Yummy. Spicy.」

『Woof woof woof!』

Alright, looks like that didn't really work for her nearly as well as the other two did. Urushi, on the other hand, liked the spiciest type the most.

Hmm... alright, so how much of each type should I make? I mean, the super spicy type isn't really for everybody, but I'm sure some people will be craving it... Wait, what if I started with just the two less spicy types and then added the third type on the second day? I'm pretty sure that'd end up grabbing more customers because people would start talking about it.

『Oh well, either way, it looks like they're pretty good, so let's pack up and head over to the Chef's Guild for the time being.』

「Nn. Got it.」

We were shown to a large underground room after we arrived at the Chef's Guild. It's ceiling was rather expensive and fancy looking, but for some odd reason, its size seemed to make it feel more like a gym than some sort of expensive facility.

「Could you please place all the ingredients you're going to be using in this room? We can head over to where you've got your ingredients stored in the

case that you've got too many to carry. The same applies if it's too difficult for you transport them over.」

「Fine. No problems.」

「Are you sure? I don't think it'll be that efficient for you to have to keep going back and forth even if you do have an item box...」

「Nn. Taking ingredients out now.」

「Huh? Wait, what?」

Fran had entered the room empty-handed, so the receptionist seemed to have assumed that she'd brought some stuff via an item box and left the rest in a warehouse or something.

Apparently that's how most of the other contestants did things. They'd normally call a representative over instead of actually going to the guild and bringing all their materials with them.

The shock the receptionist experienced from seeing Fran pull item after item out of her dimensional storage had initially caused her to stare with a blank look on her face, but she quickly recovered and started to do her job.

She immediately began using a skill in order to assess the value of what we'd brought.

「Let's see... Vegetables, flour, a barrel of oil, a large quantity of spices, and...」

She recorded each of her observations in a notepad as she went through them.

「Is this magic-infused water? How luxurious. Wow, you've even got Gullinbursti, Apis, and Gullinkambi meat!」

It took her about an hour to go through everything. All in all, our ingredients were worth about a hundred and fifty thousand Golde. If we used them all up, we'd end up making about thirty thousand servings of

curry bread, meaning we'd profit five Golde a piece if we kept our prices at 10 Golde each. The cost was actually a lot higher than what I'd anticipated it to be.

That said, it wasn't actually that bad. It would've been much worse in Japan given that we would've had to pay for utilities and all sorts of other overhead costs. Labour costed much more over there too.

Most of the contest's participants were chefs who focused purely on the pursuit of taste. As a result, their costs were rather high, and naturally, the prices for their products followed the same general sort of trend. Our strategy, which involved selling a large quantity at a low price, seemed like it was quite viable in comparison.

Another important factor to note was that the profit calculation itself was actually a bit skewed. It only included ingredients used directly in the dishes themselves, so stuff like labour and the cost of our paper bags were ignored and considered personal expenses as opposed to business expenses. That said, contestants were prohibited from bundling their dishes with overly expensive tableware as it'd skew the results in favour of anyone that happened to have extra cash on hand.

「Alright, next, we'll need a sample of your product so that we can judge its qualifications.」

「Nn.」

「Wow! What a delicious yet mysterious flavour it has.」

The employee seemed to be well deserving of her position, given that she was able to immediately recognize the curry bread's flavour as an uncommon one. Moreover, the very first bite had already led her to nod in approval.

「I see, so you're planning to put out multiple different flavours. The taste seems to match with the ingredients used, so you should be good to go.」

She used the “Tongue of Analysis” skill in order to examine the curry bread as she ate it. Its effect was to immediately identify every ingredient used in whatever she was eating. Okay, seriously, are we in a cooking manga right now? Because that’s totally something that looked like it was ripped right out of one.

The staff member lead us over to a place with a whole bunch of different carts and stalls after she finished checking over our ingredients. All participants had to pick one of several types pre-prepared by the guild.

We immediately chose one that didn’t really have that big of a prep area. Instead, it had a large display area with enough space for three different sales people.

Another requirement that we’d yet to fulfill was the creation of the sign we were going to hang atop our stall. The guild said that we could just figure out a design and hand it to them. They’d handle the rest. Our shop’s name was going to be called The Black Tail, so we just quickly drew a black cat’s tail and stuck the shop’s name beside it before calling it a day.

And that was pretty much it. The only other thing we had to do was hand over the recipe. After that, we’d be golden.

「This.」

「Right, the recipe. Don’t worry about it leaking out to the public. We’re extremely careful and will ensure that it won’t happen.」

「Nn. Done now?」

「Y-Yes, you are, but I do have to say that you sure did treat your recipe really casually.」

「Nn?」

「Most of our participants enclose it in an envelope in order to ensure that it isn’t seen by any unintended onlookers. They’re also usually quite hesitant about handing over their recipes.」

We kind of just scribbled it on a piece of paper and handed it to them, so I guess it only makes sense for the staff members to be relatively confused.

「They tend to get especially fussy when their dishes are as unique and original as your own.」

「Not making fuss because trusting guild.」

「That's good to hear. Your trust is well placed, we promise that we'll do our best to keep it safeguarded.」

「Then no problem at all.」

Honestly, we could care less if the recipe ended up getting out anyways. It's not actually an original recipe in the first place, so I don't really feel the urge to be all secretive about it or anything like that.

I mean, we could honestly probably sell it for a lot, but, weren't really in need of money or anything, and we'd probably make more from hunting magic beasts anyway.

Besides, I don't actually see any problems with having the recipe leak. In fact, Fran would probably be happier that way. Local adaptations of it would likely lead to even more variety, which, in turn, would mean more curry for her.

So to sum that all up, there's no point in us intentionally giving out the recipe for free, but we wouldn't really care even if it did get leaked.

『Alright, let's head back and start getting everything ready.』

「Nn.」

Awesome. Time for me to stay up all night and make about five thousand of each type of curry bread. I was planning to have Fran make a few in person at the stall, but honestly, that was just something we were going to do to attract customers. Most of what we were going to sell would be made in advance. We won't have to worry about our supplies running dry that way.

I mean, normally, you'd be concerned about the excess food going to waste, but that didn't really apply to us. We could keep it in storage for as long as we wanted, and neither Urushi nor Fran would mind keeping them around as snacks.

「Well if it isn't Miss Fran!」

「Colbert? Here, why?」

Colbert called out to us the moment we left the Chef's Guild's basement and went back to its lobby.

「I was actually looking for you! The contest's going to start tomorrow, so I was checking to see if you need any sort of help.」

You could tell at a glance that he was totally brimming with excitement and motivation.

「I can tell you for a fact that I really do just want to help! I'm totally not hoping that there's a chance I'll be able to sample a bit of the Master's cuisine. Not at all.」

Oh, so that's what he was actually after. Well, I guess that's fair. I don't mind feeding him a bit if that's all it takes for him to lend us a hand.

(Master, what do?)

『Maybe try asking him if he knows anyone that could help out as a salesperson?』

I was actually planning on having Rengil refer us a few people, but, an adventurer would probably work even better seeing as how they could function as both a salesperson and a guard simultaneously.

「Looking for people to help with sales. Requirement. Good at math. Even better if can cook. Ideally party of three.」

「Just leave it to me! I'll find you three helpers by tomorrow morning!」

「Paying well.」

「Got it, that should make things even easier. I'll get you the best help possible, just you wait!」

Alright, that's that out of the way. We still have two days left until the second round actually begins. In the meantime, I'll make sure I cook up the world's best ever curry bread!

『You want to help out, Fran?』

「Nn. Will do my best.」

『I'll leave keeping watch to you, Urushi!』

「Woof woof!」

I tried having Colbert retain his honorifics. It looked weird, so they're gone now. “OTL

Chapter 113: The Lunar Banquet

113. The Lunar Banquet

Silence filled the kitchen as we got ready to cook.

First up on our list of things to prepare was spices.

Not all the spices we had on hand would actually serve to improve the flavour of our curry bread, so we had to sort them and put the ones we weren't going to use aside. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that our choice of spices could either make or break the final product altogether. Next, we began mixing the spices with as much care as humanly pos—

— Or not. I'd planned on proceeding with caution, but Urushi totally chucked that out the window by sniffing at our ingredients. Normally, that alone wasn't much of a cause for concern, but it caused a chain reaction by sending a few spices flying towards Fran, who in turn sneezed and then caused more spices to go all over the place.

『Alright, how about you guys go do something else while I get all the spices prepped?』

「Nn.」

「Whimper...」

I'd honestly wanted to use a doppelganger so I could check the taste and smell as I went along with the whole cooking process, but I ended up dropping the idea altogether. I couldn't maintain my doppelgangers for all that long, so it'd be better to keep the skill off cooldown just in case we happened to run into some sort of emergency.

I asked Fran to focus on prepping the other ingredients. It'd not only prevent any additional incidents, but also help a lot in the long run, as I wouldn't have to deal with nearly as much prep work myself later.

「Will prep well.」

「Woof?」

『Hmm, yeah, it doesn't really look like there's anything for you to do. Sorry Urushi.』

「Whimper whimper...」

『Yeah, I know you want to help, but it is what it is.』

「Woof woof woof!」

『I know, I can see that, but I'm not really sure how trying harder's going to change anything.』

「Bark!」

『It's not a matter of how many limbs you use to walk so that's not going to help either.』

Urushi seemed to be trying to stand on his hind legs as if to demonstrate that he could use his front paws in much the same manner as a human being. His legs were clearly shaking though, so it evidently wasn't what you'd normally call the best idea.

That said, seeing him act all gung ho really made me want to find him something to do.

Let's see... he's much pretty limited to using only his mouth and front paws. The former was much more reliable than the latter, so we'd need something that wouldn't suffer from him holding it in his mouth all the time.

『Oh, I know. How about helping me make the butter?』

「Woof?」

『One sec.』

I grabbed a barrel out of the dimensional storage. Inside was freshly squeezed milk, obtained from none other than our friend at the Luciel Conglomerate. The plan was to use it in order to create butter which would then be used for the chicken broth we needed to flavour the spiciest variation. I was originally planning to just use of space/time magic, but this was one of the few things that Urushi could actually do, so might as well leave it up to him instead.

To begin, I had him return to his usual size.

『Hey Urushi, open wide.』

「Bark.」

『Catch.』

「Woof?」

『Make sure you don't bite down, alright? The barrel's made out of wood, so it'll probably break if you do. 』

「Woof.」

『Alright, you don't actually need to do anything super complicated. All you have to do is start shaking it as hard as you can and not stop till I tell you to.』

「W-Woof...?」

『Hey, you're the one who said you wanted to help, so get to work already.』

「W-Woof!」

Urushi obediently started to reproduce the ever so well known phenomenon of violent headbanging in response to my commands. All he had to do was keep that up for an hour, and we'd have butter! Though, he'd also probably be a bit more than just a bit dizzy, but hey, whatever. He asked for it.

And with that, both Fran and Urushi had something to keep them busy, so I went back to working on the spices.

Time flew as we concentrated our assigned tasks; the evening had almost seemed have blindsided us.

Urushi was, as one would expect, no longer able to stand on his feet. He'd been wobbling about in one of the room's corners ever since he completed his task.

『You guys want to take a break and go check out the Lunar Banquet?』

「Nn. Will visit food stalls.」

『That's not really what I meant. There's going to be a parade and stuff. I was thinking we might as well go see what it's all about.』

「Nn. Lots of delicious food.」

『Well, that works too I guess.』

The city had already shifted gears into festival mode. The streets were lined with stalls, and filled to the brim with people.

『Things sure did get lively around here.』

「Nn. Nom nom.」

『Wait a second, you're eating already!?』

「Nn. Grilled Squid.」 [1]

「Crunch crunch.」

『Man, and now Urushi's even got himself a chunk of bone-in meat? Aren't you guys being a little too quick about this? It hasn't even been a minute since we got outside, you know?』

And wait, wasn't Urushi totally about to collapse because of how dizzy he was just a second ago?

「Heard the call of tasty food.」

「Woof.」

I guess stuff like that doesn't matter so long as their stomachs are involved, or something like that.

Fran moved through the street whilst weaving in and out crowd and going back and forth between the two sides. She visited every stall she pleased, and didn't let anything stop her food-filled advance.

It didn't take long for us start to hear the sound of music, and I wasn't talking Japanese style festival music. It most closely resembled something out of Europe, but seemed to have a bit of an African-ish flavour mixed into it as well.

We started moving towards the sound's source, and eventually found a five member band playing a performance by the roadside. Their instruments actually looked quite like what I used to seeing back on Earth. That is, the musicians were making use of violin and pipe-like objects to create their melodies.

Enjoying ourselves once again caused time to fly right by, and before we knew it, the sun had vanished below the horizon.

Dusk was promptly followed by a loud cheer from the festival's participants.

『Oh? Looks like something's happening.』

「Over there. Really big.」

『Looks like a float. Wait, is there someone on top of it?』

「Priestess.」

『Huh, now that you mention it, her clothes do give off that whole sacred type of vibe.』

Appraising her informed me that she was an oracle. Wait, so can she really hear the gods' voices? If so, then I guess they really do exist, or at least they do in this world anyways.

We wanted to follow the float because they were apparently going to perform a dance for the sake of some sort of ritual, but everyone else seemed to be thinking the same thing, so it ended up getting a bit messy. We ended up more or less being stuck because of all the human traffic, and at this rate, it looked like we'd probably end up missing the ritual altogether.

『Let's get ourselves a birds eye view so we don't have to deal with this anymore.』

「Nn.」

Fran slipped out of the crowd and leapt atop a nearby building. She continued to traverse from rooftop to treetop to rooftop whilst skipping ahead of the float. I felt like we were kind of cheating seeing as how everyone else still had to put up with the crowd and all that, hey, might as well use what you got.

Our final destination ended up being on top of a clocktower that oversaw the square in which the ritual was to take place. I had to say, we had a pretty damned good view.

It seemed that our timing had been pretty much spot on. The float turned into the square right as we finished settling ourselves down.

It didn't take long for them to start the ceremony. The shrine maiden began to offer her prayer in the form of a song, to which the crowd immediately responded by quieting down. Soon the square was filled with nothing but

the the sounds of the priestess' voice and the instruments that supported it. This time around, the melody was much more gentle, and seemed to have a bit of a Japanese quality to it.

Six beautiful dancers entered the spotlight as the priestess sang; their silver, shoulder-length hair swayed through the night as they wholeheartedly immersed themselves in their performances.

「Pretty.」

『Yeah.』

I couldn't help but note how practiced and efficient their movements were. It felt as if the dance itself was something usable in battle.

—

General Information

Name: Charlotte

Age: 16

Race: Human

Job: War Dancer

State: Normal

Status Level: 30/99

HP: 146

MP: 198

STR: 68

VIT: 77

AGI: 141

INT: 96

MGC: 100

DEX: 111

Skills

Evasion: Lv 6

Singing: Lv 5

Wind Magic: Lv 3

Blink: Lv 3

War Dance: Lv 7

War Dance Techniques: Lv 6

Hand to Hand Combat: Lv 3

Close Quarters Combat: Lv 4

Dancing: Lv 8

Water Magic: Lv 3

Vigour Manipulation

Magic Manipulation

Innate Skills

Captivating Dancer

Titles

Priestess of War

Equipment

Magic Steel Ring of Combat

Macaque's Cold Resistance Wear

Pearl Wolf's Mantle

Pearl Wolf's Sandals

Anti-Charm Bracelet

Ankle Bracelet of Beauty

It looked like the dancers all had the War Dancer job. I assumed that the job's main skill would then be War Dance. Hmm, let's check a few things out in a bit more detail.

War Dance: A martial art that allows one to fight while dancing.

War Dance Techniques: A dance that charms onlooking enemies and invigorates one's allies.

Captivating Dancer: Amplifies the effects of any dance-related skills.

So apparently they can fight at dance at the same time. What's with all these manga-like abilities that've been showing up lately? I mean, their weapons were literally the metal rings they were wearing on their persons. I honestly can't say I'm not interested. That looks hella awesome.

Fran pulled out a warm glass of ginger ale as she continued to watch the ritual. She really seemed to have taken a liking to the stuff as of late.

This world's ginger wasn't as spicy as the ginger we had back in Japan. It was much sweeter overall, so most people just straight up ate it as a vegetable instead of using it as a spice. I've never actually seen anyone cook with it, and apparently, Fran had never even heard of ginger ale or ginger pork before. [2] [3]

「Yum.」

「Woof!」

Fran's facial expression relaxed as she leaned onto Urushi and sank into his fur whilst drinking her ginger ale. She was showing a rare, happy smile.

And so, we continued to watch. We watched the singers sing and the dancers dance; we observed the ephemeral scene play out as we overlooked it from what could what could only be described as a VIP seat.

『Looks like it's over.』

「Nn. Was really pretty.」

That wasn't a bad show at all. The ritual ceremony was beautiful to behold, and I felt as if it'd really drawn me in. Seeing it made me feel both relaxed and invigorated enough to return to the kitchen and keep up the ever arduous task of preparation.

[1] Grilled squid is a really common thing at Japanese festivals. They normally roast it over a stove, put on a bit of sauce and then serve to you on a skewer. Tends to look something like this.

[2] Japanese ginger ale is a bit different from its western counterpart in the sense that it tends to be closer to something homemade than the soft drink you buy from the store in the west. You also normally have it warm instead of cold. It's good for people with stuffy noses apparently. Take this with a grain of salt though, as I've actually had it myself. All this is second hand

information that indirectly came from a pos slurping a cup of the stuff on the other side of the Earth.

[3] If you go to a Japanese restaurant, you can probably get this. It's called shogayaki, and it's one of Japan's most popular pork-based dishes. I think you can make it with other meat instead, but I s2g that's blasphemy and you deserve to be hanged for it. It's pretty good, and basically, you pour a bunch of ginger sauce on top of a bunch of thin pork slices right when you finish frying them. It's often served with a few greens, and pretty damn good. Oh yeah, it's basically a rule that you have to eat this with rice. Even if you're allergic or something, eat it with rice. It'll be worth it.

Suggestions for the War Dancer job and the War Dance skill are more than welcome. They are apparently real terms in English, but they look weird to me. Maybe it's just me? I'm a foreigner though, so if you guys don't find the terms to be weird at all, then I'mma just blame that.

Chapter 114: Gestures and Confusion

114. Gestures and Confusion

We headed back to kitchen after watching the festival's main event come to a conclusion. Naturally, the trip back, like the trip there, was accompanied by Fran purchasing what could only be described as an unnecessary amount of food.

『Alright, I've got all my energy back, so I'm about to kick myself into high gear. You guys should probably start getting ready for bed.』

「It's fine. Will help.」

「Woof.」

『Well, if you're sure, then I'll take you up on that offer.』

「Nn. Can count on me.」

「Bark!」

『Sweet. Alright, I guess you can keep working on prepping up the vegetables and stuff then, Fran.』

「Got it.」

『And as for you Urushi? You're... also going to be doing the same thing you were before.』

「W-Whimper...」

I handed Urushi another barrel so he could go back to headbanging. Luckily, that would be the last time I needed to have him do it. We needed about six kilograms of butter in total, and the first barrel had managed to produce half of that, so yeah.

Butter was honestly more of a luxury than anything else in the first place. Its market price was way too high for it to be worth it, and to make matters worse, the stuff you could buy didn't even taste all that great. The butter Urushi made was salt free, fresh, and much more delicious than anything else we could get, so making it ourselves was pretty much resulted in us obtaining a higher quality product for a fraction of the cost. It was one of the ever so desired two birds one stone type situations.

『Do your best. Don't be giving up on me now.』

「Woof!」

The large black wolf ultimately resigned himself to his fate. He lifted the barrel above his head and moved over to room with a bit of a higher ceiling before finally starting to swing his neck up and down with as much vigour as he could muster.

『I guess I'll get started on the dough next.』

And so, I worked on the task for about two odd hours.

Naturally, both Fran and Urushi needed sleep, so they'd already headed back to the inn. I, on the other hand, was an object, so I used my lack of a need for rest in order to continue working throughout the night.

『Woah, it's already past midnight.』

I felt the urge to go outside and look upon the night sky. I wanted to stare at all seven gleaming moons as they illuminated my darkened surroundings, just as I'd done on the day I reincarnated. But I couldn't. We were in the middle of the city, so there was a chance that someone would spot me as I basked in the moonlight. It was a bit of a shame, but I was honestly still quite content just knowing that they were there.

Well, I could've easily just created a doppelganger and had it look instead, but that was flat out just a waste of the skill's cooldown.

Man, I can't believe I've been here for three whole months already. My life back in Japan had been rather stagnant, and time seemed to move at a snail's pace. Here though, it almost seemed to fly by far too quickly. I guess this is what it means to live out a fulfilling life.

The moment I entertained that thought was the moment everything went back.

『Huh?』

W-Wait, what the hell just happened!? Why couldn't I see anymore? Is this some sort of like bug or error? Wait, how did I see in the first place? I had no idea, which meant I also had no idea as to whether or not I was supposed to retain the ability see in the first place. Maybe this is something that's supposed to happen? Please no.

The darkness was suddenly overridden by its opposite right as my thoughts started strolling down panic lane. Everything around me had suddenly been dyed in a shade of pure white.

It looked like there wasn't actually any issue with my sense of sight. Whew. Wait, not whew. Where the hell am I? I can't tell. I looked around, but I was met with the same result regardless of where I cast my gaze. My surroundings seemed to have transformed into an infinite expanse of white. It almost looked like I'd been transported inside the Hyperbolic T*me Chamber or something. Wait, isn't this like totally what you'd normally see in the first chapter of a novel centered around the theme of reincarnating into another world? Am I about to meet some sort of God so I can reincarnate again or something? Wait, wait, wait, did I just jinx it? I'm pretty sure I did. Fuck! Fuck no! I like this world, I'm not about to let myself get ported over to a different one. I've even got unfinished business here. Fran and I are still in the midst of our journey together and I absolutely refuse to leave her side at least until she grows up. I don't care what happens, I won't budge on that at all, regardless of whether or not I'm speaking to some sort of God.

I panicked a bit more while taking in my surroundings. I couldn't actually find anything at the first, but someone suddenly rose out of the ground about ten meters in front me right as I came to the conclusion that the place was empty.

His form was exactly like that of a refined middle aged man's. His shimmering silver hair and laid back robed appearance really served to exemplify the fact that he was in the prime of his life. He looked a bit thin at first glance, but further inspection led me to understand that he was actually jacked as all hell.

The appearance he had really left an impact on me, but despite that, I couldn't really sense his presence at all. It was like he was some sort of phantom, or a mere illusion. Either way, he didn't really look like a God. Whew.

I tried to approach him so I could inspect him in a bit more detail, but...

『I can't move.』

My body had been completely frozen in place, and it didn't seem like he intended on coming any closer either so I guess that plan was out.

『Who are you?』

The man started to act out a series of gestures instead of answering my question.

『Why do that instead of just talking?』

「————」

『Huh? I can't tell what you just said. I couldn't hear you.』

「————」

『Oh! Are you perhaps mute?』

Apparently, I'd the nail on the head. The man immediately pointed at me and smiled while nodding, as if to say "spot on." However, he soon transitioned back into making more gestures. It was evident that he was trying to tell me something.

I started him down as he continued to with his odd gestures. I was having a hard time deciphering them, but I at least managed to grasp that I wasn't about to be stuck reincarnating again, at least.

Seriously though, what the hell was he trying to tell me? All he kept doing was moving back and forth whilst drawing an upside down triangle.

『Is that supposed to be La Pyramide Inversée?』 [1]

「——」

He shook his head in response, so I guess not.

The middle aged man seemed to understand that I found his actions incomprehensible, so he changed them up a bit.

His next course of action was to half open his mouth, raise both hands and slowly walk forward whilst making a sort of a zoned-out expression.

Oh, now that, I understand.

『So it's something to do with zombies?』

The man responded by giving me two thumbs up.

He then proceeded to alternate between his previous two patterns. That is, he'd start drawing triangles, switch to being a zombie, start drawing triangles again and so on and so forth. Hmmm... zombies, zombies... You know what I think of when I think of zombies? The freaking floating island we were on, that's what. Wait, is that what he's going for?

『Is that upside down triangle you're drawing supposed to be representing the floating island that one dungeon was on?』

「——」

Sweet, looks like I hit the nail on the head. He responded with another thumbs up.

『Alright, I get that part, what's next?』

The man took a lowered battled stance with his fists by his hips. He then began to tremble whilst giving off a magic-like glow, as if letting power course throughout the entirety of his body.

『Kaiouk*en?』

「——」

Yeahhhhh, I figured that wasn't it.

『Wait wait, are you trying to imitate Krill*n?』

「——」

Okay yeah, I figured that one wouldn't be right either. That said, I honestly couldn't really see his actions as anything other than him imitating a character straight out Dr*gon Ball or Huntsman X Huntsman.

I hoped he'd change his approach, but didn't and just kept repeating the exact same action.

『Hmm.. are you trying to say something along the lines of someone using an incredible amount of power?』

He stuck out a hand so it pointed straight towards me before wobbling it from left to right, an obvious indication that I was kind of on the right track, but not really all the way there yet.

『Are you supposed to be... releasing some sort of secret trump card?』

He gave me a point and a nod, so apparently that was the right answer. Let's see... secret trump card... floating island dungeon...?

『Oh! Latent Potential Release!』

The man gave me an excited thumbs up since I'd finally manage to give him the answer he wanted. Immediately afterwards, he raised his hand to his face and started to flap his fingers as if to imitate a pair of lips.

Something about talking through latent potential release...?

『The lich?』

The man formed an X with his forearms.

『Let's see... what else fits... The system announcer?』

Wrong again, apparently.

『Oh, wait! I remember now! You must've been the one dude that started talking to me telepathically out of nowhere! I remember you telling me a bunch about the System Announcer.』

It seemed like I'd gotten the answer right? The man responded with a curt nod, but quickly transitioned into a light bow with his hands pressed together in what seemed like an apologetic manner.

He again started going back and forth between a pair of actions. He'd bow and then do the talking motion and then repeat the whole cycle ad infinitum.

Looked to me like he was trying to apologize with regards to something he'd said to me back then... Hmm... What did we talk about anyways...?

『Who are you anyway?』

『Wellll, I was planning on telling you eventually anyways. And I was planning on meeting up with you in about a monthish, something around that, iunno. Well, telepathically meet up that is, if you count that. Buuuuuut, eh, whatever. Might as well tell you now minus all the pretentious nitty gritty junk anyway.』

『You sure sound laid back...』

『Welll, that's cause we don't really count as strangers n stuff anyway. Whatever, whatever. Might as well say it. My name is....』

And that was when our conversation had come to an abrupt end. So if he wanted to apologize for something, it'd probably be because....

『I'm guessing we aren't able to meet up in person like you'd been planning?』

The man responded with a nod.

『I guess you must've run into some sort of blocker or something along the way then?』

A pair of nods.

『And you can't tell me who you are either?』

A group of three nods.

Ahhh, I get what this whole thing is all about... but why can't he talk this time? I mean, he did last time.

The man made the power up pose, pointed at himself, and then got on both knees and pretended to wheeze.

『So what I'm getting is that you can't talk anymore because I used Latent Potential Release?』

Apparently Latent Potential Release had affected this guy the same way it had with the System Announcer.

『Wait, so that means you're a part of me?』

Nod.

『Are you the guy whose voice I heard right when I reincarnated?』

Nod.

I knew it!

That said, learning this had given rise to a question that I simply couldn't ignore or set aside for later.

『So... Just who are you then?』

I couldn't resist asking him that. I was so curious about the answer that I'd almost felt as if it'd been eating away at me.

The man frowned and shook his head from side to side. It didn't like he was going to be able to answer me.

『Hmm... Are you going to up and vanish too, or are we going to be able to end up being able to meet with each other like this some time in the future as well?』

The man drew one large circle overhead and dotted it with six smaller ones. An easily understood answer.

『The thing you just drew would be the full moon and its six smaller counterparts, right?』

But why only then of all times? Actually, now that I think about it, Latent Potential Release aside, the only time I'd ever spoken to him was when I was first reincarnated exactly three months ago. In other words, the moons had been full back then too

『Can you only appear during the Lunar Banquet or something?』

Apparently I was right.

『So I'm guessing I'll see you again in three months time?』

The man smiled a shit eating grin whilst energetically raising both thumbs. For some odd reason, the action had seemed to cause him to start to fade away.

『Wait a second! I'm not done asking you stuff!』

My words prompted the man to once again take his apology pose before vanishing altogether. I guess he ran out of time.

The world around me underwent the same thing it had earlier; it faded out into black before going back to normal.

『Seems like I'm back in the kitchen.』

Everything was exactly as it had been just before I faded out. In fact, no time seemed to have passed whatsoever. It was like I'd been momentarily spirited away or something.

『I guess I won't be able to see him for another three months, but I'll definitely have a tonne of questions prepped for when I do.』

I wonder if he can hear me right now. I mean, he did claim to be a part of me after all.

[1] It's an interesting French tourist attraction located in the Louvre. You guys might recognize it if you read western literature / watch western movies, as it's known for being a part of The Da Vinci Code. Image below.

I was a bit busy this week, so releases weren't as quick as usual. I'll be going over to some chick's house for dinner tomorrow too, so I'm not actually sure if I'll manage a release before the time I listed in the next chapter thingy. I'll try though.

Chapter 115: Visitors

115. Visitors

The date was April first.

We were greeted by a group of visitors not long after we got up and to work.

「Good morning Miss Fran. I found a few people to fill that salesperson job you mentioned.」

Colbert had brought with him a group of three female adventurers.

「Hello.」

「Nice to meet you.」

「'Sup」

None of the three seemed to make light of Fran despite her being a child. They all bowed as they greeted her in the manner an adventurer normally would when associating with an employer.

「These guys are all a part of The Scarlet Maidens, a D ranked party.」

General Information

Name: Judith

Age: 24

Race: Human

Job: Soldier

State: Normal

Status Level: 21/99

HP: 118

MP: 103

STR: 61

VIT: 55

AGI: 60

INT: 61

MGC: 41

DEX: 40

Skills

Flame Resistance: Lv 1

Crisis Detection: Lv 1

Sword Techniques: Lv 2

Sword Arts: Lv 4

Herculean Strength: Lv 1

Shield Arts: Lv 3

Commerce: Lv 2

Cooking: Lv 3

Vigour Manipulation

Titles

None

Equipment

Black Steel Shortsword

Spirit Tree Wood Buckler

Iron Ant's Helmet

Iron Ant's Leggings

Trap Spider's Cloak

Bracelet of Minor Poison Resist

General Information

Name: Maia

Age: 23

Race: Half Beastman (Red Dog Tribe)

Job: Scout

State: Normal

Status Level: 23/99

HP: 93

MP: 95

STR: 41

VIT: 51

AGI: 69

INT: 60

MGC: 34

DEX: 60

Skills

Flame Resistance: Lv 1

Bow Arts: Lv 3

Presence Detection: Lv 3

Negotiation: Lv 2

Shortsword Arts: Lv 2

Flexibility: Lv 2

Arithmetic: Lv 3

Cooking: Lv 3

Trap Disarm: Lv 2

Trap Sense: Lv 2

Titles

None

Equipment

Toxic Rat's Shortsword

Spirit Tree Wood Bow

Black Dogman's Leather Armour

Black Dogman's Cloak

Lesser Sub-dragon's Shoes

Bracelet of Enhanced Detection

—

General Information

Name: Lydia

Age: 19

Race: Human

Job: Mage

State: Normal

Status Level: 20/99

HP: 71

MP: 144

STR: 38

VIT: 33

AGI: 48

INT: 71

MGC: 70

DEX: 36

Skills

Flame resist: Lv 3

Staff Arts: Lv 1

Fire Magic: Lv 3

Arithmetic: Lv 4

Medicinal Herbology: Lv 3

Mixing: Lv 3

Magic Circle: Lv 3

God of Wisdom's Divine Protection

Magic Manipulation

Titles

None

Equipment

Spirit Tree Wood Staff

Magic Silkworm's Cloth Armour

Black Dogman's Cloak

Fang Boar's Shoes

Spirit Bear's Leather Magician's Hat

Bracelet of Lesser Paralysis Resistance

—

Adventurer ranks could be sorted into one of two types, individual ranks and party ranks. Fran ran solo, so she only had the first type, which as one could expect from its name, was solely based on her own abilities.

Party ranks, on the other hand, were based on the group's overall combat potential. D ranked parties, for example, mainly consisted of adventurers with individual ranks in the E to F range.

As with the case with individual ranks, party ranks were assigned by the guild. They'd look at each member's individual ranks alongside their functions and the party's overall balance before assigning the most appropriate letter grade.

The party is often ranked higher than the individual members within it, but that isn't necessarily always the case. An example of this would be the one Cruz guy we did that joint operation with back in Alessa. All three of his party's members were ranked C, but the party wasn't given promoted to B because they didn't exactly qualify for the next tier up. In other words, three fully fledged C ranked individuals were still considered weaker than a single B ranker.

Kladd, the spiky haired dude that led Dragon's Roar, was in a situation that was both a bit similar but also completely different at the same time. He and his party were both classified as E rank despite the latter having five members in total. His party was denied promotion for a multitude of different factors. The first was that the other four members were all ranked F, and the second was that none of its members used anything but spears. Honestly, if that was all it was, then the guild probably wouldn't have

minded ranking his party up, but there was also the whole thing about him having a bad attitude.

Normally, you'd think that someone that went solo would be stronger than a party given that they shared the same rank, but that often wasn't the case at all. Each member of a party had their own individual strengths. Putting those together alongside the element of teamwork could allow the party to have better performance than a single more powerful individual.

The Scarlet Maidens seemed like a pretty good party at first glance. They were pretty well balanced in the sense that they had both a vanguard and rearguard. Moreover, they apparently also had a pretty good reputation, so they, unlike Kladd were allowed to rank up to D.

One interesting factor was that all three of their members had skills that related to either math or business, which was honestly pretty rare amongst adventurers.

「I'm Judith, the party's leader.」

A girl with long, blue hair approached Fran and extended her hand out for a shake.

「I have a decent amount of sales experience. My father was a peddler, and often took me with him to work during my childhood. I have both the cooking and commerce skills.」

I see, so I guess that means it's possible to pick up a skill by watching someone else use it for an extended amount of time. She probably got her cooking skill because she'd go on journeys with said father. I didn't really see any reason not to hire her, especially given that she was both beautiful and polite.

「My name is Maia. I'm in charge of most of the party's chores.」

The next person to speak was a redhead with a bob cut. The fact that she spoke at a relatively slow pace seemed to contradict the fact that her skills were mostly thief-like. Apparently, she took care of all the party's cooking

and prep work. She'd even polish everyone's armour. Her skills more or less indicated that she was a veritable jack of all trades. She had Cooking, Negotiation, and even Arithmetic. She was also fairly pretty, so I once again saw no reason not to hire her.

「Lydia.」

The last of the three girls seemed resemble Fran a bit. She was relatively young, wore a white robe, had black hair, and seemed not to change her expression when she spoke. The only thing that really differentiated her from Fran was the fact that her hair went all the way down to her waist. And of course there was also the fact that she wasn't nearly as cute as Fran was, but that was just a given.

One her skills really caught my eye. Magic Circle allowed her to engrave a spell onto a piece of paper or something for later activation, possibly in the form of a trap. It looked really interesting. I really wanted to get my hands on it.

「...」

「...」

Lydia and Fran stared each other down for a bit, but neither had even the slightest change of expression.

「...」

The atmosphere ended up getting all awkward until Fran decided to give her head a bit of a tilt.

「...I lost!」

Lydia suddenly dropped onto all fours whilst hanging her head in shame.

「What the! What in the world are you doing, Lydia?」

Judith seemed to be surprised at her companion's sudden action.

「I lost. The whole expressionless personality I had going was just a facade, but her? She's the real deal.」

「I see...」

「If the rumours are true, then she's got me completely outclassed. She's already a master swordsman, and can apparently even use flame magic despite being younger than me.」

Huh... So they know that much about her? I guess she's quite a bit more famous than I'd anticipated. Is that a good thing though...? I honestly can't tell...

「I'm nothing but a downgrade. The only thing I have over her is the length of my hair.」

「Y-You're taller than her too.」

「That's something that'll probably change the moment she goes through puberty.」

「B-But you have The God of Wisdom's Divine Protection. That should at least let you stand out a bit, right?」

Divine protection from the God of Wisdom made it easier to level up skills related to the accumulation of knowledge, which, to adventurers, was pretty god damn useful.

The party's leader was already working hard. She had to explain the skill to Fran whilst praising Lydia and helping her to her feet.

「I have to be able to use Arithmetic in order to draw magic circles, so I can help with anything involving math. I can't cook, but I have the Mixing skill, so feel free to leave any compounding-related tasks to me!」

「A-Anyways, we'll do our best if your willing to hire us.」

「We really will!」

They didn't seem to be lying about doing their best, and they've even got Colbert backing them, so I'd say I don't really have any reason to refuse.

We negotiated with them a bit before arriving a final fee of five thousand Golde per person plus free meals for all three days. I'd thought it was actually a bit on the low side, but they seemed to find it decent given that the job was pretty much completely devoid of danger. My sense of monetary value seemed to be a bit off given that Fran and I often dispatched magic beasts with ranks far higher than our own.

Moreover, they were actually more interested in the free food than they were the Golde. It seemed that the only reason they wanted the job in the first place was because of how much Colbert had hyped up my cooking, which in turn really made me wonder if all his acquaintances happened to be foodies or something like that. Oh well, either way, they're willing to put in the effort, so whatever works, I guess.

Colbert leered at the three girls with a look of envy.

「I-I know that all you don't need anymore salespeople, but do you have any other sort of vacancy?」

The tuna lover interjected with a bit of a nervous tone.

Hmm... let's see... I can't think of anything in particular...

「I'd really just like to help out, so you don't even need to pay me. A-As long as you cover my meals.」

Okay, honestly, that was pretty worth. A B ranked adventurer was offering to help us for nothing but free meals as compensation. I didn't really see any reason not to keep him around just so he can handle whatever happens to pop up.

「Got it. Will hire. Responsible for handling all miscellaneous tasks.」

「R-Really? Hell yeah!」

「We three also look forward to working for you!」

And so, we managed to get ourselves a group of three salesgirls alongside someone to handle pretty much everything else.

We were almost done all our preparations too.

I'd already long finished making everything; the dough and filling were all completely prepped and ready to go. All that was left for us was put it together by wrapping the latter in the former and frying it. It sounded like there was very little left to do, but the final steps were actually quite tiring and time consuming in and of themselves.

Fran literally had the attention span of a cat, so I pretty much ended up having to do it all myself.

That said, she obviously wasn't just sitting around and wasting time until I finished. She and Urushi were actually in the midst of a bit of some indoor training. They couldn't actually mess everything up by going all out, so instead, they focused on manipulating their magical energies in order to draw a series of three dimensional images. The nature of the exercise made it look more like they were playing around than training, and honestly, knowing Fran, I'd say she probably wasn't even actually trying to train. She'd likely decided to do the exercise because she thought it was fun. Seeing the two of them like that almost made me feel the urge put out a few snacks for them or something.

『Huh?』

I was about to grab her some milk and cookies, but ended up stopping because I suddenly felt a bunch of people approach the building we were in. Fran and Urushi seemed to have felt it as well, as both stopped what they were doing and instead started to focus their attention on examining our surroundings.

『Looks like we've got ourselves a few guests.』

And uninvited ones, at that. There were actually two distinct parties. The first had several people in it. Its members had tried to hide themselves whilst surrounding the building and slowly sneaking closer and closer

towards us. The other consisted only of a single person. Said single person was approaching the building in a much more natural manner.

「Detain them?」

『Hmm.. I'd say we hold off a bit. We can't actually be sure that they're here to harm us.』

We've no idea what they're after. The party of one was approaching via the back door, so I decided to have Fran check what he was up to before making any moves?

I was thinking that he was going to do something suspicious, but he actually just ended up giving the door a knock.

「Who?」

Fran called out to the person whilst readying herself for whatever was to come.

「I know it's a bit late, but I was hoping to ask a favour.」

「Favour?」

「Yes. I was hoping that you would be willing to hear me out about something.」

I was a bit curious as to what was going to happen, so I took a quick glance out the door's peephole.

The dude standing outside looked like your typical textbook merchant. He didn't even bear the slightest resemblance to the dirty sleazeball he really was. That is, appraising him informed me that he was a total scumbag.

His job was Swindler, and he had both the Intimidation and Falsehood skills. Yup, he was definitely as guilty as could be. He wasn't all that strong or anything like that, but his skillset made it so that I'd probably end up saying yes if anyone was to ask me whether or not I found him difficult to deal with..

「What?」

「I would very much prefer if you let me inside.」

「Can't tell me now?」

「I'd really like to discuss the topic at length if possible.」

I went over to the window and began peering outside as Fran continued to question the man. His supposed companions were hiding themselves within the night, but I managed to find them regardless. I had both presence detection and night vision, so I more or less saw them as clearly as I would've during the day.

The conclusion? They were pretty much all just small fry. Our enemies were comprised of a group of burglars alongside a single Lv 25 assassin.

In other words, our assailants were villains that the world would be better off without. I was more or less already completely sure of the fact that they wanted to attack us. In fact, they were technically already in the process of doing so given that they were trying their best to surround the place. We could probably already claim self defense even if we jumped into the crowd and busted them all up before letting them actually try something. We didn't even need to keep them around seeing as how the swindler dude could probably tell us everything we wanted to know.

『We'd probably end up with a mess on our hands if we let him get away.』

And so, I decided to just casually start by getting rid of the people surrounding us.

『Fran, let him in so he can't get away. I'll dispose of all his companions in the meantime.』

「Nn. Got it.」

「Thank you very much for your understanding!」

「Come in.」

「Don't mind if I do.」

Urushi circled around the swindler and blocked off the exit the moment after he stepped through it. The wolf was currently in his mini mode, so he didn't look nearly as intimidating. Even so, the swindler basically had no capacity for combat, so seeing the “dog” seemed to worry him a bit. Naturally, he didn't go as far as to react by changing his expression, but I did catch him throwing Urushi a quick sidelong glance.

「Hahaha, that's a cute little doggy you have there.」

「Nn.」

Fran promptly locked the door as she responded in order to pressure the swindler even further.

I, on the other hand left the building before he so much as had the chance to see me. I used Short Jump to instantly teleport behind the assassin. I then cast Silence, lopped his head off and shoved his corpse inside the dimensional storage. The whole thing had gone much more smoothly than I'd initially anticipated. He had Crisis Detection, so I figured he might be able to react to me, but I managed to dispose of him before the skill even went off.

I picked up the pace and began to repeat my prior actions. I had to be quick about it. The burglars had presence detection, so they would eventually realize that their allies were being picked off.

However, in the end, weaklings were weakings. Four of six assailants died before any of them even noticed that something was off. The last two didn't seem to have the capacity to immediately figure out what to do, so they too soon fell to my blade.

After finishing them all off, I teleported back into the building. Specifically, I ended up choosing to go to where the storefront was in order to avoid being seen by the swindler.

「—is what I would like to procure.」

My timing turned out to be pretty good. The swindler had just so happened to start getting down to business to moment I went back inside.

「Potion box?」

「Yes. I would like to procure from you the potion box you picked up at the pirate's hideout.」

「What?」

「There's no point in feigning ignorance. I've already had the matter investigated. Would you mind selling it to me for ten thousand Golde?」

Oh come on dude. Aren't you being a little too stingy? There was over a million Golde's worth of stuff in there you know? And you're trying to get it for just ten thousand? Seriously? Come on...

I couldn't tell if he was looking down on her or just planning to get his hands on the thing through some sort of less than decent method.

Given that he had his subordinates surround the building, I'd say it was more likely than not the latter.

「Don't know what you're talking about.」

「As I said just a few moments earlier, I've already had the matter investigated, and so, there is no point feigning ignorance.」

「No idea what you're talking about.」

「Sigh... how obstinate. Taking the offer would have been to your benefit.」

The atmosphere around the man suddenly changed from that of a merchant to a much more intimidating air as he activated his skill.

「Refuse to talk anymore. Leave.」

「I won't be leaving without the potion box.」

He's pretty much kicked Intimidation into full throttle. Any normal girl would've already been scared out of her wits by now.

「Already said don't know what you're talking about. Mentally deficient?」

「Don't get cocky now, little girl... You're just a D ranked adventurer. You won't get away with just a few scratches if you dare disobey us.」

The man merchant like mask finally shattered in its entirety.

「That's my line. Mere swindler. Shouldn't be cocky.」

「I'll make you regret those words, girl!」

The man turned towards the exit whilst making his declaration. He was probably going to go order his subordinates to attack, but it obviously wasn't going to happen. The card he was trying to play was the one he'd thrown away the moment he entered the building.

「Growl.」

「Oi, what're you trying to pull here?」

「No escaping. Won't let you get away.」

「Did you really think that my subordinates would just sit there if I didn't end up returning to them?」

「Will allow you to call them. Try it.」

「Very well then! Hey! It's time for work you bastards!」

He shouted incredibly loudly. His subordinates definitely would've heard him had they still been alive. It went without saying that he assumed they were, so he ending up standing there for a few moments whilst awaiting their arrival.

He waited and waited, but not a single one responded to his calls.

「W-Why aren't they...」

「Men outside dealt with. By Master.」

「Impossible! You had a companion!? That wasn't in the reports at all!」

We then used lightning magic in order to paralyze the swindler before tying him up and getting ready to make him tell us everything we wanted to know. It'd normally be pretty difficult to actually get information out of anyone with the Falsehood skill, but I just so happened to have the ability to render it completely invalid through the Principle of Falsehood.

「What are you planning?」

「Information. From where?」

「Why would I t-zzaazzjhakjazyhuazza!」

Fran gave sent a weak electric shock running through the man's body, which in turn caused him to scream and convulse for a few seconds. This time around, we'd decided to go with a mix of electricity and Fran's bare hands because I didn't really want to have the kitchen all covered with blood.

「Haa.... Haa....」

「Will ask again. Information about me. From where?」

「How would I k- zjlkahkjdfhjksdhfjkzzzzz!」

Fran made the shock last a few seconds longer this time around. She once again repeated the question, whilst also grinding one of his hands into the ground with her feet.

It took about an hour to get him to crack, but we did manage to get the now haggard looking, teary eye man to divulge everything he knew.

Unfortunately, the process that led us there ended up getting his tears and drool all over the floor. Yeahhhh, I'll probably have to clean that up later.

「To confirm. Working for alchemists?」

「Y-Yes ma'am.」

Long story short, he was hired by an alchemist that went by the name Zerais. Apparently, said alchemist was a rogue that'd been expelled from the guild as a result of some sort of violation. He was currently working on illegal research, and was being funded by some sort of outside sponsor.

The potion box we'd picked up was originally something that Zerais had ordered. It ended up getting lost in shipment as a result of the pirates we'd "become friends" a few days back. Zerais was desperately looking for the potions within said box because they were extremely difficult to obtain.

We asked the swindler about Zerais' precise location, but it turned out that he didn't know about it because he wasn't exactly what you'd call high up the chain. Someone else had ordered him to do this, and that was all. Luckily, we did at least manage to get him to tell us where one of his organisation's bases of operation was.

Turned out it was the place Urushi had followed the hoodlum back to.

Huh, what's up with that?

So the mansion or whatever was probably related to Barbra's lord in some way. In other words, the building and whoever owned it had their feet dipped in both the world of stealing recipes from orphanages and the world of rogue alchemists. Like, what the actual hell?

We're going to need a bit more info before we can actually figure everything out. I really wanted to just break into the building, but that was pretty risky given that the residence was more likely than not ultimately related to some sort of noble.

「T-That's everything I know! I swear it!」

「Nn.」

「P-Please, just let me go...」

Yeah no. That's not happening.

I quickly put telekinesis to use and gave the man's neck a good old one eighty degree twist.

『Welp. Looks like this whole thing's just turned into one big ass troublesome mess.』

Chapter 116: Kranzel's Three Great Festivals

116. Kranzel's Three Great Festivals

「To reiterate, the contest will begin at noon. All participants will be allowed to depart the guild at ten in the morning. You've two hours to find and push your cart to a location of choice anywhere within the portside, market, or residential areas. However, be warned that you will be dismissed if you attempt to use another individual's property without prior consent. Please do not set up without first consulting all relevant individuals. Please also wait until noon to start selling your products. Anyone that starts selling their goods before noon will be instantly disqualified, so please make sure you abide by the competition's rules.」 [1]

The second round's participants immediately dispersed and began heading towards their respective destinations. We'd originally planned for Urushi to drag our stall along, but a bit of further consideration led us to realize that such an act would ultimately make us stand out, and not in a good way either. So instead, we ended up having our newly employed helper do it for us.

I have to say. Hiring Colbert? Really solid decision right there.

I know I made it sound like cart pushing was all he was good for, but that wasn't the case at all. He'd actually given us a pretty decent suggestion, a suggestion that ultimately actualized itself in Fran and the salesgirls all wearing matching maid uniforms.

「The curry bread we had for dinner last night was absolutely delicious. However, I can't say for sure if that alone will be able to carry us all the

way through to the finals.」

Colbert commented as he gazed upon our surroundings.

Each and every shop seemed to have its own selection of beautiful clerks. Though, I guess I should've expected that to be the case from the very start. The fact that pretty girls led to more sales was a universal truth, a fundamental axiom that simply couldn't be overturned regardless of what world one was in.

Cuteness simply wasn't something that could be defended against, but you know what, cute is justice, so whatever.

「Colbert and I have been thinking over how to optimize our sales, so don't you worry Fran! You'll be cruising right through the second round!」

「I'll do my best too!」

「And I'll use my charms to attract as many male customers as I can!」

Luckily, it looked like all three of our salesgirls were pretty much ready to go full steam ahead. They'd been quite shocked at how the curry bread and rice I fed them last night tasted, so telling them that I'd feed them even more extravagant meals if we made it into the finals seemed to have fueled them up all the way.

A large group of people started to tail us as we headed towards our final destination. At first, I'd assumed that they were up to no good, but they actually turned out to be customers. Apparently, following the stalls around and camping out around them till they opened was actually a thing.

The number of people trailing behind us gradually grew as we continued to move. Travelling around caused us to end up with about fifty followers, which apparently was actually a pretty low headcount. Some of the more popular participants had about two hundred odd people following them around already.

Crap. I think I might not have taken this whole thing as seriously as I should've.

「Lots of people.」

「Hahaha. They don't call this one of Kranzel's Three Great Festivals for nothing. The Spring Lunar Banquet features the King of Cooking, The Orison Rite, and the Minstrel's Contest, amongst many other events, so it draws in folks from all across the land. In fact, I'd say you've yet to see anything but a drop in the bucket.」

「Three Great Festivals? Others are?」

Fran tilted her head as she questioned one of Colbert's statements.

「The other two would be Ulmut's Dungeon Fiesta and the Royal Capital's New Year's Festival.」

「Though, I don't really think the New Year's Festival isn't actually too different from the Lunar Banquet hosted here in Barbra.」

Apparently the only real difference between the New Year's Festival and the Lunar Banquet was the fact that the King would give an address each time the former was celebrated. Both contained an enactment of The Orison Rite, and both featured stalls lining the streets with food for purchase. It wasn't all that difficult for me to picture it. The Dungeon Fiesta, on the other hand, had led me draw nothing but a blank.

「The Dungeon Fiesta is a festival meant for adventurers so they can engage in blood splattering, flesh tearing, bone crushing practices.」

The hell? All I can really say at this point is that it sounds violent and barbaric as all hell.

「Lydia's more or less hit the nail on the head there. The fiesta does tend to get a bit wild.」

「Types of activities?」

「Well, although it's a fiesta in name, it's actually something moreso along the lines of a martial arts tournament.」

「And it even takes place in Kranzel's most adventurerer-populated city, so you know it's gotta be good.」

「They've got three different categories. The first is one for people under level twenty, and the second for parties of at least size three. The last category doesn't have any restrictions on its potential participants.」

Huh, a martial arts tournament? That sounds fun. It'd be worth checking out even if we didn't end up participating ourselves.

「Takes place when?」

「It happens at the end of April, so it'll start in about a month or so. Just in case you were wondering, the festival is actually held in commemoration of the dungeon's capture.」

Sweet, the timing more or less works perfectly for us too. Ulmut was going to end up being our next destination anyways.

The conversation we had with Colbert and the girls extended all the way until we reached the place in which we'd been planning to set up.

「Okay. It looks like we're here.」

It'd come time to focus on the contest.

We'd already accrued a queue of about a hundred people, but much to my surprise, not a single one of them requested that we open shop before noon.

The place we'd ultimately chosen was the large square in which the Chef's Guild was situated. To be a bit more specific, we set up just in front of the giant clocktower that marked the square's most northern point. We figured that this was pretty much the best possible place. We could attract customers because it had heavy traffic, and there was actually even enough room for everyone to line up and stuff.

The moment we settled down was the moment we got to work. Fran immediately pulled a batch of curry bread out from within her dimensional storage box and put it on display. She then hung a sign declaring our prices, fired up the stove, and placed a large pot of oil atop it.

「That's an excellent choice as far as display and advertising goes. Did you think of it yourself, Miss Fran?」

「Master did.」

「Ah, I should've expected as much from the Master. He sure does have quite the diverse set of skills.」

The next thing Fran pulled out of storage caused our employees, or more specifically our salesgirls, to only elevate their praises.

「Wow! I've seen a few merchants carrying things like those, but never before have I ever seen any so large. They even looks like they're compatible with every single kind of coin. Were they something designed specifically for use at a stall?」

The items in question were a group of three wooden coin counters. They weren't really anything all that fancy or special, at least by my standards. All I did was use wood in order to reproduce something I remember seeing back in Japan, but apparently the girls thought them to be innovative. [2]

「Nn. Exactly.」

「The magic sword girl's master sure does seem versatile.」

「Nn. Master. Amazing.」

Judith, was a merchant's daughter, so she was able to familiarize herself with the coin counter almost immediately.

In fact, it didn't look like any of our three salesgirls had any trouble learning to use the tool, which was good. Effectively employment of the coin counter would allow them to work much more efficiently than they

would've been able to otherwise. In other words, the coin counters would facilitate that whole selling en masse strategy I had going.

We had everyone head off to the side for lunch after we finished setting up. We decided to eat a little bit earlier because we had no idea how busy things would be getting. There was a pretty decent change that we'd end up having to work nonstop for the next few hours.

「Now, lunch.」

「You have no idea how long I've been awaiting this!」

「Same here. You could very well say that we only accepted this request for the food's sake.」

「Don't forget about breakfast! It was absolutely splendid.」

「Them egg salad sandwiches... Hnnnngg.」

Apparently everyone really liked the egg salad sandwiches I'd randomly whipped up for breakfast, so I decided to stick to the whole sandwich theme for lunch too. Specifically, I ended up having four different types: egg, roast pork, chicken teriyaki, and tuna fillet. [3]

「Swooo gooooooddd!!!」

「Hey! I saw that Lydia! Stop trying to hog everything! You too Fran!」

「Heh heh heh...」

「Survival of fittest.」

「I'll be taking this then.」

「Oh come on! Not you too Maia!」

「Wow! This juice has got quite some flavour to it!」

Our so called picnic lunch ended devolving into something along the lines of a skirmish as all five people fumbled around to get their hands on as many sandwiches as they could. I figured that the fifty I made would be more than enough, but apparently I ended up being about as wrong as wrong could be. The sandwiches had almost seemed to perform a vanishing act; they all disappeared in a matter of moments. If anything, it kind of ended up looking like I didn't make nearly enough to satisfy everyone present.

The salesgirls didn't seem to be all that happy with each other, and they ended up in a bit of a squabble. Hopefully they'd be able to get back to normal by the time they had to get to work.

One thing to note was that the Chef's Guild actually had a staff member watching over each establishment in order to ensure that no one cheated. That is, they would also be responsible for aggregating sales numbers and ensuring that everyone used the exact materials that they'd prepared before hand and nothing more. You'd be disqualified the moment you tried to bribe or trick one of the aforementioned staff spectators.

We figured that they'd end up pretty hungry and exhausted at the end of the day, so we tried offering them a few sandwiches, but they ultimately ended up refusing even those.

「I really have to say that the meal before is delicious, but I think the item we're going to be selling are actually even better.」

「I know right? We'd actually considered buying ourselves some a few portions even though we just had lunch.」

Colbert and Lydia purposefully raised their voices so that the people spectating us could hear them. Apparently, it worked, as a few onlookers actually ended up running over and joining the line. Said queue was already well over a hundred people long. It looked like we were going to have one hell of a busy afternoon.

[1] I just realized I never explained this, but I've been using carts/stalls/booths interchangeably because they're like these mobile food stalls people pull out for festivals. Think the people who sell hot dogs in major cities.

[2] Think super bootleg cash registers.

[3] For some odd reason, Japanese people love taking dishes that typically go well with rice and shoving them between two pieces of bread. Now, note that they don't use the same white bread you'd typically find in the west, but rather something a bit more buttery and fluffy. If you have any Mitsuwa Marketplaces near you, you might be able to find JP sandwich bread at the bread stores often contained therewithin.

Tamagosando (Egg salad sandwich) is filled with a JP style egg salad. That is, it's basically made up of salt, pepper, sugar, and mayonnaise with a much greater focus on mayo than I'd consider healthy. Note that the mayo is specifically Japanese mayo. The difference between Japanese mayo and American mayo is that the former is typically sweeter and typically isn't made with egg whites.

The sandwiches themselves don't really contain anything but the egg salad, whereas the western counterpart seems to include various condiments as well.

Yakibuta (roast pork) is literally Chinese Char Siu. I have yet to have any decent Char Siu in the USA, but I've had my fair share of it in Canada. Shout out to anyone in the Toronto area, cause it's super good there.

The sandwiches tend to contain eggs and vegis as well.

Chicken teriyaki sandwich... do I really need to explain this one? If you don't know what it is, feel free to comment, but at this point in time, I feel that Chicken Teriyaki is so widespread that basically everyone knows what it is.

The last type of sandwich they mentioned in this chapter was magurokatsusando, or tuna cutlet sandwiches if you don't speak moon rune.

They take fish fillet and make it like they would tonkatsu before shoving between two pieces of bread. That is, they cover it in flour, eggs, and then Japanese breadcrumbs before deep frying it in a pan. Typically contains some vegetables, but there's like a billion recipes for this stuff because of how widespread it is.

So just to add a bit of clarity, Colbert = talks with respect, and a very slight bit of refinement. Judith = more casual. Lydia = most casual. Maia = the rest. Japanese doesn't use "X said, Y said." I figured it was fairly obvious as to who was talking most of the time, so I haven't been adding the "x said, y said," in all that often, but if you guys are getting confused, feel free to ask for more clarity and I'll drop a few extra lines in going forward.

Chapter 117: The First Day's End

117. The First Day's End

「So just to confirm, three milds and two mediums. Is that right?」

「I'd like four hots!」

「Okay, that'll come to a total of thirty Golde.」

Series upon series of different transactions continued to occur. It was already three in the afternoon, but we were still completely swamped with customers. The line leading up to our store never seemed to drop below a headcount of a hundred, and we had to use the dimensional storage to replenish our stock twice already.

The two non-salespeople, Fran and Colbert, were respectively responsible for frying up the food and ensuring that the line stayed organised.

「Each piece of curry bread will cost you ten Golde. The mild flavour is suitable for children and any other individuals unable to tolerate strong spices. The medium flavour is for those of you that enjoy that extra little kick. The spicy flavour is so incredibly hot that it'll make you spit flames!」

Colbert told our customers more about our products as they stood in line, and in doing so, got them to think about their orders ahead of time. His efforts helped to ensure that everything at the cash register went smoothly as could be.

According to Judith, at least half our customers ended up arriving a decision before hitting the front of the line. Unfortunately, the statistic also meant that not everyone was able order the moment their turn came. Normally,

you'd think that to be a bad thing, but apparently many of those people had only been convinced to come check out our goods because the line here was actually relatively short, which was a good thing seeing as how it meant we were able to steal customers from the competition.

「Purchasing our goods will serve to benefit your health! Our establishment uses the ever so scarce resource of magic-infused water in all our operations! Don't miss this chance! Get your serving here and now before it's all gone! I repeat, Recovery Water is right at your fingertips!」

Apparently, magic-infused water was actually considered a luxury good amongst the general populace, so Colbert advertising our use of it actually managed to pull in quite a decent number of customers.

I would've loved for things to keep going as well as they had, but fate wasn't exactly what you'd call kind.

「The fuck is this shit? You supposed to be sellin garbage?」

「Bitch, you call this bread? Looks like trash to me. The hell is wrong wit chu, chargin people for trash? Y'all fucked up and crazy.」

Our stall ended up getting approached by a group of mohawked dudes, their bodies adorned with unfantasy-like, metal-studded leather jackets.

Gross.

I could tell what was going on at a glance. They were obviously just an unruly bunch hired by one of our competitors. This was further evidenced by what I saw upon taking a quick peek at their stats. They were incredibly weak. I mean, I guess you could sic them on a normal person, or like the average chef or something because of how they looked, but they were honestly far too pathetic to do anything to an adventurer, let alone a whole group of them.

「Come on, hurry it up. Get the fuck outta here with yo dirty ass shitpile merchandise.」

「Yee, probably tastes like fucking garbage anyway. Shit's so ugly that looking at is enough ta make me want ta vomit. Shieeeeet.」

「Hurry it up, get a move on. You know what, yer asses be slow as hell. We'll fuckin move you ourselves!」

The disgustingly dressed men pulled out a series of club-like weapons as they approached, an action that immediately caused our customers to start screaming in panic.

However, they didn't so much as manage the slightest act before they collapsed.

Fran was supposed to have been cooking, but she somehow managed to end up behind them. I didn't actually know when she first moved to strike them, but if I had to guess, I'd say it was probably right after they insulted curry bread.

All four men had been deprived of their ability to move; they'd been left paralyzed by a series of electric shocks.

I wanted to get right back to selling stuff, but I also kind of wanted to try getting some information out of them too.

『You can leave the follow up to me and just focus on getting back to work, Fran.』

(Nn. Got it.)

『Urushi, go grab one of them.』

「Woof.」

I used Stone Wall to make sure no one could see what I was going to do to the man Urushi dragged away. I then took the additional precaution of casting Silence as to ensure that his screams wouldn't be heard by anyone outside the enclosure.

『We'd better get this done quick. Colbert's already called the guards over.』

I immediately made a doppelganger and smacked the man across the face a few times in order to wake him up.

「Huh?」

Smack

「Argghh!」

「Heal.」

I punched the man right in the nose the moment he opened his eyes before fixing him right back up without so much as the slightest pause.

「Wha—」

Crack

「Grarrgh!!」

「Heal.」

I then repeated the process, but this time, I broke his legs instead of punching him.

And so the cycle continued. I hit him, and healed him, only to hit him and heal him some more. All in all, I had to do it about ten times before finally terrifying him to the point where he'd start screaming with his face twisted in fear the moment I even so much as moved a muscle.

Sweet. That should be enough to make him talk.

「I'll stop doing this to you if you tell me what I want to know.」

「I-I'll tell you everything! I'll talk, so please, no more! Please!」

Everything from that point onward went just as smoothly as I'd hoped. The man answered all my questions without so much as even the slightest trace of a lie.

His group was nothing but a bunch of petty hoodlums. They didn't have the spirit required for adventuring, nor the courage needed to step onto the battlefield as a mercenary. All their income came from them harassing the townsfolk.

Just last night, they were hired by a man whose identity they knew little of. They didn't bother finding out either. All they really cared about was that the man had paid a generous ten thousand Golde per person. The task bestowed upon them was to harass and destroy a pair of stalls. Their group was normally a group of eight, but today, they'd split in two halves in order to more efficiently complete said task. The other stall they were asked to attack turned out to be the one run by the orphanage.

I tried prying so I could find out a bit more about that mysterious employer of theirs, but it turned out that the man I'd captured really didn't know much, as he pretty much ended up getting treated like a disposable pawn. Oh well, time to hand him over to the guards, I guess.

「Oi, you.」

「Y-Yes?」

「I'm going to be handing you over to the guards now. Answer every question they ask you.」

「Y-Yessir.」

「But don't even make the slightest mention of me. The moment you talk about me is the moment you'll die.」

I poured magical energy into my fingers, causing them to emit light as I pressed them onto the man's forehead.

「W-What're you...」

「I cursed you. I'll know the moment you tell anyone even the slightest thing about me.」

「I won't tell anyone anything! I swear it! I swear I won't!」

I didn't actually do anything to him, the whole thing was just a bit bluff, a facade. It looked like he totally fell for it though.

「I'd say that doing your best to reform and becoming a functioning member of society would probably be to your benefit. Not even I know what I'll do if you're still the same scum you are now next time we meet.」

「I-I'll definitely do my best! I swear I'll never do anything bad again! Pl-Please, don't kill me sir! I beg of you!」

And so, I let the man regroup with his companions so they could all be arrested and shipped off to wherever they were being taken together. Colbert seemed to make a bit of a skeptical expression because he noticed that one man was absolutely terrified, but luckily, he didn't ended up making anything of it.

『Looks like the orphanage is in trouble.』

(Master, go.)

『You sure?』

(Nn. I can't leave.)

Fran was responsible for everything that happened here because she'd registered for me by proxy. Hence, she was obligated to stay with the stall and upserve it all the way through to the end. The Chef's Guild's staff was still watching her every move, so she couldn't just up and leave without suffering the consequences.

『Alright then, I guess I'll just take Urushi with me and go.』

「Woof!」

(Leave stall to me.)

『Sure thing. Alright, let's go Urushi!』

「Bork bork!」

Urushi transported me inside of his shadow as we began to move.

Being a sword, or rather, an inorganic, made life pretty convenient at times like this. Since I didn't actually count as a real living thing, I could totally be treated like any other item and stored and stuff. Interestingly enough though, I could actually see the outside world from inside of Urushi's shadow.

The wolf dashed through the city at full speed whilst simultaneously doing his best not to stand out. The guards had started chasing us on more than one occasion, but, they were far too slow to keep up with Urushi's ridiculously high speed. Moreover, Urushi had a mark that proved he was Fran's familiar. Said mark made everything a whole lot less of a pain in the ass. That said, we still couldn't help but end up scaring a few children here and there along the way, but the most we could do was give them a mental apology seeing as the circumstances were what they were.

『I see it.』

「Woof.」

The orphanage stall was about as crowded as crowded could be, but despite that, it's queue was incredibly well organised. Their customers managed to form a line about three hundred heads long without any sort of fuss. Holy crap.

「Woof woof.」

「Look! It's Urushi!」

「Urushi!!!」

「Hey Urushi, what're you doing here?」

The orphanage children immediately recognized Urushi and ran towards him. Wait, aren't they supposed to be helping out or something?

I'd assumed they would be, but turning my gaze towards the stall allowed me to understand that there wasn't any issue. The kids that ran over to us were the younger, livelier ones, whereas the ones helping out were the slightly older and more responsible ones.

Urushi seemed quite happy with the fact that the orphanage's children had swarmed him in order to pet him, as most people ended up freezing up in fear the moment they saw him. The kids' attitudes stemmed from the fact Fran and saved the orphanage. They thought of Urushi as her pet, and thus, viewed him in a rather favourable light.

Nothing's seemed to have happened just yet, so I figured there wasn't harm in sitting around and letting Urushi enjoy himself a bit longer.

Unfortunately though, my thoughts almost seemed to have jinxed the whole damn thing, as the peace was broken the moment after the idea crossed my mind.

「The fuck!? You fucking expect us to pay for this!? You been smokin some hot shit dawg, this shit soup ain't got nothing but bushweed in it.」

「I-I'm terribly sorry...」

「Bitch, you think I'm going to just forgive yo dumb ass just 'cause you apologizin? Hell naw. You want me to forgive you? Close this shack ass stall down right the fuck now!」

「T-That's...」

「You talkin back to me bitch?」

「I...」

A sense of deja vu assaulted me as I watched a group of unfashionable men harass Io and the children working by her side.

「P-Please forgive us.」

「I-I'm scared!!」

「Wahhhh!」

A few of the children began screaming and crying in response to the thugs' intimidation.

「Shut cho ass up!」

「Get on all fours and beg! Do it, bitch!」

Okay, yeah, the men were definitely taking it too far. Io had long gone pale in the face.

『Get'em boy.』

「Grrrrrr」

「The fuck's wrong with this mangy mutt?」

「The hell you looking at? I'll kill yo as-argghghhghg!」

Urushi tackled one of the men. His body flew well over ten meters and landed with a crack as he transitioned into an unmoving lump.

The same soon happened to the other three. Each of the men flew through the streets like a bullet before collapsing.

「Woof!」

「Yay! You did it!」

「You're so cool, Urushi!!」

「Woof woof!」

Urushi then proceeded to grab the men one by one and pile them all up in a single spot, after which he vaulted on top of them and howled as if to declare victory. This action led the children around him to cheer with even greater ferocity. Luckily, it looked like they didn't end up traumatized as a result of the thugs' actions.

The whole event came to a conclusion when a few guards came over and took the ruffians we beat down into custody.

I'm glad we managed to show up when we did. The orphanage would've ended up in a pretty bad spot otherwise. Whoever was responsible for this was one hell of a conniving cunt.

『That's that taken care of, so let's lead back.』

「Woof.」

I mean, there was no way there was going to be more than one set of thugs attacking each place in a single day anyways.

The day passed as per my expectations. Everything from that one point onwards went as smoothly as could be, and we ended without any other disturbances.

Every single participant was obligated to return to the Chef's Guild at the day's end in order to temporarily hand over their stalls. There, we learned that similar things had happened to a few other participants as well. Specifically, the orphanage aside, there were two that'd suffered from similar circumstances: The Dragon's Table and The Noble's Dish.

「Any problems?」

「None. The Dragon's Table's shopkeeper used to be an A ranked adventurer before retiring.」

「Strong?」

「He's still more than strong enough to handle a few petty criminals. They say he used to hunt Dragons so he could use their meat in his dishes back in

the day.」

Huh, a former A rank dragon slayer? That's pretty interesting. He just so happened to be talking with one of the guild's clerks, so I decided to give him a quick once over in order to check out his stats.

『Woah, he's 60? Holy crap!』

He honestly looked to me like he was in his mid 40's. Moreover, he was still pretty strong. Retirement had caused his skills and stats to weaken to the point where he was statistically inferior to Colbert. However, if you were to compare the two, I'd say with confidence that the former would be much more difficult to defeat than the latter.

I could tell at a glance that he was experienced in battle. The craftyness derived from his knowledge base would be far more troublesome an asset than sheer numbers.

I then turned towards and observed the guy who appeared to be in charge of The Noble's Dish. He was followed by a series of cronies, and gave off an attitude that seemed to stress self-importance over all. Apparently, he himself was the Lord's third son, and was currently acting as a chef under his older brother's, the second son's employ.

Honestly, he seemed pretty damn weak. How the hell did he manage to drive his assailants away?

「I heard that he prostrated himself before telling them that he didn't care what they did to him. However, he begged and begged for them to at least overlook his customers. The thugs ended up losing interest and leaving shortly after.」

Huh... That might end up making The Noble's Dish quite a bit more popular than they were before.

Thankfully, none of the four shops attacked actually ended up suffering any losses. However, that wasn't to say that everything was already done and over with; we'd have to be cautious going forward as well.

What a pain in the ass...

I'd like to prevent anything from happening to the orphanage if possible. Hopefully, they'd be able to fend for themselves. I did hear that some of their alumni were going to start guarding them as of tomorrow. Said alumni had ended up becoming adventurers after gaining their independence, so they should be okay.

Either way, the first day had now come to an end. We'd already returned our cart and parted ways with Colbert and the three salesgirls. We ended up selling a whole seven thousand servings, much more than I'd initially expected. I was going to have to work hard tonight so I could replenish our stocks.

I started thinking back on the day's events as I worked. It was pretty obvious that whole reason we ended up getting assaulted was because one of the twenty participants was trying to get rid of as many of their competitors as possible. That said, there were far more than just twenty suspects, seeing as how almost everyone had sponsors and backers and whatnot. The only four people I could possibly exclude from the list of suspects would be the victims themselves.

Wait... hold on a second. Why did The Noble's Dish manage to get away with nothing more than a few moments worth of prostration? The orphanage was about to have their stall completely torn down in spite of their apologies.

Yeah, this totally feels like a set-up.

It's possible that the thugs ended up deciding not to mess with The Noble's Dish because the guy running the place was the local Lord's son, but I doubt it. There had to be more to it than just that.

It'd probably be good for us to keep an eye on them for the time being.

『Urushi.』

「Woof.」

『Do you still remember how the Lord's third son smelled?』

「Bork.」

『Alright, can you do me a favour and keep an eye on him and check what he's up to?』

「Woof!」

I had to stay here and keep making curry bread. Fran was still growing, so she couldn't afford to stay up. Moreover, she's going to be responsible for protecting the stall tomorrow too, so she's going to need all the energy she can get. In other words, Urushi was the only one left available for the job.

『I'm counting on you, boy!』

Chapter 118: The Second Day

118. The Second Day

Fran and I started getting everything ready for tomorrow after seeing Urushi on his way.

I was originally planning on saving the spicy kind so I could introduce it on the second day, but all the stress had gotten to me, and I accidentally ended up having them sold alongside our other two flavours. In other words, I'd have to introduce a brand new flavour in order to make sure everything went according to plan.

「Master. Thought up new curry dish.」

『Oh? Sounds interesting. What kind?』

「Combination of Master's best dishes. Curry sushi.」

『Not bad. The name's got a good weight to it.』

I can't really speak for the taste though. The combination seemed so odd that I couldn't even fathom it. Moreover was the fact that the concept itself didn't really seem all that applicable to curry bread in particular.

But that aside, I did have a pretty good idea myself.

What I needed to make was a super spice that transcended the realm of super spices, a super spice that went even further beyond. Naturally, a flavour as potent as that would need itself a pretty solid name. I'd considered a few things like Death Spice and Ogre Spice, but I ultimately ended up going with Dragon Spice. Dragons were considered the world's most powerful creatures, and the whole idea was that the spice was the

same. I was thinking of giving it a dragon themed slogan too. I could totally see it selling if we said that “eating it’ll make you breathe fire, just like a dragon!”

The Dragon Spice Curry Bread had a bit of alteration put into three different parts of its cooking process. First was the filling. Most of my other curries had been made Japanese style. They’d also only used a single type of meat. The Dragon Spice, on the other hand, was a pork and beef curry that moreso followed the Indian Qeema style. The dough I was using for its breading had a bit of black spice mixed into it, and as a result, shone with a much darker lustre. The final change was the manner in which it was deep fried; I mixed quite a bit of lard into the oil so I could fully draw out the curry’s taste. [1]

I then came up with an iteration of our mildest flavour. The idea was to remove a bit of spice, add some cheese and ultimately craft a batch of Cheese Curry Bread. [2]

Furthermore, I’d improve the recipe even further by grabbing all the bread crumbs I’d gotten from the whole frying processes I’d done over the past few days. The point was to rub them into the Cheese Curry Bread’s dough. I figured children would enjoy the texture more that way.

I couldn’t make all that many of either of the two new variations, but I estimated that I should be able to ramp production up enough to get us at least a solid two thousand of each. Besides, the idea was to call these products limited edition anyways. We’d them at twenty Golde a piece, with a limit on four of each type per customer. I was almost completely sure that our strategy would cause them to sell. The urge to collect the scarce was something that would have an effect on people regardless of what world they resided in.

「As expected of Master.」

『I’ll work on the two new products I just introduced. Fran, you focus on deep frying the stuff that’s already been prepped.』

「Nn.」

The two additional types we'd come up with ended up leaving us with a total of five different product variations.

With that in mind, the two of us silently worked until the clock struck midnight. It was only then that I finally finished getting a large batch of curry bread ready to be deep fried.

『Whew. That's half done.』

「Good work.」

『Thanks. Wait, what's that?』

Fran had finished with all the frying she'd been assigned a bit earlier, so she'd moved on to cooking up a little something in a pot.

「Curry sushi. Complete.」

Fran would normally mind how tedious the work was, but today all her reluctance had been thoroughly suppressed by her curiosity. The pot beside her looked like something along the lines of curry. She'd swapped one of the ingredients out for a fishy stock, and caused the pot's contents to moreso resemble a soup than a curry. Beside said batch of soup-like curry was a few pieces of the tuna sushi we'd made back on the ship.

「Put sauce on sushi. Eat.」

『I see.』

Fran immediately began pressuring me into consuming her creation.

「Try?」

『S-Sure...』

I'll admit the dish was a bit weird and off putting. However, Fran was its creator, and thus, I had absolutely no choice but to eat it. Period. Full stop.

Thus, I made a doppelganger, grabbed a piece of sushi and dipped it right into the pot of curry. Again, I couldn't help but note that it didn't look delicious. Seeing a piece of tuna smothered in yellow sauce did nothing but curb my appetite.

But that didn't matter! There was no way any real man could possibly back off from a situation like this one!

「Here goes.」

「Nn.」

Nom nom nom...

Huh? That's weird. It doesn't taste bad at all. In fact, I'd say it was pretty good. For some odd reason, the curry's spices actually managed to draw out the Tuna's flavour. The vinegared sushi rice actually seemed to work decently well with the whole combination too.

Or actually, I guess this does make sense. Fran's cooking is maxed out, and she's even got a title for it. She would actually be even better than I am at it should she give it her all. Needless to say, the making of this dish had caused her to do exactly that.

Unfortunately, I still don't really think that the whole thing she's got going here is something we can actually apply to curry bread, but, she seemed satisfied with the result, so all was good. After confirming my approval, she polished off the rest of the sushi before heading back to the inn with her spirits high.

I, on the other hand, had no choice to get back to work. That said, I'd just managed to get myself a portion of Fran's cooking, something that was pretty much of legendary rarity. Hence, I was as pumped as could be, and ready to fry all night.

The first thing we did the next day was submit a few documents to the cooking guild so that we could get our new merch approved. We'd written

all ingredients in the documents we handed over, so they ended up giving us an immediate thumbs up after giving the products a quick sample.

Our second day went much better than our first. News about our products had spread through word of mouth overnight. As a result, we ended up being permanently stuck with a line about two hundred heads long. Our two new additions were doing just as well as anticipated, and as I'd expected, the cheese type was especially popular amongst children.

Moreover was the fact that we'd yet to experience any sort of trouble.

Speaking of trouble, The Noble's Dish had managed to benefit from it greatly. Rumours of their "benevolence" had spread throughout the town, and as a result, they ended up being much more popular than they'd been the day before. I heard that they'd also hired a few adventurers as guards as a result of yesterday's occurrences.

I thought it to be odd, so I ended up appraising the people going around spreading the aforementioned rumours.

...

Are you kidding me!? Each and every single one of the rumour spreaders was a goddamn hoodlum; they all had level one intimidation. There was no way in hell people like them would go out of their way just to sing someone praise.

This be suspicious as all hell. Urushi'll probably be able to fill us in on a few more details once he gets back. I'd very much prefer if nothing happened, but having information just in case would be pretty handy.

And again, I jinxed it. The moment the thought crossed my mind was the moment something happened. It looked like someone had tried to bud into the line, and thus, he ended up arguing with a few of the other customers.

Fran and Colbert quickly rushed over in order to resolve the situation. However, it seemed to resolve itself before they got there. One of the people

in line had been an adventurer. Said adventurer had quickly pinned down the man that'd tried to bud.

Something about the unruly man felt a bit off. He continued to shout what sounded like nonsense despite having been thoroughly physically repressed. It almost seemed as if the guy had been high as a kite.

Appraising him returned the result that he was suffering from an abnormal status condition. Specifically, he was afflicted with the "Agitated Heart of Evil." The heck was that supposed to be? Is it any different from just being a bad person?

We immediately cast Refresh and returned the man's mental state to its usual demeanor. He didn't lash out or anything like that again thereafter.

「Thanks for watching over him and waiting till we got here.」

「No problem. Thanks for all your the work you put into keeping the peace.」

「Alright, you. Stand up and walk. Man, I can't believe how many people have been acting up like this today. It feels like I've been escorting rowdy festival goers all day.」

Was the guy just one of many rampaging drunks or something? I mean, the people back in Japan would end up getting pretty unruly during festivals too. They'd often end up brawling and committing petty thievery and whatnot. The phenomenon was described as falling to the devil's temptations, and I didn't see any reason for it not to occur here in this world as well.

There were only two interesting things that happened after the man's initial onslaught. The first was us getting harassed by yet another one of his kind. The second was when a bunch of dudes with serious looking expressions joined the line. I mean, they hadn't really tried to bother the other customers or anything like that, so I figured that they were just adventurers or mercenaries. The only issue was that they were so overly grim that seeing them ended up making everyone else feel a bit unsettled. They weren't

really our only set of weird customers, and it wasn't like we could send them away just cause their faces looked a bit intimidating at a glance.

It turned out that the reason they'd come was because they'd heard rumours of our Dragon Spice variation. The adventurers had started talking about it, and it'd become a widespread claim that only a true man could appreciate its flavour. Thus, many adventurers had ended up coming over to the stall in order to undergo a sort of trial.

「It appears that I may have exaggerated a bit too much.」

God damn it Colbert, this was your fault!?

Apparently, he'd claimed to have passed out as a result of its intense taste, and thus, spurred on all our make a man out of you type guests.

Yeah, we ultimately decided to end up just pretending they were regular people. They certainly were standing out, but they didn't cause any harm, and even served to function as deterrents for any potential aggressors, so yeah. Why not, right?

In other words, the number of real problems we ended up running into before finally making our way back to the Chef's Guild was two.

I immediately looked towards the Lord's third son upon our arrival. He was surrounded by his cronies as usual, but Urushi was far out of sight. My guess was that the wolf was observing from a bit further away.

「It looks like we did pretty well today~」

「Victory is within our grasp.」

The noble had come to the guild with more than just his staff members. He'd also brought along some guards, and even the merchant responsible for replenishing his stocks. He even had a few additional noble-like people with him this time, which I figured was pretty much natural seeing as how he was the son of a Lord. They were all really haughty and cocky looking.

There was no way in hell anyone like them would ever prostrate before a mere commoner, even if said commoner was a customer.

I wanted to observe the group for faults, but was ultimately interrupted as someone approached Fran and started up a conversation with her.

「Good evening.」

「Nn. Evening.」

「I am The Dragon's Table's owner. The name is Fermus.」

The man who named himself Fermus had wavy long hair, and a pair of thin, wide eyes. He stood at about a hundred and eighty centimeters tall. Despite the fact that he was fully clothed, I could tell at a glance that his entire body was constructed of steel-like muscle; his long limbs were built as could be.

His face was decorated with a gentle smile, one that I was sure had taken the hearts of many a woman captive. Even the man's wrinkles seemed to add to his charm. He seriously didn't look his age. I couldn't shake the impression that he just had to be in his mid forties.

I did as I had yesterday and once again gave him a quick scan, and verified once more than the numbers I'd seen were correct. He really was sixty, and a pure blooded human at that. The hell sort of anti-aging cream was he using!?

「Nn. Fran.」

「You see, I have recently had the opportunity to sample your shop's curry bread.」

Oh? Is he trying to pick a fight, or...?

「I have to say, eating it really inflicted me with quite a bit of emotion. Tasting something so unique left me feeling moved, its flavour was one I'd never before even imagined. I believe they say that it was your master that constructed the dish?」

「Nn. Master's creation.」

「And a wonderful creation it is. Please relay to your master that I was incredibly impressed with his work.」

Being praised by a chef as accomplished as the man standing before me gave me a rush of dopamine.

『Do me a favour and tell him that I'm delighted to hear his words.』

「Nn. Master happy.」

「Please do stop by my store with your master sometime. That concludes my business, so I shall be taking my leave for now. I do hope to see you there.」

Fermus did as he said and left immediately afterwards. His actions were mirrored by a few other chefs, they each approached us in turn in order to sing praises of how unique and delicious our product was. I couldn't help but feel the urge to smile. Each and every single one of them was offering honest praise.

That, however, was soon interrupted as the Lord's third son approached us. All the other chefs backed away the moment they saw him start to move in our direction.

「Ugh, I don't like that guy.」

「All of his profits come from his connections.」

「He definitely goes out of his way to make himself look good too.」

「The guy has a lot of rumours about him, so be careful, alright?」

The chefs immediately began bad mouthing him as they took their distances. Looked like he wasn't what you'd call liked.

「The name's Waint. I hail from The Noble Dish, and like the others, I have also recently had the opportunity to sample Curry Bread.」

「Nn.」

「It was quite the wonderful dish. It had a novel taste to it, and contained within it a series of vivid flavours.」

「Nn.」

「I wish us both luck in this competition going forward.」

Pretty much everything that came out of his mouth had been a lie. Moreover, the guy totally started wiping his hands off after exchanging handshakes with Fran.

「What an extraneous amount of effort that must have taken. I never would have expected you to not only be obligated to exchange handshakes with, but also compliment a filthy beastman.」

「Fret not. It's not too hard a task to complete if you think it an act done in good humour.」

These sons of bitches start shit-talking the moment they thought they were out of earshot! You know what? Fine. If you think your hand's all that dirty, I'll solve your little problem by cutting it the hell off. That way, you'll never have to deal with having a dirty hand again.

Shit! Where the hell is Urushi? He's probably got some sort of evidence by now. I swear I'm going to use whatever he found to shove that piece of shit convicted of literally everything at the very first possible opportunity!

I can't do anything for now, but polish that head of yours, you piece of shit! Cause I'm making a trophy out of it!

We, or rather, I headed back to the kitchen we rented out with my mood as sour as could be. Unlike me, Fran didn't really seem to care. She was rather neutral about the whole thing.

「Master.」

『Yeah, I know.』

Fran was on guard, she looked at the restaurant we'd borrowed with her senses turned up to max. Likewise, I toned down my anger and began focusing on the much more important task of observing our surroundings.

We sensed several people within the former restaurant premises despite that fact that we were the only ones that should've had access. This time around, our guests really were completely uninvited; they were trespassing on our properties whilst we were away. I wanted to just get in there and slaughter them all, but we didn't own the place, so I didn't feel right busting it up or getting blood stains all over its woodwork.

『Let's sneak up on them and incapacitate them for now.』

「Got it.」

We thinned out our presences and silently approached the kitchen door. We sensed four intruders in total. Two were in the storefront part of the building, and the other two in the kitchen part.

Our first move was to cast Silence and stick the key into the door. Strangely enough, the lock was still in the same state it'd been in the morning when we left. Did they break in from the storefront side? Oh well, no point thinking about now. We'll just beat it out of them later.

We ever so slightly opened the door just enough so that we could see into the building. None of the intruders looked to be in plain sight, they were hiding.

Were they trying to ambush us? Yeah, that's not really going to work, not on us at least.

『I'll get the one on the right. You get the one on the left.』

(Nn.)

I rushed into the room whilst expanding Silence's range to cover its entirety. I then immediately struck the man hiding behind the door frame with a bolt of lightning and caused him to pass out with his lips flapping wildly.

Likewise, Fran had also paralyzed her target with the magic equivalent of a taser. We then promptly had both restrained before moving onto their companions.

The other two invaders met a similar set of fates. All four were actually decently strong. Even the weakest of them was at least level twenty. They probably would've been able to beat Fran if she was just any other D ranked adventurer. Did they not learn from what happened last time? Wait, were these people even connected to the other group that attacked us?

We lined up the four assailants and began our usual interrogation processes. To be specific, we started with the highest level dude, the one that looked most leaderlike.

「Awake?」

「W-What in the... Untie me!」

「Might. Depends on answers. Here, why?」

「The hell? Like I know! You think you can get away with this, girl!?!」

And so, ten odd minutes passed.

All four men were now sitting with their legs tucked underneath their thighs and their butts on their heels. A single glance at their faces revealed that they were now but shadows of their former selves. What a wonderful sight.
[3]

「Summary. Attacked me to stop participation in King of Cooking?」

「Y-Yes Ma'am.」

Weren't we getting attacked a bit too often? Like, could they cut it out already? It isn't even threatening, it's just annoying.

Asking about the person behind all of this ended up providing us with a name that we'd yet to know.

「Man behind this. Named Rynford?」

「Yes ma'am.」

Apparently this Rynford guy was some old man staying alongside a few subordinates at the manor we identified a few days back. The men here were hired by said Rynford.

So why was Rynford they trying to mess with us anyways? Was he trying to back up the Lord's third son and increase his chances at winning? Or was it maybe something related to the whole alchemist thing that was going on a few days back? Or maybe this Rynford guy worked for the alchemist? But if that's the case, then why try to stop us of all people?

We need more information. At this rate though, it really seemed that we might have to end up raiding the manor after all...

『Looks like we're stuck waiting for Urushi.』

「Nn.」

Disclaimer: It's not my fault if I'm making you hungry! I'm just giving you more context and stuff, the job isn't complete without it since chances are you guys don't know what the food actually looks/smells/tastes like!

[1] Qeema aka Keema is an Indian dish that gained popularity in Japan. While the Indians do still retain their traditional recipes for it, the Japanese variant has naturally been adapted to better suit their tastes.

[2] Cheese curry bread is literally exactly what it sounds like. It's curry bread, but with cheese. The flavour is often adjusted so it's a bit less spicy.

[3] This means they're sitting in seiza, a traditional Japanese posture often used for repentance and discipline. Sitting in it for a long time kinda hurts.

Going to try for a double release today. Probably not going to make it in time because of Fire Emblem Warriors, but I'll try ;D

Chapter 119: Side: Bluke

119. Side: Bluke

「What!? What in God's name is going on!?!」

Why won't everything bend to my wishes!? Barbra is nothing short of a metropolis, and I, Bluke Krysten, am its Lord's second son. By that logic, the very city should bend to my will!

「Zerais! Did you not claim that the city would be thrown astir? Explain yourself!」

I glared upon the petite man standing before me. He appeared thin and unhealthy as ever, but he more than had his uses.

His name was as I'd shouted moments before. He was former disciple to the Adventurer's Guild's famed Eugene, and also the reason for which the great alchemist was expunged from his companions' circle. The same fate had naturally befallen Zerais, and hence, he'd fallen into the grasp of Barbra's underground. His current tasks mainly involved participation in the illegal.

Frankly, he was a madman. His research involved infusing magic crystals into human flesh, all in the name of creating members of the demon race. Truly, a realm of research from which even the Gods themselves would veer. However, the man was quite competent in spite of his lunacy, and as a result, he and I had experienced together .

The potions and poisons he produced truly put their value on display in my times of need. They would allow me to overturn a woman's decision should she reject the offer to be made into one of my concubines. More importantly, they could even be used to silence the commoners that wished to prattle to my father of my misdeeds.

Our association has granted me the ability to prosper, and it is through him that I was able to obtain my current position.

「Oh, that. Looks to me like someone's been getting in our way.」

「I demand more details.」

Had my plans been exposed...?

「Are you familiar with the name “The Black Tail?”」

「I haven't the slightest clue.」

If I were to guess, I would likely assume it to be some sort of restaurant. I fail to see how a mere restaurant would have any sort of association with my goals. [1]

「The Black Tail is one of the participants in this year's King of Cooking.」

「And what of it? I see no correlation.」

「The stall I mentioned earlier is making use of magic-infused water in its products. Specifically, it's using the Water of Recovery, which dispels the effects of any abnormal status conditions cast on the consumer within the past few days.」

「Really now? 」

I doubt that a mere street stall would have the capacity to mass produce magic-infused water.

「It's true. I had one of my subordinates get his hands on one of their products. Their items have recovery-based properties.」

「Tsk. In other words, they are ruining our plans then?」

「Yeah, especially seeing as how they're selling their products for just ten Golde apiece.」

「So they've essentially flooded the markets?」

「I'm pretty sure they've been selling at least five thousand units a day.」

「There's a fair chance that most of The Noble Dish's customers will have ingested their products as well.」

I doubt that their decision was one made as a result of their knowledge of my plans. That, however, doesn't change their fate. Anyone who stands in my path shall be eliminated, be their intrusional intentional or otherwise.

「Crush them.」

「I already hired and sent a few people over, but none have managed to succeed.」

「Did they hire some sort of guard?」

「It seems like they've Iron Claw Colbert. He practically stays with them all day. The shopkeeper's also an adventurer herself, and a D ranked one at that.」

「And what of Rynford's subordinates? The only reason I decided to shelter him was so that he could be of use at times like these.」

Rynford was the name of one of Zerais' fellow researchers. Specifically, Zerais had introduced him two months prior. Though he was a researcher, he appeared moreso like a mercenary. Most of his subordinates were well versed in combat. Many of them bore scars upon their knees, and thus, were suspicious. They likely would not have been allowed to enter the city if not for my influence. Nowadays, the man spent each day holed up within this precise manor. He was an even more peculiar man than Zerais himself, but, he too was useful, especially when it came time for the application of violence.

「Rynford had sent several of his level twenty plus subordinates, but...」

「You mean to say they failed? How ridiculous! The shop's owner is but a mere D rank!」

「Not a single one of them has returned. Rynford's assault was not actually the first. I began by hiring a set of lackeys from the city's underground, but lost contact with them after sending them on their way. I can't even confirm as to whether they're dead or alive.」

「That... is concerning. Does the shop's owner perhaps have some sort of hidden escort guarding her at all times?」

「I have no idea. I tried looking into her, but all I could dig up was that she was a D ranked adventurer, and that she'd been rewarded with a near excessive number of spices for her contribution in defeating a set of pirates.」

「Place more effort into your investigations.」

「I already tried that. She'd only just arrived in Barbra, so detailed information about her is difficult to come by. The only other fact we have is that she came to the city aboard one of the Luciel Conglomerate's ships. We did manage to bribe one of the ship's workers, but all we got from him was the time in which she'd arrived at the city.」

In other words, there was no way for us to grasp ahold of her weaknesses!? Accursed peasant! I cannot believe that my plans are about to be spoiled by a mere plebeian.

「Shall we employ mercenaries then? I doubt she would be able to survive a wave of thirty regardless of the extent of her abilities.」

「Won't your honoured father catch wind of your movements if you don't keep them in moderation?」

「Tsk.」

My old man did have several subordinates within the city's confines. There was a chance he'd catch wind of my plans for a coup d'etat if I didn't keep my actions minimal. Fuck!

How obnoxious. How long does that old shit plan to stand in my way? The only reason I wished to take his seat in the first place was because of his lack of ability to discern quality.

“Your not worthy of the Lord’s position” my ass! My older brother is nothing short of trash. His only defining trait is his ability to be diligent. He lacks my intellect, and even so much as fails to to understand what it means to have a nobleman’s pride. The fact that he takes a servile attitude even when speaking with commoners irritates me to point of wanting to fucking strangle him!

He was nothing but a weak, weak man. I was a far more suitable heir, and it was precisely the knowledge of that fact that led me to wish to wrest the position from right under his nose.

My plan was to cause Barbra to descend into mayhem and then shift all the blame onto my father in order to force him into retirement. Normally, my brother would end up becoming the lord in such a case, so I’d arrange to have him killed in the chaos.

Causing all that chaos was Zerais’ job. The first plan we had was to have him poison a group of plebeians and have them rampage. However, we soon realized that such a meagre act would take a few dozen lives at most.

Such a small scale event was far from what we needed to fulfil our desires. Thus, Zerais crafted a second, more devastating scheme, one that would cause the whole town to descend into not but madness and destruction.

Naturally, I accepted his proposal. It was one that would cause many to perish, but I paid it no mind. Most were mere plebeians, and thus, irrelevant. Little of value would be sacrificed.

There was, however, one key factor required for our plan to come to fruition: Waint Krystan, my mentally deficient younger brother.

Waint was so stupid that not even I, his flesh and blood, could resist proclaiming him a retard. He’d been born as a Marquis’ third son, but he ended something as peasant-like as a chef for reasons nothing short of

ridiculous. I paid little care to the details, but I recall his reasoning as something as nonsensical as adoring the taste of the food the Royal Palace's dishes.

He and I had two clearly distinct mentalities. If I were to follow ambitions like his, I would seek to become a titan by acquiring cooking-related businesses and expanding through investment. He, on the other hand, actually became a stupid fucking pleb, and even went as far as to open his own shop. I remember trying out his cooking once, but it'd consisted of nothing but flavourless garbage. Believe it or not, the moron had even lost all his ambition. All he desired now was become a famous chef, and so the retard developed the habit of buying expensive materials just so he could transform them into worthless plates of junk.

I never once suspected that his meaningless, idiotic ambitions would culminate in a form from which I could find use. I employed him by investing into his shop and financially subordinating him.

Nobles that wished to build connections with my father and I frequented the shop. However, for reasons unknown, they soon began to flatter the wrong individual. They spoke of my brother's accomplishments and named him a chef of skill. Sheer nonsense. Waint's ability was laughable. He himself lacked the skill to break through King of Cooking's preliminaries, so I offered my assistance through the act of donating to the Chef's Guild a large sum. Through said donation, I allowed my brother to bypass the initial competition and immediately enter into the second round.

I later discovered, however, that he was even less of an intellectual that I'd surmised. The retard hired a gathering of loose-lipped grunts in order to harass his competitors. Shocked I was to see him even send a group after his own shop so he could perform a sort of stage act. His actions naturally led the guild to immediately begin an investigation, and thus, I once again had to step in as to prevent his disqualification. Many of the guild's staff members worked to retain the competition's fidelity. However, as was with all other organisations, there lay corrupt individuals within their ranks, all of which happily casted their duties aside in order to accept my bribes.

And that was the sequence of events that led up to this point, the point where I could finally put my plan into action.

The concept was as follows: Waint would make use of a specific class of magic-infused water, one that cursed any who ingested it. Of course, the plan was one doomed to fail lest we won over individuals within the guild — but that was a hurdle long overcome.

Our magic-infused water was a formula that Zerais and Rynford had developed in cohesion. I knew little of the details, but I was aware that the curse it spread was one that caused evil thoughts to develop within its victims. It could provoke any given individual into throwing a fit of violent rage so long as they consumed a substantial quantity of the substance. Most impressive was the substance's delayed effect. The plebeians that consumed it would only lose their minds after enough time had come to pass. Thus, they would disperse from the water's source before any sort of unnatural occurrence. Waint himself was nothing short of an idiot, and for reason unknown, thought what we had given to be plain magic-infused water. Everything was perfect; my pawn had not even so much as realized that he was being merely being used.

The publicity provided from the King of Cooking provided The Noble's Dish a grand total of 3000 customers each day. Basic mathematics led to the conclusion that the number of customers would ultimately culminate at approximately 10000, a number that more than satisfied my requirements. All that was needed was for us to let loose the familiars upon which Zerais had research in order to accomplish our goals.

The occurrence of such widespread insanity would leave Barbra's lord with no choice but to claim responsibility for the events that had perspired. He would be pardoned with only retirement if luck were to be on his side. However, there was also a chance that the Lord himself would be resigned to a status equivalent to that of a criminal's. Barbra was a major portside city, and of great importance to the Kingdom. Failing in its governance was a grave sin.

Hah! The thought of sending my father to trial put an unerasable smile upon my face.

My plans had been perfect.

Yet, they'd failed.

A fool had accidentally thrown off my predictions through the act of creating a sort of bread that nullified curses. Ridiculous! It was nothing but ridiculous! Don't fuck with me!

Zerais' reports stated that the crime rate had indeed risen on a year to year basis. However, the situation had yet to spiral out of hand.

Something had to be done.

The Black Tail must be no more.

「Use him.」

「Are you sure? He may end up causing quite the amount of damage.」

「He is our only option!」

「Alright. I understand. I'll bring him here.」

A man over two meters tall appeared before after ten minutes worth of waiting. His body was covered in a layer of scarred, coppery skin. His muscles appeared so expansive that the simple act of witnessing them led me to suspect that we never had the need to employ a method as roundabout as cursing the citizens in the first place. His flesh bore such strength that I would not have doubted any claims suggesting that his heritage had been part ogre.

He was Rynford's strongest subordinate, a former C ranked adventurer. The rumors said that he was just as strong as any B rank, but was denied promotion as a result of his behaviour. To verify the claim, I had him duel one of my former C ranked subordinates. Lo and behold, he lived up to his reputation and vanquished the man in a matter of moments.

They called him Zerrosreed The Berserker. He had little interest in anything but strengthening his body. He was what one could call a battle fanatic, a

warrior sought out powerful foes for the sole sake of self improvement. He was known to even turn his blade on his companions and allies on a daily basis without even the slightest shred of care. More than one of these occasions had culminated in the act of manslaughter.

That alone did was but one of his many faults. Zerrosreed was well known for a certain incident, an incident that provided him two things: expulsion from the adventurer's guild, and a bounty that extended throughout the continent. The man had been employed by a nearby country for the sake of war. However, as anticipated by many, he turned his blade on his allies for the sake of testing his strength, and so, he'd felled the country's prince, slayed him in cold blood. The act destroyed his allies' chain of command and caused them to lose most their forces. The country suffered a huge territorial loss, and thus, issued a price for his head. Such a act would cause many a warrior to live their lives in shame. He, however, had not the slightest semblance of repentance or atonement. In fact, the man claimed to be grateful. The bounty had led many a powerful to challenge him to combat.

Comprehending a specimen such as himself was impossible. All that I knew was that his brain was constructed of muscle, and that he possessed a ridiculous amount of power.

「I've a job for you.」

「Haven't any chances to go on a good old rampage lately, so gimme something that'll let me loose.」

「I see no problems satisfying that condition. A rampage is all I would ever hope from you to begin with.」

「Hah hah hah! True, true.」

I failed to see the reason for which the oversized man had clasped his belly in laughter, but cast all considerations aside. I needed not to understand but the fact that he could be used.

(Woof!)

「What was that...?」

I could have sworn that I caught wind of some sort of bark-like noise from a nearby room. That, however, was nonsensical. This manor was one that kept no pets, it was simply not possible for there to be such a sound.

「Perhaps I have allowed myself more exhaustion than is reasonable.」

The dog I heard was ultimately dismissed as a mere figment of my imagination.

[1] “The Black Tail” is not actually the full name, but I left it like that because it sounds better. The last character in the name is 亭, which can mean inn or restaurant amongst a few other things. Hence, the actual name can be, but is not always necessarily interpreted as “The Black Tail Restaurant.” Hence, he’s unsure but able to guess correctly.

Chapter 120: Taking the Initiative

120. Taking the Initiative

The second day was over, and so, Fran and I naturally had to begin preparing for the third. I really would've wanted everything go smoothly for once, but our processes were interrupted as we detected yet another group approaching the restaurant we were borrowing. This time, however, neither Fran nor I bothered to tense up or prepare ourselves for combat.

「Master.」

『Yup, Urushi's back. Though, it looks like he's got a few people following him...』

「Four.」

Focusing a bit more effort into reading our surroundings allowed me to figure out roughly what was going on. The people accompanying Urushi were all people we were pretty well acquainted with. That is, I was able to recognize them as Colbert and the three salesgirls. However, I wasn't able to intuit why they were here or even grouped up with Urushi to begin with.

「Woof woof woof!」

「Nn. Opening door now.」

We welcomed our four employees inside, only to notice that the strongest of them had sustained an injury. Colbert was walking with a limp, and it didn't even look like he could stand on his own. Judith had to support him in order for him to make it indoors. The cloth wrapped around his left leg was already completely stained in crimson.

Damn. What happened?

「Injured?」

「Please don't mind me, I'm sorry for appearing before you in such a disgraceful manner. It was a minor blunder.」

「He ended up getting hurt because he protected us.」

「Colbert probably would've won if we weren't there to drag him down.」

「It was all our fault.」

There was no doubting that Colbert was strong. He had high stats, and it was strikingly obvious that he'd honed his technical skills as well. We knew for a fact that he was worthy of his rank. I understand that he had to protect The Scarlet Maidens and all, but still, that was a pretty big injury right there, one that could only have been inflicted by a formidable opponent.

「I happened to have a potion on hand, but its effect was not strong enough to heal all my injuries.」

「His whole foot had been torn off!」

Apparently the injury had been even worse just a bit earlier.

「Urushi saved us.」

「We were in a pretty bad spot, but Urushi managed to drive off the person that attacked us.」

「He appeared from the man's shadow and executed a well timed sneak attack. It was quite a splendid maneuver.」

「He was really awesome!」

Ahhh, I see now. So that's why they came back together.

「First, fix injury. Greater Heal.」

「Amazing! My injuries are closing so rapidly that I can see them vanishing before my very eyes.」

「Woah, you're this good at healing magic too? Just how far ahead of me are you, Magic Sword Girl...? And just how depressed do you want me to be!?!」

We had them sit down and explain what'd happened after making sure Colbert had gotten all healed up.

「What happened?」

「Well, it all started when we parted ways at the Chef's Guild. We were planning to head back to the inn we were staying at.」

「The three of us have been staying there ever since we first started adventuring.」

「I had planned to return to my residence after escorting the girls to theirs. Hence, I had accompanied them.」

Apparently, they were attacked by a gigantic man over two meters tall before reaching their destination. It wasn't just some random indiscriminate attack either, the man had clearly recognized the girls, as he called out to them before initiating his assault.

「It was clear to that the man's objective was to eliminate all three members of The Scarlet Maidens.」

「Absolutely sure?」

「Yup. He asked us whether or not we were The Black Tail's salesgirls.」

「But he actually started attacking before waiting for us to answer.」

「Don't tell anyone, but seeing him come at us like that almost made me wet myself.」

In other words, the assailant knew what they looked like. He probably knew where they lived too, seeing as how he ambushed them along the way.

「Have any information about enemy?」

「Indeed we do. The man voiced his name as he attacked.」

「Interesting.」

「He called himself Zerrosreed, The Berserker. I'd thought that the rumours had been but mere exaggerations, but I was clearly proven wrong.」

「I think he might actually be stronger than the rumours say he is.」

「Who?」

「Wait, you don't know who he is? Really, Magic Sword Girl?」

「Nn.」

The guy was apparently famous, and all four of our companions felt it odd for Fran not to know his name.

「Heheh, then I'll tell you all about him!」

Lydia quickly went over all the rumours and told us a bunch about the guy.

Apparently, he'd lose the ability to differentiate between enemies and allies the moment he engaged in combat. He even had a bounty on his head because he killed the prince of one of the countries that he was supposed to be working for. Dude sounded dangerous as hell.

The guild ranked him in at C, but rumours had said that his rank didn't do him justice. Everyone present had merely dismissed the rumours as, well, mere rumours, but they'd evidently been shown to be true.

「He was really strong.」

「Urushi's surprise attack was the only reason he resorted to retreating. As expected, not even a man as powerful as The Berserker could withstand a Darkness Wolf's ambush.」

「Urushi. Good boy.」

「Woof.」

Urushi didn't seem completely content despite being praised. I felt that he was disappointed at the fact that he was unable finish the man off, even though he'd managed to land a sneak attack.

Judith had a bit of an unsettled look on her face, which only made sense given how she was attacked by someone far stronger than her. Crap, we can't afford to have her quit on us.

I was worried that her party would give up on the task of selling curry bread, but my concerns turned out to be needless. Rather than succumbing to fear, she instead declared in defiance that she wanted to see the job through to the end. Her pride as an adventurer had completely overwhelmed her sense of terror. Colbert acted in a fairly similar manner, and got all fired up; he declared that he would defeat The Berserker next time the two of them crossed paths.

「Then looking forward. Working together tomorrow.」

「Leave it to me!」

「Me too!」

「I'll do my best.」

「Next time we run into each other, I'm giving that gorilla one hell of a bashing!」

We guided Colbert and the salesgirls over to the place we were staying after confirming their intentions. The district had a plentiful number guards within it, so we figured it would be safe. Initially, we'd planned to let them borrow our room if there weren't any more available, but the hotel's staff

immediately made us a few arrangements the moment they caught sight of Colbert.

「You're heading out again, Magic Sword Girl?」

「Nn. Will be back by morning.」

「Wait, wait! Don't tell me you're going after him!?!」

「No. Going elsewhere.」

「Alright then...」

「It's too dangerous to go alone!」

「Not alone. Together with Urushi.」

「Woof!」

「I understand... However, do make sure you return by the morning. We'll be disqualified if you fail to make it back.」

「Nn. No problem.」

We went back to the kitchen so we could get Urushi to tell us what he'd found.

「Bark bark bark!」

「Nn?」

Urushi tried to relay his message by raising his front legs whilst making dog noises. We were able to get the fact that he was trying to tell us something, and that his message contents were rather urgent. However, we were unable to discern any further detail.

I was ready for this exact situation though. I'd devised a method that could potentially allow him to communicate with us, and so, I explained it to him.

「Woof!」

『You think you can pull it off? Alright, try it on me first.』

「Woof!」

『Hmm... Yeah, it didn't work.』

The concept was to use the Level 8 Dark spell Brain Trick. The spell's effect allowed one to directly implant anything they imagined into their target's mind and thereby cause hallucinations. It sounded like a spell that would normally fall under the illusion element, but it wasn't. It counted as dark due to the fact that it would operate directly on the target's brain. As a result, it was much more difficult to detect than any sort of illusion based magic.

Specifically, the concept was to have Urushi project his memories as opposed to something he imagined. That, in turn, could potentially allow Urushi to communicate with us despite being incapable of speech.

However, it didn't go as smoothly as I'd assumed it would, probably because I didn't have a brain for the spell to mess with in the first place.

『Try it on Fran instead.』

「Woof!」

「Ready.」

「Woof!」

「Nn! Can see clearly. Mastermind. Lord's second son.」

「Woof woof!」

It seemed like it worked. Sweet, communicating with Urushi would be even easier going forward.

Fran explained to me everything Urushi had bore witness to.

『Alright. So, the lord's second son is the one behind everything.』

「Woof.」

『Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever imagined that we ended up accidentally saving the city.』

「Surprising.」

『But now he's after us because of it.』

I had to admit that we were a bit outmatched. We had to deal with Waint, Bluke, Zerais, Rynford, and even Zerrosreed The Berserker to top it all off.

We were up against an entire organisation, one that'd already weaved their web. It was going to be tough, especially given how little time we had to deal with them.

I guess it'd help if we were to borrow an organisation's power as well... though I'm not all that sure that the people I had in mind would actually be willing to help us.

『Let's go pay the Lord's manor a quick visit.』

「Nn.」

「Woof!」

I didn't bother differentiating between the girls this time around. Honestly, I don't even remember which one's which at this point.

Important Note: Translations may undergo a temporary slowdown for approximately two weeks because of recent video game releases. (I'm looking at you, Fire Emblem Warriors, Nights of Azure 2, and Super Mario Odyssey.) They also may not actually slow down. No idea, depends on my

mood/whims/school assignments. Same thing'll apply around the release of Pokemon USUM.

Chapter 121: The Lord's Manor

121. The Lord's Manor

The Lord's Manor was smack in the middle of town, right where the commercial, residential and noble districts intersected. It was about a five minute trip with Urushi going at top speed.

「Comfortable sensation.」

Fran narrowed her eyes as she enjoyed the cool night breeze. She normally probably would have found it chilly, but her armour was bestowed with cold resistance, so she found it pleasing instead. [1]

『Thank God it's night time.』

「Woof?」

Having Urushi leap through the sky at full speed during the day was a big no. We'd end up standing out way too much for comfort.

『Alright, it looks like we're here.』

The gate leading up to the manor's entrance was naturally tightly shut. In front of it stood a pair of guards. They seemed to be actively surveying their surroundings in order to ensure that nothing was off.

『Hmm, what do you think we should do? We're going to be wanting to see the lord, so, do you want to try and ask the guard for permission, or kinda just like head on inside?』

「Ask guards.」

『Alright, but what if they say no? Cause I'm pretty sure they're going to end up asking us to leave.』

Realistically speaking, the chances of us actually getting an audience were pretty miniscule. We came in the middle of the night without any sort of appointment or prior notice. Moreover, we weren't all that well known either. Fran was just another D ranked adventurer, and a young girl at that. The only two kinds of people that'd welcome her in this sort of situation were the overly nice and lolicons up to know good.

「Ask Flut and Satia.」

『Fair enough.』

I mean, they did really want us to drop by, but they might've already gone to bed given the time. That said, contacting the Prince and Princess was pretty much the only real card we had to play. Yeahhh, the situation wasn't exactly what I'd call favourable by any means.

We figured that we'd probably have a better chance if we were a bit more upfront about the whole thing, so we descended at a location a bit further away and approached the gate in as natural a manner as possible. That said, both guards still found it rather strange for a child to be walking over to them at this time of day.

「A kid?」

「At a time like this?」

「Hi.」

「W-What did you need?」

Sweet, it looks like they're at least going to hear us out instead of just chasing us away right off the bat.

「Came to see acquaintance.」

「Are you sure you didn't get the wrong place? This here is the Lord's manor.」

「I'm sure. Acquaintances staying here temporarily.」

「Hahahah. Only members of the nobility ever stay at the Lord's manor.」

「Alright, that's enough joking around from you. Go home, kid. It's late, and you should be in bed.」

The guards were surprisingly good people. They didn't shout at Fran to try and drive her away, and they even seemed genuinely worried about her.

「Flut and Satia. Should be here. Friends.」

「Flut, Satia? Who?」

「Wait, I'm fairly certain that Flut and Satia are the names of the Fyrias Kingdom's prince and princess.」

「Oh, yeah, right. But those guys are royalty. There's no way they'd be friends.」

「Hold on. I do remember them saying that one of their friends might end up paying them a visit, and that we should let said friend through should she come.」

「Ahhh, yeah. I remember now. H-Hey, what was your na – er, would you mind if I asked for your name?」

「Nn? Fran.」

「See, I knew it!」

「P-Please allow some time in order for us to authenticate any necessary details!」

And so, the guards ran around and exchanged information in a bit of a dumbfounded manner in order to confirm Fran's identity.

The whole process ended up taking about a total of thirty minutes.

「How nice of you to visit!」

「We're glad to see you again.」

「Nn. Me too.」

「We've heard much of your accomplishments. They say your entry in the King of Cooking is a dish completely unknown even to the judges themselves.」

「Our servants have claimed that they were extremely delicious. We really would like to try them ourselves.」

「Then stop by stall?」

「We can't. We as royalty can't possibly voice any dissatisfactions about the food Barbra's lord is providing us. Besides, there's all that troublesome food taster stuff too.」

Riiiiight. Royalty didn't have the liberty to just walk around in order to buy and eat whatever they wanted. That applied all the more to both Flut and Satia seeing as how they'd only just recently avoided an assassination. Serid, who just happened to be standing by, ended up giving a bit of a frown in response to the the prince's words.

「Then can just sneak a few. Here.」

「Awesome! So this is the rumoured curry bread?」

「It's still warm!」

「Paramount of flavour.」

「I-It's that delicious?」

「Nn.」

「We'll gladly accept the offer.」

Flut and Satia happily grabbed the food Fran presented them without even a moment's hesitation.

Wait, whatever happened to the food taster stuff?

I looked towards Serid, only to find that he actually wasn't bothering to say or do anything. All he did was keep the same frown on his face. In fact, he, like the prince and princess, also took a serving of the dish when we ended up deciding to offer it to him. He actually just took it without even the slightest bit of suspicion.

It looked like he actually trusted Fran. Though, I guess that did make sense. There was no reason for her to poison anyone present, especially after all they'd been through together.

「It tastes really good!」

The princess was the first to react.

「I think it might be the most delicious thing I've ever had!」

「Me too!」

「I do admit that the dish is indeed mortifyingly delicious.」

The fact that all three of them enjoyed it made me feel pretty good about myself. It seemed even royalty was within curry bread's strike zone.

「Curry is best.」

「That's a claim I'm more than capable of understanding.」

「Nn.」

Fran looked at all three of Flut, Satia and Serid with a smug expression on her face. She ended up giving a happy nod each and every single time any of the three said the words “tasty” or “delicious.”

『It should be about time for us to get down to business.』

「Nn?」

Apparently, Fran'd been so happy with everyone's reactions that she'd completely forgotten why we came here in the first place.

『We paid them a visit because we needed to see the Lord, remember?』

「Right. Accidentally forgot.」

「What's wrong, Fran?」

「Came to ask a favour.」

「What kind of favour? We'll try our best to see it through if it's something we can help you with.」

「Nn. Want to see Barbra's Lord.」

「You wanted to see Sir Rhodas? What for?」

「Tomorrow. Coup d'etat.」

「Did you state that there would be a coup d'etat!? Explain to us the details immediately!」

Serid interjected the moment he heard about the the coup.

And so, Fran told the three everything she knew. She described the second son's treachery, and the third son's involvement therein while also making mention of the assassinations ordered.

Her explanation led Flut to immediately rise to his feet.

「Serid, I command you to arrange us a meeting with Sir Rhodas immediately.」

「By your will, Your Highness!」

「Believing me?」

It looked to us like the prince had taken Fran's words to heart; his expression betrayed not even the slightest bit of doubt.

「I do. I know that I can trust you, Fran.」

「The images Urushi showed us looked quite realistic as well.」

「Telling a lie of such a caliber can result in execution, and I hardly take you for such a fool.」

And so, with that said, Serid left the room in order to book us an appointment with the Lord. Flut and Satia were royalty. Their words held quite the weight to them, so much weight, in fact, that the Lord himself came to their room before even five minutes had passed.

「I have come to answer your summons, Your Highnesses?」

「I'd like to introduce you to a friend of ours before we begin our discussions.」

「Fran. Adventurer. Nice to meet you.」

Rhodas was a noble with an incredible amount of power, but he ended shaking Fran's head with a nod of acknowledgement regardless. It looked to me that he was being as careful as possible to ensure that he kept the Prince and Princess in a good mood. Treating her without respect despite the introduction would likely lead to the opposite of his desired result.

「And I am Rhodas Krysten, Barbra's Lord. Your Highnesses, did you perhaps call for me in order to allow for this introduction?」

「Unfortunately that's not all. We'd like for you to listen to what she has to say.」

「I see...? Very well then.」

I had to say, Rhodas was truly an exemplary noble. He was probably overloaded with doubts and questions, but he managed to retain a poker face and his answer only indicated the slightest bit of hesitation. He knew that he was dealing with royalty, and that it'd be best for him to go along with their demands.

「Nn. Here to discuss second and third sons.」

「Are you perhaps referring to Bluke and Waint?」

「Nn.」

And so, Fran told Rhodas basically exactly what he'd just told Fyrians. Naturally, not even a noble as accomplished as him could remain calm when told of the fact that his kids were scheming up a coup.

「That's preposterous! On what sort of ridiculous foundation could you possibly base those claims!?!」

He eventually became unable to hold it any longer, and ended up cutting Fran off with a shout.

「The truth.」

「Then you must surely possess evidence!」

He rose from his chair whilst continuing to yell despite the fact that he was still in the presence of royalty.

「Urushi.」

「Woof!」

「A-And what precisely might you be doing now?」

「Don't worry Sir Rhodas. No harm will come to you. Please relax.」

「Y-Your Highness, I...」

「Woof!」

「Ugh... I...」

Seeing Urushi's memories caused Rhodas to grimace. It didn't seem like he was willing to what he'd just witnessed.

「What you've presented me fails to suffice as evidence... But I highly doubt that a girl as young as yourself would otherwise have knowledge of Zerais' features... Moreover, it is indeed a fact that this year's festival has seen many more arrests than any other in the past. 」

He started muttering under his breath while sorting through the details.

「Well, Sir Rhodas? What are your thoughts on the matter?」

「We have yet to see any solid evidence, and as such, I cannot agree to deploying all the city's troops.」

「I understand your concerns, but the danger posed by a potential coup d'état should not simply be overlooked.」

「Before we discuss the matter any further, I must ask something of you, Your Highness. Do you trust the words that the young lady before us has said on this day?」

「I have full faith in her.」

「I see...」

The Lord spent a bit of time contemplating the pros and cons of each of his options.

If I were to guess, I'd say that he probably first considered if his sons were trustworthy. The next factor he thought of was likely whether or not listening to the Fyrians was a good move from a political standpoint. They were royalty, but they also hailed from a completely different country. He didn't necessarily need to heed their words, but, doing so would allow him to build with them a trusting relationship. Moreover, they'd owe him a

favour if we were wrong about the whole thing. The last thing he probably ended up debating was if what he'd been shown through magic was something that'd actually happened.

And so, after a few minutes passed, he finally managed to come to a decision.

「I understand the circumstances and will act accordingly. I cannot arrest either of my sons without evidence. However, I will have the guards that normally work throughout the night restrain them whilst claiming to be functioning as escorts. I will also work to increase the number of guards on patrol in order and have them search for both Zerais and Zerrosreed. I will then mobilize an additional unit in order to collect evidence as to not make waste of time.」

「We will contribute our own guards to your forces as well. The more heads we have, the easier the task will be to achieve.」

Honestly, we'd hoped for him to mobilize all his troops in order for him to quickly capture and arrest Bluke and his companions, but that was unrealistic, and what he was now was still sufficient. Besides, the troops Flut and Satia brought along were going to join in as well, so we still had more than enough manpower.

「Got it.」

「And where, might I inquire, are you headed off to now?」

Rhodas questioned Fran as she rose from her seat. He'd probably assumed that she was just going to sit here and wait until the whole thing was done and over with.

「Finding evidence.」

We figured it'd be a good for us to take either Zerrosreed or Zerais into custody.

『Alright, Urushi. We're going to be counting on that nose of yours, boy.』

「Woof.」

「Will be back.」

—

[1] Think along the lines of how cats like to narrow their eyes when you pet them sometimes.

I'd expected that I'd end up having to take breaks from both Fire Emblem and Nights of Azure because of the translations typically being really bad for my sanity. I was right. You can thank those two games' localization teams for today's release.

Chapter 122: Of Progress and Sudden Changes in Situation.

122. Of Progress and Sudden Changes in Situation.

Rhodas had hesitated in coming to a decision, but immediately swapped to a series of quick, decisive actions the moment he did. That is, he managed to sortie his troops within the hour.

A part of his rapidity was due to the lack of a need to make any sort of major preparation. He didn't bother delivering an address. He simply told the guards that they were taking Waint and Bluke into custody, and that was that.

And of course, we ended up having to join them so we could show them to the manor's location.

『Urushi, can you tell if the lord's second son is actually there or not right now?』

(Woof!)

『Alright, good.』

It would've been a huge pain in the ass to end up not finding the Lord's second son present even after going out of our way to get what was effectively a warrant for his arrest.

The lord had his troops stand by as soon as they entered sight range of our target. Turned out that he was still indeed hesitating, which, honestly, was pretty fair. He didn't have any real evidence, the only thing he had to go off of was what he probably thought to be a suspicious girl's testament. He

didn't know exactly who owned the manor, and thus, could potentially have to end up being liable for any damages caused, especially seeing as he was basically about to have the city's guards assault it.

In other words, it was up to us to take the initiative.

『Fran.』

「Nn.」

「W-Whatever are you doing!? Return at once!」

Fran dashed out in front whilst ignoring Rhodas' protests. Our target was the gatekeeper. We didn't want to end up having to argue with him, and we figured that getting him talk would probably help convince the Lord that we were in the right.

「Huh?」

I appraised the man and verified that he was not only a criminal, but also afflicted with the whole heart of evil thing. Only after confirming all that did we strike; Fran silenced him by smacking him in the face with her fist.

We then tied him up and gagged him before healing him and waking him up.

「Mrrggphh!」

「Quiet.」

「Mrrggphh!」

Specifically, Fran had woken him up by kicking him hard enough to bend his spine into something that seemed to resemble a “less than” symbol. She then repeated the process until he finally stopped resisting. [1]

Only after that did Rhodas finally approach, several aides in tow.

「A-And what is it that you are doing right now?」

「Nn? Interrogation.」

「It appeared as but mere torture to me... That aside, who precisely is that man?」

「Dunno specifics. Some enemy.」

「And do you possess the evidence to support that claim?」

「Could tell at a glance.」

「Does that not simply mean that you have none whatsoever?」

Rhodas planted his face into his palms as he shook his head back and forth. He didn't have the ability to use appraisal, so he obviously had no clue that the man was indeed one of our enemies. Thus, he was probably contemplating what he was going to do about this whole situation.

「Will ask questions now. Answer honestly, no more pain. Make a fuss, death.」

Hearing Fran's words caused the gatekeeper to nod as fast as he could, with his face as pale as could be. He ended up just sitting there, looking at us meekly after we removed his gag.

「This manor. Who is owner?」

「The place is owned by The Eathra Company. I-I'm just a lowly guard, so that's all I know!」

Hmmm, didn't look like he was lying.

「Eathra Company?」

Dannan, one of Rhodas' older aides, filled us in on a few details after he happened to catch sight of Fran repeating the unfamiliar name under her breath. Dannan was actually quite the impressive guy. He took on every single chamberlain-esque duty whilst also managing the lord's domestic

affairs. Moreover, he was even about as strong as the average D ranked adventurer. The old man was seriously just a huge bundle of talent.

「The Eathra Company is a subsidiary under Sir Bluke's Tormayo Corporation. It is known as a rather greedy company, and widely detested as a result.」

The Tormayo Corporation was actually a rather expansive business. It mainly focused around the sale of luxuries to nobles, many of which Bluke would personally introduce to the store. It had so much wealth and influence that not even the Lord himself could really do much to it, at least not openly.

The Eathra Company had The Tormayo Corporation backing them every step of the way, so they were pretty much able to avoid all inspections and audits.

「I recall Sir Bluke stating that he knew little of Tormayo's subsidiaries as he'd left management of its affairs to one of his retainers.....」

Yeaahhhh, no. That was obviously a lie.

「Man named Bluke here?」

「Oh, you're talkin about the guy that Eathra's manager keeps bowing to, right? If so, then he's definitely here. I see him all the time, so I can say fer sure that he went inside a couple hours back.」

「Last question. You, do lots of bad things?」

「Er, well, I...」

「Hmm..」

A loud cracking sound resounded through the night as Fran kicked the man in the back hard enough to cause tears to flow from his eyes.

「I-I'm sorry, I'm sorry! I'll answer your question, so please, stop already!」

「Then answer. Shouldn't have hesitated in first place.」

「I've done lots of bad things. I've kidnapped women and dragged em back over. I've even done myself some arson when the company was faced with competition.」

The Eathra Company was pretty much made to do all The Tormayo Corporation's dirty work. In essence, the company basically constituted the corporation's dark side, but they were positioned in such a manner that they could be cut off with ease if their crimes were to come to light. Under normal conditions, their activities would likely have had remained in the dark due to Bluke's influence, but even so, the company had still gone out of their way to base itself in a location that made it easy for the people involved to cover stuff up.

「And is Bluke aware of all that is going on?」

「I would say that is a reasonable conclusion, given all the factors mentioned.」

Dannan's response to the Lord's question caused him quite a bit of grief.

「I can't believe it... For Bluke, for my own son to be involved in this line of business...」

Rhodas seemed to be the doting type. Or rather, the type that trusted the members of his family unconditionally.

「People that cross Bluke get it bad. I've heard he's killed a few, and sold a few others off into the illegal slave market.」

「C-Cease with your lies immediately... Bluke would never...」

Rhodas continued to protest, but it seemed that he'd started to doubt his son's deeds. His tone had lacked its usual strength.

「I deprived him of his right to inherit my rule as a result of the intolerable manner in which he had looked upon the city's common folk, and I had expected him to repent for his misdeeds as a result...」

「It appears that depriving him of his right to succeed has instead caused him to throw a temper tantrum.」

「That can't be... Bluke...」

Wait wait, did Dannan just call this a temper tantrum? I'm pretty sure this counts as a bit more than just that. They do realize that he's trying to kill his older brother and usurp his position, right?

「Very well. I will speak to Bluke myself. The testimony to which I have just born witness suffices as enough evidence to warrant action. Guards, I order you, take all who resist into custody, and if you happen to chance upon Bluke... Arrest him.」

「As you will, my Lord!」

We used the gatekeeper's key to get ourselves within the building's premises.

We had the sixty person group split in half. Thirty odd troops surrounded the building, whilst the rest infiltrated and performed a raid.

Bluke had a bunch of his men stationed within the manor, but they were unable to stand up to the city's guards. Hence, they were arrested and detained, one after the other. Resisting didn't do them any good.

Appraising them led to the conclusion that every single individual had been afflicted with both the Heart of Evil and Enraged status conditions. Did Bluke have all his subordinates drink the magic-infused water they made? I guess the only way to find out is to ask him ourselves.

We arrived in front of Bluke's door after about five minutes. Urushi had found him with Presence Detection, so we knew for a fact that he was there.

Fran slammed the door open, only to find the man rummaging through his desk. It looked like he'd realized that something was going on, so he was getting some cash ready in order to ensure his escape.

「N-Name yourself!」

「Nn. Will not give name to criminals.」

「And you believe that you have the right to make such a claim despite trespassing as we speak?」

「Trespassing, she is not, Bluke. Her actions abide perfectly by law, as she is currently in the midst of an investigation with regards to an organization suspected to be engaged in criminal actions.」

「What? Father!? For what reason are you here...?」

「That would be a question I myself would also like to ask. Bluke, for what reason are you within the confines of a criminal organisation?」

「What are you saying, father?」

Bluke started to make an excuse, but I didn't really care. My attention was directed elsewhere, specifically, at the fact that he was afflicted by the same two status conditions as everyone else in the building.

The hell? Did he drink the magic-infused water he made? That makes no sense. I mean, why would he? And does Enraged have anything to do with the whole Heart of Evil thing? Or are they independent of each other?

A soldier entered the room as I pondered.

「We've completed our mission sir. The entire manor is now under our control. We found a few wanted criminals within, but have managed to detain each and every single one. We also came across several young girls believed to be victims of the underground slave market. We've taken them into custody for the sake of protection.」

Both the wanted criminals and illegal slaves served to provide indisputable, incriminating evidence. There was no way Bluke could get away with the whole thing by just saying that he didn't know about it.

「I will listen to all that you have to say once we arrive at the Knights' Headquarters. However, be aware that I bear not the will to listen to mere excuses.」

「Impossible...! This is impossible! Impossible I say! How did you catch wind of my activities!?!」

Did he seriously expect anyone not to notice? Did he think himself an intellectual, and his plan super solid or something? Did he not realize that it was built atop a logical fallacy to begin with?

Like, why did he think he could become Barbra's Lord by making his father step down from his position? If the ordeal was actually so serious that they needed to arrest the Lord for it, then the country definitely wouldn't have let his family retain any power. Rhodas' whole household would've gone down with him.

Oh well, either way, we managed to stop the coup, which was good. All we had to do now was to reduce the number of victims by detaining Waint and preventing him from selling anything his stuff tomorrow.

We could cure the abnormal stats conditions that all the people had by feeding them the Recovery Water we'd made. So yeah, all was fine and dandy.

Or it should've been, had Bluke not suddenly started screaming.

「Guhguahhhhh!」

「B-Bluke? What is the matter?」

「Gugugaugagaguaguaguuuuuuuuuuah!」

Bluke's body began giving a black aura. Okay, yeah that totally didn't look all fine and dandy.

『Fran, have him drink the Water of Recovery.』

「Nn. Urushi, hold down.」

「Bark!」

Urushi held Blue in position with his front paws as the man convulsed and continued to scream. Fran approached him and tried to pour some of the Water of Recovery out and into his mouth, but he kept moving and refused to drink even a single drop.

「Urushi, turn upside down.」

「Woof.」

Urushi did as he was told and flipped Blue over so he had his back against the ground. Fran then finally managed to pry his mouth open and make him down several gulps of the Water of Recovery.

『Shit, we didn't make it in time!』

I'd thought that we finally managed to resolve the situation, but I was wrong. Appraising him didn't result in what I'd expected.

General Information

Species Name: Evil Human (Evil Being)

Level: 1

Status Condition: Insane, Rampaging.

HP: 61

MP: 70

STR: 26

VIT: 31

AGI: 18

INT: 33

MGC: 36

DEX: 24

Skills

Intimidation: Lv 2

Martial Arts: Lv 1

Innate Skills

Evil Arts: Lv 1

Titles

Evil God's Slave

Description: Unknown.

His status page looked exactly like that of a magic beast's, and his species totally said he'd turned into some type of evil being. [2] The way his level had reverted back to one almost made it seem like he'd undergone some sort of evolution. That said, his stats were super high for a mere level one's. He obviously wasn't as strong as we were, but he probably had the strength to take down a guard.

Good thing he wasn't an adventurer, or really strong to begin with or anything like that. If that were the case, we probably would've been screwed.

「Giggagagagagagaaaaa!」

「Gugagagagagaaa!」

And then, it happened. A series of similar screams resounded from outside the manor's confines.

—

[1] It's this symbol <. This is actually a pretty common description in Japanese novels. More literally, the person is said to be bent into < (hiragana 'ku') shape.

[2] The kobolds were also called evil beings.

50 releases! Hell yeah! That's like two or three volumes worth!

Chapter 123: Luzerio

123. Luzerio

Shouts and screams erupted from the building's exterior as presence detection went off and informed me of a series of enemies.

Shit. It looked like Bluke wasn't the only one that'd transformed.

「Bluke! Bluke, answer me! Whatever is the matter, Bluke!」

「Approaching, bad idea.」

「Blu-ugh!」

Rhodas ignored Fran's warning and tried to approach his son, only to be immediately met with a kick therefrom despite the fact that Urushi was still holding the newly transformed Evil Human down.

「Sir Rhodas! Are you unharmed?」

「W-Worry not. I am fine.」

Rhodas stared blankly in a mix of shock and pain as Dannan helped him back up to his feet.

Naturally, his stare did nothing to halt, or even slow down Bluke's transformation. The second son's eyes were dyed a pure, jet black; his pupils almost seemed to disappear entirely. His skin had started to undergo a similar process; every last bit of it was tainted as black as the night itself as his muscles swelled till they bulged to the point of abnormality. Everything about him had changed, save for the features on his face. An eerie, sickening result.

I felt the urge to cut him down immediately, but refrained. His father was watching, and we wished not for Barbra's lord to resent us.

Besides, there might actually be some way for us to turn him back to normal. Bluke knew tonnes about things areas in which we wanted more knowledge, so having him regain his sanity could potentially allow us to derive from him a fair amount of useful information.

「Guruuuuaaaaaahhh!」

He continued to struggle against his capture. It looked like he'd lost all sense of reasoning, and was unwilling to be detained.

Alright, for the time being, we should try having him drink a bit more of the Water of Recovery to see if it does anything.

And... nope.

Fine. What if we used Anti Curse?

And.... also nope.

Our tests led us to realize that he wasn't actually in an abnormal state.

Both the Insane and Rampaging states were considered to be his default states, and thus, we weren't able to get rid of either condition. In other words, we were going to have one hell of a hard time turning him back to normal or taking him in quietly.

『Let's see if we can make him stop moving around.』

「Nn. Urushi, let go.」

「Woof.」

「Stun Bolt.」

「Groooogaaaaa!」

Bluke had tried getting up the moment Urushi let go of him, but Stun Bolt had inflicted him with paralysis. And hence, he was now once again on the ground. He was still conscious, but no longer able to move.

『Alright Urushi, hold him down again. Have him stay there till we tell you otherwise.』

「Woof.」

『Let's go take care of everything happening in the garden, Fran.』

「Nn.」

Fran rushed back into the hallway and leapt through one of the windows that faced the building's garden, shattering it in the process.

『It looks like everyone that got arrested ended up transforming.』

All ten of the men that taken into custody had ended up breaking out of their bindings as a result of their “evolutions.” There were far fewer of them than there were guards, but they still seemed to have the advantage due to their disparately high stats.

「What now? Capture all?」

『Eh... nah. Let's just kill them. Detaining each and every single one would end up being a huge pain in the ass. Besides, they're criminals anyways, so they'd probably just end up getting sentenced to death even if we did find out how to turn them back to normal.』

I mean, that's kinda just what happens to anyone with a hand in a failed coup d'etat.

「Got it.」

Fran accelerated through the use of Air Jump and used the resulting momentum to immediately cleave one of the Evil Humans in half. I threw in a wind spell and took out a second as she landed.

The captured men had been ruffians to begin with, so they were quite a bit stronger than Bluke. Evolution had turned each into an E or so ranked threat.

That said, they still weren't anywhere close to being our match; it only took us about three minutes to finish them all off. I was honestly kind of disappointed by the results. They were actually pretty strong. I was expecting to be able to absorb their magic stones and get myself a few points. I was quite interested in all the skills they had too, but it turned out that they didn't actually have magic stones. Oh well, can't be helped, I guess.

The guards ended up falling onto their butts in exhaustion the moment they saw the last Evil Human fall.

We knew that they were tired, but, we would have to bother them a bit more. And so, Fran approached a man whose armour seemed a bit flashier than the rest, the guy we presumed was the squad's chief.

「Hey.」

「Y-Yes? What did you need?」

The chief immediately tensed up and straightened his back as he realized Fran wanted to talk to him. It looked to me like he was feeling a mix of respect and terror for Fran's strength.

「All the people in the manor accounted for?」

「Yes ma'am. The only other people we found inside are the ladies right over there.」

Following the chief's line of sight led us to a group of young girls, currently huddled up and trembling in fear. Quickly appraising them informed me that there wasn't really anything wrong with any of them as far as status abnormalities went.

「Zerais, alchemist. Rynford, old man. Both not here?」

「I didn't catch sight of either of the two.」

I'd assumed that the troops had managed to arrest the two of them, but apparently that wasn't the case at all. We went around and inspected the faces on all the Evil Humans we killed just to make sure, but we didn't actually find either of the two.

In other words, Bluke was, in fact, not actually the mastermind behind all this. The real mastermind had somehow caught wind of our actions and escaped. Moreover, he'd even manage to retaliate. Was this whole Evil Human transformation thing time based? Or was it done through some sort of remote controlled device? I couldn't actually tell which of the two it was, but I could at least say that both would definitely be a pain in the ass to deal with.

Hmm... What now? We could have Urushi try sniffing around in order to track the guy down. We could also potentially search the manor and see if we could find any sort of clue.

(Master.)

『Yeah? What's up?』

(There.)

Fran pointed to the area lying behind the slaves we'd saved. There, we saw the gatekeeper, still tied up just as he'd been before.

Wait. He didn't transform? What?

He was currently afflicted with the "Agitated Heart of Evil" status condition. Unlike the other guys though, he didn't have the enraged thing applied to him. Hmmm... I guess that means the whole transformation thing is based on the amount of the magic-infused water one ingests? If so, then we were in luck, as it meant that the townsfolk that happened to have the former status abnormality wouldn't end up transforming.

That said though, we couldn't just leave the whole situation as it was right now.

We couldn't actually get any use out of the Lord. He was still in a state of shock as a result of his son transforming into a sort of inhuman monster right before his very eyes. Hence, we decided that it'd be better for us to talk to Dannan instead.

「Understand?」

「Indeed. I see that you were telling the truth, and the situation is looking even worse than initially anticipated.」

We didn't know exactly how many people were in danger of turning into Evil Humans, but chances were, it was more than just a mere ten or twenty. Moreover, it was fairly probably that they'd end up transforming in highly populated, public areas, which, of course, would lead to one hell of a problem.

「Rally troops.」

「That I will. The situation is nothing short of an emergency, and thus, we are also justified in mobilizing the knights.」

We informed Dannan of the specifics on how to differentiate those that might transform and those that might not.

「I see, so we must use Appraisal and be wary of those that carry the Enraged condition.」

「Nn.」

「I understand. We shall immediately dispatch a request to the Adventurer's Guild in order to secure several individuals capable of appraisal. Unfortunately, we will not be able to hire nearly as many as is possible. It is important for us to ensure that these events remain unknown to the public.」

Yeahhhh, Rhodas might actually end up having to resign if everything ended up coming to light. It seemed that ideally, he wanted to punish Bluke and Waint behind closed doors, secretly find and heal everyone affected by the abnormal status conditions, and finally somehow manage to catch both Zerais and Rynford.

「Would you mind continuing to lend us your strength?」

「Don't mind. Will chase down alchemist. Zerais.」

「Please and thank you. We will ensure we reward you accordingly.」

「Got it. Will first wander around manor. Searching for clues.」

「Please do. I suspect there to be several hidden rooms given the property's scale. Be wary of their potential existence.」

「Nn.」

We had Urushi taken off Bluke-stomping duty, and instead tied the man up super tight before telling the guards to keep an eye on him. We needed our wolf's nose, so we couldn't have him babysit the Lord's son forever.

『Alright boy, we're going to need you sniff around to see if you can find strong traces of Zerais' scent anywhere. Find everything you can, be it his lab or a secret passageway.』

「Woof!」

Urushi started wandering the manor whilst putting his sense of smell to work. After wandering around aimlessly for a bit, he finally ended up choosing to descend into the building's basement. I'd a few suspicions about the building's underground section, and it turned out that they'd been spot on.

The black wolf ultimately ended up leading us to a doorway.

「Woof bark woof!」

「Can't feel anyone inside.」

『But I guess this is the place that smells most like him?』

「Woof!」

Fran opened the door to find a facility that could only ever be described as a laboratory. It very much reminded me of Jean's.

I couldn't help but want to grab all the tools left lying around for myself. Most, we could get use out of the, and the rest could fetch us a pretty penny on the market. Unfortunately though, I couldn't actually grab any of it. The current circumstances more or less dictated that everything here now belonged to the Lord, and thus, taking the items for myself counted as theft. Oh well, we didn't have the time to grab it all anyways, seeing as how we were stuck chasing Zerais.

『I guess I'll have to pass it all up...』

「Nn.」

That said, there wasn't actually too much of value left sitting around. I mean, there were a few potions and the raw materials used therein, but all the stuff here was stuff you could pretty much get anywhere.

I tried looking at a few of the documents he had sitting around, but wasn't really able to make much sense of them. I was, however, able to discern that none of them contained any information that could potentially assist us in chasing the man down. I was feeling a bit down because of it, but luckily, Urushi wasn't done just yet.

He sat himself down in front of a bookshelf and started scratching at the wall.

Wait, don't tell me they actually had a secret escape route installed? Seriously? I moved myself over to Urushi and started to give the wall a good stare, but I couldn't see any cracks or anything.

I tapped the supposed secret wall and several others with Telekinesis just to compare the sounds. Surely enough, the one right in front of me sounded much more hollow than the rest.

Hmm... but how did the hidden mechanism work? I mean, that bookshelf looked super suspicious, especially if you thought about all the stereotypes that came with this sort of situation. It could be one of the books... but it could also be the wall. Maybe there's a place to press down somewhere? Man, thinking about all this is actually starting to get decently fun.

「Master? Spotted something?」

『Hmm, well, I'm pretty sure that there's a hidden passage right here, but I can't figure out how to open it. Oh, right, you should try figuring out the trick too, Fran. It's pretty fu-』

「Like this?」

The room was suddenly filled by a loud thump as Fran gave the wall a full forced front kick.

It immediately gave into her strike and revealed the secret passageway despite having been covered in a layer of protective magic.

『Umm... Fran...?』

「One more time.」

She followed the front kick up with a spin kick and applied so much strength that she caused the entire room to start shaking. The wall was unable to sustain the force of the blow, and ended up collapsing and revealing a stairwell.

『Well... Whatever works works, I guess.』

「Nn? Let's go.」

「Woof.」

Urushi began leading us down the stairs, and into a large, earthen tunnel. It clearly an escape route, and naturally, it didn't have any sort of traps built into it.

「Someone's there.」

『Yeah, I can feel his bloodthirst emanating from all the way over here.』

Crisis Detection kicked itself into action and warned us that whatever we were about to fight was more than just a mere small fry.

『Let's make sure we're ready to jump right into battle.』

「Nn.」

『Urushi, you stay hidden boy.』

「Woof.」

We cautiously advanced for about five minutes before finally reaching an area with about twenty meters of space in every direction. At the center of it all sat the thing that'd been thirsting for blood.

It was a man, one with a gentle looking smile, the sight of which for some odd reason pissed me off to no end.

「You know, I was seriously wonderin what kind of person it'd take to actually find that little escape route of ours. Never in my life would I have guessed it to be a mere little girl.」

「Zerais' subordinate?」

「Wazzat? You seriously think someone as fuckin awesome as me would serve that gloomy-lookin, pussy ass bitch?」

Name: Luzerio

Age: 36

Race: Human

Job: Concealed Spearman

State: Heart of Evil

Status Level: 35/99

HP: 266

MP: 214

STR: 131

VIT: 129

AGI: 178

INT: 90

MGC: 121

DEX: 130

Skills

Assassination: Lv 5

Espionage: Lv 4

Evasion: Lv 5

Presence Detection: Lv 4

Sword Arts: Lv 2

Torture: Lv 6

Blink: Lv 5

Spear Techniques: Lv 7

Spear Arts: Lv 8

Short Sword Arts: Lv 3

Poison Resistance: Lv 3

Paralysis Resistance: Lv 6

Trap Detection: Lv 2

Vigour Manipulation

Pain Reduction

Titles

Mass Murderer

One who Inflicts Suffering

Servant to the Evil God

Equipment

Pointed Mithril Spear

Venomous Monkey Fang Short Sword

Black Wolf's Leather Full Body Armour

Dark Mithril Gauntlet

Mantle of Espionage

Heat Resistant Bracelet

Ring of Escape

—

Huh, that's the first time I've ever seen the Torture skill.

—

Torture

Rarity Level 3

Boosts idea generation during torture. Also increases the amount of pain inflicted to victims of torture.

—

His titles honestly made him look like a piece of shit. He was even apparently a Servant to the Evil God.

It was a bit different than Bluke's title, which claimed him to be the Evil God's Slave. This guy had the exact same title as the kobold we'd fought a few days back. I couldn't tell the difference between being the God's slave and servant, and unfortunately, Appraisal wasn't really helping me as much as I wanted it to be. It just kept spitting out that the title's description was unknown.

「Then, Zerrosreed's subordinate?」

「You fuckin kidding me!? You think I'd obey that retarded musclehead?」

It seemed that we'd flipped his switch. It was clear as day that he knew Zerrosreed, but the two didn't exactly get along.

「Only man I'd ever fuckin serve would be an Evil Arts User like Rynford. And you see, unlike that Zerrosreed retard, I've actually got brains, so Rydford trusts me ya know?」

Huh? Evil Arts User? That's the first real thing we've actually learned about the old man. The way things sounded made it seem like he was the real mastermind behind all this.

That said, it seemed that this Rynford guy was real cold hearted. He was totally willing to order his subordinates to throw away their lives just so he could buy himself a bit of time.

『Alright, let's tie him up and wring him of all he knows.』

「Nn.」

「Kuhahahahaha! You seriously wanna go? Alright, bring it on brat, I'll make you regret everything.」

Luzerio took up a stance with his spear and readied himself for combat.

Chapter 124: Luzerio's "Trump Card"

124. Luzerio's "Trump Card"

Fran smashed me into Luzerio's spear and caused a series of sparks to illuminate the underground space.

She was much more skilled than him, but had to hold back so we could keep him alive for information's sake. Moreover, he had range on her, and was actually decently strong to begin with. He could match the average C ranked adventurer.

The combination of all the aforementioned factors led the two to fight roughly on par with one another. Unfortunately for Luzerio though, said abilities had caused him to realize why he still continued to draw breath.

「Fuck! Just die already, you shitty brat!」

「Refuse.」

「Fuck! Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck! How the fuck is a fucking kid strong enough to go even with me!?!」

「Stop with denial. Not going even.」

「Shaddappppp!!!!」

He'd probably planned to take his time toying with Fran, but reality had instead grasped his dignity and slapped him in the face with it, for it was she and not he that ended up holding back. The fact that his strikes weren't

even so much as leaving scratches caused him to start screaming in frustration.

It would be in our best interest to wrap this up as quickly as possible so we could chase Rynford down, but his Paralysis Resistance was pretty high level, so I figured we probably wouldn't be able to get him with Stun Bolt.

『Alright, I'm going to mess him up next time we clash. Try not to kill him if you can.』

(Got it.)

「Just die already mother fuckerrrr!!!!」

I cast Wind Wall without chanting the moment Luzerio extended his spear in an attempt to get some decent damage in and caused his strike to deviate far from its intended path.

「What!?!」

「Opening.」

Fran immediately knocked his weapon aside as I followed up my spell with another.

『Stun Bolt!』

「Garghghg!」

Yeeaaap, I knew he wouldn't end up getting paralyzed.

「You fucking braaaaughhhh!!」

Stun Bolt didn't really do anything but make him flinch, so he immediately turned around and reached to grab his spear. However, he was interrupted by Urushi, who promptly leapt out of his shadow and gave one of his legs a good bite.

「Growl!」

「Graaahghghgh!」

His right shank had been completely detached from his body. He promptly lost his balance and fell over while staring at his severed limb with a flabbergasted look on his face.

「...M-My leg! My legggg!!!!」

He glared at both Fran and Urushi whilst grinding his teeth in hatred and rage. It almost looked as if his stare alone could cause some sort of curse.

In spite of that, seeing Fran point her blade at his face caused him to ultimately give up. He dropped the dagger he'd pulled seemingly out of nowhere, and ended up collapsing in a bit of a slump.

「Want information about Rynford.」

「The fuck you wanna know?」

「Describe.」

「Heh. Rynford is one helluva man. He's got the ability to bless people with the Evil God's power. He lets us junk this shitty human shell we've got so we can ascend and evolve!」

The Evil God's power, eh? Yeah, Iunno, I wouldn't really call Bluke's little change to be an ascension by any means. The hell's wrong with this guy? He wants to become that kind of reason deprived thing of his own volition? All you can do in that kind of state is rampage about. Yeah, I don't really get him, or anyone with deviant-like tastes for that matter.

「Rynfords goal?」

「Rynford only has one goal, ultimate power!」

「Nn? Means reviving Evil God?」

My thoughts were more or less the same as Fran's. I'd assumed that he wanted to revive or unseal the Evil God or something like that.

「Are you retarded? Revivin the Evil God would cause the world to end. You think we just want to die? Hell naw, you can't kill people or fuck bitches if you ain't alive.」

So does that mean he's basically planning to use the Evil God's power? But how's he manage that if he's not a believer?

「Evil God's what his name says he is, a God that rules over Evil. He ain't got no qualms giving his power to sinful men like me.」

Ah, makes sense. So he's okay with helping out anyone that's evil, even if they don't worship him.

「Rynford, where?」

「He's already moved to another one of the bases Bluke's prepped for him.」

「Location?」

「Hahahahaha! You want to know where it is? I'll tell you where it is. It's beside the Lord's manor, right in the center of town. It's the perfect place for Rynford to channel his magic through the whole ass city of Barbra!」

You know, he sure is being awfully cooperative. Is he retarded or something?

The moment the thought crossed my mind was the moment the ring on his finger broke whilst giving off a pale glow; Luzerio almost seemed to disappear.

「Gyahahaha! Looks like you let your guard down, brat!」

He reappeared about ten meters away from us. It looked like the ring he'd just used had the ability to be sacrificed in order to allow him to teleport a short distance. After teleporting, the man let loose a painfully loud laugh while pulling out a small container and draining its contents in an instant.

「Y'know why I was willing to talk? S'cause you'll be dying right here, right now anyways!」

His words were accompanied by the emission of a black aura. He'd entered the same state Bluke had just a bit earlier.

Appraising him led me to observe that he had gained the Enraged status. I was more or less completely certain that the stuff he'd just downed had been some of Rynford's custom made, magic-infused water. In other words, he'd chosen to turn himself into an evil human. It seemed he really did regard it as some sort of ascension.

The flesh around where his leg was severed even started to bubble as it readied itself to regenerate.

「I'm going to tear you to fucking pieagughgh!」

Annnd denied.

I'd started chanting Short Jump the moment he teleported away. We'd already seen what happened with Bluke, so we didn't bother letting him do as he pleased. This wasn't an anime, and there weren't any awesome special effects that accompanied his transformation, so there wasn't really any point in watching him as it completed.

Fran firmly grabbed ahold of his jaw the moment she blinked towards him, and held it in such a manner that his mouth stayed open. If she wanted, she probably could've just put a bit more strength into her hand and crushed it, but instead, she slammed him into the ground.

「Drink.」

「Gurajksdhgkju8asudghask」

She activated her dimensional storage, and opened it up right in front of her palm in order to force him to drink the Water of Recovery. He wasn't able to close his mouth or spit it back out, and thus, he ended up ingesting a bunch of it.

「Gaaahhh! Gahahhhhh! Greruaghghg!」

Both his abnormal statuses disappeared; feeling the power drain from his body caused Luzerio to look up at Fran with a surprised, blank expression.

「The fuck... did you do to me!?!」

「Fixed status abnormality.」

「N-No way. No fucking way! W-W-W-What happened to all that overflowing power!? My power!? Fuuuuuuckkkkk!!! I'm going to fucking murder you, you fucking shi-!」

「Hmph.」

Fran threw a textbook worthy right hook and caught him smack in the jaw. Luzerio immediately toppled over, likely as a result of a concussion.

「Shut up.」

It looked like his shouts had been hurting her eardrums because of how excessively loud they'd been.

『Well, that works I guess.』

What now though? He knew quite a bit, so, we were glad we managed to take him alive, but we were split between dragging him along with us and handing him over to the guards. Luckily, our thoughts were interrupted by a series of rushed footsteps coming from behind us.

「Are you alright?」

The chief guard greeted us as he approached. His timing was impeccable; we quickly handed off both the guy and all the information we got from him.

Or wait, no, hold up. Luzerio was way stronger than the soldiers, so leaving him as is was probably not the best idea.

「Wah!」

I cut off Luzerio's remaining leg with a quick wind spell. He probably wouldn't be able to put up a fight with both legs missing, so that was fine I guess. We quickly sealed the wound by healing him, so the only problem was that he'd woken up again as a result of the pain, a problem Fran quickly solved by giving him another concussion.

The chief had let out a bit of cry in response to our actions, which... wasn't exactly what I'd call favourable. To him, it'd looked as if Fran had been the one to commit all the aforementioned acts of cruelty.

(Don't mind. Would've done if Master didn't.)

Yeah, I guess it's a bit too late for me to be worrying about that kinda stuff, seeing as how we'd already scared them earlier anyway.

(Nn. More important. Advance.)

『Yeah, true. We should be focusing on that instead.』

Especially seeing as how we figured out where Rynford went.

Advancing through the underground path ultimately led us to a garden in what looked like an abandoned estate in the noble's district. I'd hoped that we'd end up right inside the hideout, but unfortunately, things didn't always go that well. The place we were right now wasn't right next to the Lord's manor, in fact, it was a decent distance away, but you could see the city's centerpoint if you tried.

『Alright, let's do this.』

「Nn.」

「Woof?」

『What is it boy?』

「Woof woof woof!」

Urushi looked like he wanted to head in a direction opposite that of the Lord's manor.

『Is that where your nose is telling you Zerais is?』

「Woof!」

So does that mean Zerais and Rynford split up so they could each do their own thing? Or was the hideout Luzerio talked about fake all along? He wasn't lying, but he could've ultimately been fed false info just so he could function as a sacrificial pawn when caught.

『Hmm... What do... Do we trust what Luzerio told us, or go after Zerais...?』

In this sort of situation, it'd probably be best for us to pursue the path that led to the greatest degree of certainty. We could always track Zerais down whenever because of Urushi's nose, so there wasn't any harm in giving Rynford's supposed facts a quick check or two.

『Let's head into the noble's district for now. We'll hunt Rynford down first.』

「Nn. Got it.」

「Woof.」

Urushi used Air Jump in order to allow us to make a beeline for the Lord's manor. Looking down allowed us to see the knights as they ran around the city doing everything they needed to; it looked like Dannan had actually managed to get his job done.

An ear splitting scream soon interrupted our travels; looking down caused us to see a woman being assaulted by what almost looked like a buff, black skinned Daruma, an Evil Human. [1]

We were in a rush, but not so much of one that we'd leave victims to their fates.

「Urushi.」

「Woof!」

Urushi dove straight at the Evil Human and allowed Fran to slash at its neck as she passed it by.

But it didn't die. Its head remained unsevered.

「Gruruooooohhhh!」

It'd actually managed to realize that we were coming, so it'd raised its arms and sacrificed them to save its life.

—

General Information

Species: Evil Human (Evil Being)

Level: 1

Status Condition: Insane, Rampaging.

HP: 227

MP: 110

STR: 107

VIT: 117

AGI: 66

INT: 36

MGC: 77

DEX: 55

Skills

Intimidation: Lv 4

Presence Detection: Lv 3

Sword Arts: Lv 4

Martial Arts: Lv 3

Night Vision

Innate Skills

Evil Arts: Lv 2

Titles

Servant to the Evil God

Equipment

Steel Longsword

Description: Unknown

—

Huh, this one's pretty strong. Did it used to be an adventurer or something? It looked like it even still had some of its old skills. In other words, my suspicions were spot on, the stronger the human, the stronger the resulting Evil Human.

Hmmm... That said, I do feel like I've seen the guy somewhere before. Where was it again...?

(Adventurer. Kicked up fuss at stall.)

『Oh, right! Yeah, I remember him now.』

He'd caused some trouble at our stall, so Colbert had kicked his ass. He used to be... an F ranker, but now he'd become as strong as a D ranker. Wow. That transformation really did some work.

Still though, we didn't really have any trouble dealing him; Fran's second strike split him right down the middle. Blood and other bodily fluids splurged from his muscled corpse as it fell apart from the seams.

「Hiiiiiihfff!」

The woman we saved had gone pale because the demonic-looking corpse had fallen right in front her, but she somehow managed to squeeze out a word of thanks.

「T-Thank you very much f-for saving my life.」

Crap... What now? We couldn't really just leave her here, there might be more Evil Humans about.

「Nn.」

「Huh? Kyaah!」

「Bear with it. Just a little.」

Fran lifted her up and hopped on top of Urushi's back before immediately having him accelerate to where we saw the knights. The woman began to scream, but we couldn't really blame her.

「Kyaaaaahhhhhh!!!!」

I mean, who wouldn't scream if a three meter tall wolf popped up in front of them and started carrying them off at super high speed?

「Kyaaaaahhhhhh!!!!」

Hopefully, this wouldn't end up leaving her with any sort of trauma.
Hopefully.

[1] Darumas (Dharmas) are basically fat dolls with faces on them. Daruma dolls are modeled after the guy that started the whole Shaolin kung fu shit, and they're supposed to represent good luck. Another thing is that they're commonly used as gifts. Image below.

Chapter 125: Rynford

125. Rynford

「Very well, we shall take the lady into our care.」

「Nn.」

「We thank you for your services.」

「Thank you so much Fran! You saved my life!」

「Nn. Bye.」

「Take care of yourself out there!」

The woman we helped was much more composed now than she'd been just five minutes prior. Having Urushi leap through the sky with her on his back ended up delivering to her a bit too much of a shock, so we'd descended instead. In spite of that, the atmosphere had ended up being a bit weird throughout the trip's duration. She ended up tightly clinging to his fur, and continued to do so until it had finally come time for us to part.

We ended up having the knights tell us a bit about everything they knew as we dropped her off. It seemed that the whole situation had actually turned into quite the big deal. A bunch of pretty important places were already under attack. We had to hit the gas if we wanted to get everything under control.

『I think I see it.』

「There?」

We positioned ourselves above the Lord's manor and surveyed its surroundings.

The Lord's property was vast. It contained ten different mansions, but in spite of that, we were immediately able to distinguish our target from its peers. The atmosphere around the building in question seemed much heavier than any other around it. We felt a powerful aura from it, one that was quite similar to that of the Evil Beings we'd recently defeated. It was dark, and clearly wicked in nature. That, however, was where the similarities ended. The aura before us was on a completely different scale, it was so powerful that staring at the building from which it came seemed had started to give me goosebumps in spite of the distance between it and us.

Both Fran and Urushi started the place down, scowls plastered all over their faces.

『That's definitely it.』

「Nn.」

I was honestly kind of tempted to just go charging in through the front door, but we knew far too little about our enemies for that to work, so we fell back on our usual stealth-based tactics.

We minimized our presences as we descended into the mansion's garden. The place lacked any sort of barrier, so infiltration turned out to be rather simple.

『We'll do the usual and whittle their numbers down bit by bit.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

We started by circling around the place so we could scout out the number of enemies we'd have to take down.

The process took around ten minutes, and informed us of the fact that the building didn't actually contain that many people. Moreover, all ten or so

individuals we detected had gathered at the building's centermost area.

That, however, was all we could figure out. It didn't look like we had any other choice but to break in to the mansion's premises in order to get a bit of a better grasp of what was going on.

Oh well, whatever works, I guess.

『Get yourselves ready for combat. A fight could start at any time now.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

I had Fran and Urushi each down a Mana Potion in order to top off their magical energy levels. Fran ended up wielding Deathgaze over me this time around, as I was getting myself ready to shoot off a telekinetic catapult if need be.

And so, we entered the building. Apparently, no one noticed us break through its back door.

We held our breaths as we slowly moved towards the place from which we were detecting the building's temporary inhabitants. The air seemed to be pumped full of mana, it was almost like we'd entered a haunt. Chances were, the change in atmosphere was one caused by some sort of magic item.

Not a single enemy attacked us on our way. We arrived at our destination with so little trouble that I honestly ended up feeling more disappointed than anything.

(Master. Door.)

『Yeah. It looks like all our enemies are on the other side of it.』

I could feel our enemies from beyond the large double doors before us. It seemed that the other side contained some sort of hall-like structure. The proximity we had to our foes led us to analyze them in more detail. Said

process of feeling out their magical energies led us to the definite conclusion that what awaited us was a group of Evil Humans.

Recognizing our foes but led to a single question: what now? They hadn't bothered to put themselves on guard. In other words, they were extremely confident in their own prowess. Hence, I didn't barge in immediately. It went without saying that I strongly preferred avoiding the any choices that could potentially lead to us waltzing in on a bunch of ridiculously strong foes far out of our league.

Our enemy was capable enough to make people like Zerrosreed and Luzerio into his subordinates. It was very plausible for him to have a bunch of other C or D ranked minions at his disposal. We'd end up in quite the bad spot if we were attacked by a large group of transformed humans formerly of such a caliber. I didn't think we'd win unless we managed to catch them off guard and blast them all with a bunch of full powered spells at once.

However, I doubted that such a strategy would allow us to capture Rynford alive, especially if we were going all out. I really did want to get ahold of him without actually murdering him for informations sake though... I mean, we could always just attack everywhere except for where he was. Would that work, or...?

(What now?)

(Woof?)

Nah, scratch that. It was possible for Fran and Urushi to end up sustaining major, and potentially even irreparable injuries if we tried to hold back. Their safety was my number one priority. No way in hell I was going to bet their lives for the sake of keeping some shitty old geezer away from his grave. Besides, leaving him alive might end up completely screwing us over if we messed up. It was not only possible, but likely for him to try to destroy the city immediately, should he escape our grasp.

『Alright, let's get in there and hit everyone with everything we've got.』

(Certain?)

『Yeah. We don't even know whether that Rynford guy's really here or not to begin with, and he might end up getting away even if he is here, so we'd best finish him off before he messes even more shit up.』

Sorry Rynford, but you're a dead man.

『Anyways, let's get a move on.』

(Nn.)

(Growl!)

The room shook as Fran kicked down its door and started firing off her spells. Only after we started attacking did I look around in order to ensure that all our targets were in fact Evil Humans — which, fortunately, they were, especially seeing as how we couldn't actually stop the attacks we'd already launched.

『Exploding Flare! Hazardous Gale! Exploding Flare!』

I felt a vague bit of nostalgia as I cranked out a series of full powered blasts for the first time in a long while; I overboosted my attacks whilst using Parallel Processing and Sorcery in order to bombard an incredibly large area without much delay.

The Level 4 Flame Spell, Exploding Flare, was one that incinerated a massive area. The use of a wind spell allowed us to increase the size of its explosions even further.

「Fire Wall!」

「Groooowl!」

『Stone Wall!』

I'd used the combination at too close a range, so we ended up getting hit by a bit of the resulting hot air, but Fran managed to get out unscathed by using the defensive spells she'd chanted in advance. Exploding Flare was ridiculously powerful; its aftermath seemed equivalent to that of a napalm

blast's. Both sides of the room had its walls get completely blown away. Even we felt like we were about to get sent flying despite the three layers of protection we had.

『Did we end up going overboard?』

「Better than opposite.」

「Woof.」

The building's second floor was basically completely gone by the time the explosions finally settled down. The first had ended up half collapsed as well. Of all the areas encompassed by our strikes, the most damaged was obviously the hall in which the Evil Humans had been gathered up in. All four of its walls had been completely obliterated. Its newfound, exposed appearance almost made me think that the place was instead supposed to have been a courtyard, the courtyard of a building that took up the Lord's entire Marquis-sized property, that is.

「That's quite the way to treat someone you've never met before, girly.」

「Who?!」

「Fufufu... Are you not aware of my identity?」

「Master of Evil Arts. Rynford.」

「Right you are.」

—

General Information

Name: Rynford Lorentia

Age: 100

Race: Evil Being

Class: Master of Evil Arts

State: Normal

Status Level: 58/99

HP: 229

MP: 850

STR: 127

VIT: 97

AGI: 120

INT: 236

MGC: 552

DEX: 81

Skills

Chant Shortening: Lv 4

Appraisal: Lv 7

High Speed Regeneration: Lv 6

Evil Detection: Lv 9

Resistance to Abnormal Status: Lv 4

Agitation: Lv 4

Compounding: Lv 6

Knowledge of Poisons: Lv 7

Magic Manipulation

Greater Magic Boost

Innate Skills

Evil Arts: Lv 7

Evil God's Favour

Titles

Evil God's Vanguard

Equipment

Demonic Bone Staff

Evil Dogman's Robe

Evil Dogman's Mantle

Evil Art's Bracelet.

—

「Hmm... Your status and demonstrated abilities seem a bit disparate. Were you using some sort of magic item?」

Holy shit. He's completely unharmed even after all that? Luckily, he was the only one in such a state. Seven Evil Humans were piled up in front of the short, aging man. The three in front had basically been completely obliterated; little was left of their corpses. The four in the back were a bit better off, but they still looked somewhere in the medium to well done range.

There were three more Evil Humans beyond the pile of corpses. They ended up taking a bit less damage because they'd used their allies as meat shields,

but, they weren't exactly what you'd call in a decent state either. One was going to die in a minute or so regardless of what was done to him. The other two could potentially be saved were they to be treated, potentially being the key word.

Rynford had clearly used his subordinates as to defend against our bombardment. I'd assumed that they were capable of nothing more than just running amok on a sort of rampage, but it seemed that he could order them around somehow. Well, I guess that did make sense seeing as how he was a Master of Evil Arts.

Or, so I thought, but apparently I was wrong.

「M-Master Rynford! Please retreat!」

「We'll hold them off!」

Much to my surprise, the Evil Humans were speaking much in the same manner as well... regular humans.

I quickly appraised them, only to discover that they were quite different from all the other members of their species that we'd run into thus far. First and foremost was the fact that they actually had their own names. They also weren't affected by any of the status conditions shared by their peers. Last but not least was the fact that their titles claimed them to be the Evil God's servants as opposed to his slaves.

So in other words, they managed to become Evil Humans whilst also retaining their sanity?

「Those. Can speak?」

「I guess you ran into some other Evil Humans in town then. The men here are unlike the mongrels thrashing about within the city's confines. They became Evil Humans by seeking out our Lord's, the Evil God's, grace on their own accord.」

Oh, I get it now. So it really was the title that differentiated the two types. The slaves were the ones that'd been forced into a transformation whilst also being deprived of their reason, whereas the servants were the ones that accepted the Evil God's power as their own.

Luzerio had a title saying he was a Servant to the Evil God, so he probably would've retained his sanity as well then. Whew, thank God we got rid of him before he actually finished transforming.

「Conditions for transformation?」

「Normally, I would have asked why you'd assume that I'd tell you that, but I might as well provide you a reward for making it all the way here.」

「Enough with superfluous speech.」

「How assertive you are for a mere girl, but fine. It is actually very easy for anyone to evolve into an Evil Being if they so wish it. All one must do is drink the Evil God's Magical Water that I happen to be able to create. After that, all that must be done is for me give them a little bit of a push. That's it. Simple, right?」

Very simple. Too simple, in fact. Is that seriously all it takes for a human to turn into some sort of Evil Being? There would probably be more of them if that were really the case. I'm pretty sure Rynford isn't the only Master of Evil Arts out there, so if it really were that easy, then there would at least be a bit more awareness of the topic. That, however, didn't seem to be case given the fact that neither Rhodas nor Dannan seemed to know much about the phenomenon at all. In other words, the concept of Evil Beings wasn't actually all that wide spread. It simply couldn't have been. Hence, transformation just had to have some sort of additional condition attached to it. There was no way it was actually just that simple.

Rynford was hiding something, and that something was probably related to why was here in the first place.

What was it that Luzerio said again? Something about pouring magical energy into the city's center so it could spread throughout its entirety? What

exactly does pouring magical energy into the city do?

I looked at the area behind Rynford, only to see something that made me feel a bit... off. It was quite difficult to spot at first glance, but he'd drawn a magic circle onto the floor.

Through the use of the Sorcery skill, I managed to trace its energy flow. It seemed to be taking in Rynford's evil-tainted magical energy and dispersing it. In other words, it was doing exactly as Luzerio described, it was spreading his magical energy throughout the city. The manner in which it was placed made the whole thing almost seem like a ritual of sort, and said ritual was probably that whole last push that Rynford had mentioned earlier.

「Your little display was quite interesting, girl. How about it? Would you like to subordinate yourself to me? I'll grant far more power than you have now.」

「Your goal...?」

「Wonderful, what a quick reply! I see that you're still acting quite prudent, but that's a good thing in and of itself. Very well, I will tell you my goal. My goal is to revive our saviour, The Evil God, and obliterate all that this world has to offer!」

「!!」

「Is probably what you'd think, right?」

Rynford went on to repeat basically exactly what Luzerio had said. His goal was not to revive the Evil God, but instead, to spread its divine might throughout the land.

He had no interest in any goals stemming from sources akin to excessive religious zealotry; he didn't intend on destroying the world or plunging all its citizens into despair for the sake of his God's glory.

「Well? How about it? I will give you all the power you seek if you choose the path of subordination. I can even provide you an evolution, though it

will be one that slightly deviates from the norm.」

「Nn. Declined. Won't become subordinate.」

「Are you sure? You willfully turn down evolution despite being a member of the black cat tribe, the tribe whose members are said to be unable to naturally evolve?」

「Nn? Demand explanation.」

「I recall hearing that your tribe was long abandoned by God, and thus, lost its ability to evolve. I can't speak for the claim's authenticity, but that's what they say.」

「...」

「I've the ability to allow you an evolution, and an immediate one, at that.」

Rynford offered Fran one of his old, wrinkled hands as a wide grin spread itself across his face.

Chapter 126: Temple

126. Temple

「I've the ability to allow you an evolution, and an immediate one, at that.」

『It'd probably be a good idea for us to play along a bit in order to get him to tell us a bit more.』

The Principality of Falsehood would allow us the ability to discern the truth from lies, so listening to him a bit longer wouldn't really result in any sort of harm. That said, his comment regarding the Black Cat Tribe's ability to evolve meant that evolving as a Black Catsman probably had some sort of trick to it. This was a chance for us to learn a bit more about the process, so, the risk was well worth it, at least in my eyes.

(Information already sufficient. His evolution not true evolution. Involves transformation into Evil Being.)

『True.』

(Won't lower head to man like this. Not even as act.)

『Ah, I getcha.』

Alright, yeah. Fran's choice was definitely the better of the two choices. Rynford thought his words to be the truth, but there was no way for us to determine the correctness of the information he provided. Not everything he thought to be true really would be true, after all. Moreover, we had no idea what he'd end up doing should we show him some sort of opening. Playing along wasn't exactly what you could call perfectly safe.

「Nn. Can just force information from him later.」

Fran pulled tightened her grip on me as she got herself into a combat ready stance.

「Oh? So you choose not to obey? Fine. I'll just defeat you and force you into a transformation.」

「Impossible.」

「Fuofuofuofuo! Your words appear much sharper than your skills. I assume you possess some sort of trump card, but I assure you that the magic tool you just used will be insufficient if you wish to defeat me.」

Ah, right, he had Appraisal. He must've seen Fran's fake stats, and thought her to be far too weak to defeat him. He'd likely feel different if he ended up seeing her real stats. I guess that was technically the whole point of using the skill in the first place though, so yeah.

『Welp, his fault, not ours.』

I activated my telekinetic catapult and launched myself right at him. There were only ten meters between us, so my flight but lasted for an instant.

But I was unable to impale the old man.

「That's a formidable magic sword you have there. Still, it lacks the power needed to pierce the divine protection bestowed upon me by the Evil God himself.」

I was stopped and sent flying by some sort of ridiculously powerful protective barrier. I hadn't gone all out because I didn't use Overboost, but I hadn't really held back either. He'd actually managed to block an attack that made use of element enhancements, Poison Fang, and Vibration Blade.

Shit. I ended flying a bit too far. There was quite a bit of distance between Fran and I.

(Master, Urushi. Stay at current location.)

『Alright. I'll sit around and peek at his skills to see if I can figure anything out.』

(Nn.)

(Woof.)

「How close. You would have been able to interrupt the ritual had you killed me with that blow. That said, delaying its completion for another ten minutes would be all your interruption would've managed, for not even my death can stop the gears I've set into motion!」

「Ritual?」

「Fuofuofuofuo! It doesn't matter how much information you pry from me! It's far too late! The ritual has already reached a state of completion!..」

The magic circle Rynford had hidden behind him began to shine with a blindingly bright light the moment he made his declaration. Magical power started flooding out from within it and scattering into our surroundings.

「With this, the city will give rise to an additional 330 of the Evil God's Slaves! I'd originally planned for a number ten times that, but, all is fine. Zerais' plans will more than compensate for what we lack.」

I knew he was using that magic circle for something! That said, I was too late to do anything about it. He'd already used it to transform everyone he could into Evil Humans.

「And with that, I'll be taking my leave.」

「Wait!」

Fran whipped Deathgaze at the old man, but it ended up getting repelled.

「Fuofuofuofuo. What a weak throw. I see that I was correct in assuming that most of your abilities stemmed from the sword you had. Well, I don't quite care either way. Men, apprehend her. Kill her if she resists.」

「Yessir.」

The two remaining Evil Humans had somehow managed to recover from their critical injuries. Both now semi-healthy specimens turned towards Fran after acknowledging their master's orders.

「Don't be struggling now, if you want to live that is.」

「Dedicate yourself to Master Rynford's service.」

「I am inclined to forgive you if you do as any good girl and beg for your life.」

They were looking down on us, which did make sense given that we'd disguised Fran's stats in order for her to seem like any other D ranked adventurer. Numerically speaking, she appeared to Rynford as someone far inferior to both of the Evil Humans before her.

「Absolute refusal.」

「Then die. Farewell, girlie.」

Rynford disappeared as he finished making that one last statement. Shit! Did he teleport somewhere? Evil Arts users could do that? God fucking damn it! I can't believe he actually managed to get away!

「Prepare to die, brat!」

「We'll have you pay for wronging Master Rynford!」

Their words were accompanied by a series of twisting expressions, not out of cruelty, but because Fran had killed one of them in an instant.

「T-That's impossible! Where the hell did that sword come from!?!」

The answer was obvious, the weapon she now held in her hands was one she'd procured from her dimensional storage. Specifically, she'd pulled out a blade that hadn't seen much use in quite a while, the magic sword Phantom Pyroxene.

Rynford's other minion was also disposed of in an instant. There wasn't any trading of blows. The events that transpired failed to amount to anything that even possibly be considered a battle. Fran had simply eliminated her foes. That was it. Her advantage over them was clear, she surpassed them both numerically, and in terms of the number and overall quality of her skills. Her superiority, combined with the fact that her opponents had been off guard, had allowed her to slay them without so much as batting an eyelash.

『It'd probably be a good idea for you to get rid of the magic circle too.』

「Nn. Got it.」

Rynford had mentioned something about Zerais, so chances were, the two were in the midst of joining up. In other words, Urushi would be able to track both of them down for us at once.

We left the building after casting a few spells to blow the magic circle up. Barbra was bustling with noise as a result of the old man's actions. Screams were coming from all over the city. The port was giving off a bright red glow; it had obviously been set aflame, a result that almost seemed natural given that three hundred odd Evil Humans had been let loose.

There simply wasn't enough time for us to fix everything ourselves. We had no choice but to hope that the knights would succeed in the completion of their duties.

『Let's chase Rynford down.』

「Nn.」

「Woof woof!」

Again, that didn't mean we ignored everything and just singlemindedly charged towards our destination. We still stopped to eliminate whatever enemies we happened to encounter on our way there. All the aforementioned enemies had ended up being forced into their

transformations, and so not a single one of them had managed to retain a sane state of mind.

Seeing the Evil Human's rampaging about had honestly made us feel a bit hesitant about leaving most of them as is, but Rynford and Zerais were probably plotting something to make this whole ordeal even worse than it already was, so we still ended choosing to pursue them instead.

『Take the route that'll get us to where Zeras and Rynford are fastest.』

「Woof!」

We managed to reach the source of Rynford's scent about twenty odd minutes later. The trip had resulted in us butchering three additional Evil Humans along the way.

『You sure it's here?』

「Woof.」

There didn't seem to be much magical energy leaking from the building's premises, and we weren't able to sense any presences inside of it either. But I trusted Urushi's nose. If he said that this was the place, then it probably was.

『Why a temple of all places?』

The place that Urushi had led us to was, without a doubt, a place of worship, a house of God.

This world's religious practice wasn't one segregated by different sects or cults. Every single temple was dedicated to every single God. People of certain races and occupations might end up having greater dedication to one God than the rest, but it'd never be by a large margin.

All in all, the church was a simple, powerless organisation. It never named any particular popes or pontiffs. This was the result of the people believing it forbidden to use the Gods' names in self interest. It was said that anyone that did commit such a taboo would soon meet fate in the form of death.

That, to me, seemed like nothing but just another urban legend, however, this world's denizens apparently believed it to be true. I couldn't help but feel as if applying such an axiom to the religious organisations we had back on Earth would result in about eighty percent of their staff getting wiped out.

There was a sort of Priest-like position, but it wasn't anything special. Priests were just responsible for managing their temples, and that was it. Anyone could become a priest so long as they had the Oracle skill.

Job classes could actually be considered one of the Gods' blessings, and thus, one could change their job at any given temple simply by offering a prayer. Each prayer would come with a three thousand Golde fee in order for the temple to pay its maintenance costs and keep its priests out of poverty.

One could also change jobs at the Adventurer's Guild, as Fran had done twice already in the past. The reason for that was because the guild possessed a magic item that happened to have said ability. I'd assumed that said item was considered a blasphemy or something, but apparently, all the second hand information I'd obtained said that it wasn't.

Anyways, enough digressing. All that aside, a temple was still a temple. It only made sense for the Gods' Divine Protection to prevent anything less than desirable from entering its grounds.

So, given that, how the hell did Rynford managed to worm his way inside? The guy was totally connected to the Evil God. No doubts there whatsoever.

『Just what the hell is going on here...?』

「Will know once inside.」

「Woof!」

『T-True, I guess...』

We killed our presences as we approached the building. There weren't any back doors, and the windows were too small to climb through, even for Fran. They'd only been constructed for the sake of letting light into the building's interior.

Peeking through the windows didn't reward us with any clues either. That said, we did manage to sense a slight bit of magical energy.

『I can feel a blatant evil energy in this magic, so it's gotta be him... But still, why the temple?』

We'd never entered any temples ourselves, but we'd passed by a few on occasion. The magic that we'd felt on all those occasions had been pure. What we were feeling here was far too sinister to be of the same make.

Looks like we're going to have to break in, I guess...

『Alright... Let's go.』

We steeled ourselves as we gave the door a gentle push and got ready to make our way inside.

Chapter 127: A Battle Within the Temple

127. A Battle Within the Temple

We steeled ourselves as we gave the temple's door a gentle push and got ready to make our way inside.

(Person sighted.)

Peeking through the resulting crevice allowed our eyes to catch a figure within the building's deepest depths. The temple was dark, but we were able to make out the small framed individual regardless.

『Yup, that's definitely Rynford.』

(Woof woof!)

He'd yet to notice us. The old man had probably never in his wildest dreams imagined that we would be so quick in chasing him down. It looked like we were going to be able to blindside him again, but we were going to have to mix up our method of attack. The whole fire and wind based thing we had going earlier was a fairly solid tactic, but it wasn't applicable given the strength of his protective barrier. I also held the sneaking suspicion that destroying the temple wasn't exactly the best course of action. The Gods probably wouldn't be so happy with us if we did. There was a chance that they might not consider Rynford's evil deeds as something of enough note to counterbalance completely blowing up one of their places of worship.

That said though, we couldn't just wait for him to leave or anything. Who knew what he'd do if left to his own devices?

Besides, our eyes had managed to catch themselves a little something of interest.

『Those crystal thingies he's got are looking pretty suspicious.』

(Nn. Definitely of value.)

Three massive crystals sat around Rynford, each giving off an evil, bluish purple glow. They were probably why the temple's energies seemed so off and misaligned.

『You two focus on the crystals. I'll get Rynford.』

(Got it.)

(Bork!)

(Master.)

『What's up?』

(No holding back. Will kill him. Here and now.)

『You sure? He might be able to give you some info on evolution.』

(I'm sure. Master promised, will make me evolve. So, will definitely evolve some day. Won't need to rely on information from him.)

Right. I did tell her that when we first met. I'm glad she remembers, and that she trusts me so much... I-It's not like I'm moved or anything! Whatever! Who cares! Either way, my motivation's hit its peak.

『Yeah, you're right. I'll definitely make sure you evolve.』

(Nn.)

(Woof woof!)

『See, even Urushi says he'll help you out.』

(Thanks.)

(Ruff!)

『So yeah, let's do this. Short Jump!』

I teleported myself above Rynford, charged up my Telekinetic Catapult and launched myself towards him.

「Nuasdhf!? What the!?!」

I had totally just rammed him from his blind spot, and his surprised reaction gave way to the fact that he hadn't picked up on the attack in advance. In other words, his barrier was the automatic type.

「You again, girl!? How did you manage to...」

Rynford had started shouting at Fran out of surprise, but both she and Urushi ignored him and went straight for the massive ass crystals.

「Shit! What's with this damn sword!? It's keeping me from moving!」

Oh? Did I just hear what I thought I heard? So he can't move while his barrier's out? Good to know, good to know.

I continued to use Telekinesis to push myself against his barrier in order to stop both myself from flying away and him from moving. The act was even draining his mana as a bit of an added bonus.

「Evil Smash!」

Rynford fired a spell in Fran and Urushi's direction. Surprisingly, it passed right through his barrier. Holy crap though, that barrier was hella amazing. It activated on its own, was strong enough to repel my Telekinetic Catapult, and even allowed attacks that came from inside of it to fly out. Not being able to move was honestly pretty fair as far as compensation went.

The old man had fired thirty odd projectiles in the pair's direction, but neither of the two had gotten hit. There was simply no way in hell either

Fran or Urushi would be hit by something as telegraphed as a clump of magic flying in a straight line. As the attack had failed to put any pressure on them, both my companions soon began unloading on Rynford's magic crystals.

「Stop that!」

Claw, fang, blade and spell assaulted the mineral-like objects and sent them flying all over, and so, despite the fact that they'd been reinforced, they cracked. They'd probably break if hit a few more times.

「Will you stop that already? Shit! I have no choice but to first focus on getting rid of this damn sword!」

Yeah, I figured that's what he'd end up deciding on, but yeah no. Not happening.

『Burst Flame!』

I purposefully backed off a bit before casting a fire spell a few times. The spell was actually quite weak, but, it would light the target's surroundings on fire and keep the flames lit for ten odd seconds.

『Burst Flame!』

『Burst Flame!』

Burst Flame was the perfect skill for this situation. It was weak, but I could pretty much spam it to force him to keep his barrier up. Better yet was the fact that the flames obscured his vision and prevented him from tracking me down. As a result, he pretty much ended up being stuck randomly misfiring his attacks.

「Haaaaah!」

「Growl growl!」

The crystals were ultimately unable to endure Fran and Urushi's endless assault, and hence, one soon crumbled.

Oh sweet! The whole evil atmosphere has cleared up quite a bit! Looks like the crystals were what'd been causing it in the first place.

「How... dare you!」

「Hehe. Victory.」

「Woof!」

Rynford seemed to understand that one of the crystals had been destroyed despite not having any vision of it, for he let loose a hate filled groan. I couldn't help but want to smirk as I realized that our strategy had been extraordinarily effective.

「The path will close if she destroys another crystal... It looks like I have no choice, but to... 」

The old man suddenly turned off his barrier so he could better protect the crystals. His strategy was reasonable given Burst Flame's relatively low power, but still, it was risky. It was a move that he wouldn't have been able to choose had he not resolved himself for death.

Rynford dashed towards Fran, his body cloaked in a layer of flame.

「Damned girl!!!!!!!」

However, I'd long predicted that this would happen. I knew he was eventually going to switch to suicide bomb mode, and so, I'd already plotted my next move in advance.

『Take this!』

I repeated the action I'd taken at the battle's start, and teleported above him before releasing a bunch of telekinetic energy.

「Ggagargghghajh!」

Blood splurged from Rynford's mouth as he let loose a pained scream. I had landed a direct hit, and my blade had pierced right through his torso.

The man had been split in two by the attack's force. The angle from which I hit him had made it so that the upper portion of his body almost kind of looked like the busts you'd find at art exhibitions.

I had applied a bunch of telekinetic force in order to hit the brakes the moment after I collided with Rynford, and so, I had luckily managed to avoid giving the floor anything more than just the slightest nick.

Technically, I had caused a bit of damage earlier as well. I tried to stop Burst Explosion's flames from spreading, but, I had ultimately ended up leaving the floor a bit scorched. Just a bit though! The Gods won't mind. I mean, I'm working against the Evil God's followers here, so they shouldn't, right? Right...?

I gave the sculptures in my vicinity a bit of a fearful glance, but it didn't look like they'd reacted in any which way. I guess that made sense. They hadn't even done anything to Rynford after all, and normally, you'd expect his actions would incur all sorts divine wrath and punishment, so I'm sure I'm still safe.

...

I'm really sorry. Seriously, I swear I am.

「You sons of bitches! You're not getting away with this!」

Rynford began screaming curses as I took my sweet time apologizing to the Gods above. Wait, the hell? How's he not dead? The old man should've long been turned into a corpse, but it looked like he was still just full of energy.

「I swear I'm going to fucking break that sword, put it on an altar and sacrifice it to the Evil God himself!」

We immediately tried to finish Rynford off, but he'd already deployed his defensive barrier, so our attacks were unable to reach him. Moreover, he had even begun to regenerate. It looked like he truly had long become something inhuman.

「Zerrosreed! Get the hell over here, right this instant! Summon Clan!」

Rynford had realized that he was at a disadvantage, and thus, he opted to summon one of his subordinates. I'd planned to focus fire said summon the moment it arrived, but was denied the option altogether. The sneaky old bastard had managed to cast the spell within his barrier's confines.

And of all people, he had to have summoned Zerrosreed. We'd yet to meet the guy, but I knew for fact that he would be our toughest opponent yet. He, as a human, had been powerful enough to considered as strong as a B ranked adventurer.

But now, he'd likely transformed into an Evil Human and become even more powerful. It'd probably be best for us to retreat. We couldn't match something on that level by ourselves.

Or so I thought...

「W-What!? It didn't work? Summon Clan: Zerrosreed!」

Huh, interesting...? The spell had managed to generate a magic circle, but once again, summoned... absolutely fucking nothing.

「What the hell do you mean, he refused!? C-Could he have betrayed me!?!」

Apparently, the old man and his companions had had some sort of falling out.

『Well, I guess this our chance to finish him off.』

「Nn. Will defeat here and now.」

「Growl!」

Chapter 128: Rynford: Evil God's Embodiment

128. Rynford: Evil God's Embodiment

Rynford reacted to Zerrosreed's betrayal with a hateful shout, which, in turn provided me yet another chance to assault him with a telekinetic cata-port.
[1]

A loud grinding noise filled the temple as I smashed into Rynford's automatic barrier. That, however, was still just the onset.

「Burst Flame.」

『Burst Flame!』

「Aroooooo!!」

I'd said it all haughty-like, but to be completely honest, my actions hadn't really changed much at all. I was still draining his mana and keeping him from moving by spamming a bunch of weak skills at him. His barrier would probably end up dissipating if he ran out of magical energy, so I figured it was probably the right thing to do.

「Nraaaghh! Not this shit again!」

Rynford was looking pretty desperate, so we might actually be able to finish him off if we kept this up a bit longer.

「Damn it! The Path has yet to fully open... but it simply cannot be helped. Oh great God of Evil, grant me your power!」

Orrrrr not. Well, I figured he wasn't about to just sit there till he died.

The old man started to chant, his face still twisted in rage. All the evil energy within the temple gathered around his frame.

The fuck? It almost looked like the temple was giving Rynford its power. Was it because of those crystals he had...?

Shit. Crisis Detection had kicked itself into full throttle. It was reacting just as much as it had been back when we ran into the Midgard Wurm.

『Fran! Urushi! Get out of there!』

I teleported Fran and I out immediately after confirming that Urushi had dove into the shadows. Our escape was accompanied by the sound of a large explosion. Dust and stone erupted from the temple as it collapsed.

「Gugaaaaaaaaa!!」

A roar echoed throughout the night, and with it came a wave of evil-aligned magical energy.

Holy crap he's huge!

A muscly, black skinned giant, a fifteen meter tall Evil Human-like thing rose from within the temple's rubble.

At first, I'd thought that it was something Rynford had summoned, but I was wrong.

「Get back here! You're not escaping me, little girl!」

His shout contained such force that it almost seemed to make the air tremble.

The giant that stood before us was none other than Rynford himself, as evidenced by his mutated but still recognizable face.

General Information

Name: Rynford Lorentia

Age: 100

Race: Evil God's Embodiment

Job: Master of Evil Arts

Status: Deified (Evil God)

Status Level: 99/99

HP: 5620

MP: 4458

STR: 2027

VIT: 1887

AGI: 598

INT: 1459

MGC: 1987

DEX: 115

Skills

Chant Shortening: Lv 7

Appraisal: Lv 7

High Speed Regeneration: Lv 6

Evil Detection: Lv 9

Resistance to Abnormal Status: Lv 4

Agitation: Lv 4

Compounding: Lv 6

Knowledge of Poisons: Lv 7

Magic Manipulation

Maximized Magic Boost

Maximized Strength Boost

Innate skills

Evil Arts: MAX

Evil God Arts: Lv 5

Evil God's Favour

Evil God's Cage

Titles

One Bestowed With the Evil God's Power

Equipment

None

Holy shit. He was even more powerful than the demon we'd fought back in the day. His threat level was somewhere between an A and a B, and he even

possessed skills the likes of which we'd never heard of before. Engaging him without first finding ourselves some backup was pretty much equivalent to committing suicide.

『Okay, we need to get out of here.』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

I started chanting as Fran and Urushi kicked themselves into top gear.

『Short Jump!』

The spell activated after we'd travelled about fifty meters worth of distance. It looked like Fran and I were going to be able to get away if we kept this up. Urushi had the ability to dive into the shadows and whatnot, so he'd be fine too.

That, however, was when things stopped going well.

『Gah!』

「Ow!」

「Whimper!」

Fran and I ended up colliding with what appeared to be some sort of thin wall. The same thing had happened to Urushi as well despite the fact that he was still hidden within the shadows.

「You shall not escape the Evil God's Cage, one of the new abilities with which I was blessed!」

Shit, so that's what that new skill did!? Looking around made me realize that the cage we were trapped in had been one that extended about fifty meters in every direction with Rynford at its centre.

『Inferno Burst!』

「Fire Javelin!」

I switched from spamming spells to using my Telekinetic Catapult against the barrier's outer walls.

『Shit! That didn't work either!?!』

The cage, however, remained intact. In fact, my durability had ended up going down instead. His defensive wall was even stronger than it'd been before.

『Dimension Jump!』

The next spell I tried was one that would let us teleport about a hundred meters. It was kind of finicky, but still better than Short Jump in either case.

Fuck, it's not working!?! Does the barrier have some sort of anti-teleportation property!?!

「Evil Flare.」

If I were human, the sudden influx of evil oriented magic energy would likely have caused every single one of my body's hairs to stand on end. I felt a sense of crisis, a taste a fear. As a result, I ended up firing off the spell I'd been chanting.

『Short Jump!』

A fireball passed right through our previous location before exploding into flames. It was so powerful that it ended up hitting us despite the fact that we were a whole thirty meters away from its point of impact. Luckily, I managed to set up a magical barrier and prevent most of the damage. We would've been in a pretty bad spot if we ended up taking a direct hit from it.

「Not a bad dodge, but not good enough! Evil Barrage!」 [2]

『What the!?!』

「You think you can dodge this?」

Fifty volleyball sized lumps of evil energy materialized around him and started flying at us. Each moved differently; some flew in a straight line, others moved in a more circular arc. The different movement patterns, combined with the fact that each projectile moved at its own speed, made the attack ridiculously difficult to avoid.

「Kuh!」

『Fire Shield!』

「Haaahh!」

『Wind Wall』

We defended ourselves against the spell by dodging, striking down the projectiles, blocking, and using defensive spells.

Luckily, the individual projectiles were rather weak, they didn't do that much damage. The problem lay in the fact that getting hit even a single time would lead us to flinch and thereby get hit by the rest.

Shit, what now? Let's see... we were going to have to somehow escape his barrier, which either meant we would either have to slip or break right through it.

Slipping through it seemed difficult as it stopped both space/time and darkness magic. Do I use up the rest of my points on space/time magic then? Ehh... nah, that seemed like a bad idea if anything. There was no guarantee that pointing stuff would allow us to pass through the barrier.

What if I used my points to get us a bit more brute force? I could probably shove a few into flame magic. Actually, I could probably change up my approach and go with something like purification magic instead. That'd probably be more effective given that he was classified as something evil. Probably.

Actually, we did have yet another option to fall back on if we wanted to go for pure destructive force.

(Master. Will use Latent Potential Release.)

『Wait, don't!』

Fran had hit the nail on the head. Latent Potential Release would allow us enough power to not only run away, but probably even kill him given how much stronger it'd made us during that whole Lich thing.

But I wasn't going to let her use it, absolutely not.

『I'm going to try a little something first.』

I spent six of my remaining eighteen points and maxed out space/time magic, as I figured it seemed like the best option given the current circumstances.

〈Space/Time Magic has reached its maximum level. As a result, you have now obtained the unique skill, Dimensional Magic. Its level is currently set to 1.〉

With the unique skill came the Chronos Clock, Quick, and Slow spells, but as I couldn't really use them in the current circumstances. I instead tried to activate one of the new space/time spells we learned.

『Long Jump!』

But not even that would let us escape Rynford. We once again ended up with our faces against his barrier. It seemed that the amount of distance our teleport carried us was completely irrelevant.

The old man's projectiles quickly caught up to and swarmed us once more.

(Should use Latent Potential Release)

『Let me do it then.』

(No. Me.)

『Don't. That skill's side effects are ridiculous. You might even end up dead.』

(Still want to)

『Listen to me Fran! No means no!』

(Mrmmp.)

Our exchange was immediately followed by the situation spiraling out of control.

「Guhh!」

『Fran!』

We weren't able to avoid all the incoming projectiles; one hit Fran head on. Said projectile was immediately followed by many of its kind, and Fran was subject to bombardment. Shit! We lost too much focus!

I immediately teleported us a short distance away and set up a magical barrier.

We managed to escape the attacks and reduce the amount of damage we took, but Rynford didn't let up. He immediately followed his attack with another.

「Evil Flare!」

「Uaaahhh!」

The old man had managed to catch onto the fact that it was very difficult for us to use short jump several times in a row, so he'd intentionally forced us to use it while also engulfing our destination in scorching hot flames. Both Fran and I immediately deployed our magical barriers at full power in response.

「Kuuaaaahhh!」

『Fuuckk!!』

Our full powered, double barrier was unable to hold against his attack, and so, we were blown about twenty meters away.

「Finally managed you catch you. Quite the pesky little fly you were.」

We narrowly managed to escape death, but it wasn't too far off. I'd been pretty roughed up, but Fran was looking even worse. She was barely conscious, and her left arm had been burnt black as coal.

『Fran!』

「Ugh.....」

It looked like his next attack would end up finishing us off.

『Fuck off! I'm not letting you harm another hair on Fran's head!』

I fiddled around with my status as I healed her up.

〈Chant Shortening has reached its maximum level. As a result, you have now obtained the unique skill, Chant Nullification.〉

Chant Nullification: This skill eliminates the need to chant magical invocations. Spells can now be cast simply through the recitation of their names, but at a greater mana cost.

Sweet! I'd been planning to buy time by continuously chanting short jump and teleporting around, so having this skill really helped. It gave us the ability to teleport nonstop as opposed to having to risk damage every time. I was a bit concerned about its increased mana cost, but this wasn't the time to be brooding over something like that, so whatever! Let's just do this shit!

『Short Jump!』

『Short Jump!』

『Short Jump!!!』

I teleported all over the place in order to avoid Rynford's attacks and keep Fran safe.

「Argghhh!! I had suspected that you had that skill, but why is it that you can use such a difficult spell so many times in succession!? Just die already! Damn it! Die!」

Instantly casting the spell made it cost about twice as much mana, but that was honestly perfectly fine. It allowed us to spam it and escape Rynford's assault, which in turn caused him get frustrated. Hell yeah! Keep getting mad! Start messing yourself up by getting tilted!

I started looking for a way out of this situation as I teleported all over the place. If I couldn't find one, I'd probably end up having to use Latent Potential Release.

「Master...?」

『Let's see if we can try to find some sort of weak point or something.』
[2]

We continued to dodge and dodge and dodge in order to escape his attacks, but we weren't able to inflict on him any sort of serious injury. His regenerative abilities outdid everything Fran and Urushi could output.

I tried catapulting myself at him a few times too, but even that failed. It didn't even actually inflict any major damage on him. In fact, using the telekinetic catapult ended up giving him an opportunity to counter attack us.

I made sure I at least appeared calm so Fran wouldn't end up panicking, but honestly, I'd begun feeling a bit frustrated and impatient. We were exhausting ourselves, my mana was starting to run low. I was on the verge of just saying fuck it and using Latent Potential Release.

But then it happened.

The Evil God's Cage vanished as a high pitched, clear, bell-like sound rang through our surroundings.

「W-What!?!」

We had no idea what happened, but it seemed like it was something outside Rynford's expectations.

I immediately cast all my other thoughts aside and took advantage of the opportunity presented.

『Urushi, Fran, we're getting the hell out of here, right now!』

「Bark!」

『Dimension Jump!』

I hid us behind a building immediately after teleporting about a hundred meters away.

『You alright?』

「Nn... Somehow.」

『Whew. Good.』

「Woof!」

「You okay too, Urushi?」

「Ruff.」

I didn't really know how or why, but we had managed to escape. Whew!

「Nugrahhhhhhhhhhh!!!」

The next thing that happened left us in a state of shock. Rynford had let loose a pained scream. Not a howl, or battle cry, but a scream.

『Huh?』

We hurriedly turned around and beheld the sight before us.

『Holy shit!』

「Lots of swords.」

The evil being's body had been filled with blades.

A large, snake-like thing had wrapped itself around him and restrained all his movements. Around him stood a small group of individuals.

One crushed Rynford's right leg with his bare fists. Another had impaled his left with a large, knight-like spear. Some dashed along the ground as others flew through the air. But despite their differences, they were all working together towards a single goal: Rynford's defeat.

「All really strong.」

『Y-Yeah, they are. Who the hell are they anyways?』

[1] Cata-port = Catapult + teleport.

[2] I'm not sure if this is the author messing up English, or me simply not getting a reference, but this skill is literally "Evil Familiar" (イビル・ファミリア). Do let me know if you figure out what it's referencing, if anything.

For the time being, I've translated Rynford's current race as Evil God's Embodiment, but I can't say how accurate that will be going forward. The Defied thing is also subject to change. Neither of these two translations can be very accurate without me first understanding what the author is trying to convey. I'd probably find out if I were to read ahead, but that'd also make me less motivated to translate, so I won't.

To be honest, I couldn't be bothered to even give this chapter a second look because of how dreadfully written the raw was. Translating this one in particular bored me out of my mind, so there will most likely be lots of typos and poorly phrased sentences.

Chapter 129: Side: Combatants

129. Side: Combatants

Side: Forrund

People first started turning into monstrosities about an hour ago.

I already defeated approximately thirty of them, but their end was nowhere in sight. Many continued to run rampant, and we had no guarantee that people would stop turning into them. Resolving the situation required getting rid of its cause.

I headed in the direction from which I sensed the most evil energy as I continued to eliminate any monstrosities I came across.

「T-Thank you very much!」

「...」

「U-Uhm...」

「...No prob.」

I gestured at the man thanking me that there was no need for any expression of gratitude, and that he should instead focus his energies on making his escape as the area was still unsafe. But for some odd reason, he ended up apologizing to me with a pale, panicked expression before scrambling away.

I didn't understand what had happened. I was planning on offering him an escort in order to ensure his safety, so why did he run away...?

「Haaaahh.....」

I sighed.

I never understood why, but things had always been like this. I made sure to stay quiet and expressionless, but everyone would always say that I seemed to give off an air of intimidation. I'd never thought so myself, but apparently that's just how they saw me. It's gotten so bad that I'd actually started getting used to scaring everyone I met.

I wasn't really good at talking to people, so I tried going for gestures instead, but people were still scared me anyways. I was completely at a loss. I didn't understand how I was supposed to act.

「Can't be helped. I'll just keep looking for monstrosities instead.」

I jumped atop the tallest building, some sort of four story business, and surveyed my surroundings.

The change in height granted me a much clearer view of the city.

「Hmm...」

None of the monstrosities had bothered using the night as cover. They didn't conceal their evil energies or intentions, so I was able to find one almost immediately. It was attacking a group of livestock as opposed to a human, and it was only about three hundred meters away. There was far too little distance between us for me to even consider the possibility of missing, so I decided to deal with it from where I stood.

「Pierce.」

A single magic sword materialized itself in the air, abided by my will, and flew towards its target. The blade carried with it more speed than an arrow and more power than a spear. It pierced the monstrosity with ease, destroying it in a single blow. As it had fulfilled its duty, the blade no longer needed to remain, and so, it dissipated, it returned itself to the void from which it came.

The skill I used was my extra skill, Sword God's Blessing. Its ability allowed me to create copies of any magic swords I've ever touched. The only restriction the skill had was that it possessed a sort of threshold. It was unable to imitate any blade whose abilities that exceeded said threshold. For example, I had once tried imitating Ignis, the Godblade, but my reconstruction of it was to no avail.

At first, the Sword God's Blessing had only allowed me to create swords. However, honing my skills for years on end eventually allowed me to develop the ability to control them as well. Training with the skill had decreased the amount of time and mana it took me to construct each blade. At present, I had the ability to birth and fire a hundred swords at once.

「...Target sighted.」

I managed to catch sight of another monstrosity. This time around, however, it was attacking a human, so I decided to descend and deal with the issue in person.

Questions flooded my mind as I moved my body towards its destination. I couldn't help but wonder how this event had come to be. It was far too obscure to be considered something caused by nature, as the monstrosities themselves gave off a sense of evil. They reminded me of one of the high ranking Evil Beings I'd defeated in the past.

The incidents cause simply had to be an unnatural factor. My guesses were that it was either the result of a plot or the loss of control over a sort of forbidden magic item. In either case, I would have to seek out and deal with the problem's source.

I no longer had a hometown, but Barbra may as well have been my second. I refused to let it fall, I would protect it without fail.

「Forrund Annonnkul, taking off!」 [1]

Side: Phillip

「Steel your nerves, men! Show the world why Barbra's knights as known as the elite!」

「Sir! Yes sir!」

「By your command!」

「For honour!」

My subordinates roared in response to my provocation. They looked to be in good form.

「Move out!」

Naturally, I, as the commander, was obligated to put on a display in which my men would find no shame. I raised my spear and charged straight into the horde of monsters before me.

My father had informed me that this incident was one perpetrated by none other than my very own younger brothers. I, as their flesh and blood, had no choice but to make amends for their mistakes.

I first learned of this information just before the clock struck midnight. My father had paid me a visit in order to inform me of Bluke's plan. I was shocked by its contents, and dreaded the fate he had faced.

「Father, that simply cannot be. Are you sure that you speak the truth!?!」

「I am... It is undoubtedly true... The city has already begun descending into a state of madness...」

The words that came out of my father's mouth had almost seemed like a mere delusion given his haggard state. However, even the most meagre glance at Bluke's form resulted in my realisation that my father was as correct as could be.

It was none other than my duty as a sibling to right my younger brothers' wrongs and clear the Krysten family's name of its sins. Regrettably, I must

concede that our clan has betrayed the citizen's trust, thus, it was necessary for me to risk my life in combat in order to regain it.

Many of the monstrosities bore faces recognizable as those belonging to the city's nobles, likely a result of my youngest brother, Waint, marketing his goods towards an aristocratic audience. It was a nobles duty to protect the country's people, yet, the monstrosities had fallen to the point where they instead attacked them. I felt but pity for their souls. I steeled my resolve and decided that I would strike them down before they stained their hands with the people's blood.

I knew not whether they rejoiced upon being felled by the blade of my spear. However, I felt it a necessary purge, for I bore no remorse in slaying a noble capable of casting the citizens' lives away for the sake of preserving their own hide.

「Buaaaahhhhhh!」

「Screeeeech!」

But even then, I sympathized with the fates that had befallen them.

「Oh Magical Lance, Granbolt, demonstrate your abilities! Fell all foes of mine!」

My beloved spear gave off a brilliant shine as it consumed my mana to viel itself in a coat of lightning.

「Penetrating Charge!」

The technique pierced through the throats of two different monstrosities as Granbolt electrocuted and paralyzed my foes.

「By my order, waste not this opportunity! Slay our enemies!」

My men made use of the opportunity I had created for them. They charged straight towards the monstrosities and sent them to their graves. Our coordination had allowed us to clear an entire area of them in but a single swoop.

「The coast is clear, we shall move onto the citizen's residential district. If you bear any wounds or complaints, raise your voices now or risk losing the opportunity.」

「Sir! We're ready to march!」

My subordinates responded with shouts full of vigour.

「Very well, we shall split into two squadrons. Divide yourselves into five man units. Scatter throughout the district and eliminate any monstrosities you cross. I shall work alone. Many a task requires my attention.」

「Sir! Yes sir! Orders acknowledged sir!」

「Forget not that not all our foes will immediately fall before us. Many powerful beings lie within their ranks.」

「We will sir. You take care of yourself too.」

It has come time for me to locate the incident's mastermind.

Ten minutes passed as I scoured the city for villains. It was then that I witnessed it. A manor in close proximity to my own had bursted into flame.

Side: Zerrosreed

『What is the meaning of this!? Have you betrayed me, Zerrosreed!?!』

Shut the fuck up! I'm having fun here you old shit!

「Dorahhhhh!!!」

「Gugyaagaaaa!」

「Hahahahahahaha! That's what I'm talking about! And he was just a D ranker before transforming too!」

「Gyooohh!」

I was fighting one of the guys Rynford turned into an Evil Being just cause he happened to catch my eye.

Guy was an experienced D ranked adventurer, and a strong one at that. Hahahaha! Just crossing swords with him has got my blood boiling. Going along with that stupidly long plan the old shit had turned out to be worth it. Even managed to get myself some of the Evil God's power.

Trying to kill the guy was fun, but he couldn't really hold much longer. Was fine though, fun was to be found wherever I looked!

「Chestooooo!!!」 [2]

「Gaahhh.....」

I used the power I gained from Zerais' human experiments and absorbed the evil energy that that came off the dude's corpse.

Skill was called cannibalism. Let me absorb power from anything that was "the same as me." Think he said that meant both Evil Beings and Evil Beasts.

Rynford's gotten me a tonne of prey. This rate, I could just go around hunting down evil beings to make myself stronger. And you know what? I might as well eat that old ass mother fucker while I'm at it too and make myself even more powerful!

Side: Colbert

「Urmetaaaghhhh! Dimitris Style Martial Art: Impact Wave!」

My fist drove itself into the muscular daruma's face. It was strong, but failed to match me given that I had removed my restraints. [3]

「Colbert's already defeated another one!」

「He sure is strong.」

「It looks like strong people end up turning into strong monsters.」

Lydia seemed to have hit nail on the head. The woman I had just defeated was a former E ranked adventurer. The transformation rendered her too difficult a foe for The Scarlet Maidens to safely combat.

One of the inn's employees had also undergone the same sort of transformation, however, they had ended up much weaker. Even they had been able to dispose of him without too much trouble.

If Lydia's conjecture was to truly be the case, then the area in which we were currently located could be considered relatively safe. The most dangerous areas likely lay near the Adventurer's Guild and Knight's Headquarters. Another cause for concern was the noble's district, seeing as how a part of it had already erupted into a pillar of flame. That, of course, was not the end of my concerns. My final worry lay with Miss Fran, as I was almost convinced that she knew the incident's cause.

I do hope she manages to make back safely.

「Oh yeah, I've been meaning to ask, have you like powered up or something, Colbert?」

「You can tell?」

「I can.」

「You're clearly moving faster than you were before.」

「I guess I don't really mind letting you know. I'm currently studying the Dimitris school of martial arts. Specifically, I'm undergoing a trial in order to obtain the school's recognition.」

「Ohhh, I see.」

「Makes sense.」

The girls were able to understand exactly what I meant despite my lack of a detailed explanation. I did understand why that was though. The Dimitris school's trial was rather famous.

「Huh? What's that supposed to mean?」

Apparently Judith was unaware of the trials and their details, so I decided to offer her a short explanation.

I was sure she knew of Dimitris and his exploits, but I explained his profile to her regardless. I told her that he was an S ranked adventurer known as the world's strongest Fighter. I described his feats, and made mention of how he defeated a dragon with his bare hands, and even managed to pummel a demon to death unarmed. After solidifying his style, he eventually created a school in order to pass it on and allow it to be learned by future generations.

His school of combat was so mighty that not even the Gods could overlook it. His techniques were obtained official recognition as a skill, a feat that had only ever occurred twenty times in the past.

The martial arts had long been recognized by the Gods as the most efficient mode of combat, a consensus reached upon the witness of a match between the God of Battle and the God of War. Martial arts came to be known as known for their flexibility, their capacity to allow their users to react to and deal with almost any given situation. Each martial artist had their own techniques, their own special attacks and feints, but their techniques all fell under the umbrella known as martial arts regardless.

The same applied to all forms of combat. That is, if I were a swordsman, my sword related skills would continue to be known as Sword Arts and Sword Techniques regardless of any methodologies and thought paradigms I had established. Under normal circumstances, I would never be able to obtain the “Colbert Style Swordplay” skill regardless of how hard I trained. That much was common sense.

However, common sense was a factor that failed to extend into the realm of the ingenious. The gifted sometimes refined themselves to the point where not even the Gods dared deny their abilities, and thus, they were granted skills in their name. The techniques they created were engraved into the very world itself.

And that was precisely what had happened to Demitris. His style was ultimately classified as a derivative of the martial arts series of skills.

I enrolled myself in his school and trained in the Demitris ways until my Demitris Style skill had ascended to its eighth level. Only then did I finally managed to meet the school's minimum requirements for formal apprenticeship.

Rather, I had managed to qualify myself for the trial that would lead to my admission to formal apprenticeship, the world renown Demitris school's trial.

The trial's contents required the examinee to become an A ranked adventurer whilst suppressing their strength with one of Demitris' carefully crafted sealing stones.

The sealing stones possessed the ability to disguise one's stats. It would hide the Demitris Style Martial Arts skill and the sealed state from any would be appraisers. The reason for this was that clients may otherwise make claims against the examinee. It was possible for them to state that the examinee caused them losses as a result of them failing to give their full, unsealed effort.

Of course, it was possible to undo the seal if desired, as evidenced by my actions.

「I see, that explains that.」

「I plan to seal my abilities away once after we put this incident is behind us, so please refrain from spreading the word if possible.」

「Don't worry, we will.」

「So what now, Colbert?」

「I do think we've managed to avert any crisis, but I'd like you three to remain here at the inn and protect it just in case.」

「What'll you do?」

「I will be heading over to the Adventu—」

A loud smashing sound cut me off before I managed to convey my intentions.

「W-What was that?」

「I-I think that's where the temple is.」

「That thing's enormous!」

「That... looks like it's bad news. My Crisis Detection skill has activated despite how far away we are from it.」

I can't say for sure whether or not the monster standing near the temple's ruins was the cause of this whole incident, but I knew that I simply could not leave it be.

「It may even end up destroying Barbra in its entirety if worse comes to worst.」

「Is it really that strong?」

「To be frank, I doubt I'll be able to defeat it.」

「Even with your seal undone!?!」

「So it's too strong? Even for True Colbert?」

I would very much appreciate if she would stop calling me that.

「At most, I would be able to buy the city some time assuming I was by myself.」

「What if w-」

「Don't.」

「Why not?」

「I'd prefer not to send you to your deaths in vain.」

My reply caused all three girls to lower their gazes. I was sure that they understood that they would encounter instant deaths should they follow me, and that I would likely meet the same fate in an effort to protect them.

「I'll be off. I leave the inn's protection to you.」

「Alright...」

「I'll... We'll do everything we can!」

「Let's go help the knights get everyone evacuated!」

「Great idea, but don't be pushing yourselves too hard.」

「Same goes to you, Colbert!」

Side: Amanda

I arrived in Barbra two days after receiving Fran's letter. I had done everything in my power in order to arrive as quickly as possible. In fact, I'd travelled in a straight line, I passed through mountains and forests without so much as changing directions. Naturally, I had been using magic to make this possible. My excessive consumption of mana potions had led my stomach to swell uncomfortably.

There was no way for me to leave Alessa under normal circumstances, as at least one A ranked adventurer was required to stay within the town's premises at all times in order to deter the Kingdom of Reidos from attacking.

I was quite lucky in the sense that I just so happened to have a scapegoat on hand. I owed Jean my thanks. He was a B ranker, but treated like an A ranker when it came to any sort of situation related to war. In fact, I'd say that the Reidosians feared him much more than they did me.

Jean's nickname, "The Annihilator" was one that stemmed from a Reidosian conflict. His abilities would really shine whenever he was put up

against any sort of army. His forces would absorb the enemies and grow seemingly infinitely as the battle progressed. On one occasion, his undead corps had in fact managed to completely obliterate a Reidosian unit 5000 strong. Their army feared him, and for good reason at that.

His presence and accomplishments were why I was able to safely push, er, leave the city in his hands and head off in Barbra's direction.

Fran had said that she thought the orphanage to be in a terrible state, and frankly, I was inclined to agree. I had nothing but respect for Io, who, in spite of her situation, was able to continue feeding the children delicious meals.

It was fine though. I immediately bought the orphanage the moment I arrived and provided it with all sorts of funds and support. Seeing the children thank me made the whole trip well worth it. Their smiles gave me enough fuel to fight another ten years worth of battles.

The next task on my list was to pay Fran a visit. She was running a stall, so I decided to drop by under the guise of a customer as a bit of an added surprise. I was really looking forward to seeing a surprised look on her face. Keyword: was.

「Haaaaaahh!」

My whip easily cleaved a monstrosity in two. It seemed rather weak. It had been an adventurer prior to its transformation, but the resulting monster didn't seem like anything a D ranker couldn't handle.

「Right, I should hurry over to that giant.」

A roar echoed through the night right as I finished exterminating all the monstrosities in the orphanage's immediate vicinity. The battlecry was followed by an immense wave of evil energy, the likes of which I'd never felt before.

Glancing at the monstrosity, even from a distance, told me that it was a dangerous foe to face. It would likely destroy the entire city if I let it be,

and that, of course, would mean that the orphanage would be reduced to wreckage and rubble.

I felt pretty confident in leaving the orphanage in the knights' and adventurers' hands, but I still wanted to return as soon as I could.

I was worried about Fran too.

My next course of action would of course be to take down the giant foe and search its surroundings for clues. There was some doubt as to whether or not I would be able to defeat it unassisted, but I simply had no choice. Thus was the duty of the A ranked adventurer.

Besides...

「That thing'll end up hurting a lot of children if I leave it to its devices!」

I sensed several other individuals carry out actions identical to my own. It appeared to me that they were the city's higher ranking adventurers.

「There's one.」

I approached the closest individual.

「Good evening.」

「Woah! H-Huh? G-Good evening.」

The person I met with was an adorable young lady with silver hair. She was carrying her body rather effectively, but I could still see quite some room for improvement. She didn't seem strong enough to be handling a task like challenging the giant, and so, I decided to advise her to stop.

「Are you heading to that giant thing over there?」

「I-I am. Are you?」

「Yes, I am. The name's Amanda. What's yours?」

「Charlotte. I'm not very strong, but I'm sure that there's something for me to do regardless.」

She seemed quite motivated. I wasn't able to immediately determine how I should be going about changing her mind. The other adventurers joined us before I managed to arrive at a conclusion.

「Hey there. Are you planning to help give that thing a good bashing?」

「It is for that precise reason that I have arrived.」

It seemed that all members present had felt it dangerous to challenge the creature alone.

「Hundred Blade Forrund, Amanda of Hairiti, Knight Captain Phillip, and even the guildmaster: Dragonfeller Gamud? Quite the gathering of big shots we have here.」

The man who spoke, Colbert, seemed rather surprised. He stated that the knight captain was said to be at least as strong as a B ranker. I was aware that the guildmaster was a former A ranker himself. Forrund and I were both A rankers as well, meaning we had more than enough capable individuals to take down the gigantic monstrosity.

「And who might you be?」

I turned towards our last supposed companion.

「No one important, don't be minding me. Just think me a nameless helper or something.」

「If you were to ask me, I'd say you resemble the Berserker.」

「What, you wanna take me in or something? At a time like this? You guys need all the help you can get.」

「I'm aware of that, I'll be counting on you then.」

His points were valid, so I decided to accept his help, at least for now.

「'Course. I can't actually beat you guys down yet, not as I am right now anyways. Besides, I'm way more interested in that giant thing over there than you guys in the first place, so we can all spend some time getting along for now, right? And of course, I'm talking to the guy glaring at me from over there too.」

「...I'll overlook you for now.」

Colbert and the Berserker seemed to have some sort of bad blood with one another. The atmosphere was almost explosive in nature. I suspected that I may have had to discipline them before moving onto eliminating the giant, but fortunately, both men clearly understood that this wasn't the time for any sort of internal conflict.

Again, we definitely had enough battle power to take our foe down.

However, there was still an issue. The monstrosity had a barrier around it, one that the Hundred Blade claimed to be unable to break. He was known for his brute strength, so I highly doubted that anyone else present would be able to shatter the barrier.

「The barrier seems to both block out magic and ignore the laws of physics. We're stuck waiting until that thing runs out of mana.」

How troublesome.

The Hundred Blade also informed us that there was someone inside the barrier, and that that someone was currently engaging the monstrosity in combat. We had no choice but to wait until the combatant managed to deplete the monster's mana pool. The barrier appeared as if it may also end up being temporarily released if the person fighting was to fall, as apparently, it had originally been constructed in order to keep the individual within its confines. Ideally, I would prefer for the latter option not to happen. The person was brave enough to challenge the monstrosity before any other had arrived on scene. It was their actions that allowed us to arrive before the town's destruction, so I would like for them to live.

Charlotte timidly entered our conversation as we went back and forth on how we should best approach the problem.

The young lady stated that she had a skill that allowed her to purify evil energies. She could potentially eliminate the barrier.

「Really?」

「Really. The ritual I would perform would be one that combines both dance and song. I'm not really good at fighting, but I should be able to at least do that much.」

「That's perfect. Everyone has their specialities, and yours is one that just happens to be exactly what we needed.」

And so, we came up with one some claimed to be a plan. I myself doubted the the claim, as all we decided on was that we would attack the monstrosity the moment Charlotte removed its barrier.

「Here goes...」

Charlotte's bracelet vibrated and gave off a bell-like noise as she started to dance.

「Let's get ourselves ready while she finishes up with the ritual.」

I raised my whip and began focusing my magical energies.

The time to fight was upon us.

[1] Think what people say as their Gundams launch. Unfortunately, I have no idea what they normally use in the English versions of it...

[2] This is something Japanese people sometimes scream when going for the finishing blow. It is meant to convey one's spirit as a fighter. It's sometimes translated as something along the lines of "take this," but that

doesn't really work in my opinion. It's literal meaning of "chest" (the target area) fails to capture it as well. I decided to leave it in alongside this note for the time being because I've yet to determine the best possible translation.

[3] I am 99% sure that the author messed up here. Colbert probably doesn't know what a Daruma is because that's a Japanese thing and he is a denizen of the fantasy world the Japanese person was transported to. That said, it is possible for Darumas to exist in this fantasy world because it is created by a Japanese author.

130 Frustration

130 Frustration

「Pierce, oh blades of mine.」

A hundred or so swords materialized out of nowhere and shot straight towards Rynford's body. We were watching the battle from pretty close up, so I could actually tell that every single blade was distinct, each possessed its own unique properties and abilities.

This wasn't the first time we'd come across the guy who'd launched the attack. I still remembered catching sight of him at the end of our hunting trip.

General Information

Name: Forrund Annonnkul

Age: 39

Race: Human

Job: Divine Swordsman

State: Normal

Status Level: 66/99

HP: 718

MP: 431

STR: 384

VIT: 323

AGI: 337

INT: 201

MGC: 227

DEX: 349

Skills

Swordbreaker Arts: Lv 7

Dismantling: Lv 8

Crisis Detection: Lv 6

Vital Point Detection: Lv 5

Presence Detection: Lv 7

Sword Techniques: MAX

Divine Sword Techniques: Lv 6

Sword Arts: MAX

Divine Sword Arts: Lv 7

Collecting: Lv 4

Kicking Techniques: Lv 5

Kicking Arts: Lv 6

Resistance to Psychological Abnormalities: Lv 4

Petrification Resistance: Lv 3

Elemental Blade: Lv 8

Leap: Lv 7

Throwing: Lv 8

Poison Resistance: Lv 3

Dual Blade Style: Lv 7

Magic Resistance: Lv 6

Paralysis Resistance: Lv 4

Vigour Manipulation

Dragon Killer

Beast Slayer

Greater Strength Increase

Innate Skills

Sword Technique 50% Cost Reduction

Extra Skills

Sword God's Blessing

Titles

Adored by the Sword God

Liberator of Haunts

Dungeon Conqueror

Dragon Killer

Beast Slayer

A Ranked Adventurer

Equipment

Orichalcum Longsword

Orichalcum Swordbreaker

Dragon Lord's Leather Full Body Armour

Sword God's Headband

World Tree Bark Shoes

Dragon Eating Spider Silk Mantle

Braclet of Mana Recovery

Bracelet of Substitution

Forrund? Oh yeah, I remember Colbert mentioning him and calling him an A ranked adventurer. I think his nickname was Hundred Blade Forrund or something like that? Either way, he really did seem just as strong as Amanda.

His extra skill was pretty impressive too. Its description said it'd let him duplicate any magic sword he managed to get his hands on, with the exception of anything super high tier. That really got me thinking, would he be able to copy me...? What would happen if he did? I was feeling pretty curious about it, but honestly, I'd prefer not to find out. Neither of the two

conclusions were what I would call trouble free, so I'll have to sure I stay as far away from him as possible.

Colbert looked like he was participating in Rynford's subjugation as well. He seemed a bit stronger than usual, seemingly because of that Demitris Style skill. I don't remember seeing that last time I appraised him. Had he been keeping it hidden with a piece of equipment or something? If so, then why the sudden change?

Everyone else present was pretty strong too. The Gamud guy really seemed to stand out in particular. His Divine Hammer Arts allowed him to swing his giant warhammer around like it was nothing. His strikes were so powerful that they actually ended up making Rynford stagger despite the difference in the two combatant's sizes. It turned out that he was actually Barbra's guildmaster, which more than explained his strength.

The knight named Phillip was also doing pretty well. He swung a large knight's spear around with ease despite being covered from head to toe in plate armour. The most interesting part about him was that his last name was Krysten, meaning he was probably Rhodas' eldest son. Bluke must not have understood the extent of his elder brother's strength. Any assassins he sent after Phillip would probably have ended up dead.

Zerrosreed was fighting alongside them for some odd reason as well. I guess he probably had his own reasons, seeing as how he betrayed Rynford and all that. He didn't seem intent on attacking Colbert for the time being either, so I didn't really think we needed to pay his loyalties all that much mind, at least not for now. I was more so worried about his current species. He wasn't just your everyday Evil Being, he'd apparently become a subspecies known as a Demonic Being. That Cannibalism skill pretty bad news. It wasn't the type of skill that either Fran nor I could make much use of, but to him, the city was pretty much like an all you could eat buffet. Wait, did he betray Rynford just so he could consume him? Hmm... I get that he's technically an ally for now. I don't plan on attacking him, but it'd probably be pretty bad to just leave him be...

「Fran!」

「Amanda?」

「Are you alright? I hadn't been expecting you to be the one fighting that gigantic monstrosity!」

「Here, why?」

「I hurried over the moment I got the letter you sent me.」

The weird snake-like thing currently keeping Rynford restrained turned out to be Amanda's whip. Wait, didn't we only just send that letter like three days ago? Holy crap she got here fast.

『You sure it's okay for you not to be in Alessa?』

「Don't worry about it, I'm having Jean watch over the town in my place.」

『Wait, isn't Jean just a B ranker though?』

「He is, but he's treated like he's an A ranker in times of war.」

Amanda told us a few things about Jean and convinced me that he was well deserving of his nickname. The ability to command an entire army's worth of undead? Yup, sounded threatening enough to me.

A young girl ran up to us as Amanda gave Fran a bit of a hand. She seemed terrified of Rynford, and kept glancing in his direction as she approached. In spite of her fears, however, she still managed to reach Fran and offer her a potion.

「Um... Are you alright?」

「Seen somewhere before?」

『Yeah, we have. She was one of the Lunar Banquet's dancers.』

「My name is Charlotte. How are your injuries?」

「Nn. Fine. Just slight exhaustion.」

She was more than just a little bit exhausted, both physically and mentally.

「I want to talk to you a bit more, but first, I'm going to have to go get rid of the monster that hurt you, okay?」

「Make sure you be careful out there!」

Charlotte gave Rynford another quick glance as she spoke.

「Don't worry about it. I'll be right back.」

Amanda gave both Fran and Charlotte a light wave before leaping towards the Evil Human. Her kind smile had transformed into a ferocious one, she seemed rather angry at the fact that Rynford had hurt Fran.

She immediately began attacking him with what I assumed was some sort of skill. Her whip grew several times longer and attacked him from every direction at once each time she gave her wrist so much as even the slightest twitch. Every single one of her strikes was as powerful as one of our sword techniques.

The other combatants' attacks were inflicting quite a bit of harm of damage as well. They were all clearly stronger than us.

Just looking at the scene really made it hit home that Rynford had never actually been invincible or anything like that. So, knowing that, why was it that I never thought of anything but running away? Did we really have no way of fighting him at all?

I understood the answer to both questions. I had been afraid of Rynford, and my fear of him had ended up making me feel as if it was simply impossible for us to defeat him. I ended up doing nothing but thinking about how we could go about running away, even after getting two new unique skills. I mean, the outcome we arrived at wasn't necessarily a bad one. We managed to avoid the worst case scenario of death, but thinking back on it, we'd been

far too cowardly. Why did not try pointing one of my offensive skills instead? We might've been able to face him head on if I had.

(Master.)

『What's up?』

(Frustrating.)

『Yeah... It sure does feel frustrating doesn't it...?』

Watching Amanda and everyone else present fight filled me with a sense of irritation. I was going to have to fix the fact that I was still weak. I needed to train, and seriously, at that. It was something I needed to start the moment this issue was dealt with and out of the way.

『...No, that's not right.』

I realized that I was still letting my fears get ahold of me. There was no reason for me to wait until everything was done and over with. The battle had yet to end. We could still join the fray and contribute to Rynford's defeat.

There was no point to just sitting around and mulling over my sense of frustration. The enemy that'd caused it was right there in front of us. We had no reason to rule out combat as an option as we had before. I understood that I still felt the subconscious urge to run the hell away, but now, we were immediately presented the chance to turn that emotion on its head.

What we needed to do now was not to wait, but to fight.

『Let's go, Fran.』

(Will pay back for frustration.)

Fran understood my intentions. It seemed I was still no match for her in terms of mental fortitude.

「Are you planning to join the battle?」

Fran was given a worried look as she rose to her feet. I thought for a second that Charlotte had intended to stop us, but, she instead ended up giving us a bit of encouragement alongside a potion.

「Do your best out there.」

「Nn.」

「I can't fight myself, but I will at least be able to offer you my assistance.」

Charlotte brought her hands together as she spoke. A mysterious light enveloped Fran's body, accompanied by the chiming of a bell filled our ears.

「I have given you a barrier that exorcises and wards off evil energies. But be careful, it's rather frail.」

「Monster's barrier. Broken by you?」

「Yes, that's correct.」

Wow, seriously? I'm sorry I thought your stats were really low.

(Everyone amazing.)

『Yeah.』

Stats were important, but they weren't all that mattered. The abilities to adapt and draw out one's potential to its fullest were just as important.

Fran went silent for a bit, seemingly lost in thought.

『What's the matter?』

(Master. I'll lead.)

『What do you mean?』

(Couldn't do anything when running from Rynford. Not just this once. Always relied on Master. This time, let me lead.)

『Fran...』

I'd actually been thinking that I was trying too hard to do everything by myself. I didn't ask Fran for her opinion nearly as often as I should have, but, it looked like all that was about to change.

『Alright, got it. What are you planning though?』

(Want to try something new.)

『Like what?』

(Finishing move like Master's Overburst. Thought about it for a long time already. Conclusion, attack that uses everything we have at once.)

Her use of the word "we" meant that she wanted me to be doing something as well. More importantly though, it implied that she was confident she'd be able to draw out every last bit of my power. Awesome! As a sword, I couldn't feel more blessed. I was sure that I would one day grow to rival even the Godblades if I were to remain in Fran's hands.

(Want specific skills to be set.)

I think this might be the first time Fran's ever asked me to set any specific skills in combat.

『Alright, take your pick.』

And so, with Fran's selected skills in tow, we took off and dove straight in Rynford's direction.

131 Strength and Technique

131 Strength and Technique

「Master. Thing I wanted to try.」

『Lay it on me. I'm ready for whatever, though I'm a bit nervous because we aren't really going to get to practice it or anything.』

「Nn. Skills. Air Compression, Magic Thread Weaving... 」

Fran ultimately ended up asking me to set fourteen different skills: Flame Magic, Wind Magic, Atmospheric Circulation Control, Air Compression, Air Jump, Vibration Fang, Anti-Weight, Weight Boost, Elemental Blade, Charge, Parallel Processing, Magic Thread Weaving, Magic Poison Fang, and Coordination.

She got to work the moment I had them set, and raised both arms in front of her with her palms facing forward. She made use of the Atmospheric Circulation Control skill and created herself a pair of cube-shaped blocks of air, each about a meter and a half across. Each was populated by a bunch of thin magic threads.

『Oh, I get it now! Nice thinking!』

The combination allowed her to manipulate the threads in midair and move around in kind of the same manner as Spiderman or someone with a Three Dimensional Maneuver Gear.

Fran immediately moved the threads behind her and leaned on them to pull them back. They were elastic, so they quickly sprung back against her and launched her through the air.

At first, I'd thought that her actions resembled those of a pro wrestler, but a bit more observation led me to think of the threads as the spring in a pinball machine.

Fran used Air Compression and covered me in a layer of wind as she leapt into the air and delivered a powerful overhead swing.

「Nn. Works well.」

She nodded with a satisfied look on her face. I didn't know exactly what she was planning, but it looked like it was going well.

「Time for practical application. Will explain in detail.」

Fran filled me in on her plan. The thing she had in mind was nothing short of interesting, though, under normal circumstances, it would likely be labeled as reckless.

『Alright, let's do this.』

As per her suggestions, I used Long Jump and teleported us way up into the sky directly atop Rynford's head.

「Starting now.」

『I'll support you with everything I got!』

「Nn!」

Fran began compressing the air and generating magic threads the moment she teleported. Unlike our little trial run, however, this time, she was going all out and pouring every last bit of magical energy she could muster into her spells. She soon started free falling, but didn't seem to mind as she calmly placed the thread she constructed above her head.

She then used Air Jump to leap straight up, and did exactly as she had during the little practice session earlier. This time, however, she didn't fly launch herself horizontally. Instead, she propelled her body straight down.

And that was just the beginning.

Fran used Air Jump and Wind Magic in tandem to create herself a series of vertical footholds, which she ran straight down in order to raise her speed even further. She readied me for action by raising me above her head and used Atmospheric Circulation Control to minimize the amount of wind resistance generated while also using Weight Boost to bolster my weight to a point well over the fifty kilogram mark.

I'd become incredibly heavy for a weapon, but the combination of Fran's strength stat and the Anti-weight skill allowed her to continue wielding me without any issue.

We rapidly closed in on Rynford, while using the Espionage skill to remain undetected.

I molded the shape of my body as she got ready to swing. She'd requested me to take on a form with a backwards arching blade. There were a few other instructions as well, and so, in the end, I ultimately ended up as something that closely resembled a katana, a result that left me shocked. I'd never told her about katanas before, the idea she had was one that she'd formed all on her own.

The only worry I had was that our sword skills wouldn't end up applying to katanas. We did have a few potentially applicable skills, like Single Edged Sword Arts, but their levels were all fairly low. The fact that Single Edged Sword Arts and Double Edged Sword Arts had been differentiated meant that they likely were mutually exclusive, so I made sure to leave two edges and retain a more longswordy shape in general. [1]

「Oh?」

Rynford finally noticed us after we got within the twenty five meter range, which made sense. It was pretty hard to avoid detection without any cover given our proximity to him.

「You were still alive, girl!?!」

Rynford stared at her with bloodshot eyes as he let loose a hate filled scream. A rancid, purple miasma accompanied his words and leaked out of his mouth as he shouted. The smoke-like substance was filled with evil energy; everything that touched it, be it skin or armour, would end up melting away as if dipped in acid. The most annoying part about it was that it had an incredibly large area of effect.

So what do? I had no idea how we were supposed to go about avoiding it.

「One trick pony.」

I didn't manage to think up a solution myself, but it was an attack that we'd already seen time and time again. Fran had long predicted it and prepared a countermeasure.

「Burnia」

Burnia, a level two flame spell, allowed its caster to use the power of an explosion in order to provide themselves a burst of speed. It was a bit difficult to use, as the caster would end up getting caught in the explosion radius.

Fran quickly created a barrier of wind that served not one or two, but three functions. It reduced the amount of damage the explosion inflicted upon us, allowed her to increase her velocity even further, and even protected her from the miasma's effects as she charged straight through it.

Rynford's eyes bulged as he realized that she managed to break through his smokescreen without taking any damage.

「Damn you, you impudent brat!!」

He rapidly raised both arms and guarded his face against the assault he couldn't help but label as dangerous.

What an idiot.

He'd fallen for our feint. Fran had directed all her bloodlust at him while gazing straight into his eyes, so he'd assumed that we'd been targeting his

head.

But that was far from the truth.

「Haaaahhhhh!」

『Haaaahhhhh!』

Fran's strike was aimed not at his cranium, but at his torso.

The level five Collaboration skill allowed me to understand her intents without the two of us having to perform any sort of actual communication. I casted Elemental Blade to wreath my body in flame, activated Vibration Fang, and triggered Magic Poison Fang right as we got ready to strike.

And of course, I wasn't the only one to act. Fran had activated the exact skills, but with Magic Poison Fang substituted out for Weight Boost. She seemed to know that my blade wouldn't hold out for too long, so she made sure that the six skills we casted remained active for only a fraction of a second.

That, however, was more than enough. Fran drew me from the air she had compressed around me like a sheath and concentrated all her energies into a single godspeed slash. [2]

Her attack wasn't like my Telekinetic Catapult. It wasn't something as simple or dull as a display of brute force, but rather, a finely crafted technique that embodied the very meaning of the term "ultimate." [3]

「Nraaaaghhhhhhhhh!!」

The vicious strike left a deep wound that extended all the way from Rynford's shoulder down to his midsection. I felt my blade sever his very heart in two.

We weren't able to immediately check out our handywork in detail, as I was forced to teleport Fran away before she crashed into the ground.

「Thanks Master.」

『Whew, barely made it.』

Fran was calm despite the fact that we would've ended up face planting into the earth's surface if I waited even a second longer. Not to brag, but I could tell she really trusted me.

We turned back towards Rynford shortly afterwards in order to examine the effects of our actions.

「Curse you! Curssee yyouuuuu!!」

That single strike removed half his life force. He had no choice but to take a knee as blood spilled out of his newly opened wound.

Wait, he's still not dead!? Holy shit! Why the hell is he still alive after having his heart literally cut in half? Damn stubborn old man, just die already!

I was surprised that we didn't manage to finish him off, but all was good. Our efforts hadn't gone to waste.

『We did it Fran.』

「Nn! Ultimate obtained.」

The only problem with our newfound secret technique was that it could only be used under a specific set of circumstances. We wouldn't use it in any sort of cramped environment, so it probably wasn't going to be all that useful whenever we went to the dungeon we'd been planning to check out.

Well, that only applied to the attack as a whole though. We could still use parts of it. That pseudo-sword draw technique? Yeah, I could see us using that all the time. Unlike the pain in the ass stuff you'd see in real life back in Japan, the sword draw technique Fran had devised was actually practical. It could be used for more than just a horizontal slash from one's waist, and the blade would actually accelerate far more quickly than usual when pulled from its sheath. Moreover, the technique had great synergy with the Weight Boost skill when used with a vertical slash.

It looked like Magic Poison Fang was doing its job too. Rynford's state now claimed him to be envenomed. That said though, he had Resistance to Abnormal Status Conditions and Regeneration so he wasn't actually taking all that much damage. That said, the fact that we'd more or less nullified the effects of Regeneration meant that he was now far more vulnerable to all the other combatants' attacks. In other words, he was pretty much screwed.

「Don't let the opportunity Fran's given us go to waste!」

「Mmph.」

「Great job, Miss Fran!」

「Orders acknowledged!」

「I'll show you what it means to have a Dwarf's strength!」

「Hahahaha! These guys've all got some fight in em, but that'll have to wait. Right now, it's your turn, you old shit!」

「Do your best everyone!」

The all star team followed Amanda's orders and focus fired Rynford. We wanted to join them, but that little trump card of ours had caused my durability to plummet. I wasn't able to heal up enough in time to join them even with Instant Regeneration. Fran was pretty much completely out of mana too, unfortunately.

Rynford's left arm was mauled by a spear as the rest of his body was pierced by countless magic swords and struck over and over again by an unrelenting whip. He was then lifted off the ground by one of Colbert's uppercuts, only to have his right leg smashed back down and pulverized by the Guildmaster's hammer.

「Gugagagagagaaaahhhh! Y-You sons of bitchesss!!!」

「The finishing blow is mine!」

「Damned traitor...!」

Zerrosreed's assault had ended up removing his other leg and caused him to crumple onto the ground. Turned out the Berserker really had been going for the finisher. Bastard was trying to use his Cannibalism skill to make himself even stronger.

But luckily, it turned out that the battle had still yet to end.

「Hooooowlll!」

Urushi imitated Fran's actions and dashed straight down from somewhere way up high. He drove his fangs into Rynford's neck and gave it a good tear before plummeting back into the shadows the moment he was about to faceplant.

Damn boy! You totally just stole the spotlight right there!

「Graaaaggh... Why... Not like this...」

And leaving only those four words, Rynford breathed his last.

「Oh god fucking damn it! Stupid god damn dog got in my way again!!」

[1] This is a minor technicality with the Japanese language that normally isn't enforced. 刀 (pronounced katana or tou) refers to swords with one edge, whereas 剣 (pronounced tsurugi or ken) refers to swords with two edges. Note that these meanings are actually relatively vague and the latter in particular is often broken and just used for swords in general, hence why it was translated as just Sword Arts up until this point. Now that the author has made the distinction, it will be translated as Double Edged Sword Arts going forward. Note that this may still be incorrect, and it could actually just be Sword Arts with certain types of swords having their own categories. Also note that 刀 (single edged sword) is often used to refer to the Japanese Katana in particular. Context clues in this case make it seem like it's for single edged swords in general, but in other cases, it could just mean Katana Arts. Another note is that I forgot I was going to translate the

“(Weapon) Arts” one as “Way of the (Weapon).” Since it completely slipped my mind for the past month or so, I’m going to hold off on it and keep “(Weapon) Arts” for consistency’s sake for the time being. I’ll change it sometime down the line if the author continues to fiddle with minor connotations. I also only now realized that I forgot to mention that the “Arts” part of “(Weapon) Arts” alludes to the “Arts” in “Martial Arts.”

[2] The sword drawing technique referenced here and later in the chapter is “Battoujutsu.” You might recognize it if you were a Rurouni Kenshin fan, but it’s basically a technique in which one uses a sheath to draw and swing their blade with ridiculous power, accuracy and speed. As mentioned by Swordbro, it isn’t something that’s really what you’d consider practical in real life.

[3] The word used here is “必殺,” pronounced “hissatsu.” There is no English term that shares the same connotation, so I used the closest game related one I could think of. By ultimate, I mean ultimates in any sort of hero based game. Examples of these include League of Legends, DOTA, and Overwatch. Ultimates are ridiculously powerful, signature techniques that serve to define the character they belong to. The Japanese term used here tends to allude to being a finishing move/insta kill. A popular example would be the Giga Drill Breaker.

132. Rynford's Demise

132. Rynford's Demise

Urushi's attack functioned as the finishing blow; Rynford was deprived of his life force and left only the ability to voice one final hateful cry before passing away. His body promptly reacted to his passing. His flesh began peeling off his muscles and his corpse rapidly decomposed into a fine ash.

His end was abrupt, so abrupt, in fact, that it almost seemed underwhelming.

「Whimper...」

Urushi popped out from the shadows as Rynford's remains continued to degrade. The combination of his pain filled whimper and the blood dripping from his mouth indicated that something wasn't quite right.

『What happened boy? You alright?』

「Rynford's fault?」

「Whimper...」

We quickly peeked into his maw and found the source of his pain. The large wolf's fangs were in a sorry state. Ever last bit of his jaw seemed to have been suspect to some sort of damage. Worst of all were his canines, which had been torn out altogether. Their now empty sockets had even started to hemorrhage.

Despite all the damages incurred, I couldn't really say I was even the slightest bit surprised. The attack Fran and I had used was one that came

with enough drawbacks to completely wreck my blade. Urushi had copied us, so it only made sense for something similar to happen to his fangs.

『Don't be pushing yourself too hard now, alright?』

「Woof.」

「But, actions performed were cool.」

「Bark!」

I quickly patched him up by throwing a few heals at him.

〈Fran has leveled up.〉

〈Fran has leveled...〉

The battle had ended, so the System Announcer chimed in with a few notifications.

Rynford had been worth a tonne of experience. Fran managed to gain three levels; she hit level forty despite the fact that the exp had ended up getting split nine ways.

—

General Information

Name: Fran

Age: 12

Species: Beastman (Black Cat Tribe)

Job: Magic Warrior

State: Contracted

Status Level: 40/45

HP: 450

MP: 382

STR: 251

VIT: 196

AGI: 248

INT: 172

MGC: 206

DEX: 170

Skills

Espionage: Lv 3

Court Etiquette: Lv 4

Presence Detection: Lv 4

Sword Techniques: Lv 5

Sword Arts: Lv 6

Blink: Lv 3

Fire Magic: Lv 2

Cooking: Lv 2

Insect Killer

Vigour Manipulation

Goblin Killer

Mental Stability

Skilled Skinning

Demon Killer

Determined

Directional Sense

Night Vision

Magic Manipulation

New: Evil Killer

New: Evil Resistance

Innate Skills

Magic Convergence

Special Skills

Black Cat's Divine Protection

Titles

Match for a Thousand

Insect Killer

Lord of Dismantling

Recovery Magic Adept

Goblin Killer

She who Slaughters

Skill Collector

Dungeon Conqueror

Giant Eater

Demon Killer

Fire Adept

Wind Adept

King of Cooking

Undead Killer

Skill Maniac

New: Evil Killer

Equipment

Black Cat Set (Body Armour, Gloves, Shoes, Earring, Cloak, Belt)

Power Bracelet + 1

Bracelet of Substitution

Skull Necklace

The Evil Resistance skill looked like it was something that'd resulting from all the damage she'd just taken. Her new title was pretty interesting as well. Appraising it ended up giving me the following results.

—

Evil Killer: A title bestowed upon those that have felled Evil Beings.

Effect: Grants the user the “Evil Killer” skill.

—

It seemed to be the type of title you got from killing some sort of super strong enemy as opposed to just killing a certain number of weaker enemies.

More importantly was the fact that she was about to hit her level cap. Thinking about what would happen filled me with curiosity. I couldn’t wait.

Naturally, Fran wasn’t the only one to level up. The same had happened to Urushi.

—

General Information

Name: Urushi

Species: Darkness Wolf (Magic Wolf (Magic Beast))

State: Normal

Status Level: 22/50

HP: 644

MP: 811

STR: 341

VIT: 290

AGI: 439

INT: 282

MGC: 511

DEX: 258

Skills

Darkness Resistance: Lv 8

Darkness Magic: Lv 3

Sense of Smell: MAX

Espionage: Lv 7

Fang Techniques: Lv 6

Fang Arts: Lv 6

Shadow Dwell: MAX

Shadow Travel: Lv 6

Air Jump: Lv 8

Fear: Lv 4

Vigilance: Lv 6

Presence Concealment: Lv 6

Regeneration: Lv 5

Deadly Poison Magic: Lv 1

Blink: Lv 5

Muffle: Lv 6

Spirit Magic: Lv 5

Life Force Detection: Lv 7

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 6

Poison Magic: MAX

Echolocation: Lv 7

Roar: Lv 8

Shadow Slip: MAX

Dark Magic: MAX

Night Vision

Greater Poison Fang

Automatic HP Recovery

Automatic MP Recovery

Immune to Poison

Body Alteration

Magic Manipulation

New: Evil Detection

New: Evil Resistance

Unique Skills

Prey Absorption

Titles

Kin to the Sword

Kin to the God of Wolves

—

Looked like Urushi had managed to get himself a pair of new skills too. Wait, Evil Resistance? I don't recall him taking nearly as much damage as Fran... Hmm... I guess it was probably because of Prey Absorption. The skill would let him absorb a portion of the abilities of anything he ate, and I guess he did technically ingest Rynford's flesh and blood when he finished him off, so that's probably where he got that.

There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with him, but would it perhaps be better to have him not eat Evil Beings from now on?

『Alright, that's done and over with, so we should probably be going after Zerais now.』

(Nn.)

The only issue was that we had absolutely no idea where he was. I really wish we'd managed to get Rynford to tell us or somet- Oh wait. We could probably just get it out of that Zerrosreed guy instead.

『Or... not? Where'd he go?』

「Nn? Vanished.」

「Huh? Oh! Darn it! The Berserker got away!」

Amanda had overheard Fran's muttering, so she ended up giving the surroundings a quick once over that ultimately culminated in a frustrated shout.

When the hell? Didn't he literally just try finishing Rynford off?

「It looks like he might have the Anti-Perception skill...」

「Oh, I see him! He's right over there!」

The spot Amanda was pointing to was about fifty meters from where we were. Holy crap, when the hell did he leave...?

「The last hit should've been mine! I could've gotten my hands on a good chunk of that shitty old geezer's power! Everything would've gone perfectly if not for that god damned meddling dog! Fuck this, I'm out!」

「You won't be getting away!」

Colbert immediately dashed after Zerrosreed, but the berserker had been one step ahead of him.

「Hahaha! Zerais's up in the Alchemist's Guild if you need him, by the way, so goodbye to you!」

「Huh? He teleported?」

As evidenced by Amanda's surprised response, Zerrosreed had teleported himself away. Appearance wise, it looked pretty much identical to the stuff I could use. Rynford did something similar just a bit earlier as well, so my guess was that it was the effect of some sort of skill derived from the Evil Arts. Neither Zerrosreed nor Rynford seemed to have been able to use the skill on more than one occasion though, so it probably had a few constraints on it or something.

「Tsk. I should've expected as much from someone with such a big bounty on his head, but he sure is good at running away. I'll definitely get him next time!」

It looked like he managed to escape, but I figured we could still get him if we had everyone give us a hand. That said though, I decided to put the idea aside for the time being as capturing Zerais was much more important. We had no idea as to whether or not Zerrosreed was telling the truth, but he did

already have a pretty good track record as far as betrayal went, so chances were that he was. Having some of us split off to go after Zerais served in his favour, so there was all the more reason for him not to lie.

「The air still gives off a sense of evil...」

Forrund's words momentarily cleared my mind of all my thoughts regarding Zerais and Zerrosreed, and reminded me of the Evil Crystals Rynford had been using. I didn't really know if they'd cause anything bad to happen without any outside fluence, but it probably wasn't a good idea to just leave them be anyways.

「Might still be here. Evil Crystals.」

「What Evil Crystals?」

Fran quickly answered the Guildmaster and began talking about the crystals Rynford had been using. Her explanation immediately led everyone around her to turn pale and immediately start digging through the temple's debris.

Charlotte played a pretty key role. Apparently, she was fairly sharp as far as evil energies were concerned, so she managed to find both crystals almost immediately. They were buried under a bunch of other stuff, but Gamud was pretty good at earth magic, so he managed to get them out in a jiffy.

「So these are the Evil Crystals you were talking about...」

「Evil energies thinner?」

Fran had been on point. The Evil Crystals were giving off much less energy that they'd been prior to Rynford's transformation.

「You said that these were placed within the temple's grounds?」

「Nn. Rynford performed ritual.」

「I see...」

「Have you figured anything out, Charlotte?」

「I'm not too confident in my theory's correctness, but...」

According to Charlotte, temples effectively functioned to allow communication with the Divine Realm in which the Gods resided. Oracles and other similar individuals could use the connection in order to create a path, which in turn was used for job changes and the like. A job change in particular involved making use of the Divine Realm's axioms in order to overwrite the data that pertained to one's job.

The paths were governed over by the Gods themselves, so it was impossible for normal human beings to use them as they pleased.

Charlotte had deduced that the Evil Crystals had the ability to warp said path, and instead direct it towards the sealed off Evil God.

A few of the people that'd fought with us, Colbert included, immediately voiced their objections, but they were quickly overruled by Amanda and Gamud, who stated that it could be possible. Very little was known about the Evil God's powers, and thus, warping the path could potentially fall within the realm of the Evil God's capabilities.

Apparently, the Evil God had been split into a great number of smaller pieces upon its defeat. The core in particular had been taken into the Divine Realm, where it was placed under surveillance. We had no real way of confirming whether or not that was actually truth, but we assumed it was as that was what the legends said.

Either way, we decided to destroy the Evil Crystals. They probably wouldn't see any decent use even if we did just leave them here, and not a single one of the individuals presented objected to the idea, so we had everyone join in and quickly smashed the crystals to bits.

Alright, that's another task done. All that's left for us to do now is hunt down Zerais.

「Amanda. Need help with something.」

「Sure, what is it?」

「Can request anything? No objections?」

「There's no way I'd turn you of all people down, Fran. So, out with it. What did you need me to do?」

Luckily, Amanda was more than willing to cooperate, so we quickly told her and everyone else about Zerais. Specifically, we explained that he was the mastermind behind all this, that he was still at large, and that he still seemed to be up to something.

「I am surprised to hear that Zerais has yet to leave the city... I shall make good use of this opportunity and pay him back in full force for involving my brothers in his schemes.」

「I hadn't heard his name in quite some time. I'd assumed that he'd already dropped dead.」

「We may be able to encounter the Berserker should we track him down.」

「I'm going to have to give those baddies a bit of punishment for the children's sake.」

「Indeed.」

It seemed that everyone was willing and ready give solving this whole case a go, so we had Colbert, the person most familiar with the city's layout, lead us over the Alchemist's guild. The party we moved with was one of extraordinary strength. With them around, taking Zerais in would be easy as pie.

133. The Alchemist's Guild

133. The Alchemist's Guild

It didn't take long for us to arrive at the Alchemist's Guild. We ran into a few Evil Beings along the way, but they all ended up dying instantly seeing as how our party's specs were what they were. We had practically mowed straight through the city. The only person that had trouble keeping up was Charlotte, but we quickly rectified that issue by having her join Fran on Urushi.

I couldn't help but accuse our wolf companion of being a huge pervert. He refused to let men ride him, but was more than willing to shoulder a pretty girl or two. It might've also been because he thought of her as weak though, so I couldn't actually say for sure. I mean, he was totally okay with the orphanage's children after all, regardless of gender.

Thinking about it made me arrive at the conclusion that he seemed to think that men should be able to manage without any sort of assistance, an opinion quite similar to my own. I wonder... Did the summoning process intentionally pull in a creature with a personality that resonated with mine or something like that?

「I have eyes on the Alchemist's Guild, but ...」

「Oi, ain't that our guild's bunch right there?」

The situation was basically exactly as Colbert and Gamud had described; a melee had broken out in front of the Alchemist's Guild. I could tell at a glance that the adventurers present were fighting a group of things, but I couldn't immediately discern what those so called things were as they didn't seem to be Evil Beings. I'd almost thought them to be the undead at

first, but I could feel them giving off some sort of life force, so that couldn't have been the case.

I didn't manage to figure out what the things were before getting within appraisal range, so I just went and did that instead of thinking about it. They turned out to be Demonic Beings. In other words, they were the same species as Zerrosreed. Unlike the Berserker, however, the Demonic Beings the adventurers were fighting weren't really all that strong. Hence, I was much more interested in their abnormal status conditions than anything else about them. Apparently, they were in the Impaired state. The hell was that supposed to mean?

「Let's go back up the adventurers for now.」

「Indeed!」

「Here goes!」

Colbert and Gamud had both been a full step ahead of Amanda, as they'd already started charging the moment she started issuing orders. Phillip and Amanda jumped in immediately after, while Fran and Forrund wordlessly brought up the rear. Urushi didn't join the fray, and instead sat around on standby as Charlotte's guard.

「I'm here to help!」

「Guildmaster!」

Turned out that Eugene had joined the fray as well, as a member of the Adventurer's Guild, of course. He had been firing off spells into the crowd in order to defeat the Demonic Beings.

「Eugene?」

「You're here too, Fran?」

「What happened? Want explanation.」

「Well, you see...」

The Adventurer's Guild was first notified of the Alchemist's Guild's plight about an hour back. One of the older alchemists that had kept in touch with Eugene even after the incident had barged into the Adventurer's Guild in a panic and requested his friends' assistance.

Apparently, one of the Alchemist's Guild's higher ups had been working together with an alchemist outside their ranks in order to conduct illegal experiments. The experiment's participant then went on to using his concoctions in order to seize control over the Alchemist's Guild's upper stratum. He then forced those with less influence to assist in the experimentation.

Specifically, the less influential alchemists had ended up being forced to function as lab rats. The old man had managed to escape his colleagues' fate as he had coincidentally holed himself up in his room and continued his research without exposing himself to the guild's other members.

The illegal experiments worked towards the goal of obtaining more information about Demonization, the process of imbuing magic stones inside of human beings in order to strengthen them. Interestingly enough, Demonization was in fact the precise topic that had led to the expulsion of Eugene's disciple.

That disciple's name had of course been Zerais. The Alchemist's Guild had supposedly washed its hands of Zerais' experiments the moment he was expelled, but one of the guild's higher ups had not only preserved all the data obtained, but also offered the fugitive both shelter from the authorities and the opportunity to continue his research.

The man seemed to have two reasons for his actions. The first was apparently that he believed the research to be of monetary value, governments and militaries would pay out the ass for that kind of information. The latter seemed to be that he, as an alchemist, thought that it would be wasteful to throw away all the useful data obtained.

「Then, those things. Former alchemists?」

「Precisely. I attempted to have their magic stones removed with the adventurers' assistance, but unfortunately it was to no avail...」

They'd tried pretty much everything they could think of. They experimented with healing magic, purification magic, surgery, and even brute force, but none of it was to any effect. The demonic beings were much like magic beasts, they would die the moment their magic stones were removed or destroyed. And of course, the human used the demonic being's base would end up dying as well in the process.

「Can't communicate?」

「We tried, but again, to no avail. The magic beings appear to have all gone insane.」

Zerrosreed seemed to have retained his ability to think though. Was that because he'd had the magic stones transplanted into him as an Evil Being or something?

「Half had already been let loose by the time we arrived, but managed to encircle the Alchemist's Guild's building before the other half escaped its confines.」

It was quite difficult for the adventurers to capture the Demonic Beings alive. There were a few small fry here and there, but many could use magic. Asking adventurers to take in something that powerful without killing it first was more or less equivalent to asking them to off themselves.

Hence, they'd only tried removing magic stones from the demons they happened to accidentally render incapable of combat.

「So we have no choice but to kill them?」

「Exactly.」

Eugene responded to Amanda's question with a nod.

Well, I guess we kinda have to lend him a hand or two. I'm feeling a bit paranoid that one of them is going to suddenly power up the same way

Rynford did, so yeah.

(Master. Gunning for magic stones.)

『Right, yeah, good point.』

Fran immediately dashed into the melee and swung me at one of the Demonic Beings, to which I responded by promptly absorbing its magic stone on contact.

—

General Information

Species: Demonic Being

State: Impaired

Status Level: 1/99

HP: 48

MP: 55

STR: 25

VIT: 23

AGI: 10

INT: 27

MGC: 25

DEX: 10

Skills

Painting: Lv 1

Compounding: Lv 1

Water Magic: Lv 2

Alchemy: Lv 4

Magic Manipulation

—

And of course, I gave his status a quick peak right before he died. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get my hands on the Painting skill he had, and to make matters worse, he was only worth a single magic stone point.

『Let's hurry up and get this over with.』

「Nn.」

We followed Amanda and went even deeper into the mob of Demonic Beings, but much to my dismay, not a single one of them was worth more than just one measly magic stone point.

The moment I started grumbling my complaints was the the moment I spotted a Demonic Being that seemed to stand out from its peers.

「Strong.」

『Sure looks like it. His stats are pretty high, and he isn't Impaired either.』

He was much stronger and faster than the other Demonic Beings. And, although it sat at a measly level one, he did technically have the Sword Arts skill. Fran ended up disposing of him in an instant anyways, but he still was pretty strong when compared all the others.

And you know what? Best part is that he gave more than just one magic stone point. Killing him and ended up getting me three whole points. Does

the amount of points I get vary based off their state? Or is it something else instead?

「Will find even stronger Demonic Beings.」

『Go for it.』

We ended up charging straight for the Alchemist's Guild's building despite it basically being the enemy's HQ.

「Any plans as far as taking control over the building goes, Gamud?」

「There ain't really anything to take control of. There don't seem to be any human beings inside the place anymore.」

According to Amanda and Gamud, the Guild's interior was basically devoid of human life. There was some evil energy flowing out of from within it, but the amount was miniscule relative to what we felt back at the temple, so I didn't really think it to be an issue.

Urushi, however, thought otherwise.

「Growl.」

He barked a low, guttural bark while staring straight at the building before us.

「Is something wrong, Urushi?」

「Woof woof!」

The wolf answered Amanda with a pair of more vigilant barks.

「Something coming.」

「?」

「Are you certain? My senses are failing to react if so...」

Neither Forrund nor Philip were able to sense whatever it was Urushi was detecting. In other words, this was probably the work of his newly acquired Evil Detection skill, as no one else present happened to have it.

The skill was still just level one, but it seemed quite effective seeing as how he was able to outdo several A ranked adventurers in terms of detection.

「I sense it now as well!」

「Really? You too, Charlotte?」

「Really. It seems to be coming from somewhere underground. Right, Urushi?」

「Woof woof woof!」

「Well, your impressions seem to match up, so I don't see any reason to be doubting you.」

「Incoming attack detected.」

「It seems so. I can feel it in my fists.」

Everyone else finally started picking up whatever Urushi had sensed after about a minute or so.

Whatever was coming for us seemed a lot weaker than I'd initially anticipated. It was only giving off as much evil energy as your average Evil Being. However, I was still quite curious about it as it seemed to carry with it a sort of artificial nature. The part that piqued my interest the most was how it felt a lot more like clump of pure evil energy than an actual living thing.

All my questions were answered three minutes later, as whatever we'd detected finally made its way outside the Alchemist's Guild's confines.

「Is that a golem?」

「Huh. I can't appraise the damn thing, it's got Appraisal Blocking.」

Gamud was unable to learn anything about the golem despite having his appraisal skill leveled to 3. I tried taking a quick glance at it with the Eye of Empyrea, but even then, the only thing I got was its name. Apparently, it was a Magic Stone Soldier.

「Growl.」

『Get ready. Looks like it's shifting right into combat mode.』

「Nn!」

At this chapter's time of writing, TSKD was in fact the most popular web novel on Syosetu.

Happy Thanksgiving everyone! Time for me to get drunk as fuck.

134. Zerais' Goal

134. Zerais' Goal

Five Magic Stone Soldiers emerged from within the Alchemist Guild's depths. For some odd reason, they seemed to give off a heavy, intimidating air despite looking like a bunch of armoured gorillas.

They could also be described as golems with elongated arms. Either way, their bodies were made purely of a red and black, crystalline substance.

Their short legs made it so that their longer arms extended all the way down to the ground. A bit of further observation led me to realize that they very much resembled the robotic soldiers that guarded a certain castle in the sky.

None of the five gave off even the slightest bit of life force. It looked like they really were golems as opposed to powersuits or the like.

「Be careful. I can't appraise these damn things for the life of me. There's no way for us to tell what they have up their sleeves.」

「All the more reason to attack them before they've a chance to attack us!」

Although Colbert kind of seemed like the kind of guy that'd enjoy charging right in, he was experienced enough to understand that running up to and punching an enemy whose abilities he knew little about was not exactly the best idea. Hence, his preemptive attack instead took the form of a skill somewhat similar to sword arts' Sonic Wave. That is, he fired off a shockwave in the golems' direction by punching the air.

The shockwave flew straight towards them. I could tell at a glance that it had more than enough power to mangle a hobgoblin and grind it to pieces.

But it had no effect.

Colbert's shockwave almost seemed to vanish altogether the moment it came into contact with the Magic Stone Soldier standing in front. It hadn't even taken any damage from the attack.

I couldn't tell if it'd used a skill or invoked some sort of magic, but in either case, it seemed as if it hadn't been affected at all. Man, not being able to appraise something is a huge pain in the ass.

Seeing the Magic Stone Soldier's ability had caused our allies to halt in precaution. Four of our five enemies immediately took note of our hesitation and began swinging their arms in a large arc. It seemed that they were in the midst of gathering magical energy there within.

「Watch out! They're mounting an assault!」

「Oh Barrier of Wind.」

「Howl! Granbolt!」

『Fire Wall.』

We setup our defenses the moment the golems unleashed their attacks.

「They're using composite attributes!?!」

「That thing was as strong as a high tier spell!」

We had managed to ward off the golems' barrage, but the brute force that they came with had left quite an impression nonetheless. The wind bullets they fired had been about as powerful as what you'd expect from Storm Magic, but that wasn't all. They'd also thrown a few rarer elements into the mix, namely ice/snow, lightning, and lava.

The fact that golems were able to use magic was, in and of itself, a pretty rare occurrence, so seeing them use powerful spells derived from rare elements made the whole situation seem outright unrealistic.

Both Amanda and Gamud had shouted in surprise, and although Forrund refrained from speech, I could tell that he felt the same based on the fact that he'd gone wide eyed.

「So, how are you finding my Magic Stone Soldiers?」

「Nn?」

『Is that a hologram? Or is he using illusion magic or something?』

A man had materialized between us and the golems right after Amanda had another one of spells do nothing whatsoever to an enemy golem.

At first, I'd thought that he'd teleported here or something, but I'd very obviously been wrong. His translucent form and the occasional static that seemed to pulse through his body both evidenced that he was obviously just an illusion.

The man was so good looking that it pissed me the hell off. He looked to be about twenty, and had the ever so rumoured blonde hair and blue eyes. His stature was a bit on the smaller side, just enough so that I almost felt the urge to warn him to be wary of pedophiles.

「Who?」

「Zerais!」

「Oh, long time no see, Master of mine.」

Eugene ended up shouting out the man's name and revealing to us his identity, but I still had a hard time digesting it. Like, was that seriously him? I really didn't expect him to be so young and whatnot. I'd always pictured Zerais as an older dude in a lab coat.

「You haven't really changed much.」

「Oh that? That's just because I happened to get my hands on a bit of demon blood.」

Ohhh, I get it. If you inject yourself with the blood of a longer living race, you'll end up looking much younger than you actually are.

「Are you the reason the guild's alchemists are the way they are?」

「Well yeah. I put them all through my Demonization experiments, but as you can see, they ended up turning into failures. It looks like you need someone that's really strong, both in mind and body, if you want to actually get something out of shoving a magic stone inside of a human being. All the small fry I tried the experiment on ended up dying because their bodies rejected the magic stones. The ones lucky enough to live all ended up losing their minds. They might as well be zombies with the way they are, but oh well, I guess that's fine too since they're pretty easy to control.」

Zerais proudly started to blab about everything he'd done. The look he had on his face pissed me off to no end. He seemed to love attention, so he ended up giving us a bunch of information for pretty much no reason at all.

「I still need just a bit more work on the Demonization end of things, but those Magic Stone Soldiers I've got over there are pretty much complete already. How are you finding them? Strong, right? I figured out how to make them when I was doing research on demons. I couldn't really get things to go the way I wanted at first, but one of my collaborators gave me a bit of a hand and helped me push them towards completion.」

「Rynford?」

「That's right. Oh wait, I've got a pretty good idea who you are. You're that adventurer girl, Fran, right?」

「Rynford? Who's that?」

Hmmm, I see, so Eugene didn't even know Rynford existed.

「He's one of the Evil God's servants, and the guy behind this whole mess. Though, I can't really say I didn't lend him a hand or two. He taught me Evil Arts and several methods for handling evil energies, so I paid him back by teaching him all about alchemy and magic stones. Anyway, I know the

night's been a bit of a rowdy one, but why don't you join in on all the festivities? Oh yeah, I just realized I lied a bit. I think I did end up participating in planning tonight out, since I did need two or three thousand souls, you see.」

Zerais' smile was so pure and serene that it almost seemed like his actions hadn't caused him to feel even the slightest bit of guilt.

「W-Why would you...」

Eugene narrowly managed to squeeze out half a question as he stared his disciple down. The half insectman's face had clearly gone pale.

「Hmmm... Well, to sum it up, I guess it's cause I wanted to leave proof of the fact that I existed.」

「What? I don't understand what you're saying.」

「I guess I'll remove a step's worth of abstraction then. My goal is to become so famous that my name goes down in history. I'd like for people to remember me, even a thousand years down the line.」

「Are you serious, Zerais...? You're willing to throw away people's lives for that mundane a reason...?」

Eugene's face stiffened. He took on a much more teacher-like air despite the fact that didn't seem to be able to comprehend the fact that his former disciple had gone mad.

「When was it...? When was it that you were first led astray...?」

「When? Well, I was always like this. The only difference is that I used to be a bit better behaved is all. You know, Master, I really do appreciate all you've done for me. Your lessons are the only reason why I'm even starting to get close to accomplishing my dream, you know?」

Eugene was honestly a pretty good, down to earth guy, but as a result, he couldn't understand why his apprentice was acting the way he was. He

failed to comprehend his malice, no, his outright lack of concern for anyone but himself.

In other words, I was trying to say that Eugene was far too kind and naive. Though it sounded like I was kind of shitting on the guy, I really meant it as a good thing. Eugene's kindness and naivety seems to have been what's gotten him to where he is today. My guess was that he had believed that Zerais had been somewhere out in the world atoning for his sins with his day to day actions.

The way I saw it though, Zerais hadn't even the slightest desire to repent. He was more like a rotting apple. In fact, he'd gotten so rotten that he started draining the life of the other, healthier apples around him. At this point, I'd say it was even fair to start calling him a mutated apple. He seemed pretty normal from the outside, but his insides were a total mess of toxic sludge. Anyone that tried to eat him would probably instantly die of food poisoning, so it'd be best to throw him out altogether. Yup, we needed to seek him out and eliminate him right away.

「Besides, what's so abnormal about wanting to get famous anyway? I'm pretty sure it's a normal thing pretty much everyone wants.」

「You're right, Zerais. Fame is something commonly sought after, but that does not mean that you can just go around doing whatever it is you want. You cannot simply trod on the lives of other human beings! Are you truly satisfied with leaving behind a name soiled by a legacy of infamy?」

「Like I care. I don't mind being infamous at all. In fact, I'd rather be infamous than just famous, you know?」

「Why? Demanding Reason.」

「Well, Fran, why don't I put it this way? Have you ever heard the tales of King Yvel and Saint Myurell? If not, then what of Dragonslayer Sigmund?」

「Know none.」

「See? That's exactly my point. All three of the people I just mentioned were outstanding individuals famous for their accomplishments. The first had worked with a group of knights to hold back a horde of goblins 1,000,000 strong. In his time, he was known as The Heroic King. The second was a wandering saint, she travelled the lands and spent her entire life healing its people. The third was an adventurer that threw away his life in order to free the continent of Khrome from a Dragonic Lord that would've otherwise brought about its destruction. Their achievements were all quite amazing, don't you think?」

「Nn. Amazing.」

「Yeah, but despite that, you didn't know about them until just now. In fact, few do, their names are unsung. But, what if I ask you about Trismegistus the Rebel? You know him?」

「Heard of.」

「Of course you do. Pretty much everyone knows him. And now you get it, right?」

Wait, who the hell is Trismegistus?

『Hey Fran, who's Trismegistus?』

(Famous alchemist. Really bad person. Destroyed continent of Goldishia.)

Fran quickly briefed me about the guy and his deeds.

Trismegistus was apparently a man that existed long in the past. He was a king, but not just any king. The kingdom he ruled over was so vast and powerful that it effectively had control over an entire continent. Yet, he wasn't satisfied. He had tried to birth an almighty magic beast for the sake of achieving a single goal: world domination. And of course, his ambitions weren't ones that could be achieved through normal means. Hence, he unsealed the Evil God's heart and attempted to use its power.

The magic beast that resulted from such a decision was immensely powerful, so much so that it ended up obliterating an entire continent and almost all its people. Said magic beast continued to grow in strength by eating the very land itself. It got so large that it became capable of engulfing every last bit of landmass that remained in a single, fell swoop. The people despaired, but the Gods descended and offered them salvation. They created a massive barrier and entrapped the continent sized magic beast, the Abyss Eater. It's said that the Abyss Eater continues to thrive within the barrier to this day.

On a side note, the Gods cursed Trismegistus in order to force him atone for his sins. Specifically, they provided him immortality while also leaving him within the barrier, hence forcing him to suffer as the beast consumes his flesh in perpetuity.

I've no real way of knowing whether or not the story is a factual depiction, especially seeing as how it's used a bedtime story in order to discourage kids from misbehaving. But still, holy shit that's terrifying. Like, damn, that is one hell of a curse. Gods, you scary as hell.

「Boy am I jealous of Trismegistus. Must be nice to be him!」

「What are you saying, Zerais!? That's ridiculous! Wait...Don't tell me you plan on undoing one of the Evil God's seals...?」

「You know, that's actually exactly what I had in mind. Don't you worry though, I'm not planning on doing something as drastic as freeing a piece as major as its heart.」

「Are you trying to say that you think you can take control of it!?」

「In fact, yeah, yeah, I am. I can do it you know? I mean, just look at me! The only problem is that my little old collaborator had to end up dying on me before we actually got a chance to take a stab at it. I haven't gotten enough souls either, and I can't actually undo the seal myself. I mean, I may be gifted, but I'm not actually capable of using the Evil Arts.」

Whew.

「But you see, the thing is, I'm starting to get real annoyed with Fran over there, you know? First she takes the package I was having shipped over, then she got in the way when I tried having a few of my employees deal with the orphanage and whatnot, and now she's even helped kill Rynford and his merry little friends.」

The orphanage? Wait, so he was the one after Io's recipe?

「Want recipe why?」

「Nothing special. Just a bit of idle curiosity, you know?」

「Curiosity?」

「Yup, curiosity. At first, it was because Bluke wanted to know about it and wouldn't stop nagging me, so I started by embezzling all money that normally would've been used on the orphanage's operating expenses. You see, it costs money for me to get my hands on magic stones and equipment and the like, so I didn't see any reason for me not to. I figured that they might start selling off the children if they didn't have enough money to get by, and I was definitely in need of extra lab rats. It was totally a win win situation, right? I decided to pay the orphanage a quick visit in person a bit later on so I could start checking out the children ahead of time, but I then ended up realizing that the dishes that they served there were really quite strange, you see.」

「Dishes?」

「I mean, look at their ingredients. The stuff that they served there was obviously way better tasting than it really should've been. I thought that they might have access to some sort of technology that'd let them inject mana into their ingredients or something. Turned out that I was completely off the mark though.」

Zerais lightly laughed as he recalled his mistake.

Holy shit, this guy's a huge fucking asshole. We can't actually get to him, or even find him right now, but that didn't really seem like too much of a

problem at all. Amanda was giving off an incredible amount of bloodlust, so I figured he'd probably just made it to the top of her hit list. No mistaking it, he was totally in for a fate far worse than death.

「Anyway, this conversation's dragged on for a bit too long already, so I'm going to be heading out. Oh yeah, and, just in case you were still wondering, I'm not actually at the guild anymore.」

「Running away?」

「Yes I am. My plan's a total failure now that Rynford's dead. I'd been planning to have his mass produced Evil Beings kill a bunch of people so I could use their souls to summon a piece of the Evil God's flesh. It would've worked too, especially if Rynford had managed to draw from the Evil God's power. Oh well, there's always a next time. Have fun playing around with my Magic Stone Soldiers. Buh bye.」

Zerais' projection gave a quick wave and disappeared immediately after he finished speaking.

『Seems like he was telling the truth. I can't sense anyone in the guild at all.』

(Urushi. Can't chase?)

(Whimper.)

『Tsk. God damn it.』

(Woof...)

『Oh uh... whoops. My bad Urushi, I wasn't trying to say it was your fault or anything.』

Oh well, can't be helped I guess. Let's deal with these guys for now and figure out what to do about Zerais later.

135. Versus: Magic Stone Soldiers

135. Versus: Magic Stone Soldiers

「So that was Zerais? He sure was an obnoxious one.」

「I can't stand the fact that he's managed to get away.」

「I fail to comprehend the extent to which he belittles the value of the citizen's lives...」

「How terrible he is!」

「We're going to have to deal with these things first if we want to hunt that asshole down though, you know?」

「Right.」

The entire all star cast seemed pretty pissed off at Zerais, but they all assented to the fact that the alchemist had already effectively escaped regardless.

We couldn't really go after him anymore because we flat out had no idea where he was. Moreover, we kinda needed to take out the Magic Stone Soldiers before they caused any more harm. If we were lucky, we might even be able to get a clue or two out of investigating the alchemist's guild afterwards.

That said though, defeating them would be a milestone in and of itself. We didn't know precisely what their abilities did, but they seemed to be able to nullify any sort of ranged attack regardless of whether it was based in might or magic. They didn't seem to be deploying any sort of barrier or anything like that, so I really had no idea what the hell was going on.

Colbert had tried throwing another ranged martial art or two at the things, but his attacks were once again rendered useless.

「Well, projectiles don't work, so it looks like we're stuck with good old close quarters combat. I'm a lot more durable than you lot, so I'll volunteer myself to go up first.」

Gamud stepped up as he made a declaration whose contents sounded fairly logical. The fully armoured dwarf was the splitting image of a tank. I really couldn't imagine him going down all that easily, especially if he had a few buffs applied and whatnot.

「Sounds like a plan.」

Amanda assented with a nod.

「Then here I go!」

The guildmaster dashed towards the Magic Stone Soldiers with a huge smile on his face.

He reached one of the golems in a blink of an eye and immediately swung his hammer towards it. His speed was incredible, especially for someone wearing full plate armour.

「Hah, these things react slow as hell!」

The dwarf immediately swung his hammer without using any sort of technique or art and delivered a single forceful blow. Despite him choosing not to apply any sort of skill, the strike still looked powerful enough to smash his target's head to pieces

But it didn't.

The noise that the hammer had caused was not that of a smash, but rather, a screech.

「Nuooooowaaahhhh!!」

The mallet-like weapon had ended up being forced to a stop right before it was able to make contact with the enemy golem. Gamud was sent flying, four spells on his tail. Fortunately, Phillip managed to block them before they caused him any harm.

「Are you alright, Guildmaster?」

「Ugh... The hell just happened...?」

Gamud seemed pretty confused, which, to be fair, made sense given how far he'd been blown away. The counterattack he'd been hit by was incredibly powerful, as evidenced by the huge dent in his orihalcum armour.

It was a bit unfortunate for him, but we still managed to get something out of it. Namely, Forrund seemed to have figured something out.

「Reflection.」

「Oh, that does seem fairly likely now that you've mentioned it.」

Amanda acknowledged the other A ranked adventurer's muttering with an enlightened, knowing tone.

「I think there was a moonlight spell that did something like that. I've seen someone use it once before」

「Same.」

Apparently, Moonlight Magic was a branch of magic that specialized in reflecting and invalidating enemy attacks. The Magic Stone Soldiers had already demonstrated that they were capable of all sorts of rare magic, so it actually seemed quite likely for them to be able to use Moonlight Magic as well. The specific behaviour that the golems seemed to be demonstrating was reflection against close ranged attacks and invalidation of longer ranged ones.

Holy shit that stuff is rare though. Like, damn, neither Forrund nor Amanda had seen it more than just once despite their long careers.

「It might be better for us to try wiping out the ones in the rear before attacking the one up front.」

「Agreed.」

We tried following Amanda's suggestion, but it didn't work out.

Colbert and Phillip were both immediately blown back the moment they tried engaging one of the golems in the back. In other words, all five units were capable of using Moonlight Magic.

The golems' stats didn't seem all that high, but the properties of their spells made them incredibly difficult to deal with.

「So, anyone here know how to deal with this?」

「Yes.」

「Well, it's probably not all that easy for them to keep reflecting and invalidating our attacks, so it should show a few openings if we just keep attacking them. Let's try pelting it with weaker hits for now, ones that wouldn't really hurt you much when reflected.」

「I see. That does sound rather promising.」

Phillip immediately stepped up for the job. He was wearing a tonne of heavy armour and looked like he could tank as many weaker hits as he wanted.

And so, the experiment commenced. He threw a chain of light stabs at the golems, only to find that one in every few attacks would end up actually hitting its mark. The issue was that the Magic Stone Soldiers were fairly durable, so they didn't end up taking any noticeable damage.

Any attack that was strong enough to take the golems down would likely result in at least a few broken bones if reflected. And of course, that applied just as much to Colbert and Gamud as it did to Phillip.

We decided that we could probably join in as well. We wouldn't run into any issues so long as I kept our magic barriers up at max while Fran lightly slashed the Magic Stone Soldiers over and over.

We figured that the reflection spell might not actually activate if our attacks were too weak, so Fran ended up using as much force as she could while making sure to stay within the Magical Barrier's defensible limits.

And so, with that condition in mind, we rapidly assaulted the closest enemy rear guard whilst completely ignoring all its counters.

The act led us to hear a series of ringing sounds followed by a loud smack.

I guess that means we hit it. Wait... what?

「Huh?」

The familiar sensation of absorbing a magic stone ran through me as the magic stone soldier we hit just flat out poofed.

Ohhhh, I get it. These things are literally soldiers made out of magic stones, which meant I could basically just absorb them as I could any other magic stones. Is this how life feels on easy mode or something? On well, either way, it seemed like I was pretty much the Magic Stone Soldier's natural predator.

「Woah. What did you just do, Miss Fran?」

「You totally obliterated it in just one hit? Damn.」

「What sort of action did you perform?」

Oh shit. They totally just saw me absorb the magic stone soldiers. Crap, I need to come up with an excuse. I really don't want to be telling everyone that it was one of my abilities. I didn't want Forrund taking interest in me, so yeah... I guess we could just say it was because of a skill or something, but I'm not really sure if that'll fly...

「Come on guys, asking other people about their skills is bad manners.」

「Well, true, but...」

「All that matters is that Fran has a way to beating these things with relative ease.」

「I guess you're right...」

Luckily, Amanda managed to bail us out.

「In that case, I think it'd be best for us to provide Miss Fran with backup while she eliminates them.」

「Yeah.」

「Acknowledged.」

It didn't take long for us to dispose of the remaining golems. The task went by especially quickly because the people helping us were so ridiculously strong. They easily held the Magic Stone Soldiers attention as I quickly absorbed them all.

It only took us three minutes to finish off all five Magic Stone Soldiers. Each yielded about three hundred Magic Stone Points, so I ended up getting approximately a thousand five hundred in total. I even managed to get my hands on Ice/Snow Magic, Lava Magic, and Moonlight Magic as a bit of an added bonus.

Man, that went so well. Felt like I was working some sort of super well paying job or something like that.

Gaining all those magic stone points did wonders for my self evolution skill. Things were looking up.

—

Self Evolution: Rank 11.

Magic Stone Points: 4486/6600

Memory: 100

Spendable Points: 2

Each golem being three hundred points meant that they were worth roughly the same as B ranked magic beasts.

「Alright. That's over with. We'd best move onto investigating the Alchemist's Guild's interior.」

「Good idea. Might still be something in there.」

136. Zerais' Ambition

136. Zerais' Ambition

We immediately started investigating the Alchemist's Guild after defeating the Magic Stone Soldiers that emerged from within it. I was honestly left blown aback by the fact that it was basically completely devoid of human life. In fact, the only living things we ever came across were the occasional mouse or roach.

It looked most of the alchemists had either been turned into Demonic Beings or killed in experiments' processes. This was further evidenced by the document Zerais had left in the facility's basement. The observation logs there within described the results of administering different dosages and the like. Even a quick glance at the report's contents left me filled with a sense of disgust.

I'd been hoping for him to have left a few magic stones sitting around or something, but much to my disappointment, he hadn't. There wasn't really anything of interest, least not for us, so we quickly grabbed all of Zerais' data before turning heel. We planned to hand it over to Gamud or Eugene a bit later on.

『Hey Urushi, are there any like escape routes or hidden passages around here or anything?』

「Ruff.」

『Oh well, too bad...』

「Might I ask how things are progressing on your end, Fran?」

Eugene called out to us and requested a quick update.

「Got documents.」

「I see. The same goes for myself.」

The Adventurer's Guild's alchemist continued to look around with a grim look on his face. My guess was that he was probably feeling the weight of his disciple's sins.

「Can use them to figure something out?」

「To an extent. However, I do believe that it's possible for Zerais to have intentionally left these documents behind as they'd provide only a miniscule amount of knowledge.」

「Intentionally?」

「Precisely. None of the documents I came across contained any sort of key information regarding his processes. Hence, they left me unable to reproduce the results he's managed to derive. The only useful information his files contain are pertinent to the conclusions drawn. There's also just enough data left in order to evidence his conclusions' validity.」

Ahhh, I get it now. Zerais wanted his name to be known across the land. Hence, his personality probably led him to leave just enough data behind to show off his efforts.

「This document on Magic Stone Soldiers is a prime example of what I mean to say. It states that employing the use of evil energies can allow one to engrave a single spell upon the magic stone that serves as the soldier's core. It makes no further mention of the processes involved and hence does not provide one with enough information to recreate his work. That said though, the information presented is not required for his documents to prove his point, seeing as how the end result, the Magic Stone Soldiers, had only recently engaged us in combat.」

Eugene quickly glanced at another one of the documents he grabbed, and found it to be rather similar. It described that different humans being would require magic stones imbedded in different locations, a fact that our

experience with them had solidified. That, however, was basically all the document said. It didn't tell us how to actually figure out where to put the magic stone, nor did it describe the embedding process.

「This?」

「That one... seems to describe a weapon constructed of magic stones...
Hmm....」

Fran handed the document we found over and had Eugene quickly look over it. Apparently, it contained information about something that was kind of just a little bit dangerous.

The weapons described in the document were unlike the usual in the sense that they didn't simply use the magic stones embedded in them as a source of fuel. Instead, they allowed the wielder to use the spells sealed inside of them. Moreover was the fact that they were expendable as opposed to long lasting. The most intimidating part of it all was that they could even store extra skills and unique skills, and hence, were hella useful even if only usable once.

「Zerais was... ever so talented. If only he could have used his abilities to better the world and the lives of its people...」

Eugene's face was distorted with a look of lament.

「Magic stone weapon. Seems amazing.」

「I agree. It's applicabilities are boundless.」

We suddenly felt a presence appear behind us immediately after Eugene finished speaking.

「Thief God's Grace.」

「!!」

『Who the hell!?』

Seriously, what!? There hadn't been anything there just a second ago.

Fran immediately reacted by swinging me to her rear, but she wasn't the only one to act. The person behind her also started to give off an incredible amount of magical energy.

I immediately deployed my Magic Barrier at full power as Fran turned around and faced our foe.

The person that'd been standing behind us was none other than the guy whose looks pissed me off to no end.

Zerais.

How the hell? Wait, I recalled him saying "Thief God's Grace," so he'd probably used a skill. Its name gave way to the fact that it was most likely derived from being the recipient of Divine Protection.

「Ooookay. I'll be taking this back now, thanks.」

Zerais was smiling a prince-like smile despite the fact that I'd chopped off one of his arms. He raised his remaining hand and dangled a bottle as if to show it off to Fran.

「Mmph. How?」

『What? That's impossible! That should've been inside my dimensional storage!』

The thing Zerais was holding was the bottle that contained the Root of Arcane Souls.

「Fmmph!」

「Ahahahha, oh come on, no need for you to be looking at me like that.」

「Mmph, can't cut.」

「That would be because he's already turned into an illusion.」

「Woah, that was close. I probably would've been split in half if I teleported even just a moment later.」

I ended up passing through nothing but thin air. Zerais himself had already disappeared. He'd instead been replaced by a hologram without any physical substance identical to the one we saw in front of the guild.

「Seriously though, just who are you? You came out of nowhere, completely messed up my plans, and even managed to completely obliterate all my Magic Stone Soldiers with ease. You know how frustrated all that's been making me? I mean, I may not look it, but I sure am.」

「Just black cat clan, D ranked adventurer. Fran.」

「Ahahaha! Nice one, nice one. You know I made it so that those magic stone soldiers were supposed to have the evil energies inside of them swell up and explode if you hit them the wrong way, right? There's no way for a D ranked adventurer to be able to completely wipe out all that evil energy in an instant, you know?」

「Did anyway.」

「I started following you around the moment you started fighting them so I could steal this little thing back from you, but you defeated them right away and didn't show even the slightest opening. Course, I followed you after too, but you still never showed any openings at all no matter what. I ended up having to trade you one of my arms for it, but I did manage to get what I needed, so it's fine I guess.」

「Took, how?」

「Oh you know, I decided to use a Magic Stone Weapon. It let me use the Thief God's Grace, which is a skill that'll let you steal anything from anyone so long as they're within the skill's area of effect. All the data I've got on you seemed to be pointing to the fact that you could use space/time magic, so I assumed you had a dimensional storage. Man, you know, I really would've had to give up if I didn't have the Thief God's Grace with me. Oh yeah, and the reason I could follow you without you noticing me is

cause I was using a Magic Stone Weapon with the Perfect Invisibility skill sealed inside of it, yup.」

The pendant that'd been resting on top of Zerais' severed arm cracked and shattered into several pieces. So that's a Magic Stone Weapon? Okay yeah, it's just as I suspected. Those things are ridiculous as hell, even if limited to being one time use.

「Aw man, now it and the one with the Thief God's Grace are both all busted up. They cost a hundred million gold in total, you know? They were supposed to be my trump cards.」

「Wanted item that badly?」

「Yeah, I guess you could say that. You know, I actually really want to thank you. I probably never would've been able to get my hands on it if you hadn't taken it from those god damned pirates. Man, I went through soooo much trouble for all this stuff. Thank you so much! I won't have to write off any of my plans anymore after all.」

「And just what precisely is that supposed to be, Zerais?」

Eugene finally joined in on the conversation after staying silent throughout. It seemed that he was genuinely curious as to the identity the soul contained within the bottle.

「Oh man, not even you knew, Master? Hehehe, it's a Chimera's Arcane Soul. Surprised? I bet you are.」

「T-That's preposterous. D-Did you just say a Chimera?」

「Rare?」

「The word rare doesn't even begin to describe it. There are rumoured to be less than five Chimeras throughout the world. They're so dangerous that they're all supposed to have been sealed away.」

「Ahahaha! See, I knew you'd be surprised. Isn't this thing just great? I requested it from the Reidosian Alchemy Lab by using the Barbra Guild's

name and all that. It ended up costing me a whole billion! Man, you know much money a billion is? Actually, it wasn't even my money, so I don't really care. But man, it was one hell of a snag!」

「Just what are you trying to accomplish?」

「Oh you know, I'm just going to be making the strongest magic beast ever. The final product should hopefully be strong enough to destroy the entire world!」

Holy crap. That item was way more than I'd thought it was.

「Anyway, I've met all my goals, so I'll actually be bidding you farewell for real this time. Buh bye!」

「Wait, hold on! Zerais!」

Eugene yelled his disciple's name at the top of his lungs, but the other man was long gone.

「Zerais...」

「Chimera is what?」

「Ah, right. Chimeras are the most powerful artificial magic beasts known to man.」

Apparently, they were something made in an experiment involving mixing many different kinds of magic beasts together.

Chimeras were considered biological weapons ranked A or higher. The researchers that made the first hadn't expected it to be as powerful as it was, and thus, they ended up losing control of it. The escaped subject had ultimately ended up completely ravaging several cities.

The researchers continued to churn them out in while also attempting to actually take control of them, but it turned out to be an impossible task. Several countries ultimately ended up falling to the experiment's products, and thus, all the world's governments ended up coming to conclusion that

further research on the topic should be banned, and that all existing Chimeras should be sealed away. The researchers' data was destroyed, and they themselves executed.

Creating a Chimera took ridiculously pricey materials, some of which came from creatures that had long gone extinct. It should've theoretically been impossible for anyone to get their hands on a Chimera given the current circumstances, but apparently it seemed that wasn't the case...

「As of right now, the Kingdom of Reidos is a mess. Someone may have used the country's state of turmoil in order to steal the Chimera whilst not knowing the danger posed by their actions.」

「A mess?」

That's the first time I've heard that. Then again, I didn't really know much about Reidosians. The only thing I did know was that I'd already started thinking of all Reidosians as my enemies.

「The Reidosian King died a sudden death approximately ten years ago. Four of the country's archdukes have been wrestling for control through military means ever since. The country has almost fallen into one in a state of civil war. I'm honestly quite surprised to say that it hasn't.」

「Understood.」

Hmmm, could that mean that Salrut and the Lich were both products of one of those archduke's ploys? Or were they potentially products of them all scheming against one another? I wanted more information, but it seemed that Eugene had already told us everything he knew.

「I'm going to go report everything that has happened to both the Lord and the Adventurer's Guild. Any matter involving a Chimera is of utmost importance, after all.」

It seemed like Zerais was going to have his name plastered on wanted posters all around the world. Chances were that he was probably actually

going to be pretty happy about that, but it couldn't really be helped. I agreed that dealing with him was indeed a matter of utmost importance.

We couldn't find any additional clues, so we decided to give up and regroup with Amanda for the time being.

137. The Contest's Whereabouts

137. The Contest's Whereabouts

「And here's your order.」

「Be careful, it's hot!」

「Nn.」

Today was the day after the incident. Err, technically, it was still the same day seeing as how everything happened after midnight, but yeah, whatever.

We were going around with our stall and handing away our products away for free, well, kind of. Barbra's lord had technically bought us out in advance, so we were still making bank.

Zerais had gotten away, but naturally, the city's problems hadn't upped and vanished with him. We ended up having to go around hunting Evil and Demonic Beings all night. I think we managed to get around ten or so ourselves. The most successful hunter had been Forrund, who had netted himself a whole twenty kills. Our efforts had allowed the city had regain its usual tranquility by sunrise.

Unfortunately, the population had taken a pretty big hit. Lots of people died. Those that had survived were left in a state of confusion as a result of last night's events. Thus, the cooking contest had naturally been cancelled. The Chef's Guild needed to sort itself out and identify all its corrupt members and whatnot before proceeding with its festivities.

That said, a complete and utter shut down would likely lead Brabra's citizens to feel uneasy about the city's state of affairs. The lord had wanted to prevent the city from adopting a negative atmosphere, and so, he had

asked the contests' participants to push their stalls around town and give out their products for free.

We didn't really mind going along with his request. We had a tonne of curry bread left lying around, and apparently we were going to get cash out of helping out, so why not, right? It seemed that most of the other contestants had felt the same, as they'd also willingly assented.

「Hey! No fighting over there! We still have lots in stock, so calm yourselves down!」

「Would anyone like to try the dish that might just have ended up winning the contest? If so, then line yourselves right up!」

『Alright, why don't we try moving along and heading over to the next area?』

The three girls we hired were helping us move the stall around. I'd originally been planning to have Urushi do it, but the lord had ended up advising otherwise. He told us that Urushi would end up scaring the citizens because of how large, fearsome, and potentially unsanitary he looked.

Hey! Urushi has feelings too, you know? He's totally feeling down cause of all that.

Our second idea was to have Fran do it, but the three salesgirls had stated that they, as adults, couldn't stand to let a child do physical labour in their presence while they did nothing. Hence, they ended up doing it instead despite being much weaker than her.

『The lord told us to visit as many places as we could, so, yeah.』

「Nn.」

Phillip had told us a few things before we ended up setting out. According to him, this whole free food thing was apparently the Krysten family giving back to the citizens what it could before it was deprived the ability. Most of their wealth was probably going to end up being confiscated, and hence,

they were spending as much of it on helping Barbra's people before it was all taken away. Apparently, they were more or less guaranteed to at least be relieved of their positions. The merits they'd accumulated over the last three hundred years were significant, but they weren't enough to make up for an incident as big as the one that'd occurred last night.

They'd sent a magistrate to the capital, and ordered him to report everything that had occurred. Hence, they were expecting the King to get in touch with them within a few days. I honestly had to say that both the Lord and Phillip, his eldest son, were good people. They were honest, and upright. Their only faults were that they were a bit too soft on those they held dear.

He'd also told us about the fates that befell those that a hand in the crime. Apparently, everyone that Bluke had hired would end up being beheaded. The people that had been forced into cooperating would be made into crime slaves and sent off to Goldishia or the mines. Both locations involved them serving fixed terms.

I understood the whole mine thing, but I had no idea what he meant by Goldishia, so naturally, I had Fran ask him a bit about it.

Apparently, it was the name of the continent destroyed by Trismegistus. It was covered by a large barrier, but not actually completely sealed off. The barrier only covered the continent's center. There were still a few places outside of it that could sustain human life.

The people who still lived on the Goldishian continent were mostly Dragonfolk. They were aware of the sins shouldered by their predecessors, and thus, they spent their days repenting by entering the great barrier and fighting the Abyss Eater. It seemed that the barrier had been made so that people could enter and leave it at will. The Abyss Eater, however, was unable to escape it.

The Dragonfolk had the world behind them. Every single nation offered them support in the form of both soldiers and supplies. Crime slaves were often sent over as well so that they could be put to use in the form of meat shields.

Wait, wouldn't the death penalty actually just be better at that point?

It turned out that the answer to my question was no. Some crime slaves would actually manage to endure Goldishia's harsh conditions, survive, level up, and attain freedom. Hence, it was still technically better than just flat out getting executed.

Speaking of which, some of the cooking guild's top brass had ended up getting turned into crime slaves. They'd been judged to be at fault for not properly appraising Waint's cooking. Bluke had been threatening them, so it wasn't entirely fault, but they could've prevented an incredible amount of damage had they chosen to do their jobs properly.

『You think this city's still going to be alright from here on out? The Alchemist's Guild is gone, the Lord's going to get forced to retire, and a good chunk of the population's just flat out dead. 』

「Worried about orphanage.」

『I think they'll be fine. Amanda's got their backs.』

「Nn. Right. Amanda, not type of person to let children be sad.」

『Honestly, I'm more worried about the Chef's Guild than the orphanage. It looks like they might end up completely collapsing at this rate.』

「!!」

Fran's eyes suddenly shot open in response to my words.

『Hey uh, you alright? Is something wrong?』

「No finals if no contest...」

『Well, yeah.』

「Can't force feed him curry!」

『Ahh, you mean that one old due? Yeah.』

「Managed to escape!」

『Well uh, it's technically not his fault, so escape might not really be the right word.』

Yeaaaaah, I totally forgot about him. I wonder if he's doing alright. I mean, I thought he was a pretty good guy, so I hope he didn't end up getting caught in this whole mess.

Wait, did we just end up raising a flag or something? He literally showed up right in front of the stall as we finished moving it and started setting it up again. His face was coated with its usual frown. I couldn't immediately tell what he was up to, but soon realized that he was waiting for us to finish our preparations. The way he stared at us almost made it seem like he was trying to tell us to hurry the hell up.

「Mmph.」

「I've come to try your dish.」

「Will make you break down into tears.」

「I'm looking forward to it.」

The man's frown broke into a fearless smile.

Judith seemed to be taken aback by the sudden event. Lydia, on the other hand, appeared to have caught on, as her eyes were sparkling with a weird sense of anticipation. I couldn't really tell what Maia was feeling at all. Maia was typically all smiles, but interestingly enough, she was actually the hardest of the bunch to read. She completely trumped the not-actually-emotionless Lydia.

The old man took his first bite out of a piece of plain curry bread approximately ten minutes later. His location hadn't really changed much, he was still standing right beside the stall.

「Oh?」

Damn, I'm starting to get all nervous. I was pretty confident in the dish's taste seeing as I'd tried it myself and all, but, I was no gourmet. I had no idea as to how he'd feel about it.

「Hmm.」

「Well?」

「I very much regret the fact that I'm unable to stuff myself with as much of this as I'd like.」

Wait, does that mean he liked it?

「The fried breading provides an excellent sense of texture, thereby deepening the dish's taste and pushing it over the edge. The filling is obviously the very same curry that you had me consume upon our last meeting, but I can taste that its recipe has been slightly adjusted for it better fit with bread that encloses it. As a result, the sauce and its container serve to amplify each other's tastes and deliver a final product far beyond the sum of its ingredients. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this very recipe has earned its right as one that functions as a milestone in cooking's history. Please do tell your master that I found it to be a wonderful dish with a unique, thorough flavour.」

He totally just gave the type of speech you'd normally see in a food journal! Shit, he totally praised the hell out of me!

「Nn. Will tell.」

「I'd also like to say that I'm sorry that the contest ended up the way it did.」

「Nn? Not guild's fault.」

「Even so, I'd like to apologize regardless. Many of our members were responsible for the incident. I'm absolutely certain that your dish would've allowed you to make it to the finals.」

Huh, this old guy's actually pretty honourable. It looked like he visited us for the sole sake of fulfilling his promise.

「I'd like to retract my words. Your master is a wonderful cook, and this dish of his is absolutely delicious.」

「Heheh」

Come on Fran, this is where you're supposed to say ""Don't worry about it,"" instead of getting all cocky you know? Well, the old guy didn't really seem to mind, so it's fine I guess.

Man, I'm tired. I feel like taking a nice, long break after we're done giving out all this curry bread. Man, worrying about pickpockets, taking curry bread out from my dimensional storage, and all that other random stuff I did sure was exhausting. I know what you're thinking, but I swear I am actually tired, okay?

Wait, where'd all these people come from? Why the hell is the line so long?

I guess that old dude must've been a local celebrity or something. Everyone in line immediately started talking about how he praised us.

「Huuuh? How'd the line suddenly get this much longer?」

「There's way too many people here.」

「I guess they must all be attracted to my beauty.」

Welp, looks like I'm not getting that break any time soon.

TL: Sorry for the slow updates... Exams will be over soon!

138. I Want Magic Stones.

138. I Want Magic Stones.

「I would like to offer you my thanks in return for your assistance.」

「Nn.」

Phillip stopped by not too long after we finished handing out curry bread and whatnot. It was a bit late, so Urushi had actually long passed out inside of Fran's shadow. That said though, we decided to let the knight in anyways seeing as how he came out of his way to visit us and all that.

At first, I'd been a bit surprised to see that he was unguarded, but quickly rationalized it. Phillip was incredibly strong, so to him, guards were more of a luxury than necessity. It was only natural for him to come alone given how short the city currently was on manpower.

The first thing he did after arriving was hand Fran a box whose sides measured about thirty centimeters each. The wooden container was black, but not unnaturally so. It seemed to be made out of ebony.

「This is your reward. We would have hosted a grand ceremony in recognition of your efforts, but our current circumstances unfortunately do not allow for it.」

「Don't mind. Don't want to stand out anyways.」

「I am glad that is how you feel about the matter. The magistrate stated that he would like for us to minimize any and all publicity related to last night's incident.」

A scandal involving a marquis was pretty much as big a thing as a scandal involving the entire nation served by said marquis, so chances were, the country wanted to make this whole fiasco seem as small scale as possible.

In fact, they were so keen on restricting knowledge on the event's details that they weren't even actually going to announce that the Krystens were actually responsible for the incident. Or rather, they couldn't.

The lord's household had heavily involved themselves in cleaning up after last night's events. They had not only kept crime at a minimum in the disaster's aftermath but also generously compensated Barbra's people for their losses. Announcing that they were at fault for the incident would result in a loss of trust, and thereby cause the current state of affairs to degenerate into a downwards spiral. That, in the country's eyes, was a scenario they wished to avoid at all cost. In other words, the country had decided not to punish the Krystens. Instead, it tasked them with restoring Barbra to its former glory.

「My father and I had planned to make our sins public knowledge, but we as nobles cannot go against the court's wishes. It is unfortunate, but we cannot announce my brothers' sins either.」

「To Blue. What happened?」

「Neither Blue nor Waint are human any longer. They have both lost the ability to reason, and thus, we've no choice but to put them to death. We have yet to determine the precise method of execution, but I have no doubt that they will soon pay for their sins. As we cannot inform the citizens of our wrongdoings, we will announce their official cause of death to be illness.」

Yeah, I figured something like that'd happen.

Phillip's expression turned a bit sour as he discussed Waint and Blue. He seemed troubled. My guess was that he still loved both his brothers despite their actions and current states.

「I apologize, but we cannot publicly credit you for Blue's arrest.」

「Don't really mind.」

I mean, we got rewarded anyways, so who cares?

Phillip seemed really apologetic about the lack of credit we'd get throughout his visit, but we honestly would've rejected any ceremonies or parades or anything like that anyways. In fact, we very much preferred him doing things the way he did.

「Master. Will open now.」

『Go for it. I'm pretty curious about what they gave us.』

Fran opened her reward shortly after Phillip's departure, only to find it full of valuables.

The first thing to catch my eye was a stack of gold coins that added up to a whole million Golde in total. The rest of the box was pretty much filled to the brim with jewelry. We'd gone into this whole thing thinking we'd be working for free, so we were pretty damn happy about getting rewarded, especially with so much cash.

『Coming to Barbra sure has made us a lot of bank.』

「Nn. Can buy lots.」

『Yeah. Were you thinking of buying anything in particular? Like food or something?』

「Want that too. But not what was in mind.」

Wait, Fran wants something other than food? That's rare. Is she finally going to buy herself something all cute and girly-like? Or maybe some fancy clothing?

Okay, yeah no.

「Will buy magic stones.」

『Huh? Magic stones?』

「Nn. Will buy magic stones for Master to absorb. Aiming for rank up. Barbra should have lots.」

『You sure?』

The thought of buying magic stones for the sake of absorption was something that weighed on my conscience. It just kinda felt like all the money we made belonged to Fran. The same went with potions, armour, materials, and all that stuff too. She'd take all that, while I'd take the magic stones. That was just how I had it sorted out in my head.

Though, I did understand that me getting stronger was equivalent to her getting stronger, so it wasn't exactly like I was actually depriving her of funds for no benefit or anything like that.

Besides, I did figure that this would end up happening in due time anyways.

In fact, I'd always thought that we would probably end up having to become a rather aggressive buyer of magic stones. Each consecutive rank up required more magic stones than the last. Powering me up was ultimately going to end up getting a lot harder down the line.

「Will sell all unneeded items, buy needed items, then spend rest on magic stones.」

『I guess that works. We'd probably be able to get a pretty big variety if we asked both the Adventurer's Guild and the Luciel Conglomerate.』

Ideally, I'd prefer if we could get our hands on magic stones from either higher ranked monsters or monsters whose magic stones we'd yet to obtain.

Welp, I guess it's time to sell all the stuff we don't need that's piled up in storage.

「Thanks for waiting. Here's what we owe you, we'll be bringing the merchandise you requested out shortly.」

「Nn.」

We dropped by the Luciel Conglomerate in order to get rid of all the junk we still had on hand. We sold off all our weaker equips, our spare magic items, and even all the random jewelry we happened to have on hand. We'd actually just finished doing something similar at the adventurer's guild as well. There, we sold off all the random magic beast parts we weren't planning on using. We actually had quite a bit piled up in storage, so yeah.

Of course, we had bought all the stuff we needed as well. Our inventory ended up looking like this:

Phantom Pyroxene (Magic Sword)

Deathgaze (Magic Sword)

Mysterious Item Bag

Highest Grade Life Potion x 3

High Grade Life Potion x 5

Panacea x 3

High Grade Mana Potion x 3

Mid Grade Mana Potion x 5

Highest Grade Alchemy Potion x 3

High Grade Potion of Repair x 1

Potion of Rising Skill x 1

Anti-Side Effect Potion x 3

Lots of Ingredients

Camping Supplies

Corpses

Poisoned Water

At first, we weren't actually all that sure whether or not we wanted to sell the Aidoneus' Mantle or the Serpent King's Short Sword. But after mulling over it a bit, we ultimately ended up deciding to get rid of them.

Whew, emptying out our inventory made me feel all refreshed.

The two equips we bought were the Bracelet of Herculean Strength and the Mage's Necklace. The former increase the STR stat by twenty, and the latter provided a bit of a boost to magic. Fran's current equips were:

Black Cat Set

Bracelet of Herculean Strength

Bracelet of Substitution

Mage's Necklace

We ended up having about four and a half million Golde on hand even after buying two new equips.

That said though, my sense of value is getting really screwy. I actually ended up thinking that the bracelet we bought was rather cheap despite it costing a million and two hundred thousand.

『I guess we'll be spending the rest on magic stones.』

「Nn.」

「So about those magic stones you wanted...」

Hmm, Captain Rengil's all hesitating and stuff. Looks like they probably won't be willing to sell us any.

「Barbra's currently experiencing a major shortage of magic stones.」

「Why?」

「The Alchemist's Guild was buying them all up. We've very few D ranked stones, even.」

「Still have some?」

「A few, but they all belong to either Gullinburstis or Apis, and I recall you saying that you had no interest in either.」

So they basically only have stuff you can get locally?

「The supply shortage has caused the price to skyrocket too. They're going for nearly twice as much as usual right now.」

God damn it Zerais! You son of a bitch! Fuck, you owe us way more than just one arm. Curse you, asshole!

(What now?)

『Uhhh, well, there isn't really anything to do.』

The Adventurer's Guild had a policy against selling magic stones to anything but other organisations. The only place in Barbra we could actually try was really just the Luciel Conglomerate. So uh, yeah. We were pretty much dead out of luck.

「The only other magic stones we happen to have in stock are scrap stones.」

「Scrap stones?」

「The term refers to magic stones that come from Goblins, Fanged Mice, and other magic beasts ranked at G or lower.」

「Have those in stock?」

「We do. The magic stone shortage has actually lasted for quite some time, so we bought them in order to experiment with them, but we couldn't find any use for them, so they've more or less just been sitting there.」

(Master?)

『Sounds good to me.』

Goblins had all sorts of skills, so I didn't see any harm in going through with the purchase.

We ended up buying a total of two hundred scrap stones, alongside fifteen slightly better stones that I hadn't absorbed before. We had no idea what skills they contained, but honestly, it didn't really matter. They were worth their weight in magic stone points anyways.

「You sure you want these? They're scrap stones, you know?」

「Don't mind.」

「Alright then. I'm honestly thankful you're taking these off my hands, so I'll throw in a bit of a bonus.」

We ended up a total of a hundred thousand Golde on magic stones. Apparently, their prices didn't really start skyrocketing till they hit rank D. Magic stones of rank E or lower were typically used for everyday commodities and stuff, so they were still rather cheap. Even the most expensive magic stone, one that came from an Ice Rock Apis, only ended up costing us three thousand Golde.

I immediately started absorbing them after we got back to the inn.

「Master. Ready.」

『Oh hell yeah! Hnnnnnnnnngggg!!』

I had Fran pour all the magic stones she got into an empty bathtub and dived straight in the moment it was ready.

So you might be wondering to yourself, what the hell is that damn sword doing?

Well you see, the answer is... taking a magic stone bath. You know how like, people that suddenly got super rich would start bathing in their cash? Yeah, this is that, but with magic stones instead of dollar bills.

Hot damn! I'm completely immersed in magic stones. This. Is. Bliss.

「Master, having fun?」

『Hell yeah I am! Yahoooooo!!!』

Absorbing magic stones one at a time would've ended up being a huge pain in the ass, so I ended up coming up with this method for the sake of efficiency.

Fuck, this is amazing! I feel filthy fucking rich! This is what it's like to be loaded! Shit, I'm feeling like some snobby ass douche right now, but who cares!!

『Yeaaaaa boiiiiiii!!!』

Even the slightest bit of movement causes me to absorb the magic stones around me. I can feel their power flowing into me. Hnnnnngg!

And so, ten minutes passed.

「Master...」

「Woof...」

『Mah bad...』

I realized only after the fact that I'd done something unbecoming. I was supposed to be Fran's guardian, so acting like that wasn't exactly the best

idea. Man, Damn it, now their gazes have gone cold. They're both looking at me like I'm some weirdo. Stop it Fran, Urushi! Your eyes burn!!

『Y-You guys want anything? Feel free not to hold back.』

「...All you can eat curry. 1 week.」

「Woof」

『S-Sure why not.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

Alright, I'm going to need to be a responsible adult. Time to get my dignity as a guardian back.

『I-I ended up getting about seven hundred magic stone points.』

「Decent amount.」

「Woof!」

My stats had changed as follows.

Self Evolution

Rank 11

Magic Stone Points: 5169/6600

Memory: 100

Spendable Points: 2

New Skills

Detect Malice: Lv 1

Evil Sword Techniques: Lv 1

Illusion Magic: Lv 1

Thin Sword Techniques: Lv 1

Thin Sword Arts: Lv 1

Staff Techniques: Lv 1

Okay yup, it's not working. Their gazes are still all chilly.

『S-So, how about paying the Prince and Princess a quick visit before we set off for Ulmutt?』

「Agreed,」

『Alright, let's go!』

「Nn.」

「Woof!」

Whew, I think they're both back to normal now.

The two turned around the moment the thought crossed my mind. Both Fran and Urushi tilted their heads and looked up at me, their actions in perfect sync. It almost looked like they'd planned it out ahead of time.

「No forgetting about all you can eat curry.」

「Woof woof.」

『Yes ma'am.』

I was actually planning to do this yesterday, but I played like 30 minutes of the Xenoblade game for the Switch, and was so disgusted by the localization that I couldn't bring myself to read the English language for an entire day. Seeing English still makes me cringe right now, in fact...

On a side note, after this chapter, I'm going to start making master use stuff like "100k" for numbers. Iunno why I forgot until just now. Maybe I haven't been playing enough (any) MMOs as of late. The reason I didn't do it in this chapter is because I remembered after finishing and I'm too lazy to go back and change stuff.

139. Next Next Destination.

139. Next Next Destination.

「Is that really what happened?」

「Nn.」

「That's quite amazing, Fran.」

We were currently inside of Rhodas' manor.

That said, we naturally weren't actually visiting him. We'd come to see the prince and princess.

It turned out that we weren't the only ones getting ready to leave the city. Flut and his party were also packing up and getting ready to head back to their country. Their ship was to set sail tomorrow.

「Did you see any of the monstrosities?」

「I did.」

「Did you fight them?」

「Defeated easily.」

「That's awesome! Man, Fran, you're so cool!」

Fran, the prince, the princess, and the former slaves had gotten together for a tea party.

The children were delighted at the fact that we'd provided them snacks in the form of curry bread.

「Are you not going to come with us, Fran?」

One of the former slave asked her in a bit of a hopeful tone, but she responded to him with a shake of her head.

「Already decided where to go.」

「Come on, can't you just change your mind and join us in serving the prince?」

「Need to go.」

「Yeah, but we've finally started getting along...」

「Yeah, he's right!」

「Let's not pressure Fran any further. I'm sure she has her reasons and circumstances.」

「That's right. Besides, it isn't as if we won't ever see each other again.」

Flut and Satia somehow managed to calm the other children down.

「I do understand how you all feel. I'd love for her to come with us as well. In fact, I've even considered offering to hire her as our guard once more. I'd also considered offering her a permanent, high paying position.」

「Then w-」

「But I decided against it. I've decided not to make use of royal position.」

One of the children tried to protest, but Flut quickly cut him off by raising his voice while shaking his head.

「Because I would then lose the ability to call her my friend.」

「We would much rather be Fran's friends than her superiors. If we employed her, we'd no longer be able to call her our equal.」

The children fell silent in response to the prince and princess' proclamations. They seemed to have understood and accepted the twins' opinions.

Fran looked rather pleased to hear their choices. Her expression hadn't changed, but both her ears were happily twitching away, so it was rather easy for me to read her.

However, the children seemed to have felt that they'd been scolded, and hence, an unpleasant atmosphere soon filled the room. Luckily though, Serid bailed us out of the situation by bringing in a few sweet treats. He also helped perk everyone up by telling us about the recent failures experienced by the children during their training sessions.

The children's moods were soon restored, and hence, they ended up chatting the entire day away. The sun had started setting before we'd even realised it.

We wanted to stick around a bit longer, but Serid informed us that Flut and Satia unfortunately had other responsibilities to attend to.

「I apologize for interrupting your conversation, but it has come time for your appointment with the Magistrate, your Highnesses.」

「Is it really that time already?」

「We had so much fun that the day almost seemed to pass in the blink of an eye.」

Both twins promptly accepted their duties; neither Flut nor Satia had voiced that they wished the delay the appointment. I was amazed at how they were already able to immediately prioritize their royal obligations over their personal interests.

「It is unfortunate, but we have an meeting to attend. We must depart for it immediately.」

「We still have tea and sweets readily available, so please feel free to stay as long as you'd like, Fran.」

「I unfortunately have to object to that. There is in fact an envoy here for Miss Fran as well.」

「Envoy?」

「I named him an envoy, but the individual in question is in fact the Master of Barbra's Adventurer's Guild. He has just finished meeting with the Sir Rhodas and the Magistrate. Guildmaster Gamud immediately stated that he would like to meet with you upon hearing that you were currently at this residence.」

The Guildmaster? Did he need us for anything? I could've sworn we dropped by the guild already just earlier this morning, but oh well, might as well go see him I guess.

One of the manor's servants led us over to another room upon confirming that we were willing to see the other party.

「There you are, Fran!」

There, we met with the Guildmaster, the buff ass dwarf that'd help us fight off Rynford.

「Sorry for calling you out like that.」

「Don't mind.」

「Heard that you'd be leaving soon. I wanted to meet with you at least once before you did, but I couldn't really find the time for it because I've been busy with cleaning up after everything that's happened. Caught wind of the fact that you happened to be visiting, so I urged them to lend me a room. Been wanting to thank you, you know? Your actions saved the city.」

Gamud got up off the sofa and bowed a deep bow.

「Didn't really save. In fact, was saved. Almost lost against Rynford.」

「Forrund and Amanda are the only two that could've possibly beat that thing one on one, so don't sweat it. What matters is that you bought us enough time to arrive. He probably would've spread mass destruction if you didn't manage to stall him. That's why, I'll say it again. Thank you.」

「...Nn.」

「Gahahaha. All's good so long as you know how grateful we feel.」

Fran's expression warped into one that simultaneously expressed both happiness and frustration. If I had to say, it seemed like it was leaning a bit more towards the latter than the former though.

That said, I can't really blame her. I mean, we really did end up losing to Rynford. In fact, recalling our loss is making me feel all frustrated too.

「Nyways, let's get down to business. I heard that you were looking for magic stones. That true?」

「Still looking.」

「I see... And you're planning to head to Ulmutt next?」

「Nn.」

「It ain't going to be too easy for you to get your hands on magic stones over there either, you know?」

「Really?」

「Really. Think bout it this way. Barbra is Kranzel's second biggest city. All the other nearby cities ship their excess magic stones over to us, so there being none in Barbra means that there ain't any anywhere else either. Of course, that applies to Ulmutt too. The place really does produce a lot of the stuff, but most of it gets ported right over.」

Wait, seriously? Well, I guess that does kind of make sense. I mean, Barbra's got a lot of adventurers, but there's no way they can get enough magic stones to fuel the whole city all by themselves.

It looks like it really is going to be hard for us to get magic stones, even if we do go to Ulmutt.

Gamud produced a folded up a piece of paper from one of his chest pockets as we groaned in response to his words.

「So I'll give you this.」

Is that... a letter?

「This'll serve as a letter of introduction. It'll get you into the auction held in the kingdom's capital.」

「Auction?」

「Yeah. They hold a huge auction in the capital every June. It's normally pretty hard to get yourself through the door, but show this to the staff at the capital's guild branch and they'll let you take part in both the buying and the selling. 」

「Sure it's okay to take?」

「Yeah, don't sweat it. Oh, and don't be feeling like you're obligated to participate or anything either. Just do whatever you want, it's just an option now is all. I do think it's a good idea though. Should be able to get a whole bunch of magic stones for cheap if you get lucky.」

Looks like we just got our hands on something amazing. The auction sounds like a pretty big event.

「Nn. Will thankfully accept.」

「No problem. Glad to be of service.」

Welp, I guess we're going then. For some odd reason, we ended up deciding where to go after leaving Ulmutt despite not yet having even set off for Ulmutt.

140. The Night Before Our Departure

140. The Night Before Our Departure

Author's note: Someone suggested that it would be better to have Bluke and Waint listed as the incident's casualties as opposed to people who died from illness shortly after, so I'll touch up on that a bit. NOT A TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

We happened to spot someone standing in front of the inn as we made our way back towards it.

「Colbert?」

「Oh, there you are. Hey.」

「Doing what?」

「I happened to catch wind of the fact that you would soon be leaving the city, so I was thinking of maybe treating you to meal. I've got a fairly good restaurant in mind.」

「Nn. Looking forward to it.」

「Please do. I've invited the Scarlet Maidens as well. Let's have ourselves a blast.」

「Nn. Sounds Good.」

「Right, there's something I've been meaning to ask. How fares the master? Was he adversely affected by the incident? Did he happen to incur

any sort of injury?」

「No problem. Already healed.」

All my injuries pretty much regenerated right way, so I was perfectly fine.

「W-w-w-what?! Is he really alright!? D-Did his injuries have any adverse after effects!? W-w-we need to get him a potion! As high quality a potion as possible!」

Colbert, apparently seemed to think it to be a big deal though, as he grabbed Fran by the shoulders and immediately started shouting. It was an action she probably would've hit him for had he not been one of her acquaintances.

「...Nn.」

But since he was, she instead ended up being completely taken aback by his sudden action, and only barely managed to squeeze out a reply.

Right, Colbert was one of my fans for some odd reason.

And, now that I think about it, he's actually helped us out a tonne. He played a huge role in both fighting off magic beasts and helping us with the cooking contest. I'd like to thank him if possible... Hmmm...

(Master?)

『Tell him I'll be joining you guys for two odd hours. I'm planning to tag along with a doppelganger.』

The only problem was that my doppelgangers would always spawn in wearing a t-shirt, a jersey, and a pair of sandals. That said, the aforementioned appearance only something that my doppelgangers had started adopting recently, mostly because I'd finally gotten used to the skill. In the past, I used to spawn in with Fran's cloak, so chances were, the doppelgangers' appearances probably had to do with the skill level and my ability to picture stuff. I do recall the System Announcer spawning in all the

clones she summoned with cool looking armour and whatnot, so I should be able to do all that too if I bump the skill level up a bit more.

But either way, I feel like I'd end up disappointing Colbert if I dressed like that. In fact, I kind of doubted that the store would even actually let me in. It'd probably do better for me to stick to the dress code. Wait, would wearing an overcoat work instead? Yeah, I'll probably go with that.

(Got it. Colbert be pleased.)

Colbert's excitement shot through the roof the moment Fran conveyed my intentions to him.

「W-What!? The Master will finally make his advent, you say!？」

「Nn.」

「Then I simply cannot settle for taking him to a dining hall in the city's outskirts!」

「Okay to take me there though?」

「I've no choice but to use every single connection I have and reserve only the finest restaurant!」

「Doesn't matter, as long as tasty.」

「I must seek an appropriate restaurant immediately... Wait, no... It would be extremely rude of me to take the world's greatest chef to a mere restaurant... I must immediately hunt the prey to be used myself... I do recall there being rumours of a dragon nesting in the Cage of the Crystal Tree...」

Holy shit.

The three girls approached as we tried to figure out how to calm him down.

「What's the matter, Colbert?」

「That's kinda creepy and gross...」

「The fact that I look up to him as an adventurer makes me kind of want to cry.」

It seemed that throwing them into the mix did the trick, as hearing them all criticize him brought Colbert back to his senses.

「Oh, hey. When did you ladies get here?」

「We're more interested in what you were up to.」

「Gross.」

「Did something good happen?」

「Yeah! You see...」

Aw crap. Lydia's question ended up sending Colbert back over the edge.

Luckily, the four girls did ultimately manage to drag him off to the place he'd initially booked.

And so, thirty minutes passed.

「Nom nom nom nom」

「Well? How is it? Good, right?」

「Mmphnom」

The food appeared incredibly delicious. Fran had shoved ten whole plates down her throat, and had yet to stop.

「Have you heard about the Alchemist's Guild? It seems that they're planning to send some staff over from the capital in order to reorganize Barbra's branch.」

「They used to have priority in the purchase of magic stones, but apparently they're going to be losing that now. In fact, they're now going to have restrictions and purchase limits too.」

Yeah, I figured they wouldn't completely get rid of the Alchemist's Guild. Barbra was a city in which a vast number of resources were made available. The benefit of having people do research here far outweighed any potential costs.

Besides, the newly placed restrictions should hopefully prevent any similar incidents from ever happening again. Hopefully.

「I've also heard that both the lord's second and third sons died as a result of the incident's events.」

「Oh, the two idiots, right?」

「I assume they were killed by the monstrosities?」

Huh, I thought Phillip said that they were going to claim that they died from illness? Saying they died in the incident would probably bring pity to the household and kind of rally the people to give the Krysten family their support. Phillip didn't seem all that willing to do anything like that, so I figure that they probably ended up getting ordered to lie or something.

「It seems like there's been a lot of rumours flying around even though the whole thing just happened last night.」

「Oh yeah, I heard a few people talking about how they were worried that this was a sign of the Evil God's revival.」

「I've also heard rumours of how another country had been pulling the strings from behind the scenes.」

「There was even a group saying that a demon was responsible for killing all the monstrosities and saving the city.」

「Oh come on, that one's just flat out impossible. Why would there even be a demon in the city to begin with?」

「That's kind of just how rumours are.」

The three Scarlet Maidens were trying to kick the conversation into gear through the use of rumours, but Fran was too busy eating to actually pay attention to them. They naturally noticed, but, didn't really pay it much mind. Instead, they ultimately ended up just awkwardly laughing it off before joining her in gluttony.

And so, the rest of the night pretty much ended up becoming a fatfest.

「This place is fairly famous for its low prices and good food.」

「The meat they sell here is delicious too.」

「I could just keep eating this forever.」

「Oh damn it you three, at least hold back a bit!」

「Free food is always the most delicious food you can get.」

It really did look quite good. The atmosphere was all lively and stuff too, so I kinda wanted to join in. It was about time anyways.

『Fran, it's time.』

「Getting master. Will be back soon.」

「Please allow me to join you! I simply have to greet him upon his arrival!」

That's a bit troubling. I'd been planning on using Doppelganger Synthesis just outside the store.

(Teleport.)

『Yeah, I guess I don't really have any other choice, do I?』

「Bit far away. Will need a minute.」

I teleported a bit away and made a doppelganger. Normally, Fran would be able to teleport us both back, but that didn't seem to be working. It normally worked because I counted as a piece of equipment, but a humanized doppelganger was uh, kind of not a piece of equipment. Luckily, it didn't actually really matter because my doppelganger could still use space/time magic anyways.

And so, we teleported back to the restaurant.

I was wearing a large overcoat on top of my jersey and t-shirt. I would've immediately been labeled as suspicious back in Japan, but whatever, it was what it was.

「Brought him.」

「Y-Yeah. So he's...」

「Nice to meet you. I'm Fran's master.」

「I-It-It's very nice to meet you too! I'm Colbert, and a huge fan of your cooking. The food you made was exquisite, be it the curry, sushi, or dishes served during the competition. Please allow me to enroll as one of your disciples!」

「Sorry.」

「He was refused immediately!」

Errrr, I was not expecting him to ask that, especially not right off the bat. Crap, did that mess up the mood?

「Damn... I guess it can't be helped seeing as how I'm not nearly as talented as Miss Fran over there is.」

Fortunately, he ended up randomly accepting his rejection, which honestly made me feel a bit unsettled. I'd been intending on thanking him, but I ended up doing something rude instead.

I quickly handed him something to make up for it. I'd been planning on giving it to him later as a form of thanks regardless, but the timing seemed to work out perfectly.

「I can't make you one of my apprentices, but I can give you this.」

「This...? Wait! W-Wh-what!? You have to be kidding me! Is it really okay for me to have this!? Am I dreaming!?!」

「What did you receive, Colbert?」

「Groooooossss」

「Is that supposed to be like a treasure map or something?」

「Shut up Lydia, you're being rude! A-Ahh, right, so as I was saying, thank you very much for giving me something of such value!」

The thing I gave him was my curry rice recipe. I'm glad he was that happy to receive it, really made it worth giving.

The Luciel Conglomerate had asked to buy the curry bread recipe back when we went looking for magic stones, so I figured it might be a good idea to hand copies my curry recipe over to everyone that had helped us.

Naturally, I knew that the conglomerate wouldn't be all that happy about us giving the curry rice recipe away for free if they ended up buying the curry bread one, even if the two were technically different dishes. That said, we still did need money in order to buy magic stones. Hence, we ended up giving them several other recipes for cheap as well in order to appease them. As a result, they did ultimately end up agreeing to letting us give away the recipe for the curry's roux.

The other people we'd been planning to give the recipe to were Io, the old guy at the Chef's Guild, and the cook at the inn we were staying at.

I'd really love for it to end up developing into Barbra's speciality or something like that. I'm really looking forward to seeing all the variations that'd spawn from the recipe.

But yeah, the party went by pretty smoothly. We somehow managed to calm Colbert down and enjoy ourselves.

It actually turned out to be the first party I actually was really a part of ever since reincarnating. I mean, I was totally okay with being a sword, but this wasn't bad at all either. I honestly really enjoyed the two hours I spent just doing whatever.

It looked like Fran had herself a pretty good night too. She'd actually ended up humming in the shower after getting back to the inn.

「Woof...」

『Here's a super spicy hamburger. Eat it and cheer up a bit.』

「Woof...」

Urushi was really disappointed by the fact that he couldn't join us, and hence, ended up missing out on a bunch of delicious food.

『Don't worry, they'll be more good stuff to eat in the future, so cheer up, okay?』

「Woof...」

And so, morning came.

The first thing we did was make our way to front Barbra's gate with a clear blue sky up above us.

『Looks like a good day to set out on a journey.』

I quickly went over our plans in order to confirm them.

We were going to set off for Ulmutt; it'd take us about five days for us to get there.

We'd then dive into the city's two dungeons and level up before finally taking part in the city's martial arts competition. This pretty much went

without saying, but our goal would be to win it.

『Ulmutt, huh? I'm really looking forward to it.』

「To dungeon diving.」

「Woof!」

『We've bought everything we needed to buy, learned everything we needed to learn, and even bid all our farewells to everyone that mattered.』

Amanda had cried in response to our departure. She wasn't going to leave till the orphanage was back on its feet, but it seemed like she was planning to meet us in Ulmutt once it was.

『Hopefully we'll have gotten a lot stronger by the next time we meet her.』

「Nn. Will for sure.」

『Yup. Anyways, I think it's about time for us to go.』

「Nn.」

「Woof!」

141. Ulmutt's Entrance

141. Ulmutt's Entrance

It took us four days to get from Barbra to Ulmutt.

Nothing really happened along the way. The only event worth mentioning was us stumbling across a goblin's nest containing 20 odd individuals, but cleaning that up took us less than half an hour, so it honestly was rather insignificant.

It turned out that Ulmutt was much smaller a city than I'd been expecting it to be. I mean, I knew for a fact that it'd be smaller than Barbra, but it turned out that it was actually way smaller than Alessa too. In fact, it was less than half Alessa's size.

That said though, it'd still left quite an impression on me even from the very moment I first caught sight of it. Our approach included Urushi carrying us on his back while running through the sky as usual, so I ended up getting a birds eye view of the city. Said view allowed me to fully understand just how weird Ulmutt's layout really was.

Most of the weirdness stemmed from the two large constructions that had immediately grabbed my attention. The first was the massive wall that ran all around the city's borders. It was just as tall as Barbra's, but much wider. It honestly looked extremely out of place, and almost entirely unnecessary.

The second was the enormous cylindrical structure that almost seemed to loom over the city in its entirety. I mean, I totally could've rationalized it as a fortress meant for the sake of defense had it been located outside the city's perimeter, but it wasn't. Hence, I could only assume that it to be some sort of shelter or facility.

『Oh well, we'll figure out what it is if we just head over or something later.』

「Nn」

「Woof.」

The only issue with said suggestion was that getting into the city seemed like a huge pain in the ass in and of itself.

There were around a thousand people lined up before Ulmutt's gates. It seemed that the city's main entrance was being swarmed by adventurers, spectators, and merchants alike as a result of the upcoming martial arts tournament.

Honestly, I thought the crowd to be justified seeing how the tournament was known as one of the kingdom's biggest events.

We got off Urushi's back at a spot a bit away from the crowd before moving towards the line and joining it — only to find out that the line basically wasn't moving at all.

I overheard the merchants standing in front of us saying that it was a difficult to be admitted into the city if it was your first time there unless you were an adventurer. Ulmutt contained two different dungeons, so they'd pretty much interrogate everyone that wished to enter about their intentions at the admissions gate.

Anyone that's been admitted once would then be granted a pass that'd allow them to freely enter and exit the city over the course of the next half year. It also allowed use of the less crowded non-admissions entrances. The martial arts competition was an annual event, so people that came solely for its sake would end up having to sit through the line every single year.

The people that came every year more or less regarded lining up as an annual tradition. Some of the more aggressive merchants would even intentionally target those waiting in line through the sale of refreshments. Some of these refreshments had come in the form of booze; several groups

of people had already sat themselves down in order to engage in drinking contests and the like.

Seeing these sights reminded me of comiket and the other conventions we had back in Japan. As a result, I couldn't shake the feeling that the event would end up starting before we actually managed to get ourselves admitted. [1]

It seemed I wasn't the only one that felt that way, as some of the other individuals in line appeared simply incapable of waiting any longer. Most of these individuals were commoners or adventurers like us who were visiting the city for the first time.

The most agitated group of all was composed specifically of adventurers with a less than refined appearance. They were getting into arguments here and there. There'd yet to be any violence, but I felt as if a brawl could break out at any given moment.

Goddammit. Do those idiots not realize that they're just making this whole line move even more slowly than usual?

Our gazes turned cold as we continued to observe them while patiently awaiting our turn.

『Goblin.』

(Ogre.)

『Hmmn.. Dragon.』

(Kobald.)

『Uhhh one sec... Uhhhhh, demon.』

(Chimera.)

『Hmmmm』

Fran and I were killing time by engaging ourselves in games that could be played anywhere at any time. Specifically, we were currently taking turns listing off monsters whilst trying to be the last one to be able to name one.

However, said game of ours was ultimately brought to an abrupt end. And annoyingly enough, not because it'd finally become our turn.

「Hey you, brat. Get over here.」

A bearded adventurer called us over in a cocky tone. I took a quick glance at his stats, only to find that they were abysmal. He was probably an E ranker at best.

「...」

「Oi! Listen to me, you goddamn brat!」

「...」

「Bastard, think you're tough shit for ignoring me, huh?」

「...」

Fran didn't respond to the adventurer at all, as she was too busy trying to think up a monster to name. The man's face had rapidly reddened as a result.

(Hmmmm...)

『Hey Fran.』

(Nn? Master, giving up?)

『Nah, it's just that there's someone trying to get your attention.』

「Nn?」

The adventurer immediately started yelling at Fran as if to intimidate her the moment she turned towards him.

「I was thinking of allowing you to pour me booze once we made our way over the wall, but there ain't no forgiving you now, brat!」

「Shut up.」

「The fuck you say!? You trying mess with me!?!」

Fran had flattened her ears and muttered under her breath because of how much of a pain in the ass the guy was being, but, that only seemed to fuel his rage further.

「I'll be making you pay for this!」

The bearded man immediately threw a punch in our direction. Is he stupid? Like, look at how many witnesses there are. Wait, does he have the ability to shut everyone up or something? Could he perhaps be related to one of Ulmutt's more influential figures?

「Nn.」

I was a bit concerned about the man's identity, but Fran honestly couldn't care less.

She slipped right by his attack and smashed her own fist straight into his solar plexus. The onlookers had probably initially thought it to be a rather insignificant action. In fact, many seemed to suspect that that the man wouldn't suffered even the slightest bit of damage from the attack, but they were immediately proven wrong and forced to doubt their own eyes.

「Guah!」

The man flew five meters before finally landing back on the ground. The force of the impact had caused him to keep rolling even afterwards.

『Did you not hold back?』

(Enemy too weak so didn't use Master.)

「Guueeeeeee....」

The man lay twitching as both his blood and the contents of his last meal leaked from his throat. I mean, he did kind of deserve it given he just tried to hit a little girl. He's lucky he didn't get all sliced up and stuff instead.

But naturally, there existed opinions that differed from our own.

「Hey, Brulace, you alright!?!」

「The hell did you do to him you goddamn brat!?!」

「Yo, that was way too over the top. The hell man!?!」

Brulace's companions yelled at Fran in rage. It seemed that they wanted a go as well.

Their reddened faces gave way to the fact that they were all drunk. Brulace had been the same, hence his overly quick temper. That said, it wasn't like we were planning to be all kind and forgiving just because they happened to be under the influence.

Fran immediately disarmed them and sent them flying in the exact same manner as she had Brulace.

「Ugeehh」

「Uuuueeeeeee」

I mean, we were kind of the reason they ended up barfing, but I couldn't help but feel that all four men looked way too gross for comfort. The other people in line seemed to feel the same, as they looked upon the men with eyes of disgust whilst taking a few steps away from them.

Whooops. Turned out we were the first to resort to violence.

Hmm, maybe we should clean all this up?

An older man approached us as we contemplated how we could best address the issue.

「Wow, that was impressive. You seem pretty strong.」

He was quite dandy looking, and probably a noble. The clothes he wore were gaudy; they were heavily embroidered and seemed luxurious even from a glance. His whitened hair was arranged in a swept back manner. His beard, which of course was of the same colour, had been cut to resemble something along the lines of a goatee. Though he seemed to be at least sixty years of age, his body was still so well balanced that it verged on being abnormal. All in all, he seemed to give off the air of an experienced warrior.

I found it a bit weird for him to be happily smiling at and talking to us given the status quo. My guess was that he either had balls of steel or simply couldn't read the mood.

「My name is Dias. What's yours?」

「Fran.」

「Are you an adventurer?」

「Nn.」

「I see. You seem quite promising based on how cute and strong you are. I look forward to seeing how you'll develop going forward.」

Hmmm, just who is this old man? He doesn't seem to be hostile, and he doesn't seem to be trying to evaluate Fran or anything like that either.

I mean, my first impression was that he was probably some sort of noble, but he didn't give his family name when he introduced himself, so he probably either wasn't one, or belonged to a family too famous for him to want to name himself.

I wanted to appraise him, but, didn't actually get to. I was instead distracted by the fact that I happened to see a group of guards run over to us from the gate.

「Hey, you, kid.」

The guard's tone was a rather threatening one. It seemed like we wouldn't be able to get ourselves out of this one just by claiming self defense. It might work out if the people around us help testify though...

That said, it didn't seem like anyone wanted to give us a hand. They all immediately averted their gazes the moment Fran looked towards them, as if to signify that they wanted to stay out of the situation given how troublesome it was.

「Geez, why'd you have to go and stir up trouble like that?」

「We're already busy enough as is.」

「To the guard's room with you. We'll listen to what you have to say once we get there.」

「Come on, let's go.」

We'd already spent an hour in line. It'd really suck if they sent us to the back again afterwards.

The guards sure did seem to be in a bad mood though. The glances they shot in Fran's direction were totally cold. I wouldn't be surprised if they ended up just locking us up without actually listening to us.

What I didn't understand was why they only took us and not the people Fran had hit.

I really didn't wanted to deal with all this, but it wasn't like we could just say screw it and leave. Luckily, Dias stopped the guards right as Fran resigned herself to follow them.

「Hold on. None of what'd happened was actually her fault at all.」

「Okay and? Who the hell are you?」

One of the guards glared at Dias in a rather stuck up manner.

『It looks like this might lead to even more trouble.』

Or so I thought, but apparently not.

「M-Master Dias!」

「W-Whatever might you be doing in a place like this?」

「Oh, you know, I just happened to be passing by.」

Huh, looked like that old man had quite a bit of influence. Looks like he really might be a noble after all.

「Understood sir.」

「As I was saying, she wasn't at fault at all. All the fault lies with the men collapsed over there, so if you want to be taking anyone away, it should be them. I know they're filthy, and I do feel bad for you because of it, but you will be taking them in regardless, right?」

「Y-Yessir!」

Ah, I see now. The guards hadn't wanted to carry off four dirty ass men, so they'd decided to try targeting Fran instead. They might've even ended up wronging her as a result, so I do feel fairly thankful for Dias' actions.

Dias' words had inspired the guards to immediately bring all four men to their feet and take them away in earnest.

「Thanks.」

「Don't sweat it. Seeing how promising an adventurer you are just happened to make me feel like keeping you out of trouble is all.」

「Why?」

「Hahaha. Anyways, I'll be off now. See you around.」

Dias dipped after leaving us with a few words that seemed to be hinting at something. Just who the hell was he? I guess we'll probably end up finding out when get inside the city.

「Bored.」

『Me too.』

It looked like we'd still have to wait for quite some time before finally being allowed into the city's walls.

『Whoops. I just realized I totally forgot to appraise him.』

[1] I'm pretty sure most WN readers know this already, but comiket is comic market, a huge convention in which they sell all sorts of goodies and porn. Mostly porn. Think of it like a super crowded Anime Expo, but with ten thousand times as much porn. Many of the more popular pornographic artists end up having their stuff completely sold out by the time people in the middle of the line actually manage to enter the facility. Oh yeah, did I mention the porn? That alone makes it worth going to Japan.

[2] This note is classified as legacy. It is no longer applicable, but will be left for those interested in the meaning of "sama". Thanks to everyone for their answers regarding Dias' identity. Normally I don't do honorifics, but I haven't read ahead, so I have absolutely no idea what his actual title is. If anyone's read ahead and wants to tell me who Dias is, please do so and I'll be able to get rid of sama and replace it with something appropriate. Anyway, when you append "-sama" to someone's name, you're typically doing so because you have great respect for the other party, or you're just flat out completely subordinated in both mind and body. Individuals in servile positions, like maids and living sex toys often use this to refer to their masters.

142 Bardiche? Sorry, I Meant Erza.

142 Bardiche? Sorry, I Meant Erza.

We finally made our way through the city's gates about an hour after meeting Dias.

I quickly looked around, only to find that, the massive, towering, cylindrical building aside, the city was actually surprisingly normal. In fact, seeing it reminded me of Alessa.

『Let's start off by checking out the Adventurer's Guild.』

「Nn.」

We needed to sell the few materials we happened across on the way here and get ourselves a bit more info about the city's two dungeons.

One important fact to note was that not just anyone could just head over to the dungeon and hit it up. You'd need permission and whatnot first. I figured we'd be fine though. Alessa's Guildmaster, Klimut, had given us a permit ahead of time so we probably wouldn't run into any major issues.

Finding the guild ended up being a relatively simple task. We managed to catch sight of it after asking people for directions and walking around for 10 odd minutes. The guild's building was a fairly large one, which did make sense given that the city contained two dungeons.

『The doors sure are wide, huh?』

「Nn. About same as Barbra.」

「Woof.」

Barbra's guild was quite a bit taller, but Ulmutt's looked like it was built atop a bigger plot of land.

Entering the building made me realize just how large it really was. There were twenty different counters, and the adventurers that sought service from them were in such excess that they had to form lines.

『Holy crap, this place is just bustling with life. It's even more lively than Barbra's branch.』

「Nn. Amazed.」

「Woof.」

Wow, there sure are a lot of adventurers. I thought Barbra was crowded, but holy crap Ulmutt takes it to a whole new level. I mean, it makes sense given the dungeons and whatnot, but still, wow.

Fran immediately moved to the line with the least people in it. The man in front of us turned around in response. Is someone seriously about to pick a fight with us already?

I position myself to “accidentally slip out of my sheath” at any given moment.

「Just so you know, this line's only supposed to be for E rankers.」

Turned out he was just bringing it to our attention that we might be in the wrong place.

The man briefed us on how things were organised. There were five different types of lines, each of which had four corresponding counters. The first four types were for G, F, E, and D ranked adventurers respectively, whereas the last handled everyone that ranked in at C or higher.

Fran moved over one line after hearing him out.

「Oh come on, listen to me goddamit. That one's supposed to be for D rankers.」

「Nn?」

「I literally just told you you're not supposed to use that line unless you're a D ranked adventurer.」

You know, the dude who called out to us looked all intimidating and stuff, but he was actually a pretty nice guy. I mean, he did make light of Fran's abilities and all that, but it wasn't like he did out of malice or anything. He'd only called out to her in the first place in order to patiently instruct on something he realized she didn't know.

I had a feeling that this was just how things tended to be in Ulmutt. There were quite a few other younger individuals lined up around us as well, though Fran was still definitely the youngest of them all. Most of the younger crowd seemed to be about 15 years old, and there were far more of them than there were back in Alessa.

「That's why this line.」

「Huh?」

「Currently D ranked.」

「Whaaat?」

Her proclamation seemed to have surprised not only the man that'd been giving her advice, but also the adventurers around us as well. Many had turned their heads in disbelief.

「Here.」

Fran showed the man her guild card and immediately caused his eyes to widen in shock.

「The guild card says... it's true... Wait, what? You're higher ranked than me?」

「Damn, seriously?」

「She's higher ranked than me too!?!」

「She must've cheated or something.」

「Y-Yeah, figures.」

「But what if she really is that strong?」

The adventurers around us started kicking up a fuss. Fran, however, didn't really care at all.

「Hey! You!」

Annnnd someone tried picking a fight with us. I knew this would happen, especially with all the commotion.

「You're a liar!」

「Not lying.」

「There's no way a kid like you could be an adventurer! That cards probably a fake!」

「You, also kid.」

「N-No I'm not! I'm already 15!」

This was honestly pretty much the usual save for the fact that the person trying to pick a fight with us was a kid. The teenage boy glared at Fran with his face dyed a shade of bright red.

「Genuine card.」

「I-I don't believe you!」

「Genuine.」

「T-There's no way that's legit! Even I'm still just G ranked!」

He refused to believe that he was in the wrong, not that I can really blame him too much seeing as how Fran being a D ranker is kind of surreal in and of itself. What to do though? Like, there's no way we could rough him up like we usually would, seeing as how he's just a kid and all that.

(Master, use violence?)

『Hold on.』

(Nn? Why?)

Though I thought him to be nothing but a brat, there was no way for me really judge if Fran felt the same. I honestly couldn't tell if she thought of him a young or old seeing as how she was the younger of the two. That said, she obviously did see him as someone that annoyed her and tried to pick a fight with her either way.

『He's just a brat, so let's just let him off.』

(Then what do?)

『Hmmmm...』

Oh, right. We could totally just use wind magic to make him shut up for the time being. We'll still deal with him normally if he actually tries something though.

Despite the fact that we'd went ahead and planned out what to do, we never actually ended up getting a chance to put our ideas into action.

「What's going on here?」

Oh, it's Miss Erza.

「Geez, are you guys causing trouble again? You boys sure are naughty.」

「_____! 」

『_____! 』

Both Fran and I completely froze the moment we caught sight of the person that came out from the guild's rear. Fran, who'd always been taciturn and calm, had her eyes wide open in surprise. I feel like this might've been the first time I'd ever seen her in such a state. That said, I understood her sentiments. The person we caught sight of was one whose presence truly gave off a sense of impact.

「M-Miss Erza.」

「Oh my, would you happen to be the source of all this fuss, Yuuri?」

「Er... no, I'm not. It's just that there happened to be a kid playing around inside the guild, so I was just telling them off is all.」

The boy that'd been picking a fight with Fran, Yuuri, suddenly became all obedient. He immediately began standing at attention. Likewise, all the other adventurers had stopped slouching and straightened their backs as well.

「A kid? Oh my, how adorable she is.」

「...」

『Fran』

「...」

『Fran!』

「Was just bit surprised.」

『You alright?』

「Oh my, what is it?」

It seemed that this was Fran's first time meeting anyone like the person standing before us. Again, I couldn't blame her since I'd totally been taken aback as well.

「Nice to meet you, my name's Erza.」

「Fran.」

「Fran, is it? Wonderful, I do hope we get along.」

「Nn. Just one question.」

「Whatever might that be?」

「Male? Or Female?」

The man that called himself Erza took a pose as if to show off his buff ass body while also lightly pressing a finger against one of his lips. He then winked and blew a kiss in Fran's direction. Oh god why!?

「S e c r e t.」

Secret my ass! He's totally a dude!

Though I wanted to call him out on his bullshit, I couldn't help but feel that it was a horrible idea to do so.

The way he was twisting his body around didn't actually seem all that gross. In fact, it didn't leave that bad of an impression on me at all, though I'd say that was probably mostly because of how ridiculous the rest of him appeared.

He wore heavy makeup on his cheeks, and thick eyeshadow on his eyes. His lips were covered in a red purple lipstick, and his head topped with a crimson afro. You could easily make out both his tights and muscular body even despite him wearing a layer of leather armour. Holy shit, he was a legit homo manwoman.

General Information

Name: Bardiche

Age: 47

Race: Human

Job: Indestructible Fighter

State: Normal

Status Level: 50/99

HP: 580

MP: 229

STR: 255

VIT: 310

AGI: 148

INT: 112

MGC: 110

DEX: 151

Skills

Transportation: Lv 3

Resistance to Environmental Conditions: Lv 5

Panic: Lv 4

Vigilance: Lv 5

Make up: Lv 6

Fist Techniques: Lv 5

Fist Arts: Lv 5

Combat Qigong: Lv 5

Regeneration: Lv 5

Sewing: Lv 3

Divine Staff Techniques: Lv 1

Divine Staff Arts: Lv 3

Resistance to Abnormal Status Conditions: Lv 6

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 3

Staff Techniques: MAX

Staff Arts: MAX

Provoke: Lv 5

Beautification: Lv 5

Magic Resistance: Lv 4

Cooking: Lv 3

Vigour Manipulation

Muscles of Steel

Kobold Killer

Dulled Sense of Pain

Pain Conversion

Innate Skills

Enhanced Resistances

Titles

Ulmutt's Guardian

Kobold Killer

One Who has Overcome Pain

Equipment

Guardian's Mace

Scarlet Panther's Leather Armour

Rainbow Silk Garments

God of Beauty's Sandals

Charming Earrings

I felt an incredible urge to complain about a bunch of different stuff. Like, firstly, his goddamn name was Bardiche, not Erza. Secondly, how the hell did he look like he was 30!? That said though, both the aforementioned aspects paled before the one thing I really wanted to complain about, one of his skills.

Pain Conversion: Converts some pain to pleasure.

That skill right there was a masochist's best friend. Wait, does this mean that there's skills specialized for sadists as well? Like maybe something that boosts one's stats when bullying people or inflicting pain or something?

Either way, it seemed like the masochistic homosexual before us was one of the most powerful people I'd ever met after reincarnating.

Man, appraising him sure wore me the hell out... That's the first time that's happened...

「Are you the same little lady that happened to get into a fight just outside the city's gates?」

「Nn.」

「Would you mind coming with me then? The guildmaster told me to bring you his way if I happened to find you.」

「Guildmaster?」

「Yuppers. He seems to have some business with you. Would you mind?」

Did he want to scold us or something? I don't really think what we did was serious enough for us to need to have the guildmaster personally see to us.

Well, either way, it was one of the Guildmaster's personal requests, so it's not like we could actually turn it down at all.

「Okay.」

「Thankies. I'll be taking her then everyone.」

「Sure thing.」

「Oh, and Yuuri, you should be a bit more vigilant, you know? You'll die the moment you set foot in a dungeon if you're bad at judging how strong people are.」

「Huh? What?」

「Over here Fran~」

「Nn.」

Fran followed Bardiche... Erza? Uhhh... I guess I'll go with Erza, whatever.

Fran followed Erza as she led her in over to the Guildmaster.

「Hmmm hmm hm hm hmmm hmmm」

Oh god why! Stop shaking your ass while you walk around goddammit!

143. The Guildmaster's Identity

143. The Guildmaster's Identity

Erza (♂) took us towards the Guildmaster's room by leading us up a flight of stairs. We had Urushi sit back in the shadows since we were visiting someone important and all that.

「I've brought Fran over as requested, Guildmaster.」

「Thank you Erza, and hello again, Fran.」

「Dias.」

「I'm glad to see you still remember me.」

We were surprised to see a familiar face, the man that'd given us a hand just outside the city's walls, awaiting us in the Guildmaster's office. He seemed to have been expecting us, as he was standing in his room with a wide smile on his face.

「Dias is Guildmaster?」

「I am. I guess I'll reintroduce myself. I am Dias, the Master of Ulmutt's Adventurer's Guild.」

「Nn. Hope to get along.」

Ah, so he was the Guildmaster. I see, I get it now. The guards were addressing him all respectfully and stuff because he was the person in charge of the adventurers in a city with a tonne of adventurers.

Oh right, I better appraise him before I forget again.

General Information

Name: Dias

Age: 71

Race: Human

Class: Phantom Magic Warrior

State: Normal

Status Level: 76/99

HP: 241

MP: 668

STR: 122

VIT: 110

AGI: 291

INT: 389

MGC: 278

DEX: 389

Skills

Sole Sense: Lv 4

Espionage: Lv 6

Bare Handed Combat Techniques: Lv 3

Bare Handed Combat Arts: Lv 4

Anti-Detection: Lv 6

Appraisal Detection: Lv 8

Inconspicuous: Lv 7

Magic: Lv 8

Vital Point Detection: Lv 4

Court Etiquette: Lv 6

Presence Detection: Lv 6

Presence Elimination: Lv 6

Illusion Magic: MAX

Phantom Magic: Lv 6

Resistance to Confusion: Lv 4

Weakness Detection: MAX

Covert Action: Lv 3

Resistance to Abnormal Status Conditions: Lv 3

Short Sword Techniques: Lv 7

Short Sword Arts: Lv 7

Earth Magic: Lv 3

Legerdemain: MAX

Throwing: Lv 7

Fire Magic: Lv 3

Charm Resist: Lv 4

Carpentry: Lv 4

Trap Removal: Lv 4

Trap Detection: Lv 8

Trap Creation: Lv 7

Vigour Manipulation

Dulled Sense of Pain

Indomitable

Thought Division

Magic Manipulation

Lesser Magic Boost

Unique Skills

Technically Senile: Lv 7

Innate Skills

Induced Thought: Lv 8

Induced Line of Sight: Lv 8

Titles

Master of The Art of Illusion

Guildmaster

Trickster

One who has Surpassed the Bounds of Mediocrity

A Ranked Adventurer

Equipment

Dragon Fang Short Sword

Dragon Scale Suit

Dragon Leather Mantle

Shoes of Quickened Feet

Bracelet of Substitution

Magician's Ring

Hmmm, he sure seemed strong. Both his stats and skills looked flat out ridiculous, and he appeared as if he was capable of combat at pretty much any range. He had a lot of skills that'd led him take advantage of his enemies' weak points too. Magic show related skills aside, he more or less looked to be an assassin.

He even had a unique skill to top it all off.

Technically Senile: Forces the target to forget that they have a certain skill for a fixed time period. This time period and Technically Senile's cooldown are both dependant on the target skill's level and rarity. Maximum period of senility: 1 minute.

Holy crap that's OP. Forgetting you have a skill in the middle of combat could be flat out fatal.

Induced Thought: Allows the caster to momentarily redirect the target's train of thought.

Induced Line of Sight: Allows the caster to momentarily redirect the target's line of sight.

His two innate skills, combined with Inconspicuous, Espionage, and other similar abilities, would probably allow him to make his opponents completely lose track of him, especially if he was to make use of his illusion based magics. The name of his job seemed to hint at the fact that he specialized in using the illusory arts in conjunction with magic trick-like abilities, meaning that he was actually much more difficult to deal with than his stats seemed to indicate.

「Hahaha. It seems that you just appraised me.」

Wait, how?

「The Appraisal Detection skill allows me to sense those capable of using appraisal. It also lets me know if it gets used on me. Out of curiosity, can you see my unique skill?」

「Nn.」

「I knew it. Your appraisal sure is high leveled. I'd actually used it when we met a bit earlier so you'd forget to appraise me, just so I wouldn't get found out cause I wanted to give you a bit of a surprise here and now. Sadly, you don't look even the slightest bit surprised though. Looks like my little prank ended up failing.」

Oh, right, that explains why I kept forgetting to appraise him back then. Man, I knew something was off back then. In fact, I was so confident that I was getting paranoid that I was being attacked by a Stand.

...

Okay, yeah no, that was just flat out bullshit. I'd honestly blamed it on my own carelessness.

「Your appraisal skill sure is high leveled though. You put my skill on a three day cooldown, and I didn't even manage to successfully prank you. Man, I wish I never bothered.」

「Your own fault.」

「Yeah, I know. I'll make your stay here a lot more convenient as an apology, so could you please stop glaring at me already?」

So that whole gentlemanly act he pulled off outside town was all just a ruse for the sake of a prank? The boyish way he put his hands together and lowered his head made it look like my guess was perfectly on the mark. Fran seemed a bit peeved as well, but it's not like he actually caused us any harm. In fact, he'd even given us a hand, so I guess we don't really have any choice but to forgive him.

「...Will get mad next time.」

Is it really normal for him to just go around using that skill on people? I feel like he'd be put in a pretty bad place if the person he tried to mess with ended up finding out. They might take his use of the skill as a sign of hostility and choose to engage him in battle.

「Seriously Guildmaster? You did it again? Do you really like playing pranks on all the promising newbies that much?」

Looks like this isn't just a one off thing. Is it really alright for the Guildmaster to do stuff like that?

「You can just hit him if he starts to get him on your nerves, Fran.」

「Got it.」

「Nice, I'll be cheering you on then! I hope that silly Guildmaster of ours ends up suffering just a bit some day.」

「Wow Erza, you're terrible.」

「I mean, you're the one always pushing it just because they'll never fire you, so you kinda deserve it.」

「Why never fire?」

I was a bit curious about that as well. I mean, Guildmasters had authority and all that, but their positions weren't nearly influential enough to allow them to permanently hold their titles.

「Well, you see, he's really strong. He's definitely one of Kranzel's top five. I'm one of the strongest B ranked adventurers out there, but I'm not even the slightest bit close to even being his match, mkay? That make sense honey?」

Wow, is he really that strong? I mean, their stats don't look that different, so I guess it's based on how well they apply their skills. Erza seems like the brute force type, so he'd probably get screwed from having holes poked in his weak points.

「He's strong enough to be worthy of his title as Guildmaster of a city containing two different dungeons. Mhmm.」

Well, yeah, he does seem several times stronger than most other adventurers.

「And he's the only one capable of negotiating with the Dungeon Master too. Yuppers.」

Negotiating with the Dungeon Master? The hell's that supposed to mean?

「Negotiate?」

「Oh, right, you just got here. Ulmutt's gotten really famous because it's got two dungeons, both of which are still alive. They've even got their Dungeon Masters still inside of them.」

「Dangerous.」

「Normally, yeah, but Ulmutt's fine, so no worries there honey.」

「Why?」

「Well, it's because we made a deal with the Dungeon Masters. The Dungeon Masters have agreed not to strengthen the dungeon any more than absolutely necessary or tell their monsters to invade the city. They've also agreed to tolerate adventurers and their actions within the dungeon's confines. In exchange, we provide the Dungeon Masters supplies from outside their dungeons and agree not to touch them or the dungeons' cores. Yuppers.」

Ah, I see. I guess this is something that becomes possible under the condition that the Dungeon Master is of an intelligent race. It'd make sense for said Dungeon Master to prefer coexistence to getting destroyed by high ranking adventurers.

「The Guildmaster was the first person to succeed in negotiating with the Dungeon Master. Mhmm. He did it back in his younger days.」

「Man, it was really hard, and took forever.」

「I don't really know why the Dungeon Masters trust this old man, but, they've appointed him as a point of interaction, so we kinnnda don't have the slightest clue what'd happen to the guild if he quit. Ulmutt only exists for its dungeons, so there's really no way for anyone to fire the Guildmaster without bringing about a tonne of harm.」

「Heh, and you know what that means? I get to do whatever I want, and no one can stop me.」

「That's not something that's supposed to make you act with such a irresponsible attitude!」

Holy crap. I think I need glasses. I swear I just saw a homo manwoman scolding an old man in the same manner as she would a brat.

「Mmm, I think it's about time for me to excuse myself.」

「Keep up the good work.」

「You really shouldn't be saying that seeing as how you're the one that keeps making me work harder than I should be!」

You know, I could actually kinda get use to this. Their interactions, I mean.

「See you later Fran. I really think I've taken a liking to you, so tell me if you ever need anything. I'll help you out if I can. Mhmm, yes I will.」

「Nn.」

「Byebye~ Muah~」

Oh god why, he just threw a kiss in at the end just to do it! Holy crap, that was dangerous. I almost instinctively moved my body out of its path and got myself caught in action by Dias.

(Master, something wrong? Twitchy.)

『I-It's nothing, don't worry about it.』

Though, it seems like Fran actually did notice.

Do note that translations will be a bit erratic for a while. I've no idea if I'll have the time to get to them due to guests and what not.

144. Dias' Abilities

144. Dias' Abilities

The Guildmaster breathed a light sigh not too long after Erza's departure.

「Whew. He's not a bad guy, but I find myself having a bit of a hard time dealing with him.」

I'm guessing he means that he can't stand Erza on a physiological level or something like that. Fran seems fine, but that's more so because she hasn't really developed a sense of personal space yet.

「He's what I would call a little bit special, you see.」

「Man, but also woman?」

「That's a part of it.」

A part? There's more to it?

「Other parts too?」

「It looks like you'll be stuck dealing with him for quite the time to come, so I guess there shouldn't be any problems with me telling you. Besides, I'd end up with a few concerns over my own safety if you were to fall into his venomous clutches.」

Dias muttered several things under his breath with a serious look on his face; he seemed to be lost in thought.

「Erza's what you'd call a man with a woman's heart. He's equally interested in both men and women alike, and his tastes span the generations

as far as age goes. In fact, both you and I fall into his strike zone. He's even got an inclination that makes him happy when abused by others.」

『...』

(Master?)

『Holy shit! I think I actually just blanked out for a second.』

So he's a masochistic bisexual manwoman attracted to basically everything and anything? Like, isn't he, as a living thing, supposed to have instincts that make him only want to tap to certain things? Whatever the hell happened to those? Holy crap, I think this has gone so far that I'm starting to feel physical harm. Each of these facts is as bad as a blow to the gut. I'mma say we should stay as far away from him as possible, for sanity's sake.

「???」

All of what we'd discussed seemed to have gone right over Fran's head. I can practically see a bunch of question marks floating on top of her.

(Master? Understand?)

『I-I do, but I think it's fine for you not to get it for now.』

(Why?)

『I-It's a subject for grown ups. You don't need to get it yet. In fact, I think you'd be happier not getting it than getting it.』

(Hm?)

I'd honestly rather prefer that she never gets it, if anything.

『A-All you really have to know is that Erza's a bit of a weirdo. That's it.』

(Nn. Got it.)

Whew. Thank god that's over. I was pretty confident that I'd end up losing my ability to think rationally if I had to actually explain Erza's inclinations.

「Erza doesn't believe in simply watching over children lovingly and will act on his urges, but that isn't to say that he actively goes after them himself either. Despite all else, he still is technically Ulmutt's ace, so some children do end up developing odd tastes and approaching him on their own.」

Oh, so that's what he meant by falling into Erza's venomous clutches? Yeah no, that's more like getting flat out poisoned and corrupted.

「To tell you the truth, I was actually warned by a certain individual ahead of time that I shouldn't let you fall into Erza's clutches... I'm pretty sure I'd end up getting murdered by said individual if I did.」

「Certain individual?」

「Amanda of Hairiti. One of your acquaintances, I presume?」

「Nn.」

「She'd sent me a letter by hawk. Here, feel free to take a look if you'd like to see it.」

Dias smiled bitterly as he showed us the letter. It named Fran and described her features before going on and on about how cute and good a kid she was. It ended off by saying that she'd probably stand out, and that Dias should be aware of the fact that other adventurers would likely try to pick on her. It more or less coerced Dias to figure something out and do something about the fact that Erza would definitely end up taking a liking to Fran.

「Erza and Amanda are on pretty good terms, but Amanda refuses to budge when it comes to anything related to children.」

「Nn.」

「I mean, again, he's really not that bad a guy though...」

I really ought to thank Amanda. We owe her so much for having the Guildmaster help us with this whole Erza thing. I mean, we're grateful she helped us get in touch with the Guildmaster period, but the Erza thing was what truly made me feel like thanking her from the bottom of my heart. Like, I know Erza's not that bad a guy or anything like that, but chances were, I would've flat out snapped if Erza ended up taking a liking to us and following us around everywhere all round the clock.

「Alrighty... Would you mind if we changed topics and started addressing something a bit more serious?」

Dias' face suddenly went solemn as he brought both hands together in front of him much in the same manner as Commander Ik*ri.

「That sword isn't just your average everyday sword, is it?」

The next words that came out of his mouth had all the effectiveness of an explosive.

『What!?!』

「!!」

「Heh, curious as to why I found out? How about appraise me again if you want to know?」

「?」

「Come on, just give it a shot. I tricked you the first time, you know?」

Hmmm... I guess I'll do as he says. I'm curious as to how he managed to figure me out, so yeah.

I ended up trying to appraise him again after a moment's worth of contemplation.

(Master?)

『Hmmm...? He's got more skills....?』

There weren't any differences in his stats or skill levels. However, he had two more skills than he had last time: Appraisal Cover Up and Mind Reading. Both new skills were level 8.

「You see them?」

「Nn.」

「Appraisal Cover Up can either be used to disguise one's entire stat page, but that's not it. You can also focus the skill's effects on a few specific items in order to completely and totally hide them. I've been doing the latter to hide Mind Reading, my trump card.」

Holy shit. Dias' skillset lets him go after weak points, so giving him a skill like that just flat out makes him completely borked.

「Mind Reading can be used to outwit people, especially when paired with Technically Senile. I'd love to have Appraisal as well, but it seems I don't really have any affinity for the skill. I just can't get it no matter how hard I try. Oh well, it's pretty easy to figure out what weapon and magic based skills someone's got just by looking at them, and most people tend to think about their skills right before they use them, so I can just deal with whatever comes at me by reading my opponent's mind ahead of time.」

As I analyzed the skill, I came to realize a pressing issue.

Mind Reading: Allows one to catch a glimpse of a target's thoughts.

His skill didn't specify that it could only read the minds of people or intelligent animals. Does that mean he can read my thoughts as well? Even though I'm a sword? Wait, wait, can he read the mind of anything capable of actual thought period?

「Heheheh, looks like you're panicking. Have you figured it out? It's exactly as you think. This skill allowed me to come to realize that your sword can think too, Fran.」

『Shit, he just totally read Fran's mind again.』

「Oh, just so you know, I don't actually go around randomly reading people's minds, you know? I just happened to catch sight of the fight you were involved in earlier. I figured I'd read your mind and step in if you happened to want to kill the people that'd bothered you, which would've been a fairly easy task seeing as how bloodlust is a simple thing to read. It just so happened that I overheard you seemingly having a telepathic conversation, at which point in time I realized that your sword had the ability to think too.」

So he knew about me right from the moment he first called out to us? Is this why he called Fran here to begin with?

「So why don't you tell me about that sword of yours?」

(What do?)

『Hmm... It looks like he's figured most of it out anyway. He'd probably actually get mad if we kept trying to hide anything else, so...』

That said, it wasn't like he had any real evidence. Playing dumb is probably still an option. We don't really know what his goal is here, and if worse comes to worst, he might even end up trying to confiscate me and wield me for himself.

「Hahaha, it looks like you really don't trust me at all. Don't worry, I won't do anything that'll make you worse off. I'll even swear it in Amanda's name. I owe her a great deal, so I wouldn't be able to face her if I wronged you in any which way. Plus, I already told you about my own trump card, so it's only fair for you to tell me about yours. Right? Come on.」

Dias' smile contained not even the slightest trace of malice, and it didn't seem like he was lying either...

Hah.... Well, I guess it can't be helped. We'll be staying here for a while, so I don't want to make an enemy out of the Guildmaster. He'd probably end up figuring out whatever we were thinking anyways, even if we did try to pull one over him.

『Do you mind?』

(Nn. Can't be helped.)

He pretty much knows anyways.

『I guess it can't be helped then.』

「Woah, w-was that the sword just now...?」

『Yeah, hi. Fran's sword speaking.』

「Hahaha! Wow! You can actually speak, just like a human!? I was not expecting that.」

「Nn. Master amazing.」

「Master?」

And so, we did the usual and had Fran explain my name and effectively force the other person to praise it. Luckily, Dias was pretty good at reading the mood, so he complimented Fran's naming sense a whole bunch, almost too much, in fact.

『So did you need something from me? Or were you just curious?』

「Right, my bad. This is my first time seeing an intelligent weapon, so I ended up getting carried away out of excitement. I admit I was a bit curious, but I also wanted to give the two of you a bit of advice.」

「Advice?」

「Yes, advice. Master, Appraisal isn't too uncommon a skill, but, it seems you've kind of just been using it all willy nilly?」

『Yeah, pretty much.』

「I know that I'm not really qualified to say this myself seeing as how I read people's minds, but you should be more careful on who you use it on

since it'll expose everything they wish to keep a secret. There's a fair number of people out there who really hate nobles and royals, so you may end up getting arrested under the pretense of being a spy should you be caught using appraisal on either of those two types of people. Many royals even have appraisal detection, so you'll be noticed immediately. And do keep in mind that the crime will end up falling on Fran's shoulders in your case.」

You know, he's got a pretty good point now that I think about it. Appraisal lets you pretty much see everything, so people with lots of secrets would probably hate for it to be used on them. I'd never actually thought about the skill from that kind of perspective before.

「I'm sure that Fran will ultimately end up meeting royals on multiple occasions in the future due to how promising an adventurer she seems, so do take heed of this for when that happens. If not, then...」

Dias gave his neck a light chop instead of finishing his sentence with words.

Yeah, makes sense. Pissing off royalty isn't exactly something you could get away with, at least not easily. Putting it like that, randomly using Appraisal can lead to terrifying results. I guess I'll be a bit more prudent.

「That's all for Appraisal related advice. I still want to advise you on something else too though.」

「Something else?」

「You guys haven't really leveled your detection type skills, have you?」

『What makes you think that?』

「It's because you didn't realize when I used Technically Senile, Mind Reading, Induced Thought, or Induced Line of Sight. I mean, I am good at hiding the fact that I'm using them, but you guys are just way too defenseless, you know? Strength in combat aside, you guys are really ungarded for people that've got something to hide, you're just flat out

unbalanced. You should've been able to realize that something was amiss had you trained your ability to detect as much as you had your ability to fight.」

We do have a whole slew of detection type skills, but most of them are rather low leveled. The highest would be Presence Detection, and even that's just level 5.

『So is having level 5 Presence Detection just not enough?』

「It isn't. You'll either want at least one level 8 skill or three level 6 skills if you want to go up against any tougher opponents.」

Both those options are pretty far off.

「It isn't an absolute necessity in general. You could always act in much the same manner as Erza, who claims to have nothing to hide, but that wouldn't quite do for the two of you now, would it?」

『Yeah, I'd like as few people to know about me as possible.』

「I happen to have a pretty good place for you guys to train. Want to check it out?」

『You mean the dungeon?』

「Exactly. You know that Ulmutt's got two dungeons, right?」

「Nn.」

「The western dungeon is for beginners. It contains very few traps, and most of the magic beasts inside of it will fight you head on. It's a good place for newbies to grind up their levels. The eastern one is effectively the western's opposite. It's for more experienced adventurers, and contains lots of traps. The magic beasts within it also like to set up ambushes, with the inclination only growing stronger as you dive deeper into the dungeon's depths. Many D ranked adventurers have ended up losing their lives within the eastern dungeon's confines.」

『So what you're saying is that you want us to head to the eastern one to train up our detection skills?』

「You guessed it. The eastern dungeon is perfect for anyone that wants to get better at detection. So, how about it? You probably won't be able to suddenly bump your skill levels up, but it should still be worth your time. You normally have to prove yourself in the western dungeon before being admitted to the eastern one, but I'll offer you guys a chance to bypass all that if you want.」

『I guess that's fine? I mean, we were planning to go dungeon diving anyways...』

I don't really know if we'll manage to actually start leveling our skills up, but, we should at least be able to train a bit in order to actually get better at using some of them. It's usually pretty hard to get practice with detection based skills, so I'm totally fine with taking that as a bit of an added bonus. That said though, I can't help but feel a bit bothered by all this.

『But why go so far?』

I just can't seem to bring myself to trust him. I doubt he'd do this much for us sheerly out of good will.

「Hahaha, I'm not trying to trick you, you know? It's just that this happens to be something that benefits the guild.」

「Nn? Me exploring east dungeon benefits guild?」

「Yes it does. The western dungeon is filled with newbies, none of which will actually be able to tell how strong you are. I can say for sure that you'll end up getting in even more trouble if you end up going west.」

Ah, I see. The tournament is coming up soon, so Ulmutt's getting a huge influx of adventurers. With more people, you tend to get more idiots, meaning more people that'd try to pick a fight with Fran. The guild would probably be pretty happy if it manages to minimize the amount of commotion caused by her.

「There are very few adventurers exploring the eastern dungeon to begin with, but those that are are also relatively experienced. They likely won't mess with you so long as the guild makes an announcement or two.」

『Hence, you'd prefer us dive into the eastern dungeon as opposed to the western one?』

「Exactly, it's a deal that benefits us both. So, how about it?」

『What do you think, Fran?』

「I don't mind.」

「Good, good. It looks like you're nice and motivated.」

The Guildmaster seemed to have expected our answer, as he immediately pulled an eastern dungeon permit with Fran's name carefully inscribed on it. Holy crap, he was totally ready for us.

Real talk, I really can't hate Dias, but I can't bring myself to trust him either.

145. The Reference Letter

145. The Reference Letter

Fran examined the permit she got from Dias by flipping it over and shining a light on it.

「Is something wrong?」

「Nn. Might have hidden mechanism.」

「Hahaha, wow, you're mean. I'm right here, you know?」

「...」

Dias had made his claim with a smile on his face, but that hadn't been nearly enough for him to earn Fran's trust, she continued to gaze at the letter suspiciously regardless.

「Just trust me on this okay? I won't play any more pranks on you. The only pranks I ever play are ones that end up benefiting the adventurers that get pranked, you know?」

「Meaning?」

「Think of my pranks as a form of parental love. I use them to make sure everyone doesn't get too relaxed on a day to day basis. I don't just play them to have fun.」

「...」

Fran stared down Dias, whose expression remained serious despite his obvious bullshitting. I didn't even need the Principle of Falsehood to know

he was straight up lying to our faces.

「Well... Okay, I guess it is half for my own entertainment.」

「Nn.」

「A-Ah, right, that reminds me. Just letting you into the eastern dungeon isn't all I've come up with. I've also got a few other ideas that'll benefit you.」

The Guildmaster ended up just flat out changing the topic, not that I really mind given that I was interested in what he'd brought up.

『Other ideas, you say?』

「Yeah. To be more exact, I've thought up three different courses of action. The first is to issue a proclamation regarding the protection of younger adventurers, something we, as the guild, ourselves would also benefit from. I'm fairly certain that this is something you've already noticed, but Ulmutt's got a relatively large proportion of younger adventurers.」

「Nn.」

「Our dungeons [1] fall in somewhere in the lower D ranked area, but we've a system that allows F and G ranked adventurers to explore the upper floors regardless so long as they party up with people ranked in at E or higher. This system really helps newbies that want to gain experience, as well as G rankers, as they aren't allowed to enter any of the country's other dungeons.」

「That's why, G ranked kids, lots?」

「Exactly. The problem lies with the fact that many of the people out there like to take advantage of them. They manipulate them and use them as bait. I've been thinking of enforcing a penalty for actions like that for quite some time now.」

So Fran just happened to end up as the spark that'd set his plan into action? Makes sense.

「Second?」

「My second idea would be to go around telling everyone how much Erza likes you. Ulmutt's adventurers typically prefer to be on his good side rather than not.」

Right. All the adventurers seemed to quiet down the moment he showed up. Yup, makes sense. There's no way anyone would be willing to go head to head with that after all.

「Last?」

「That would be to quickly raise your rank.」

「??」

「You know, Fran, the guild really values all the contributions you've made to it. We'll bump you up to C rank the moment you complete enough requests to qualify yourself for it.」

「Surprised.」

Yeah, me too. Was it because they took what we did back in Barbra into consideration?

「The royalty you escorted named you an incredibly valuable asset. The reports they sent contained nothing but praise.」

Oh, he must be talking about when we escorted Prince Flut and Princess Satia.

Fran's expression remained unchanged, but I felt Dias' words ignite a fiery passion within her.

「Will do best.」

「Please do. We'll do for you as we have for every other adventurer that's reached C rank here at the Ulmutt branch and make a series announcements in order to spread your name far and wide. That way, almost everyone in the

city will know you're a C rank, and consequently, there'll be far fewer people that'll want to try picking a fight with you.」

Fewer? So there still will be some? Can't be helped, I guess. Oh well, that works too. Less is always more when it comes to this kinda thing.

「I'll give you a few requests you can complete during your time in the eastern dungeon. You should be able to finish them and easily rank yourself up while going through with your training. 」

Dias handed us twenty something requests as he continued to speak.

「You'll need to complete another 23 D ranked requests if you want to qualify for C rank. Take all these, and start doing what you can.」

「Got it.」

『Thanks.』

And so, we ended up being allowed into the dungeon. I'd been expecting us to have to be examined or something, but I guess this is fine too. It's a shame that Klimut's reference letter ended up going to waste, but oh well.

Actually, I guess there's no harm in giving it to him anyways, right?

「Here.」

「That looks like... Alessa's Guild's crest. Would that be a letter from Klimut?」

「Nn. Reference letter.」

Dias' face paled in unease the moment Fran nodded to affirm his suspicions. Wait, what? You okay, old dude?

「By the way, Fran.」

「Nn?」

「Umm... You're not going to tell Klimut about how I tried to play a bit of a prank on you, right?」

For some odd reason, his tone voice of voice had immediately turned into a flattering one.

「Why?」

「I guess it'd be better for me to say since I'm the one asking for a favour here. Klimut is one of my seniors and someone I look up to as an adventurer. He gave me a hand when I was just starting out, so I owe him quite a bit. I wouldn't be able to bring myself to face him if you told him what I did. Er, actually, that's not it at all. To be honest, I'm just flat out terrified of him.」

I'd used the Principle of Falsehood to verify his words, and apparently, he wasn't lying. He was actually afraid of Klimut.

Well, I'm glad that reference letter of ours ended up actually seeing some use. In fact, it more or less ended up functioning as a sort of trump card, huh?

「Will tell Amanda and Klimut next time something weird done.」

「I'm sorry. I'll never do anything weird to you ever again.」

You know, it's really pretty rare to see a Guildmaster prostrate himself on all fours. Man, I wish I had a camera right now. Oh well, either way, it looked like Dias is going to stop with his pranks now, so all's good. [2]

「Nn. Got it.」

「Hahaha...」

Seeing Fran take a haughty stance while holding Klimut's letter with Dias prostrating before her almost made me want to say "Case Closed!"

[1] Raw does not say if plural or singular. The manner in which the writing is presented is pointing towards the first, but context from the previous chapter is pointing towards the second.

[2] Dogeza. Universal Japanese apology/begging tool. Basically getting on all fours with your knees touching the ground and prostrating. Normally only used for overdramatic apologies and whatnot.

146. The Whereabouts of Those Sought

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I made sure to double check a few details regarding our detection skills before we left Dias' office.

Specifically, I asked him to once again verify that we'd only need either a single level 8 skill or 3 level 6 skills.

「Personally, I can figure out when someone's using Appraisal right away because I've got the Appraisal Detection skill, but it's normally quite difficult to catch someone in the act of it. The skill is honestly quite a stealthy one. The same goes for connoisseur and mind reading type skills. They're all pretty hard to detect.」

That sounds like something that'd make people with secrets to hide go crazy with anxiety. Someone could find out whatever it is you're trying to hide without you ever being the wiser.

「Skills like Induced Thought and Technical Senility are much more difficult to cover up. Even I can't make them totally undetectable despite having both the skills at a fairly high level.」

Neither the Appraisal or Connoisseur-type skills involved invoking any sort of effect that'd influence their targets. All you had to do to activate either was look at whatever it is you wanted to know more about, and that was it.

Induced Thought, on the other hand, flat out messed with its target. Hence, it became much less difficult to detect.

Taking that theory and applying it to the skills in my possession allowed me to realize that it'd probably be hard for people to sense Appraisal or the Principle of Falsehood. Skill Taker, on the other hand, seemed like it'd be pretty easy to notice immediately.

「I doubt Presence Detection would allow you to detect if you're being appraised, even if raised to its maximum level, but leveling the skill to level 8 should at least be enough for it to let you to detect if someone uses a skill that'll have an effect on you.」

In other words, level 8 probably wouldn't cut it for us. Self Evolution allowed us to get skills much more quickly than the average person, but it also came back to bite us in the ass by not providing us with any of the experience typically involved in leveling it. Luckily, it looked like the eastern dungeon would allow us an opportunity to overcome our shortcomings. In either case, it seemed like our goal was set. We'd dive into the dungeon and level Presence Detection up to 8 either through absorbing magic stones or using self evolution points.

「Leaving now.」

「'Kay, see you around. Oh, and please don't forget about the Klimut thing!」

Fran turned her back on Dias as he begged her for a favour and departed from his office.

『Let's go check out the library and see if we can gather ourselves some information about the dungeon.』

「Nn.」

『We don't have that much time to spare, so we'd best get all this administrative stuff over with as quickly as possible.』

We needed to find ourselves a place to stay before nightfall. That, however, was honestly not my first priority. I had something else on my mind, something much more important than just finding an inn.

『You think Old Man Gallus is here yet?』

And so, two hours passed. We had long stopped looking around the library and instead started walking around the city in search of Gallus. He should've arrived way before we did, especially after taking into consideration the fact that we'd gotten ourselves a little bit more than a little bit sidetracked.

The reason we were searching for him, and not verification of the fact that he was here was because it was pretty obvious that he'd at least been here rather recently. Many of Ulmutt's adventurers were like the ones in Alessa in the sense that they were walking around with high quality weapons made from iron or steel.

We had started out by asking a few of these adventurers for confirmation, and it turned out that our guesses had hit the nail right on the head. Their weapons were indeed made by the old man, but that was where our smooth sailing came to an end, as they'd all pointed us in different directions when we asked them for his location. It seemed like Gallus had been going around the city borrowing other blacksmith's forges in order to make his goods as opposed to staying in one place like he did back in Alessa.

Fran and I ended up having no choice but to visit random weapon stores in order to hopefully run into him whilst also listening in on the adventurers in our vicinity along the way. Much to our annoyance, it seemed that most were talking about topics relating to dungeons or the upcoming martial arts tournament. We didn't hear anything about Gallus at all. That said, we did happen to stumble across a group of three adventurers discussing something that just so happened to catch our attention.

「Hey, you hear about the evil god's fortress? Apparently it fell overnight. Wasn't the Millenia Fortress supposed to be their most fortified stronghold?」

「Yeah, but that's not the only place in which the evil god's believers have gathered en masse. The rumours have been saying that some of them are

even getting blessed with the evil god's powers.」

「Wait, wait, that's a thing? I thought the only people that worshiped the evil god were criminals and outlaws.」

「Apparently, Evil Goblins and Evil Kobolds are only the way they are because they've powered up after receiving the Evil God's blessings, not that I've ever seen either of them myself.」

「Oh! Those things? I've heard that they're really hard to deal with. Wait, don't some countries go all out in order to exterminate the evil god's believers? Maybe that's why Millenia fell.」

「Oh come on, you know that the Millenia Fortress is in the Kingdom of Reidos, right? There's no way the Reidosians would ever bother wiping them out. In fact, it's far more likely for them to try putting them to use instead.」

「But, if the Reidosians didn't crush the fortress, who did?」

「Who knows? I've caught wind a few rumours saying that it was because they had a falling out. I heard it from one of my acquaintances that happened to be in the area when it happened, and he got his info from one of the underlings that escaped from within the fortress. Apparently one of their top brass happened to get back that day and caused an uproar. It's said that guy had totally transformed, as if born anew. His body became like that of a magic beast's instead of a human's. He used that new body of his to slay all the other executives before laughing and claiming that he'd consumed them for their power. He was like a demon, they say.」

「Dude, that sounds freaky as hell.」

「Were you try to tell us a horror story or something?」

「Come on guys, I was being serious. Though, it was just a rumour I heard, so do admit that it might've ended up getting exaggerated.」

I was rather surprised to hear that the Evil God's believers had a sort of fortress set up, and even more surprised to hear that it'd already fallen at the hands of one of their own allies.

(Just now, talking about Zerrosreed?)

『You think so too?』

To me, that sounded like Zerrosreed feeding his cannibalism skill no matter how you spun it. Does that mean he'll end up going around tearing down all the Evil God's strongholds for his skill's sake if we just leave him be? I mean, that actually kinda sounds like a plan. We could leave him be till he takes out all the Evil God's followers and then just kill him off. Only problem is that we don't really know how strong he'll end up getting by the time we get to him.

(Growl.)

『You sure sound pumped, Urushi.』

(Will defeat some day.)

『Yeah, we'll kick his ass. But first, we'll have to get stronger.』

(Nn.)

(Woof!)

The conversation we overheard was interesting, but it didn't really give us anything to act on, so we continued walking around town with our ears perked.

We weren't able to find anyone that knew Gallus till we entered our third smithy. Its owner was much like the old man, he was also a dwarven blacksmith.

「Already left Ulmutt?」

「He left a few days ago cause he heard about what happened in Barbra. I'm pretty sure he decided to head over because he figured he'd be able to help.」

Looks like we just missed each other.

「He said he'd be back before the Martial Arts Tournament, so you might catch him if you sit around long enough.」

「Got it.」

「Y'know, Gallus has actually told me about you ahead of time. So that's what his custom made named equipment looks like...? Damn, that's fabulous.」

The blacksmith looked at Fran's black cat armour pieces with his eyes gleaming. I mean, I got that he was looking at the armour, but many of the people that passed by seemed to think him a pervert ogling a little girl.

In fact, most passerbys regarded him like he was some sort of weirdo, and some had even given him a series of harsh glares. I couldn't help but think that they were going to end up reporting him to the authorities, though I hoped they'd refrain.

The dwarven smith, however, completely ignored them all and even continued to do things like touching the mantle and checking the quality and feel of its fabric. Fran herself was rather happy that her equips were being praised, so she stood still and cooperated as he went through with the inspection process.

It took the blacksmith five whole minutes worth of staring and touching before he finally found himself smiling in satisfaction.

「What a sight for sore eyes. Thanks for letting me do that. Feel free to come here if you want your stuff repaired for cheap. I'll help you get your hands on discounted dungeon supplies too.」

We hadn't really been concerned about the repairing our stuff, but, the supplies part sounded pretty nice. We might end up needing stuff in order to go dungeon diving and whatnot.

『Oh, right. Let's ask him if he knows any good inns.』

「Nn. Know good inns?」

「You haven't decided yet? As for me, I think the Cellar Blade Shop's probably one of my favourite places. The booze they serve there is great.」

Well, that's a dwarf for you. That sounds good and all, but wouldn't somewhere with a lot of drunks be all noisy?

「The bar's in the basement, so it's not too bad as far as noise goes.」

「Got it. Will go check out.」

「Alright, and do come again.」

「Nn.」

The inn the smith introduced us to was one with thick walls and a rather calm air to it.

We decided to check out the place they had underground, and it turned out to not be nearly as loud as I'd been expecting. It was much more of a bar than a tavern. There was a cafeteria-like area as well, but it wasn't all that loud there either. The only booze they served was located at the bar, so you couldn't eat and drink at the same time. As a result, there were far fewer people making noise. It looked like the dwarven blacksmith had been right. The noise didn't look like it was going to end up bothering us.

Our room was of a similar standard of quality. The floor was clean, and the bed soft. We were even allowed to let Urushi in in his smaller form, albeit at a bit of an additional cost.

All in all, it seemed like a really nice place.

「Nn. Not bad.」

「Woof.」

Better yet, it looked like both Fran and Urushi liked it too.

『Okay, that's done. Any other plans?』

「Dungeon diving.」

「Woof woof!」

They were both just full of energy, which, I guess wasn't really too bad a thing. We have a bunch of requests and whatnot to handle anyway.

『Alright, but let's check out all the requests we have first.』

「Right. Forgot.」

We began placing the requests on the bed so we could go through them more easily.

Wait, there's a tonne here. Is it really okay for us to take all these? I feel like other adventurers would start calling nepotism if they found out how many we were hogging them all to ourselves.

『It looks like it'd probably be better for us not to tell anyone else how many requests we're handling.』

「Nn.」

Er, well, I said that, but it turned out that half the requests were subjugation type requests. They were much like the regular goblin ones in the sense that they were perpetually active. That is, they could be completed by any one at any time.

The other half required us to gather materials.

「High Ogre horns, Man Eating Mole claws.」

『I don't think I've ever even heard of any of these magic beasts.』

「Woof.」

『Though, the notes I took in the library say that they can be found starting at the eastern dungeon's tenth floor.』

「Looking forward.」

All of the requests we got were clearly justified in their classifications as quests for D rankers, as they all needed us to do stuff in places newbies would have to struggle to even get to. It seemed that you weren't supposed to go past the eastern dungeon's 9th floor if you were F ranked or lower.

『Let's see... Phantom Dogs, Darkstalkers. Yeah, it looks like there's lots of stuff that'll try sneak attacking us.』

Dias' info had been spot on.

It actually took us quite some time to finish looking through all the requests we got. Fran and Urushi both ended up bored out of their minds. You know, Fran should start learning how to focus on this stuff. Gathering information seems like it'd be a pretty important basic skill for adventurers.

Though, she did manage to spend a whole hour looking through it all, so I guess that is technically a pretty big improvement. She used to start nodding off after just five minutes.

『Alright, let's go.』

「Wait. Not yet.」

Oh? Is she going to go through all the info again?

「Eat first.」

「Woof!」

『Oh. Right, yeah. Let's do that.』

TLN: First of three Christmas releases! The other two will be out as soon as they're done.

147. Arriving at the Dungeon

147. Arriving at the Dungeon

We headed over to the dungeon immediately after eating our fill at the inn's dining hall.

Neither Fran nor I knew where to go, so we asked one of the lady's at the inn. The reply we got from her was surprisingly short and simple.

「The west dungeon's over near the western stronghold, and the east one's right beside the eastern stronghold. Just walk in a straight line, you can't miss either of them.」

It looked like the dungeons were inside the large cylindrical buildings. Rather, it turned out that the buildings had actually only been constructed in order to enclose the dungeons in the first place. [1]

At first, most people had still felt that the dungeon masters were rather untrustworthy. They didn't actually believe that they would uphold the contracts they made with Dias.

Thus, the Kingdom of Kranzel ended up constructing two large buildings, one around each dungeon. These two constructions were an attempt to minimize the people's feelings of anxiety. The people would be less concerned about the dungeon masters failing to fulfill their promises so long as they had insurance in the case that it happened. The wall that surrounded the city was also constructed with the same purpose in mind.

That is, the outer wall would be able to contain the dungeons' monsters even if they managed to break through the strongholds built up in their immediate vicinities. The construction of both these countermeasures managed to settle most of the citizens' concerns.

That, however, begged a certain question. What did Ulmutt's citizens think? It was technically possible for the city to end up as a battlefield.

We'd asked for the innkeeper lady's opinion, and it turned that most of the people that lived here actually felt more positively about the dungeons than anything. The majority of Ulmutt's citizens either were merchants and adventurers, or had some sort of connection with them. They'd actually only chosen to move to Ulmutt because of its dungeons. They knew the dangers and had long acknowledged them as a part of their daily lives. In fact, the city's people saw the dungeons as their breadwinners and were even concerned with their conservation.

They went as far as to regard the city's outer walls as a nice added bonus that they just happened to be lucky enough to get from the government, reason being that they hadn't paid even a cent for it themselves.

All I had to say was... wow. I mean, I should've expected it given that the city was frequented by rowdy adventurers and cunning merchants, but damn, the people here got guts.

We did as the innkeeper instructed and made our way towards the eastern stronghold. It didn't take long for us to realize that navigating the city's streets was as hard as navigating a maze, even with the end goal almost in sight. It'd almost felt whoever built the place had done so without a solid layout planned out ahead of time.

The closer we got to the fortress, the more apparent this became. The buildings themselves started getting older and more historic looking, whereas the streets just flat out degenerated into a huge mess of alleyways and intersections. The older buildings looked to be of a poor quality, as they obviously weren't built with any sort of construction related principles or standards in mind.

We went up and down stairs, hit dead ends, turned around and did all sorts of wandering before finally reaching the dungeon's entrance about an hour after we first set out for it.

「Arrived. Here, dungeon?」

「Woof?」

『I'm pretty sure that this is the fortress they built up around the dungeon. We should be able to get ourselves inside if we head over to that gate over there.』

The building looked pretty big up close. I also now realized that the stronghold we were looking at was no normal fortress. It didn't have windows, and its gate would actually be pretty small if you ignored the part that had been dug out under the ground level. I could see why though. I mean, they called it a fortress, but it was only actually built in order to keep the dungeon in check and whatnot. In other words, its goal was to keep what was inside in as opposed to a regular fortress' goal of keeping what was outside out.

A group of soldiers had taken up residence in the fortress' upper floors so they could act in times of emergency.

Ten odd adventurers were lined up in front of a small building set up by the fortress' gate. It looked like they were waiting their turns in order to get themselves admitted to the dungeon.

Fran garnered a bunch of attention as she got in line, but this time around, there wasn't anyone that bothered messing with her.

A fair portion of the adventurers gathered at the gate seemed to be ranked in at D or higher, and most were able to discern that she wasn't just some weakling. Having Urushi around helped quite a bit too. We'd already had him go back to his actual size, so he looked fairly intimidating.

Even the more mischievous looking adventurers seemed not all that keen on involving themselves with us with our giant ass wolf friend around. Urushi was normally restricted from using this form. He couldn't parade around town in it, and dungeons were often too narrow for him.

「Next plea — WHAT THE! That wolf is huge!」

「W-What's wrong? What's all this commotion all of a sudden!？」

The person responsible for admissions accidentally screamed when he saw Urushi. The guard hadn't ended up seeing him ahead of time because he happened to be in the building's blind spot.

「W-Whoops, s-sorry. I just got a bit surprised is all.」

「Sorry little lady, he's a bit of an idiot.」

The guards that showed up here were much more pleasant sounding than the ones that we'd met outside the city. They apologized sincerely and whatnot, and more importantly, they didn't really seem even to bear even the slightest bit of disdain. Their attitudes were so good that they even left Fran in a state of confusion.

「...?」

「Is something the matter?」

「Nn. Complete opposite of guards outside city.」

「I see. Did you run into any sort of complication with them, perhaps?」

「That'd probably be because they sent all the more diligent guys over to Barbra.」

Ulmutt's soldiers needed to be strong enough to both guard the dungeons and keep unruly adventurers in check. Thus, stronger individuals were often hired even if their attitudes happened to be a bit lacking.

The city had decided to send some of its troops over to Barbra in light of the recent events that had occurred, and it went without saying that sending the more ill-mannered individuals was nothing short of a horrible idea. Hence, Ulmutt's higher ups had ended up deciding to send over most of their harder workers, the people that normally made up the backbone that supported most of the city's regular guard-related activities.

As a result, the less well mannered guards usually responsible for rounding up criminals and subjugating magic beasts outside the city's walls were tasked with helping with maintaining public order. As a result, the town had, in general, gotten a lot less secure. In fact, the guards themselves ended up bringing about a fair amount of trouble.

「The men we sent to Barbra will be returning in due time. The Guildmaster and several other high ranking adventurers are helping us keep everyone in line for the time being, so everything's still thankfully under control.」

「Still, it'd be best for you to be careful. It was honestly very difficult for us to immediately see you as an adventurer. We wouldn't have believed you if not for your guild card, and I'm sure there will be others that not only feel the same, but are more stubborn in their ways.」

「I think you're probably the youngest adventurer to have ever tried entering the eastern dungeon.」

「...And you're registered. Your guild card should now log the dungeon's info.」

「Log?」

「It'll track the floors you've visited and number of monsters you've defeated. It'll let you immediately determine whether or not you've completed a request.」

Oh, nice, that sounds really convenient. It sounds like it'd make reporting subjugation requests incredibly simple. It'd also prevent people from giving false reports, not that that mattered to us seeing as how we were actually planning to do stuff the legit way anyways.

「Do pay attention to the fact that the east and west dungeons have separate trackers. Nothing done in the eastern dungeon will count towards trackers for the western dungeon and vice versa.」

I guess that means we'd have to register again if we wanted to do stuff in the western dungeon too.

「And here's your card back.」

「Don't push yourself too hard.」

「Nn. Thanks.」

Alright! It's finally dungeon time.

(Let's go.)

(Woof!)

『Be careful though. The place is supposed to be filled with traps.』

(Nn. Got it.)

You know, now that I think about it, this is actually our first time entering a more difficult dungeon all on our own. It'd be best for us to be prudent.

Having Fran die by falling in some random trap without any real warning would totally suck, so I'd really prefer for that not to happen.

『Urushi, don't warn us about any traps unless we're about to get totally screwed. We won't be able to get much training done if you do.』

(Ruff.)

The door opened as one of the guards did something with an item he happened to be holding. There seemed to be a weird flow to the magic in the door's vicinity, so he'd probably just used some sort of magic item.

We caught sight of a small shrine-like thing situated in the centre of a stone dome the moment we went through the gate.

『Is that the dungeon's entrance?』

「Small.」

「Woof?」

Looking a bit closer, I noticed that the shrine's entrance contained a flight of stairs that ultimately led deeper underground. Still, the dungeon's entrance sure seemed small for how famous it was, but that didn't mean we'd be letting our guards down. A dungeon was a dungeon, after all.

[1] This wasn't all that clear in earlier chapters, but turns out there are two cylindrical buildings. Japanese rarely involves the specification of plurality, I unfortunately had no way of knowing whether there were one or multiple ahead of time.

148. Disarming Traps

148. Disarming Traps

「Just remembered. Thought Master would refuse.」

『Refuse what?』

「C rank promotion, because will stand out.」

『Well, I guess you're right, but I figured there wasn't much point to it anymore. I mean, you want to participate in the martial arts tournament, right?』

「Nn.」

『Yeah. Participating will make you stand out pretty much right away anyways.』

「Right. Will stand out if achieve victory.」

『Haha. Yeah, basically.』

「Nn.」

We descended the dungeon's stairs as we chatted. Naturally, we didn't relax our guards while doing so.

It didn't take long for us to arrive at the first floor's entrance, a long, narrow passage constructed entirely of stone. It was far too short and thin for Urushi, so he had no choice but to return to his smaller size.

「Urushi. Training to fight while small.」

「Woof.」

We didn't need to light any torches or provide any other sources of light. Luminescent moss grew on the cave's ceiling and provided the passage with a dim glow. It didn't illuminate every last nook and cranny, but, was still good enough for our purposes.

『Looks like we've already hit a crossroads, and one that diverges into three different paths, at that.』

「Go down which?」

『Hmmm, well the rule says you should always go left.』

The rule I was referencing was the so left hand rule. It stated that you'd be able to find a path out of basically anything so long as you had your left hand against the wall and always turned left. I mean, it technically did work with your right hand as well, but yeah.

Naturally, the left hand rule wasn't actually perfect and didn't actually apply to every given situation. For example, it didn't work if the place we were trying to get to required us to traverse a hidden room. It also failed to apply when the place we were trying to reach was the centre as opposed to an exit, when there weren't any walls, and when we had move up and down stairs and ladders and stuff in 3D space.

Oh, and just to put this out there, we looked up all sorts of stuff so we could successfully complete our magic-beast related requests, but we didn't actually spend any time looking at the dungeon's layout, nor did we look for information pertaining to the traps within it. We figured that kind of info wouldn't actually really help us given that we were trying to train ourselves in the art of detection. The whole point was for us to locate traps and magic beasts on our own, without any extra help.

「Then will choose left.」

I guess that works. I'm not really sensing any traps or magic beasts from any of the three paths right now anyways.

『Alright, let's go.』

「Nn.」

We popped our detection skills and began walking down the leftmost path.

「Mmph.」

『Oh?』

Fran and I simultaneously detected something around three minutes after we started moving.

「Detected.」

『So you managed to pick it up too, Fran? It looks like a Shadow Snake to me.』

「Over there.」

A single black snake was hidden away in a dark corner that the luminescent moss' light failed to reach. It was quite difficult to notice, and almost seemed as if it was blending into the shadows. Its name made me think it could use dark magic, but it couldn't. It was instead something that stemmed from how it it slithered around in the darkness.

「Weakling.」

「Woof.」

『Yeah. It is kind of the first thing we've run into though.』

It was about the same size as a Japanese rat snake, and had basically no offensive prowess whatsoever. Shadow Slip and Presence Detection skills aside, it was basically just a normal snake. Honestly, it would probably never be able to harm you so long as you just wore yourself a pair of boots.

To be frank, it was a magic beast that the average adventurer wouldn't even bother hunting. It tasted like garbage, its magic stone was worthless, and it

basically didn't give any exp at all. To make matters worse, you actually had to go through its corpse and extract its magic stone too, a procedure that took much more time than it was worth. That said, we weren't normal adventurers. I saw no reason to pass up a chance to potentially level up a skill while also getting free magic stone points.

And so, Fran murdered the Shadow Snake. It only ended up giving me a single magic stone point, but hey, one step at a time, right?

『Alright, let's keep going.』

「Nn.」

Time passed as we advanced.

Fran completely froze after we got a bit deeper into the dungeon.

『What's wrong?』

「Trap...?」

『Really? Where?』

「Floor. There.」

『Ohhhh. I see it now.』

Looking at the place Fran had pointed to made me feel a sense of discomfort, as if something was just the slightest bit out of place. Activating Trap Detection and staring at the area with a more discerning eye allowed me to understand that the trap I was looking at was one would activate in response to weight. Specifically, activating it would release an arrow.

Fran seemed to have noticed the trap before me as a result of the Sole Sense skill, a skill that allowed her to detect oddities through the soles of her feet. It was really quite useful, as Fran could sense the vibrations she produced

while walking around, thereby allowing her to derive quite a bit of information.

It was a skill I wouldn't get any use out of unless I was dragged along the floor or walls, but that'd produce way too much noise for comfort, so yeah no.

『You want to try disarming it?』

「Nn.」

Disarming traps was honestly pretty much my speciality due to my access to telekinesis. I could get rid of their mechanisms without much effort, and if I messed up, I could just choose to set them off from afar from without putting at us risk. That said though, we figured it'd be a good idea for Fran to get used to doing it herself as well.

『Good luck then.』

「Nn.」

Fran pulled out the toolkit we got back at the Adventurer's Guild. In it, she found a pair of tweezers and a thin blade. Both items were said to be necessities for adventurers with scout-type jobs.

The toolkit also included instructions on how one would go about disarming traps, and went over several different principles. The method Fran was trying now was specifically one that made the trap harmless instead of just flat out obliterating it. That is, she would figure out how it worked before destroying one of the key mechanisms that rendered it operational as opposed to just messing the whole thing up.

The trap that the two of us were looking at right now was activated through a weight trigger. That is, applying weight to the area it which it was set would lower it, thereby pulling a wire which in turn would release an arrow from a hole in the wall to our left. As far as I could tell, there were two ways to disarm the trap. The first was to plug the hole, and the second was to carefully cut the wire.

Fran ended up deciding to go with the latter of the two options, and thrust the blade she got from the toolkit into a thin gap in the floor that lay between the activation tile and the rest of the cave.

We were still only on the first floor, so the trap was still a relatively simple one that didn't take much effort to disarm. The arrow was positioned so that it'd only hit people that were standing, so we honestly could've just crouched and had Fran press the tile in order to disarm the trap by setting it off had we been any lazier.

In fact, we didn't even actually need to disarm it. We could've just avoided the activation tile and been done with it, but we decided to go through with the entire procedure because we figured it was a good chance for Fran to get some practice in.

「...Done.」

『Yup, looks like you did it.』

「Woof!」

The dungeon had the ability to repair itself, so the trap would end up getting rearming in a few hours time. In other words, we won't be able to piggyback off other adventurers. All the traps they disarmed would be back to normal by the time we reached them.

「Let's look for next trap.」

Apparently, Fran had enjoyed disarming the trap. She was scanning the area for more with an entertained expression on her face.

『Er, sure. But I think we'll have go dive a bit deeper first if you want to find any.』

Why do I feel like she might end up wanting to choose a scout-related job for her next job change? Crap, what if she actually does, and stops wanting to be a swordsman?

「Trap found. Want to disarm. Okay?」

『S-Sure, go for it.』

Everything'll work out just fine, right...?

『Is disarming traps really that fun?』

「Nn!」

Fran's eyes gleamed as she approached a hole in the wall. The way she stood in front of it with her arms crossed and her expression all serious almost made it seem like she was giving off the aura of a trap craftsman.

Is she this entertained because she finds traps to be like puzzles or something?

『I guess we'll keep watch over our surroundings...』

「Woof...」

—

That's all for now. Merry Christmas, happy holidays. I'll try cramming a few more releases between now and the new year. Peace.

149. An In-Dungeon Encounter

149. An In-Dungeon Encounter

We were steadily grinding our way through the dungeon.

The first floor's traps were simple, and its magic beasts weak. Hence, we'd managed to reach the stairs leading to the dungeon's second floor whilst remaining completely unscathed.

「Hurry to second floor.」

『The first floor kinda had this whole like testing ground-like feel.』

「Woof.」

I mean, we were careful and all that, but holy crap that first floor was way too easy.

『Let's keep going till things start getting a bit too difficult.』

「Nn.」

Welp, onto the second floor we go.

We descended the stairs while keeping an eye on our surroundings, only to find a scene that could be described as relatively familiar.

That is, Fran, Urushi and I found ourselves in a small room with three paths splitting off of it.

「Keep left?」

『Sure, why not?』

I mean, we didn't really know anything about this place, and it wasn't like we could make a more informed decision or anything, so whatever works, works.

And so, just like that, we managed to breeze our way through the dungeon's first 4 floors without even the slightest bit of trouble from any of the traps or magic beasts we ran into along the way.

We didn't run into any other adventurers either. The first couple floors didn't seem to have anything that'd provide an adventurer with any real sort of income, so most people probably just followed a map and dove straight down the shortest route or something.

Making our way through the dungeon without a map and disarming all the traps we ran into along the way filled us with a sense of idle curiosity.

The fifth floor was a slight bit different to the four that preceded it.

「...」

『...』

Namely, it's traps were a tad bit more difficult to deal with; it took Fran quite a bit more time to disarm them. As a result, traversing the fifth floor ended up taking about as much time as the third and fourth put together.

「Master, trap.」

『Man, putting a trap right in front of the stairs leading to the next floor is one hell of a dick move.』

「Woof.」

『And it's a pretty difficult one to disarm too.』

I checked out its inner workings by using echolocation, and turned out it was actually fairly complex. That said though, its complexity only ended up

pumping Fran up the more.

「Will do best.」

And so, Fran started tinkering with the trap with a serious look on her face. She remained quiet throughout the process, hence causing the dungeon to be dead silent save for the trap's metallic clanking and the occasional breath.

Both Urushi and I quietly stood by and watched over her as she went about taking the thing apart.

She and I both let out a bit of a noise about five minutes after she first got to work.

「Oh.」

『Welp.』

Three arrows flew out from the ceiling, their tips aimed straight at Urushi's back.

「Whimper!」

『Are you alright, boy?』

「Woof....」

It looked like he somehow managed to dodge them in time. Well, hopefully he learns his lesson, and stays on guard from now on even if we're not actually having any sort of trouble.

「Sorry. Made mistake.」

It looked like she cut the wrong wire.

『It looks like it's much harder to deal with than the all the earlier ones. It might be a bit hard for you to disarm with it unless you get a job that enhances your ability to mess with traps.』

「Will disarm next one. Without fail.」

『Sure. I don't really see any issue with us going at it a few extra times.』

「Nn!」

Attempting to disarm more complex traps is probably a pretty good way to train up the Disarm Trap skill anyways.

『You stay motivated too, Urushi.』

「Woof!」

Alright, let's go down those stairs.

『Looks like the sixth floor starts off pretty much the same way as the others before it did.』

「Three paths. Still left?」

It ended up turning out that the only part of the layout that actually remained the same was the first.

The sixth floor's traps were much more difficult to disarm, and we only managed to successfully get four out of five.

They'd also become much more deadly. The arrows were coated in poison, there was a bunch more smoke, and the pitfalls were made twice as deep. I mean, they weren't so bad that they'd cause instant death, but they were definitely deep enough to cause quite a few serious injuries.

The magic beasts ended up getting a good bit stronger too.

「Haaah!」

『Fire Javelin!』

「Growl!」

「Nn!」

『Nice!』

The battles functioned as yet another form of practice. That is, Fran was using them in order to better her sword drawing techniques.

We faced off against assassin slimes and chameleon lizards, just to name a few. The first of the two mentioned would crawl out of cracks in the dungeon's walls in order to assault us, whereas the second would attempt to blend in with the walls themselves. All the magic beasts we met were like them, the cunning little bastards refused to play fair and kept trying to pull fast ones on us. Worst of all was the fact that most of them were ridiculously difficult to notice.

Yeah, I could totally see why training here would let you grind up your detection-based skills real quick.

That said though, they were still far from being our match. They were probably E ranked threats at best, so they didn't end up managing to put any damage on us either. Honestly, I felt like the traps were more difficult to deal with.

『The magic beasts should get stronger if we dive a bit deeper, but they honestly don't amount to much right now...』

I mean, it was still our first day here, so I didn't really see any issue with us just sitting around and practicing stuff for a bit. We might end up having quite a bit of trouble detecting some of the stuff on the lower floors, so yeah.

Well, we might as well keep going for now. We can figure out whether we want to keep going or not when we actually do start running into the more difficult to deal with magic beasts.

Only after clearing the sixth floor did we meet our first adventurer.

A half dead, bloodied young man was sitting on the dungeon's floor with his back leaning against one of its walls. A second, older man lay beside him, but unlike the first, the second had already breathed his last. Though, the first did look like he'd soon do the same if we just left him there.

It seemed he had the Appraisal Blocking skill, as I couldn't actually appraise him at all, so the only thing I could do was go off his looks, which informed me he was some sort of beastkin. I didn't really see any reason not to help him. There were three of us here, so we could easily just dispatch him if he turned out to be some sort of villain.

『Greater Heal』

「...What.... just....?」

「Still alive?」

「Did... you just help... me?」

「Nn.」

「I see, thanks. W-Wait, was there anyone else, or was it just me here?」

「One more. Didn't make it.」

「Wha!? L-Leader!! Why did it have to come to this...?」

The beastkin boy began to cry as he clung to the corpse of the man he called his leader.

「Uuu....」

Fran immediately raised me and pointed me towards him. Her actions were merciless but also absolutely necessary.

「No evidence you didn't kill him.」

There was always the possibility that the boy was just acting, and that he was a thief that'd traded fatal blows with the now-dead man. I mean, he

looked like his feelings were genuine, but we couldn't appraise him, so we couldn't let our guard down.

「So you're an adventurer too? You're... so much more amazing than me.」

「Give answer.」

「I don't know how I can make you possibly believe me, but he and I really were friends...」

『He isn't lying.』

「Nn. Got it.」

「You'll believe me?」

「Can tell is truth by looking.」

The boy seemed relieved despite the fact that we'd just totally flat out bullshitted him; he breathed a sigh as he unsteadily rose to his feet.

「Thank you.」

「...What happened?」

I kind of pity him, but I felt it was important for us to figure out exactly what happened.

The boy responded to Fran's inquiries and slowly began filling us in on everything. The party he'd been a part of had been composed of four F rankers, an E ranker, and a D ranker.

They'd finished collecting all the materials they'd sought out to, and were on their way back.

「But we were suddenly attacked.」

「Magic beast?」

「Humans. Magic beasts wouldn't be able to wipe out a party of six even if they did get the jump on them, not on this floor. The people that attacked us were evil adventurers, thieves.」

Yeah, I figured there'd be people who did stuff like that.

The boy's party had heard rumours of adventurers acting as thieves. They were also aware that the guild had even stated that bringing those guilty of the act would be rewarded. Hence, the boy's party had been all gung ho about eliminating them, but they ultimately ended up finding themselves outmatched.

「They used traps to get rid of two of us right off the bat, then killed another two of our other members in the surprise attack that followed. There were still two of us left afterwards, but we weren't able to do anything against the three thieves we were against. Leader had somehow managed to use a Teleportation Feather by mustering up the last of his strength. The two of us should've been able to teleport out...」

「Just you and leader here.」

「I see...」

「Attackers, what kind of people?」

「Their faces were masked, and their equipment didn't really have any distinguishing features... so the only thing I know is that they were a group of four, and that they were all men.」

Hmm... what do? I mean, we could just have Solas, the boy, head towards the exit on his own, but he'd probably die if left all by himself. We kinda went out of our way to save him, so I don't really want to just let him roll over and die after the fact.

In the end, we decided to accompany him back to town. I mean, a pretty fair distance for just a single day's worth of adventuring anyways, so yeah.

「I'm sorry for causing you so much trouble.」

「Helping those in trouble, normal.」

「Thanks. I'd like to bring Leader with us too. I don't want to let the dungeon absorb him if possible.」

The corpses of any humans and magic beasts would end up getting absorbed by the dungeon after about a day. This is only preventable by either taking the corpse outside the dungeon or dismantling it.

Soras was planning to carry the corpse out on his own, but that'd take way too long.

We might as well help him carry the leader guy out, even if we just leave the rest of his companions as is

There was no way for us to get the rest of his companions out, but I guess we might as well carry the Leader guy for him.

「Got it.」

「Huh? What just...」

「Dimensional storage.」

「Oh! That's amazing! I don't think I've ever seen it before!」

「Nn. Go.」

「Ah, yeah, wait up!」

And so, Fran started climbing back up the stairs with Leader's corpse in tow.

150. Attackers

150. Attackers

We led Solas back to surface by retracing the path we took on our way down. We had healed him, but he was still missing quite a bit of blood so I figured his pace would be a rather slow one. Contrary to my expectations, however, he was still moving along fairly steadily regardless.

I'd honestly just kinda ended up assuming that he was an F ranker because he said his party was comprised of D, E and F ranked adventurers, but he seemed to at least be as good as an E ranker.

「Hey Fran, are you using some sort of detection type skill? It sure seems like it. I've only got Presence Detection myself.」

「Nn.」

Solas seemed to be the boisterous type. He more or less kept talking and wouldn't shut up despite the fact that all Fran really ever did in response to his rambling was nod.

We were able to progress up through the dungeon fairly quickly due to the fact that the traps we disarmed had yet to be restored. I wasn't sure if everything would stay disarmed long enough for us to break through the fifth and sixth floors, but I sure hoped that would end up being the case, as the traps therein were more difficult to deal with.

Two men appeared in front of us as we continued to make our way towards the exit.

「Hey there.」

「Nn. Hi.」

「Huh...? Are you two by yourselves?」

「That's impossible. They're just kids. There's no way two kids would be able to make it this deep by themselves.」

「R-Right, good point. So where's your party at?」

Both men seemed rather surprised that Fran and Solas appeared to be travelling alone. I couldn't really blame them. They were really quite justified if one was to take the norm into account. That said though, they soon regained their calm after asking us a few questions.

「So you two really are all by yourselves?」

「And you're adventurers?」

「Is that wolf your familiar?」

「Feel free to stick with us for a bit if you got separated from the rest of your party members.」

「Hey, that's not a bad idea!」

「Right? Come on, let's go.」

They seemed like good guys that were concerned about Fran and Solas...

Not.

A quick appraisal immediately informed me that they were about as villainous as could be.

They not only had the theft, torture, threaten, and deceptions skills, but were also marked with titles claiming them to be murderers.

My immediate guess was that their strategy was to approach other adventurers in an amicable manner and attack them the moment they let

their guards down. You would normally think that dungeon cards could totally be used to prove that one had killed another adventurer seeing as how it logged stuff, but that wasn't the case. They only recorded monster kills and couldn't be used to prove whether or not one was committing crime within the dungeon's confines.

I felt another person sneak up behind us as I contemplated whether these guys were the same group that attacked Solas' party — not that it really mattered. In either case, they were enemies we had to defeat, and that was that.

『Be careful Fran, these guys are thieves.』

(Nn.)

(Woof?)

『What's the matter, boy?』

(Woof woof?)

Apparently, he was questioning why I'd used appraisal, given that Dias had literally just warned us to be more prudent in its use.

He had a point, but I quickly justified to him my actions. That is, Dias' warnings more so pertained to cases involving royalty, namely in public situations. He also basically more or less explained that other people would also sometimes get mad when appraised because it was seen as a breach of etiquette in general. One of his other key points was that using it under certain circumstances could also get you caught up in some sort of ploy or conspiracy if you weren't careful.

Dungeons, however, detailed a whole different scenario. You couldn't really not use Appraisal in dungeon-based settings seeing as how it was pretty common for one to run into idiots like these guys. If anything, using it was more natural than not. You'd really need to be a special type of stupid to unconditionally trust someone you just met, especially if that someone happened to have a weapon.

The only thing you could get out of calling breach of etiquette under such a circumstance would honestly be suspicion. It is possible for something unfortunate to come out of indiscriminately using Appraisal even in a dungeon, but that'd only happen if the other party happened to have some super rare skill that happened to damage those that tried to appraise them. Even then, I'd honestly say that appraising them would probably still be worth the risk.

I wouldn't mind being on the receiving end either. That is, I'd think it fair and not complain if someone wanted to appraise us in order to trust us if we happened to meet them in the middle of a dungeon.

『That's just how it is, so don't worry about it.』

I finished explaining my thoughts to Urushi right about when the men began getting impatient at the fact that Fran had remained silent.

「So? Where yo party at?」

One of the men began talking in a rougher tone, as if he couldn't keep his act up any longer.

「Nn?」

『Fran, try leaving one of them alive if you can. Preferably whichever one seems to be in charge.』

(The rest?)

『It'd be too much of a pain in the ass to take them all back into the city with just us here, so you can just cut them up if you want.』

(Nn. Got it.)

『Their stats aren't too low, so be careful. Urushi, you be in charge of guarding Solas.』

(Growl!)

Though even with that said, I honestly couldn't shirk off the possibility that these men weren't the same group that had attacked Solas. They could've just been former villains that had already been rehabilitated into upstanding citizens. The chance of such a scenario was incredibly small, but there nonetheless, so I honestly hoped for them to make the first move, just in order to confirm that they really were villains.

Fortunately, their next actions almost seemed to function as a response to that hope of mine; one of the men lost his patience and began attacking us.

「Ugh, whatever, enough of this shit already.」

The person who spoke seemed to be a leader, and his words some sort of signal. The man that'd been sneaking up behind Fran immediately drew his a dagger and dashed towards her at an incredible speed.

Although the attacker was just a thief, I had to admit that he wasn't all that bad at combat. Specifically, I felt that he deserved praise for remaining cautious. He didn't let his guard down around Fran despite her being a young girl, he remained vigilant and tried to deliver a blow that would hinder any future actions as opposed to one that would slay her in one strike. In other words, he didn't fully commit himself to the engagement and tried to make sure that he'd be able to withdraw if he wasn't able to accomplish his objective.

『He's a careful one, but not nearly careful enough.』

「What!？」

I stopped the man's dagger in place, and sliced his neck open with wind magic before he was able to recover from the shock of his arm suddenly losing all its momentum and freezing in place.

「Huh!? What!？」

Solas was left completely bamboozled as the situation continued to rapidly change.

「Daz!」

「Guah!」

Fran sliced one of the men into pieces, and sent the other flying by batting him with the flat of my blade.

「Gruaaahh!」

The man that got sent flying had so much momentum that he ended up cracking the wall he was smashed against. His arms and ribs both looked like that'd immediately been broken. His spine looked like it'd seen much better days as well.

「Why...」

「Too obvious.」

「Fuck'n... 'ell...」

The man responded to Fran with a frustrated groan before finally losing consciousness.

(Master, what now?)

『Let's head back into the city for now so we can hand the guy we just captured off to the guild. You get rewarded for turning him in, remember? We can probably get him to tell us who he's working with while we're at it.』

Solas approached the man while we were figuring what to do with him and immediately swung his sword without even the slightest shred of hesitation.

His action and Fran's response to it caused a metallic clang to ring through the dungeon's corridors.

The man we painstakingly refrained from killing would've ended up six feet under had Fran not used me to stop Solas' strike.

「Explain?」

「S-Sorry, seeing him again just made me want to...」

It turned out that these guys really were the ones that'd attacked Solas and his party. He ultimately ended up lowering his sword, but continued to fiercely glare at the scumbag we had just captured regardless.

Next chapter should be out as the new year comes to pass where I am. There is a small chance that I may actually end up being too drunk to finish the chapter in time, but that probably won't happen.

151. Skill Related Suspicion

151. Skill Related Suspicion

We started moving back towards the city immediately after eliminating the thieves that'd attacked us.

Solas had asked to let him take up the lead, to which we raised no objections.

It felt like a much better idea to keep him as far away from our captive as possible, just in case he felt like murdering him again. Apparently, the men had still been holding onto the items they stole from Solas' party, so we retrieved them and stuffed them inside of Solas' Item Box.

We'd been unable to discern his skills because he had Appraisal Blocking, but it turned out that he was a scout-like kinda guy. He'd occasionally find traps and move to avoid them.

That said though, it didn't seem like he was skilled enough to notice and avoid all of them.

「Woof!」

『Huh?』

「Urushi?」

「Woof.」

An arrow shot out of the ceiling and made its way towards Urushi, but the large wolf had managed to grab the projectile with his mouth before it hit him. Dat reaction speed though.

「Okay?」

「Growl!」

「S-Sorry, my bad.」

Solas immediately apologized for missing the trap. I couldn't blame him though. He was in a bit of a rush, so he seemed less on guard than he otherwise would have been. Plus, it's not like we pick up on every single trap either.

Hmmmm... Though, for some odd reason, I felt a sudden sense of discomfort, as if something was out of place... It was almost like a jolt of electricity had run through my brain — not that I actually had one in the first place.

『Hmmm....』

(Master? Something wrong?)

『I'm not quite sure how to put it, but... I feel like something's not right.』

(Nn?)

『Like, do you feel like anything's just a bit off?』

(Hm?)

『What about you, Urushi?』

(Woof?)

Was I just imagining things?

「I'm really sorry, I just set off another trap.」

Oh! There it is again...

『How about just now?』

(Nn?)

(Woof?)

Neither Fran nor Urushi were able to feel what I was feeling, despite the fact that it was pretty much the same as the feeling I got when I sensed magic beasts and traps and whatnot. Hm... Weird, I don't get it.

『Oh well, whatever, let's just keep going.』

「Nn.」

「Um, are you okay?」

「Unharmed.」

「Whew, good...」

Solas came to a sudden stop after we advanced a bit further.

Did something happen?

「There's something over there.」

「Nn? Where?」

「Over there.」

I couldn't see anything in the direction Solas was pointing. I mean, he wasn't wrong though. My senses were telling me that there was some sort of trap there, but I couldn't figure out what it was. That odd sensation of something being off was back too.

「It's literally right there. You know what, come on, let's go check it out.」

Huh... It just happened again. Yeah, alright. I'm definitely not imagining it.

That said though, I wasn't given any time to figure out why I'd been feeling it to begin with, as Solas had immediately dashed forwards without waiting

for Fran to first respond to him. Four small holes opened up around us and immediately began to emit a sort of mist. There was one above, one under, and one on either side.

The mist was something that our skills rendered completely invalid: poisonous gas.

「Ah! My bad!」

It looked like Solas had accidentally stepped on the trap's activation switch. Seriously, holy crap, why is he messing up this much? Like, even given the current circumstances, he really shouldn't be.

「A-Are you okay?」

We couldn't actually see him because of all the poison that got emitted, but we could still hear his voice.

And along with said voice once again came that odd sense of incongruity.

It seemed like it was something I'd feel whenever he spoke. Wait, could it be that this is what Dias described as the odd sensation you'd get when someone used a skill on you? Wait, that'd have to mean that Solas was using some kind of skill...

On us.

Doubts began flooding my mind the moment I came to that realization, as if they'd broken through and burst out of a dam.

At first, he said that he was attacked by 3 people, but he later went on to say that there were 4 thieves. At the time, I'd ignored it because I thought to be an honest mistake, but it looked like I messed up. I trusted someone I just met despite not being able to appraise them. Why the hell?

He'd also said that the men that attacked him were masked, but he managed to recognize them immediately. Like, how? That just flat out didn't make sense.

I also don't understand how I didn't catch the fact that him asking us questions nonstop was actually just him probing our skills and whatnot.

He kept activating traps, and even tried to kill the man we captured to top it all off. Like holy crap, he's suspicious as all hell.

The only reason I trusted him was because the Principle of Falsehood hadn't told me that he was lying, because he technically wasn't.

An incredibly powerful sense of discomfort assaulted me, one much greater than all the others I'd felt before it. Why had we treated someone that we'd met less than an hour ago like a companion? And as if it was natural too.

The answer to that question was one that I simply could not explain. My guess was that Solas had done something to us, but I couldn't figure out what, and also still couldn't help but have the sneaking suspicion that I was wrong about this whole thing.

Solas was definitely suspicious, but we had no solid evidence that he was the one behind all this...

『Fran, don't respond to him.』

(?)

『Just do as I'm about to tell you.』

Fran followed my instructions and took a knee. Likewise, we had Urushi “collapse” on the ground. Naturally, the two were both just acting.

If Solas really was what I thought he was, then he'd probably try something — not that he'd actually be able to harm us. I could activate Telekinesis literally instantly, and I'd already cast Chronos Clock, a Dimensional Magic spell, on both Fran and Urushi. The spell allowed the two to interpret Solas' actions in slow motion, and thus retaliate should he try something.

Chronos Clock's biggest disadvantage was the fact that his words would get slowed down as well, so they wouldn't be able to figure out what he was

saying, hence why I didn't cast the spell on myself as well.

「Did you just use some sort of magic...?」

「...」

「Fran? Are you okay?」

It seemed he sensed that we'd cast a spell. I guess casting Chronos Clock wasn't exactly the best idea, but better safe than sorry.

「Ugh...」

「Hmm, so you used some sort of magic, but weren't able to prevent yourself from being poisoned?」

「Uu.」

Fran was showing off her acting skills by pretending to be in pain.

「It looks like you really have been poisoned. Don't worry, I'll help you make it so it doesn't hurt anymore.」

He still wasn't lying, but his actions served to contradict his words. That is, he'd drawn the blade at his waist and swung it in Fran's direction.

Actually, thinking about it, what he said was cliché, but it wasn't wrong. Killing someone was indeed a way to prevent them from feeling any further pain.

「Nn.」

「What!? How!? That shouldn't be possible!」

「Fmmph!」

「Guahhh!」

Fran easily dodged his blade, drew me, and performed a pair of slashes. The first removed his right hand from the wrist down, and seperated him from his sword. The second caused him to part with his right leg.

「W-What...」

Solas, who'd collapsed, looked up at us with an expression filled but with shock.

There wasn't any way for Fran to converse with him while she was still under the effects of Chronos Clock, so I undid the spell and let her talk.

「First. Deactivate Appraisal Blocking.」

Happy New Years everyone!

152. Solas

152. Solas

We quickly threw a heal at Solas, who was still collapsed on the ground and unable to rise to his feet. He lost both an arm and a leg; his injuries were far too serious for a single heal to fix, but we didn't really care. All we needed was for him to stop bleeding so we could question him.

「...」

His expression remained constant throughout the process. That is, he simply continued to glare in Fran's direction.

「First. Deactivate Appraisal Blocking.」

「What?」

「Playing dumb. Pointless.」

「...I see. You must have Appraisal then.」

「Nn.」

「And what if I say no?」

His expression was filled with a sort of strength, one that left me confused as to whether he was trying to negotiate or just flat out defy us for the sake of it. Either way, we didn't care. We weren't planning to really negotiate with him in the first place.

What we needed to do was figure out what the skill he was using on us was.

「Will keep hitting, but won't kill. Can use healing magic, won't allow suicide.」

「...」

Fran's lack of an expression was pretty nice to have at times like this. It made her sound completely serious — not that we weren't actually completely serious anyways.

Solas seemed to have sensed it, as his eyes had immediately began expressing his fear.

「...You'll at least let me live, right?」

I felt something again the moment he spoke in that probe-like manner. The sensation I felt this time, however, was a bit different than usual. It was much more clear. I could immediately tell that Solas had done something to us.

The sensation was very much akin to having someone stroke my blade, it was one that was simply impossible for me to ignore.

I was pretty sure that Malice Perception, Crisis Detection, Magic Detection, and Presence Detection were all working in conjunction in order to allow me to sense that he'd used a skill on us.

『Fran, did you feel anything just now?』

「?」

『What about you, Urushi?』

(Woof?)

Neither of the two could sense anything at all. Why was I the only one capable of picking this up? My immediate guess was that it was probably because I had the Sorcery skill, and that it made me better at picking up on magical energy and the flow thereof. If that is indeed the case, then I guess

that just means that I'm just better at picking up magic-related stuff, kinda like how Fran's better at picking up stuff that involves using the five senses.

(Something done to us?)

『I think so.』

「Nn.」

Fran nodded and stabbed me straight through Solas' back.

「Giiiiiiihhhh!」

It was a well aimed thrust; I went right through his lungs. If Solas were an ordinary person, he probably would've died just then. Him being an adventurer only prolonged his pain. The fact that he wasn't weak disallowed him from even fainting. He was forced to endure an exorbitant amount of pain as blood spewed from his lips.

「Hiiigiiiiigiiiiiihh!」

「Middle Heal」

「Ugh....」

Being healed caused Solas to fall into despair. Only then did he realize just how far she was willing to take this.

「Will not allow any actions until Appraisal Blocking deactivated.」

「Growl.」

「Ha...Ha...」

I couldn't tell whether it was because he started getting scared, or whether it was just because we'd stabbed him through the lung, but Solas' breath gotten all ragged. He didn't bother putting up a front any longer. He hadn't removed his gaze from Fran, but tears had welled up in his eyes.

「I-I get it, I get it! I'll deactivate the skill. It's one of my equips, so you'll have to let me take it off! Give me just a second!」

He brought his hand out in front of him and bit down on his ring in an attempt to take it off. Apparently that was what was stopping us from appraising him.

Oh right, we chopped off his other arm so he can't really take it off normally, can he?

That said though, it refused to budge, which kinda did make sense. Rings were like that. They'd get stuck if you gained even the slightest bit of weight.

「Haa... mmmphhh....」

However, Fran wasn't what you'd call the patient type. Seeing him fiddle around with it only served to annoy her.

「Enough.」

「Whagyaaa!!」

Solas lifted his head with a bit of a stupid look on his face in response to her words, only to immediately lose his finger. Fran finished everything up nice and quick by severing it before he had much of a chance to protest against her actions. The man had naturally let out a scream in pain, but I didn't really mind it too much. I was more so focused on admiring Fran's technique. She'd managed to separate him and his finger without causing even the slightest bit of damage elsewhere.

「Heal.」

「Hiii hiii」

The only comment I had was that it was a shame the ring had been broken — not that it was even the slightest bit Fran's fault. It seemed like the ring was the disposable type of equip. It was made to break the moment it was

removed. That said though, it was still pretty worthwhile an item seeing as how it prevented people from appraising you and all.

General Information

Name: Solas

Age: 33

Race: Beastman/Red Cat Tribe

Job: Labyrinth Scout

State: Normal

Status Level: 34

“HP: 208

MP: 187

STR: 101

VIT: 98

AGI: 187

INT: 111

MGC: 84

DEX: 191

Skills

Assassination: Lv 3

Acting: Lv 6

Espionage: Lv 6

Deception: Lv 5

Presence Detection: Lv 3

Silenced Actions: Lv 4

Dagger Techniques: Lv 3

Dagger Arts: Lv 6

Throwing: Lv 4

Poison Resistance: Lv 3

Magic Detection: Lv 2

Trap Detection: Lv 6

Trap Disarming: Lv 6

Vitality Manipulation

Unique Skills

Coerced Camaraderie: Lv 6

Titles

Traitor

Murderer

Huh, he seemed decently strong, and his skill levels weren't too bad either. In fact, he looked like he could be a C ranker if he wanted.

『He's got a unique skill, it looks like. Coerced Camaraderie, apparently.』

「Coerced Camaraderie? Effects?」

「Err... that, right, yeah, that! I'll answer you, so lower your sword and have your wolf back off a bit already!」

「Growl.」

Okay, he seriously needs to just get to the point. We don't have time to listen to him rabble on and on forever.

「It's just a boring little skill that'll make people think of me as a friend or comrade. It lowers the target's guard and makes them less doubtful of what I do. It's nothing special. I can't use it to make people treat me like their best friends or lovers.」

Ah, so that's it. That's why we didn't suspect him, or rather, that's why we thought we were just imagining the fact that he was acting suspiciously.

「It's a skill that'll undo its effects the moment you happen to have any strong doubts.」

「Used skill to infiltrate adventurer parties and attack companions?」

「Pretty much.」

I figured that was the case. My guess was that he's been popping traps and whatnot on people here for quite some time already.

「Any other companions?」

「None. Just the people you killed.」

『That's a lie right there.』

「Lies. How many total?」

Fran pointed me right at Solas' face.

「Do you... happen to have a skill that detects lies too?」

「Nn.」

「Man, I was being extra cautious of that too...」

Ah, I see, I see. He had Appraisal Blocking and Coerced Camaraderie. He'd be able to basically come off clean so long as he stayed vigilant of any lie detecting skills.

Now that I think about it, he was always speaking kinda ambiguously. His answers, for the most part, could've been taken both ways. They'd technically be right regardless of how we interpreted them. Moreover, Coerced Camaraderie would do to most people what it did to us, and make it so that said ambiguous answers were regarded as ones that affirmed his innocence.

The Principle of Falsehood was honestly a pretty useful skill, but we couldn't really be relying on it all the time. We needed to be more careful about the manner in which we asked questions, else risk having this, or something like this, happen again. Learning that here and now was honestly one huge gain on our part.

「Two choices. Answer honestly now. Answer honestly after torture.」

「I have four other subordinates!」

「Nn.」

I'm glad he was all honest and what not, but... seriously? He was the guy leading all the thieves this whole time?

「Where?」

「...They should be at the guild.」

Solas' role was to find targets for the rest of his teams. He'd usually go after parties on the rise, people who were earning a fair amount of cash and acting all gung ho about it. Very few would be suspicious of parties like that suddenly going missing seeing as how they usually had the tendency to act rather recklessly.

He'd reach out about once a month, and even then, his lackies wouldn't actually act every single time. They were cautious and did their best to ensure that there wouldn't be any rumours about how the parties Solas joined would vanish.

Alright, I guess we'll have Solas take us to the rest of his companions. Gotta take out the trash and whatnot, you know?

『Hmmm, you see, we've got a bit of a problem. He knows a lot about our skills and stuff. I'm not sure letting him go free is that good of an idea. He might go around telling other people about us. What do you think we should do?』

(Kill.)

『Hmm... I mean, I guess that works, but....』

We would be able to get a good amount of info out of his lackies, but there's probably some stuff that only he, as their boss, knows as well. You know, like where he stores his loot and stuff.

『Actually, hold up. Don't kill him just yet. There's something I want to try.』

We should be fine so long as we stop him from leaking anything about us.

「Won't inflict any more pain if taken to their location.」

「Alright, I got it...」

「But only on one condition. Will form contract.」

「Contract? You can use contract magic?」

「Can't say anything about us. Leaking information means death. Must agree to contract terms.」

「I'll take it!」

Yeah, I figured he'd say that. He'd die if he didn't, soooo, yeah.

「Then will create contract.」

On a side note, as I'm sure some of you have noticed, it's now referring to Solas as a 33 year old as opposed to a young man as it did earlier. I'm assuming he probably just looks young, or the author changed his mind.

153. Erza Is Willing

153. Erza Is Willing

We had a pretty easy time getting back up to the surface.

Solas had spent the rest of the trip wrapped up in some of my threads and strapped to Urushi's back. We only healed him to the point of necessity; we closed his wounds and stopped him from bleeding anymore, but that was pretty much it.

Fran had also stripped him of all his armour and even covered his face with a cloth in order to make sure that his companions wouldn't be able to recognize him on sight. He'd already told us everything we wanted to know, so we'd also gagged him in order to prevent him from speaking. We figured that we might as well bring him all the way over to the guild. It was impossible for anyone to tell that the person we had bagged was Solas, but we kinda just sorta really stood out anyways.

「O-Oi oi, did something happen?」

「Was it serious?」

「Sure looks it. I wonder if everything's alright.」

「Looks like someone's gotten themselves a pretty serious injury.」

The gazes of the people around us immediately locked on to us the moment we left the dungeon. The guards had began rushing our way as well.

Welp, it doesn't look like we'd be able to get out of this by making any sort of excuse, so I guess we'll have to tell the truth. That said though, we still

wanted to keep attention to a minimum in order to prevent Solas' lackies from getting away.

「Got attacked during return trip.」

「Woof.」

The people around us immediately started to make a fuss the moment Fran informed the soldiers of our circumstances.

「She did that to the person that attacked her?」

「Man, she's merciless.」

I feel like we gave the people around us a bit more of a scare than we should've, though I guess it can't really be helped seeing as how our wolf companion was kinda dragging a person with severed limbs around like a piece of luggage. The fact that we'd hidden his face away didn't really help our case much either.

You know, now that I think about it, the way we're going about this has a bit of a homicidal kinda feel to it, so I can kinda see why people are getting freaked out.

「Oh, you were attacked by thieves?」

「Nn.」

「Nice job there! Both you and your doggy did hella good.」

That said though, the only people that got freaked out were the general populace's members. The adventurers and guards actually seemed to view our actions in a favourable light. To them, thieves and the like were vicious criminals whose actions verged on the unforgivable.

I thought that they might end up being rather suspicious of us, but Fran's outward appearance manage to dissuade those who did and made everyone view us in a bit more favourable a light. They seemed to think that there was no way such a young girl would lie about capturing a thief, especially if

she had him in tow. Moreover was the fact that going to the guild would allow verification of our claim's authenticity. A few soldiers ended up offering to accompany us to that end.

「Are you planning to head back over to the guild?」

「We'll escort you over if so.」

Them accompanying us was an action that'd kill two birds with one stone; they'd be able to escort and monitor us simultaneously. Honestly, we didn't mind it at all. In fact, we were happy to have them accompany us, as it'd help save time. It'd make it so we wouldn't have to stop to explain our circumstances every single time we came across a guard.

We happened to encounter Erza on our way back. He'd ran over because he'd heard something had happened, and was a bit concerned about all the fuss.

He'd initially assumed that Fran had been arrested, and started giving one of the soldiers a really hard time.

「Are you okay, Fran!?!」

「Nn.」

「Whew, thank god~ Were you afraid?」

「Perfectly fine.」

「Fufufu, you sure are a strong one. So I'm guessing that's the scummy thief that attacked you?」

「Yup.」

Erza sent a hateful gaze in Solas' direction. It was one filled with such an immense amount of rage that it caused its target to tremble despite him not being able to see it.

The raging bisexual lowered his lips to Solas' ears before whispering a single line.

「How wonderful.」

「Hiii....」

「I would've smashed you to bits had you given her even the slightest scratch.」

We decided not to tell Erza about the fact that he'd made us inhale a decent bit of poison. I feel like the he'd go on a total rampage if we did, and we kinda couldn't have Solas dying on us right here and now since we still needed him to verify if we got the right people when we hunted them down.

Actually, that might not be that much of a problem, if any at all..

『Hey Fran, what do you think of asking Erza to help us round up Solas' lackies?』

(Nn. Good idea.)

『I mean, there's a good chance that Erza knows what they look like. He's pretty damn strong too, so he shouldn't have any issues on that end of the spectrum. It'd be far more likely to succeed than us dragging Solas around everywhere looking for them too.』

We were attracting a fair bit more attention than I'd initially been suspecting. I wasn't actually all that keen on heading over to the guild as we were now. It didn't seem like that great an idea.

It seemed like us meeting Erza here was actually a lucky break on our parts.

「Erza.」

「Sup~ Did you need something?」

「Want favour.」

「Sure, leave it to me!」

「Didn't tell any details yet.」

「Doesn't matter, just leave it to me. I'll do whatever you want me to. What do you need? Want me to help you tap the Guildmaster because he's pissed you off? Or maybe punish the guards that've been bullying you?」

Oh god, was that a joke? Please tell me it was. He looks hella serious, but please tell me it was just the kind of joke homos like to make.

For fucks sake, this guy makes me feel so creeped out that I get the chills despite being a god damn sword!

Fran, however, seemed not to mind even in the slightest. She simply conveyed her request to Erza in her usual indifferent tone.

「Need help capturing this man's companions.」

「Mhmm~」

Erza's eyes sparkled like those of a dragon that'd found itself some prey as Fran told her the lackies' names and features.

「Will leave to you.」

「Ufufu~ I just have to not kill them, right? That'll take a bit of effort.」

「Nn. No issues so long as reward.」

「Got it. I'll personally give you a reward if you don't end up getting one from the guild.」

That uh, no. We didn't mean that. We just want to take them alive so we can have them tell us where they keep their loot and fess up about all the stuff they've done.

「I'll be off then!」

「Nn. Do best.」

No, Fran, no. Please don't tell him of all people to do his best. That just won't turn out right.

「Ufufufufu! Hearing you cheer me on makes my bravery and vigour increase a hundred fold! Of course, the same goes for my love too. I'll be back soon, I'll catch them right away!」

The manwoman ran off like a gale before Fran had a chance to tell him to take it easy on Solas' companions.

『Uh....』

(Master?)

『It's nothing, don't worry.』

「Woof.」

I hope he doesn't mess them up too much. It'd be nice if they were at least still recognizable by the time he was done with them.

154. Reeling Them All In At Once

154. Reeling Them All In At Once

It took us a fair chunk of time to rush our way over to the guild. We'd already figured out to get between the guild and the dungeon's entrance, and hence, it normally would have only taken us about 5 minutes to get ourselves all the way over, but we had to keep pace with the guards that'd accompanied us, so it ended up taking a whole 30.

「We're... finally here...」

「Woof.」

「Nn.」

The soldiers that'd accompanied us were panting heavily. It seems we might've been moving around just a bit too quickly for them. That said though, our thoughts weren't really with them. Both Fran and I were instead wondering whether or not Erza had managed to successfully catch all of Solas' companions.

「Gyaaa!」

「H-Help! Please, help!」

Okay yup, Erza be on a rampage.

「Oh, hey Fran~ Welcome back~」

「Nn. Them?」

「Yup yup they are. We've got all the evidence we need, so I'm in the middle of giving them just a little bit of punishment.」

「We'll tell you whatever you want!」

「I'll tell you everything I've ever done wrong, so please, no more!」

Three men were crouching with their thighs shut closed together. The last was, for some odd reason, collapsed face up with both hands on his ass.

「You naughty little boys were attacking other adventurers in the dungeon, weren't you?」

「W-We were!」

「So, you have a boss? Someone must be giving you orders, and someone must've brought that whole idea up to begin with.」

「W-We do have one.」

「Who?」

「U-Uh, that's...」

「If we talk, we'll...」

「Oh? You're more afraid of him than me? I guess I must need to punish you guys a bit more~」

「Hiiii! Please, no! It's Solas! Our leader is Solas, an E ranked adventurer!」

「He's actually much stronger than he seems! He could probably take a D ranker head on if he wanted!」

「He'll kill us all in just the blink of an eye!」

It seemed that they were absolutely terrified of Solas, though I guess I could see why. He was not only fairly skilled, but also capable of pulling off

scummy moves in a calm manner. It seemed that he'd always been the more cautious type of criminal too, so, those that knew of his actions probably thought him to be some ridiculously evil criminal mastermind.

「That won't happen. He's already been captured too, right Fran?」

Well then. Looks like Erza had us totally figured out.

The entire guild seemed to turn their gazes in our direction the moment the manwoman called us out.

「Wait, is that supposed to be...?」

「The rumoured D ranker...?」

「A black catkin...?」

「H-How adorable...」

It didn't seem like most people were looking at us favourably. Their gazes seemed to contain more curiosity, doubt, and lust than anything else.

「Nn. This.」

「Thankies.」

Erza lifted the cloth that covered Solas' face and caused his companions to start screaming. They were completely blown aback by the shock of seeing the man that had always ordered them around in such a helpless state.

「T-That's Solas?」

「D-Do you think Erza got him?」

「Seriously?」

「It was Fran that caught him.」

「Nn. While on way back.」

「She is a D ranker you know? And a really strong one too.」

「Haaah?」

「What're you saying?」

「There's no way a little girl like her could've caught Solas.」

Eh, I figured this would happen, and I honestly don't particularly care so long as we get rewarded appropriately.

Erza, however, didn't seem to be able to find it in him to let them off.

「So you don't believe me?」

「Hiii!」

「T-That's not true. That's definitely not true at all! We totally believe you!」

「Good. Oh, right, why don't we ask Solas too. Hey Solas, who captured you?」

「F-Fran.」

「See! It's true.」

「A-Alright.」

Erza puffed his chest up in pride in response to their claims, but it seemed that he was the only one that'd believed the men he'd coerced into agreeing with him. The people around us were still looking rather doubtful of the men's claims.

「Where to put him?」

「Just wait around a bit. This is a pretty big deal, so the guildmaster should be right on his way.」

「Nn. Got it.」

「Do you want to do anything while you wait? Do you maybe want to drink some tea?」

「Nn.」

「Hey, you lot. Keep watch over these guys.」

「Sure thing!」

Erza led Fran over to the guild's bar and left Solas and his underlings to the adventurers that happened to be present.

I didn't really think that to be a good idea at first, but it seemed that the adventurers he'd ordered ended up taking his instructions with a surprising amount of sincerity. Though, I guess it does make sense. Erza would probably give them one hell of a harsh punishment if they let them get away and all.

Plus, we were kinda in the adventurer's guild. It was kinda impossible for them to escape given that there were adventurers all over the place.

A stack of 20 plates of cake formed next to Fran and Erza over the course of about half an hour. The two seemed to be having fun; Fran nodded along as Erza told her about all sorts of things. He was really skilled at conversation, and honestly would be super popular if he was a bit easier on the eyes. That said though, I'm not all that sure which gender he'd actually be more popular with...

As for Urushi, he was sitting off to the side happily gnawing on a fairly large bone.

「Hey, I heard something happened.」

Only then did Dias finally show up.

「That was really slow of you. Were you up to something?」

「I was on patrol. What about you? You two sure seem to be having fun.」

「Mhmm. We had loots.」

「Oh, right. And he was the one responsible for that whole traitor ruckus?」

Dias seemed all laid back and whatnot, but I really had to give it to him. He was deserving of both his A rank and his Guildmaster title. He had no mercy for those that harmed the guild and its interests; he aimed a ridiculous amount of bloodlust in Solas' direction as he spoke.

「Hmm, I see, I see. So you've been committing quite the number of crimes.」

Did he just read Solas' mind? I think he did, but he wasn't using the skill on us, and he had a tonne of other skills that made him more stealthy and difficult to read, so it was pretty much next to impossible for me to tell. I'm going to have to work on my detection and perception type skills if I'm going to want to be able to see through him.

「And you're the person behind it all?」

「Yuppers he is. His name's Solas, and it looks like he was doing a pretty good job of hiding his strength up till now.」

「Really? You must be quite skilled given that your name wasn't one I recognized. You've got quite the interesting skill there too.」

The fact that not even Dias knew of him meant that he really did do a pretty good job of keeping himself inconspicuous. He stayed away from all those that were actually strong and preyed on the weak whilst laying low as your everyday harmless dude.

「To him, what'll happen?」

「Hmm, well, we're still going to be running investigations for the time being, but, he'll probably eventually either get put to death or end up as a slave. I'm fairly certain we'll be choosing the execution option seeing how difficult it is to deal with that skill of his. Turning him into a slave would effectively be the same as just leaving him be. That said though, I can't speak for the type of execution he'll get. The two options are either for us to euthanize him or torture him to death. 」

Oh wow, torturing people to death is actually a thing? Really makes me realize how dangerous a world it is out there. That said though, I do agree. He'd probably just manage to get himself released even if he did end up as a slave.

The thieves we caught had muzzles strapped to their faces, so they couldn't actually speak. They were trying, and making "mmph" noises as a result, but everyone around them just casually ignored them.

Their fates were sealed, and that was that. However, there was a problem. Or rather, something that I thought of as wasteful.

That thing happened to be the fact that Solas' unique skill was going to go poof. Coerced Camaraderie was an incredibly useful skill. I mean, relying on it too much the way Solas did would probably get us caught, but, it's something that'd probably be difficult to detect if used sparingly. I mean, the only reason he actually got exposed was because he'd been too confident in his ability to finish us off.

I really did want the skill.

But even with that said, we weren't going to be able to get it, at least not normally. Skill Taker was going to be on cooldown for another two months, and there was no way he'd be allowed to live that long.

Wait. Right, we have three Anti-Side Effect Potions. I might be able to get Skill Taker to cool down really quickly if I use all three.

「Nn. Works.」

「I'm glad you're not opposed to the idea.」

「But want to speak to him later. Need to ask something before execution.」

「That's fine, but, I'd prefer for you to get that done before the Martial Arts Tournament. There'll be lots of stuff for me to get ready, so I'm going to be getting fairly busy soon.」

「Then will visit in ten days. Acceptable?」

「Barely, but yes. I'll talk to a few people and get the necessary arrangements out of the way.」

「Nn.」

「Oh right, Fran, Erza, the two of you both have the right to claim rewards for the captures you performed. How exactly would you like to sort that out?」

「I don't need anything since I was just giving Fran a bit of a hand. Do what you want Fran~」

(Master?)

『Well, just take I guess. Erza'd probably be happier if you treated him to a meal or something later instead.』

「Nn. Will gratefully accept. Will treat Erza to food later.」

「Kyaahh! Really!? I'm swwwooooo happy!」

Yup, called it. He responded by screaming in delight and wriggling his body all over.

Alright, that's that! All that's left is for us to head back to the inn and test out our Anti-Side Effect Potions.

155. The Terror Wrought by a Skill

155. The Terror Wrought by a Skill

We went back to the inn immediately after the Guild's staff took Solas away.

Our goal was to test the Anti-Side Effect Potion and evaluate its effects.

「Master, how to use?」

『Hmmm... I dunno...』

I'd originally been thinking of creating a doppelganger and having it drink the thing, but that didn't seem like the best idea as it in no way guaranteed that my main body would also be able to receive the potion effects.

『Let's try dribbling it all over my blade. Apparently that's how the Greater Potion of Repair gets applied, so it should work.』

That said though, I wasn't actually sure whether or not the potion was supposed to have any effect on me to begin with seeing as how I was a sword.

But you know what, whatever. What's the worst that could happen? We waste a few Anti-Side Effect Potions? Yeah, that's no big deal. Screw it, poverty ahoy!

「Ready.」

『Alright, do it whenever. I'm ready too.』

「Nn.」

Fran opened a test-tube like bottle and dribbled its contents all over my blade.

I could feel the vivid sensation of the liquid flowing down my body, but nothing seemed to happen, even after a few seconds came to pass.

『Did that not work?』

The moment I doubted the potion was the moment in which it finally showed its effects; it made a “shwing” sound and began seeping its way into my blade.

「Master. Glowing.」

「Woof woof!」

『I guess that means it must’ve worked?』

I quickly appraised myself to check the potion’s effects.

『Sweet! It did work! Skill Taker’s cooldown got a fair chunk taken off of it!』

Its 57 day cooldown had been cut down to 37 days.

I can now use it a whole 20 days earlier, meaning, I should be able to use the skill right away if we just used the other two pots.

It seemed that Doppelganger Synthesis’ cooldown got completely reset as well. Wait, wait wait, does that mean the potion counteracts all side effects simultaneously? Thinking that, I quickly checked Self Evolution, but it didn’t seem like the magic stones points consumed by Latent Potential Awakening had returned.

It seemed that the potion could do stuff about cooldowns and whatnot, but I guess what was gone was gone. Wait, crap, that means it might not be able to counteract the recoil caused by some skills either.

「Keep going.」

『Hell yeah! Bring it!』

「Nn.」

Fran used the second potion and once again caused me to be enveloped by a veil of light.

Except... things didn't turn out the way we thought they would.

『Huh, that's weird.』

「Something wrong?」

「Woof?」

『That one only cut the cooldown back down to 30 days.』

Apparently the pot wasn't consistent. It'd sometimes do more and sometimes do less. Is that due to the fact that each individual potion was of a different quality? Or maybe because of some sort of diminishing returns-type effect?

Hmm, what to do? We might not be able to make the 10 day deadline even if we use our last pot. I mean, we might get it if the third ends up being at least as effective as the first, but...

『Oh well, let's use it anyways.』

「Sure?」

『Yeah, I am.』

「Then will use third.」

And so, we did.

『We totally failed~』

It seemed that the difference in effects stemmed from the differences in quality between each individual potion. The third was a bit better than the second, but not as good as the first. It took 12 days off the skill's cooldown.

Skill Taker still had 18 days on its cooldown; we definitely weren't going to make it in time.

Oh well, whatever. We figured out how the pots worked and cut a fair chunk out of Skill Taker's cooldown, so it's still a win in my book.

「Don't need to steal Coerced Camaraderie.」

『Why's that? It looks like it could be really convenient.』

「Still, don't need. Master said Principle of Falsehood required caution, and should not use very often but used lots anyway.」

『Well... okay, yeah...』

「But mostly used to protect me from deception. Can't be helped because I'm still weak.」

『Fran...』

「Coerced Camaraderie will be same. Will say that it will only be used in times of need, but will use lots anyway. Skills that interfere with people's minds are scary. Remember... fat noble with Principle of Falsehood.」

『You mean August Arsand?』

Looked like she totally forgot his name already.

「August, Solas, both were messed up in the head. Most likely because of skill use. Didn't seem like they could trust people anymore. Don't want Master to overuse skills and be the same.」

Wow I'm pathetic. I'm supposed to be Fran's guardian, but this is like the nth time she's lectured me like this.

『Yeah... you're right. Good point.』

I'm a weak person. I'd definitely lose to temptation and start using the skill left, right, and everywhere just cause it'd be convenient for me to do so. I'd probably make excuses all the time and try to justify myself too. Skills that can mess with people's minds are terrifying. It'd be better for me not to have them in the first place.

『Alright, let's just pretend Coerced Camaraderie never existed to begin with!』

「Nn. Good idea.」

『Let's check over all the loot we got this time around.』

「Okay.」

I worked myself up whilst arranging the items we got in order to shake off the awkward mood that'd arose from our previous conversation. Fran hopped right on board and began examining the stuff I laid out.

「This one. Interesting.」

『The knife? Yeah, it's got a bit of a weird shape to it.』

「Cheap product?」

『Probably, yeah.』

Everything went back to normal; we chatted as we looked over the items we took from Solas.

We were allowed to take all the items Solas and his companions had in their possession, meaning we were also granted rights to the stuff he'd stolen from the adventurers he'd recently murdered. All in all, it was quite a lot of loot.

Naturally, we decided to sell all our materials to the guild and have me absorb all the magic stones despite the fact that they were all of a rather

poor quality.

Most of the equips they had were kinda bad, so we decided to get rid of them by pawning them off. Most.

They did happen to have 4 magic items. Two were trash that just gave minor stat boosts, so we completely disregarded them. The other two seemed a slight bit more useful. One was a tent that made it a slight bit harder for the people inside of it to be detected. It looked like something we could get some decent use out of if we decided to camp out in a dungeon or something like that. It wasn't all that big, but it was roomy enough to fit Fran and Urushi assuming the latter was in his smaller form.

The last item was much more interesting than any of the prior three. It was an equip meant for beast-type familiars. Specifically, it was a claw-like thing that you were supposed to strap to their front paws.

It was made in such a way that it wouldn't hinder any of the familiar's regular activities. However, one could have claws extend from it should they charge the item with magic.

Name: Claw of Capture

Attack: 230

Mana Capacity: 100

Durability: 700

Magic Power Conductivity: D+

Skill: Stunning Strike

Huh, that's not bad. The item's attack stat was kinda low, but it was still better than the nothing he had equipped right now. Plus, that Stunning Strike skill looked like it could put out quite a decent bit of work if used right. It looked like it'd fit right into Urushi's hit and run style by augmenting his stikes with a negative status condition.

Like honestly, that's about as good an item as you could expect from a D ranked dungeon.

『Fran, have Urushi equip it.』

「Nn. Urushi, paw.」

「Woof!」

「Right paw first.」

「Woof.」

Fran quickly strapped the leather gauntlet-like equip onto Urushi's front feet.

The first thing our wolf companion did after equipping both items was to take an imposing stance. He seemed rather proud and happy. His tail swung back and forth so quickly that it kicked up a gentle breeze.

『That suits you pretty well, Urushi.』

「Looks cool.」

「Woof woof!」

『How does it feel? Did it make walking more difficult? Are the metal parts uncomfortable at all?』

「Bark? Woof woof!」

Looked like everything fit perfectly.

『Alright! Tomorrow, we test it!』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

156. Side Story: Adventurers

156. Side Story: Adventurers

Pathetically Stupid Blue Catkin's POV

This couldn't be happening.

It simply couldn't be real. It had to be a nightmare.

「T-Tarkas? Rawrs? Tordo? T-The hell are you guys doing?」

My three companions had collapsed right in front of me. They were missing all four of their limbs and bleeding themselves out as they cried in pain and despair.

「You bitch! The hell'd y-you do to them!?!」

「...」

「You be hella open! Die asshole! Oraahhhh!」

「Nn」

「Shit! The hell!?! That's impossible! Let go damn it!」

That's fuckin' just not right! The brat just stopped my club with her bare hands!?! How the hell!?! There's just no way! My strength matches the average D rankers, but I can't budge even the slightest bit no matter how hard I try.

「W-What kind of cowardly trick are you tryin' to pull!?! There's no way someone as great as me could lose to the likes of a god damned black

catkin!」

「Fmph.」

「Gah!?!」

I couldn't tell what happened, but both my arms and legs started to burn with a sudden intense pain. Gaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!!!

It hurt so bad that I couldn't help but scream.

And then, I realized it. I'd fallen in much the same way as all my companions.

Just how did this happen? We were drinking and making merry just 10 minutes ago...

「Hey, you see that?」

「What?」

「That, over there.」

「Her? Why the hell's a brat like that in a place like this?」

Tarkas made a gesture with his chin and pointed in a brat's direction. She was eating all by 'erself, and you could tell at a glance that she was at too young an age to even drink booze.

This bar be a place where adventurers gather. Brats like her are supposed to get their asses turned away at the entrance.

「Guhehehe, why don't we make like adults and give 'er a bit of a warning?」

「Heh heh heh. Adult my ass, you're getting all giddy about having the chance to make a brat bawl her eyes out.」

Rawrs' had a huge smile plastered across his face. Looked like Tordo was spot on. He was probably planning to give the kid a "lesson" and then ask for some "tuition."

He started walking towards the girl, his steps unsteady with drunkenness.

「Hey brat, this ain't the type of place you should be hangin' around」

「He's right ya know? S'only a place for adventurers, not somewhere brats like you should be hanging around.」

「...」

「Oi! Say something goddammit!」

「Respond already ya damned brat.」

「...」

「What? So scared that a cat's got yer tongue?」

「That's why you shouldn't be coming to places like this in the first place. Now scram! Won't hit you too hard if you do.」

「Kehihihi, think of this as a lesson kid. Not all adults are as nice as us, y'know?」

「But it goes without saying that we'll still be charging you just a bit of tuition. But don't worry, we're not all that bad. You can keep your clothes, but that's it. Hand over everything else you got.」

「Gyahahahahah! Man, we're so nice.」

「...」

「Tsk. She ain't saying a word is she.」

「Hey Tarkas, ain't she one of them black catkin?」

Oh man, I was so damned drunk I ain't even noticed the black tail and ears she's got. No doubt 'bout it, she be a black catkin.

「Geheheheh, you know what? You're just a measly black catkin, so forget everything I just said. Give us everything you have, including everything you're wearing.」

「Yeah, yeah, do what he says bitch. You's just a lowly black, you're nothing to us blues. Only reason you exist is so that we can prey on you. Black Catkin? More like wimp catkin.」

Man, we're lucky. It's like we happened across a wallet. It goes without saying that the blackies will always be inferior to us blues, and that to us, they're nothing but prey.

「Annoying. Shut up.」

「Haaahh? What did you just say?」

「Shut up. Close mouth and disappear.」

Did this fucking wimp catkin just talk back to me? A Blue Catkin? The nerves of this bitch. She's going to fucking pay for this!

「Y-You fucking brat! How dare a black cat like you defy us!?!」

「Get on all fours and beg for your fucking life! I'll only leave you half dead if you do! You ain't fucking getting away with standing against us, you fucking wimp catkin!」

「...Mmph.」

Kukuku, would you look at that. We intimidated her so badly that she can't even speak no more. She's fucking shaking in her boots, serves her right! Stupid bitch shouldn't've 'pposed us from the start! Bitch! That's what you get for trying to be more than just a slave or wallet! Still though, I'm not going to be forgiving that bitch, not at all. It's her own fault for disobeying us blue catkin!

Or so I thought, but we were never even given so much as a chance to draw our weapons.

「Blue trash cats. Live rest of lives in regret.」

And then it happened, just moments after the wimp catkin spoke.

First was Rawrs. Then Tordo, Tarkas, and finally, me.

「Ugaaahhhh!」

She grabbed the club I swung with the intent to kill and severed all four of my limbs.

「Arrghghhhhhhh!」

Damn it, what's that noise? Oh, right, it's come from my very own mouth.

How the hell did it come to this? All we did was mess with a black catkin brat.

The brat stood in front of me, her eyes filled not with the hatred or bloodlust I'd been expecting, but instead with disgust. She looked at me like she was looking at a filthy roach, or mere trash by the side of the road.

「You said wimp catkin twice.」

The brat swung her blade without even the slightest bit of hesitation.

「Gyahhhhh!」

This damned brat cut off my tail!! Argghhhh!!

Why did this have to happen!?

Rescued White Dogkin Man's POV

I continued to gaze at the scene before me, unable to utter even the slightest sound.

It simply seemed unreal. I couldn't believe it to be something based in reality.

I felt that even the act of recognizing it would lead to it distorting my common sense.

But I simply had to. The sounds that assaulted my eardrums and vibrations that resounded through my body informed me that it was all too real.

「Haaaah!」

「Gugyaaaaooooohhh!」

The young girl's blade split the last remaining high ogre in half.

「Are... you serious...?」

I unconsciously let out an amazed groan. How was a girl so young completely decimating a whole hoard of D ranked magic beasts in what almost appeared to be a single strike each? I couldn't help but feel that the phrase "One Hit One Kill" existed for the sole purpose of describing what I'd just bore witness to.

High Ogres were by no means weak. In fact, they were incredibly powerful. They were capable of smashing through a full suit of armour in a single hit. They regenerated ridiculously rapidly, and their skin was so hard that the average blade would find itself simply unable to pierce it.

I knew for a fact that they were strong, especially seeing as how they'd almost killed me just a few minutes back. In fact, I'd already long steeled myself for death, as my sword was unable to inflict them with any wounds whatsoever.

But then she showed up.

When she did, my heart fluttered from despair to hope, and back to despair. I'd realized that the person that came to help me was a mere little girl, a black catkin one at that.

Just think about it, one little girl against a swarm of High Ogres, this dungeon's most powerful foe. A group of five high ogres was considered a C ranked threat. There was just no way a single girl could win against them. In fact, she was probably going to get totally demolished. I didn't think she'd even be able to buy me enough time to escape.

But she did.

She killed all 5 High Ogres in just 3 minutes. It took her less time to wipe them out than it would've taken me to kill the same number of goblins.

「A black catkin kid...」

I remember hearing a rumour about her as of late.

They said that she was a D ranked adventurer that showed up in Ulmutt rather recently. That in itself was normal, Ulmutt was where all Kranzel's intermediate-ranked adventurers gathered.

But that was the only normal part about her.

The first abnormal thing about her was that she was extremely young. She was also a member of the weakest beastkin tribe, the black cat tribe, and made it so that everyone that messed with her lost the ability to remain as an adventurer. That wasn't it either. She was also diving solo as opposed to with a party, and coming out with incredible achievements regardless.

The rumours were totally absurd. I'd assumed that she'd spread them amongst the drunks herself in order to promote her name.

Besides, there was no way for Black Catkin to be anywhere even remotely close to strong in the first place. As a beastkin myself, I thought that to be common sense.

Beastkin were creatures that more or less valued strength over all else. Those that behaved poorly would be forgiven and their actions excused so long as they were strong. In other words, we were the type of creatures that would always lay blame on the weak. Such a trend was deeply rooted in our

culture. Black Catkin were thought of as the weakest type of beastkin, and as a result, the ever so douchey Blue Catkin would often sell them into slavery. The fact that they were the lowest in the beastkin hierarchy was exactly that, a fact.

That's why I simply couldn't believe that a young, female black catkin could be that much stronger than me. Many other adventurers felt the same. That was why conversations about her were often centered on her tribe rather than her strength or appearance.

「I guess she must be The Black Cat that everyone's been talking about.」

It looked like the rumours had been based in truth.

The girl that many had started referring to as The Black Cat didn't bother turning around to face me. It seemed that her saving me had just happened to be a little bit of an extra bonus, and that she'd only been after the High Ogres to begin with.

I myself was also a D ranked adventurer, but seeing her in action had ripped my pride to shreds.

But still, I considered myself lucky. My pride was worth much less to me than my life.

I managed to stay free of injuries and live to see another day. And on top of that, I even managed to learn that The Black Cat's strength was genuine. I'm glad I learned that here and now rather than at a bar or tavern somewhere. I surely would've messed with her had I not known that she was this powerful.

「I better make sure I tell everyone else about this. They're all just as dumb as I am, so they'll probably try messing with her if I don't.」

157. The Old White Dogkin

157. The Old White Dogkin

「Wait Fran! Hold on for just a second!」

「Nn?」

Erza called out to us as we made our way over from the inn to the dungeon.

He ran towards us with full force, his inner thighs rubbing together and his massive frame jiggling as a result of his movements.

Urushi seemed to feel the same way as me; he was lying down with his tail between his legs. His body language made it seem as if he had simply lost the will to exist because Erza did.

Fran, on the other hand, was able to maintain her composure. Man, she's got more guts than the two of us combined.

「Erza? Need something?」

「You see, I just so happen to know someone that wants to meet and ask something of you.」

「Wants to meet me?」

「Yuppers! He's taken an interest in you because of all the stuff he's heard from all the other adventurers. He really wants to meet the Magic Sword Girl that everyone's been talking about.」

「What kind of person?」

「Hmmm... well, he's not a bad guy for sure. He used to be an adventurer, so he's not the strict type either. He's effectively the boss of Ulmutt's beastkin, so it won't hurt for you to know him.」

Erza's description made it sound like getting along with the person in question would provide us with a lot of benefits. That said though, we might not actually be able to get along with him.

He might think us to be cheeky. Plus, he's a beastkin, so the very fact that he wants to meet with Fran seems kinda fishy given that she's a Black Catkin.

(But introduced by Erza.)

『True. I doubt Erza would introduce you to anyone that'd try to screw with you....』

「I know how you feel. You must be a bit anxious about it, mmmm?」

「Nn.」

Yeah, in more than one way at that.

「Don't worry! I'll be right there with you. I'll make sure I take responsibility if he tries to take you for a fool.」

What? Just how? God damn, Urushi's getting all teary eyed. It's okay boy, he's not that scary, it's okay.

「...Okay. Will meet.」

「Thankies! I'll show you over to him then.」

「Nn.」

「Would you mind if we took a shortcut? I think it's one you should be able to take without any issues.」

Erza jumped the moment he finished speaking.

Apparently his so called shortcut just involved running atop the building's roofs. I guess that made sense seeing as how this the city was built like a maze and all that, but was that really okay? Would we not get in trouble?

Er, actually, I guess there wouldn't really be any complaints, at least not to Erza's face anyways. Oh well, I guess it saves time, so whatever.

「Nn. No issues.」

「Woof!」

「Knew it~!」

And so, we found ourselves in front of a fairly large house after 10 odd minutes.

It wasn't as big as the mansions nobles would typically have, but it was still fairly sizeable. Two fairly strong-looking beastkin were standing guard in front of the property's gate.

「Here?」

「Yup. This is Grandpa Aurel's house. Good day, guards.」

「Good day, Erza. It has been quite a long time since we've last seen you. Please, do come on in.」

「That I'll do. Oh, right, I've brought a little someone along with me, so don't worry about her.」

「Sir.」

Wow, Erza showing his face just flat out gets us past security and everything? Damn.

「I've done quite a few jobs for Gramps, so he's taken a liking to me and allowed me go in and out as I please.」

「Spacious.」

「Woof.」

「He's a former B ranked adventurer and a successful businessman. He's even also served at the King's side.」

Holy crap, Aurel sounds like he's the spitting image of success. Yeah, he doesn't really sound like the type that'd get along with Fran. Alright, I should find us an excuse to get us the hell out of there just in case the mood turns sour.

Though, I guess he kinda already has his eyes on us already seeing as how he's calling us out right now.

Man though, the dude's garden is absolutely massive. We still hadn't even reached the actual house yet.

The garden was beautiful. It was filled with an assortment of flowers in full bloom and decorated with both fountains and statues. Erza taught us a bit about the flowers' names as we traversed our way through to the main building.

That said though, neither Fran nor Urushi really seemed to really care about what he was talking about at all.

「Gramps! I'm here!」

「Hello Erza.」

「Hey Shalla, where's Aurel?」

「He's currently out relaxing on the terrace.」

「Thankies. This way Fran.」

「Nn.」

Erza seemed to know the place pretty well. The maid recognized his face, and he'd managed to easily find his way over to his destination without having to stop and ask the maid for directions.

Our destination, the terrace, was on the building's second floor. It, like the garden, was incredibly vast and expansive. The mansion's size made it so that the terrace provided us a good view over the city in its entirety. Both Fran and Urushi also seemed rather impressed by the angle we had on Ulmutt.

「Wow.」

「Ruff.」

They both jogged right up to the terrace railing and began looking at the city while completely ignoring the mansion's owner.

「Hahahaha. Looks like the view happens to be to your liking.」

Whew, thank god he wasn't all anal about manners and stuff. He simply watched over Fran, Urushi, and the pair's sparkling eyes with a bit of an amused look on his face.

「Nn. Amazing.」

「Woof.」

「That's good to hear. I'm Wijaht Aurel, a White Dogkin. Mind telling me your name, little missy?」

「Nn. Black Catkin, Fran. This is Urushi.」

「Woof!」

「Thanks for accepting my invitation. Do have a seat.」

The White Dogkin was like Erza in the sense that he gave off an incredible sense of impact, albeit one of a completely different type; the man gave off the same sort of impression as a Mafia's Don.

His back was straight, and his gait full of vitality despite the fact that he appeared rather old.

「You really don't look like someone in their seventies no matter how I look at you. I really would like you to tell me your secret.」

「It isn't really anything special. I simply kept setting goals for myself and moving forward. I just didn't give my body any time to age.」

Thank god he isn't the type of person I was suspecting he might be.

「This tea is quite delicious, it's one of my favourites, so I do recommend you try some.」

「Nn.」

「The leaves come from the Continent of Chrome. Collecting tea leaves has in fact been the sole hobby that I've picked up in my older years.」

「Garden?」

「I don't do the gardening myself. I just hire someone and have them do what they think works best. The garden would probably end up some sort of jungle if I was the one in charge of it.」

Fran got down to business while enjoying the refreshments provided.

「Wanted to meet me? Why?」

「Hahaha, you sure are a hasty one. I honestly wasn't driven to do so by anything in particular. I just happened to feel like meeting you after hearing all the rumours that've been going around town lately.」

「As I said earlier, he's basically the one in charge of all of Ulmutt's beastkin. He just so happened to be interested in you, Fran.」

「In charge of the city's beastkin? That's an exaggeration. I just happen to know most of the people around because I was an adventurer for at least fifty years.」

Is that really it? Does he really not like run an operation from the shadows or something? Okay, you know what, let's use the Principle of Falsehood and double check. I know Fran totally just warned me about overusing it, but this is one of this scenarios where I kinda have to! Right...?

「I took quite a bit of interest in how terrifyingly strong everybody said you were.」

「So, what do you think? Isn't she cute? She really is just as strong as they say too.」

「It seems that you've taken quite the liking to her. I can see why, it's been a while since I've seen such a bold kid, so I too immediately took a liking to her. Also, I assume the fact that she's got your approval means that the rumours were true as well.」

Apparently the part about him taking a liking to Fran was the truth.

「Still believe rumours even though I'm a Black Catkin?」

「What, did you think that being a Black Catkin innately made you weak? That's not true at all. I've met a fairly strong one when I was young, and right here in one of Ulmutt's dungeons at that.」

Aurel spoke in a bit of a nostalgic tone.

「Really? That's not something I've ever been told about.」

「That'd be because I've never mentioned it.」

「Where is that person now?」

Fran questioned Aurel in a tone of voice much firmer than her usual one. I could see why though, this was our first time ever hearing about any other strong Black Catkin.

「That... isn't a question that I know the answer to.」

「Then, what kind of person?」

「Well, it all happened a whole 53 years ago, so I've basically forgotten everything.」

It seemed that he just lied to us... but why? Was it because he died in the dungeon or something?

Aurel's expression had gone dark. It didn't seem like he wanted to explore the topic in any more detail.

「I know most of this city's beastkin, so do tell me if you happen to run into any issues. I'll be sure to give you a hand.」

The Principle of Falsehood informed me that he really meant what he said, that he'd help us out if need be. You know what, let's not try digging into that whole other Black Catkin and whatnot. There was no point probing him about the topic, especially seeing as how we seemed to have just won his favour. No point going out of our way to lose it now.

「By the way, I happen to have a request for you. Would you mind taking it?」

「What kind?」

「I'd like you to deliver something to a place not too far from here. You should be able to get it done if you work at Erza's pace.」

「Can't just ask Erza?」

「I'd prefer if you took this request. How about it?」

「Okay.」

Fran replied to him immediately. I felt that this whole thing seemed a bit fishy, but Fran seems to think it's okay, so , so I'll just roll with it.

「Great. Thanks.」

「Nn.」

Aurel made a bit of a relieved smile. It seemed that he'd really wanted Fran to take his request.

「Alright then. I'd like you to take this to one of my acquaintances.」

「Pendant?」

Aurel handed Fran a plain looking pendant with a black stone embedded inside of it. It looked like the type you were supposed to wear around your neck.

It looked a really cheap item, the kind of thing you could find just about anywhere.

「That it is. Could you hand it over to the eastern dungeon's Dungeon Master?」

「Dungeon Master?」

「Yeah. Make sure you hand it over personally, okay?」

「Nn. Got it.」

Hmm, this request's got a bit of a mysterious air to it. I'm really looking forward to seeing what'll come out of us doing it.

158. The Mysterious Dungeon Master

158. The Mysterious Dungeon Master

(Sorry?)

『What for?』

(Accepted request without asking.)

『Oh, that? I'll admit I'm a bit worried about it, but I'm game so long as you are.』

(Nn.)

『Seems like you took a liking to that old man, eh?』

(That old man. Evolved.)

『Seriously?』

(Evolved White Dogkin. White Wolfkin.)

『Didn't he call himself a White Dogkin though?』

I could swear he introduced himself as “Wijaht Aurel, a White Dogkin.”

(White Dogkin still White Dogkin after evolution. Just White Wolfkin variant.)

『Oh, so that's how that works? So you'll still technically be a Black Catkin even after you evolve?』

(Nn. Still some sort of Black Catkin.)

『Man, I'm honestly surprised you noticed though.』

(Can tell because also beastkin.)

『Is that how that works?』

(Nn. That's how that works.)

Is it cause their instincts, or maybe some sort of racial trait?

(Need to ask about evolution. That's why accepted request.)

『Ah, I get it. So that's why.』

「Nn.」

「Hmmm? Did you say something?」

「Nothing.」

「Really?」

We'd left Aurel's mansion and headed in the Adventurer's Guild's direction. We were still with Erza, and hence, naturally taking one of his shortcuts.

We hopped from roof to roof like a group of bunnies and surprised the crap out of anyone that happened to be in the middle of hanging their laundry.

Our purpose was simple. We were heading over to the Guild in order to formally file Aurel's request. If we didn't, it'd kind of end up as something along the lines of a personal favour as opposed to something that went through the guild and got processed.

Apparently, anything that involved delivering something to a Dungeon Master would automatically be qualified as a request of rank D or higher, hence, Erza had recommend that we record it so we could add it to our list of completed requests.

Moreover was the fact that anything that involved meeting a Dungeon Master was actually kind of a big deal. Hence, reporting in and notifying the Guildmaster ahead of time would be in our best interests.

「I've never actually been given the chance to meet the Dungeon Masters myself you know?」

「Really?」

「Mhmm. The Dungeon Masters shut themselves in, so you might not find them even in the dungeon's deepest depths. The Guild Master is more or less the only person capable of meeting them 100% of the time.」

Well then, it looks like this request of ours is an even bigger deal than I thought.

『Oh well. We kinda accepted it, so let's put our heads together in order to figure out some way to actually see it through.』

I've also gotta think about Aurel's true intentions as well. Why'd he go out of his way to ask this of Fran in particular?

I guess we should start by looking up some info about the Dungeon Master. The fact that it's capable of negotiation means that we know for a fact that it's a member of a race capable of speech, but honestly, that's about the extent of our knowledge.

We managed to immediately get ourselves a moment of Dias' time. Meeting the Guildmaster just like that wasn't something that'd normally happen. Things only went as smoothly as they did because we happened to be in Erza's company.

Apparently, Erza wanting to talk to the Guildmaster basically out prioritized everything else.

「Wow~ I'm surprised you're here.」

「Well, I'm not always out and about. Did you need something?」

「Not exactly. Fran was the one that needed something.」

「Oh?」

「Nn.」

Fran quickly told Dias about the request Aurel had given her.

Rather, she started from the fact that the old dogkin had wanted to see her, and accounted everything between that and her receiving the request with particular emphasis on the refreshments she was treated with.

「Ah, so you met Aurel.」

「Acquainted?」

「Well, the city isn't exactly what you'd call large, so yes, I have. Though, I'm rather surprised to see that he's given you a request.」

「I can't figure out Grandpa Aurel's intentions myself. You got any clues, Guildmaster?」

「Hmm... So Aurel too, huh...?」

「Nn?」

「Nothing, don't worry about it. I'll acknowledge his request, but with it, I'll also give you a few warnings. First and foremost is the fact that you are absolutely forbidden from harming the Dungeon Master. Harming the Dungeon Master is a crime that's deserving of something much worse than just capital punishment.」

「I know.」

He gave us one helluva harsh warning. It was possible for the Dungeon Master to destroy Ulmutt altogether if we pissed it off. That said though, we weren't planning to attack it in the first place, so that at least shouldn't be an issue.

「You should also keep in mind the fact that you may not actually be able to meet the Dungeon Master.」

「Know that too.」

「Good. 」

「Nn.」

「Another thing is that she's a bit hard to please. Try not to piss her off if you actually get to meet her.」

「She?」

The Dungeon Master's a chick?

「Whoops, that's something you should be looking into yourself, not something I'm supposed to be carelessly telling you.」

「Got it.」

We tried looking up a few things about the Eastern Dungeon Master a bit later on, but didn't come up with anything at all.

Everything about the Dungeon Master seemed to have been classified or something. The only pieces of knowledge we ended up having were the fact that she was female and the fact that she was capable of speech.

I figured that we might be able to find ourselves some hints if we looked up stuff about the Western Dungeon Master instead, but that didn't really end up producing any results either. Again, all we found out was that the Western Dungeon Master was also female.

A part of the lack of knowledge stemmed from the fact that very few had actually made it all the way through to the dungeon's depths. Even fewer had actually managed to encounter the Dungeon Masters.

『Well, I guess going in blind is basically the only option we've got.』

I mean, we were planning to dive into the Eastern Dungeon's depths anyways, so whatever, I guess.

159. Traps Suck

159. Traps Suck

『Alright, you ready to move on?』

「Nn.」

Today was our fifth day in Ulmutt. We'd already finished all our business in the dungeon's simpler subsections, and hence, we'd started digging a bit deeper.

We were currently hunting magic beasts around where the 14th floor was located. We could've gone a bit deeper given the fact that we had to handle Aurel's request and all that, but we decided to take it slow in order to avoid injury.

Speaking of which, Fran was currently in the middle of slowly disarming a trap.

The 14th floor was one of the dungeon's lower floors, and the traps had been modified to match. They were much more complex than the ones we'd encountered earlier. They were made much nastier too.

What I mean by that is that the traps themselves were full of well, traps. For example, there was a trap composed of a bunch of wires. You'd normally assume that it'd activate if you stepped on something, and that you were supposed to disarm the trap by cutting its wires. However, that one was instead made so that it'd only trigger if you tried messing with it. Another example would be a trap that fired an arrow that activated another trap.

Some traps had also started causing teleportation or instant death upon activation. We also started hitting areas that'd seal off our ability to teleport

or use Presence Detection — not that it mattered to me seeing as I had the Unsealable skill.

I mean, I knew that the Guildmaster's managed to get a few negotiations done and all, but this was still technically a dungeon. It wasn't some sort of training ground for adventurers. It was the real deal, a place in which one wrong step could lead to death.

「Nn... Done.」

『Really? Lemme see.』

Yup, looks like she disarmed that one perfectly.

Many of the Magic Beasts that thrived in the dungeon's lower levels had the Trap Detection, Trap Disarm, and Trap Creation skills. The magic beasts themselves weren't actually all that strong, but they could make for a deadly force when working in conjunction with the dungeon's traps. And that, to me, honestly seemed rather logical seeing as how the dungeon itself was pretty much crammed full of traps.

Absorbing said magic beasts' magic stones meant a fair increase in the respective skills' levels. Trap Detection had leveled to 7, Trap Disarm to 4, and Trap Creation to 3.

The dungeon's traps served to provide us with a bunch of practice too. The combination of the skill and practice had led Fran to become much more skillful in the art of disarming traps. The difference between her now and her when she tried disarming her first trap was as clear as the difference between night and day.

Two of the magics we'd obtained from Zerais' golems, Ice/Snow Magic and Lava Magic, turned out to be rather useful when it came to their applications in disarming traps.

Moonlight Magic, on the other hand, had been stuck sitting on the backburner. The only two spells we had at the moment were Moonphase and Night Vision. The former would provide us buffs at night. The latter

would allow us to temporarily see in the dark. Neither was all that useful; we probably wouldn't be able to get any value out of Moonlight Magic until it leveled itself up a bit.

Ice/Snow Magic allowed us to freeze traps and hamper them from activating. In fact, a single activation of the magic would actually even flat out disarm explosion-type traps altogether.

Lava Magic was actually even more useful than Ice/Snow Magic. We could use it to weld a trap's subsection and just flat out stop it from activating.

Both Magics had quite the potential for practical use even outside of battle-type situations.

That said though, Fran was still far from being able to disarm every single trap every single time.

「Oops.」

『Short Jump!』

「Whimper!」

Holy crap that was close. We were almost hit by a series of super high speed bullets made of water despite the fact that we'd teleported away. The area of effect was insane. We probably would've gotten seriously injured had we not escaped. The bullets were powerful enough to just flat out kill you should they hit your head or some other vital.

「Sorry.」

『Looks like you're still a bit shy of being able to disarm the traps here perfectly.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

Oh well, can't really be helped. That trap was the kind that wouldn't let you go any further unless you did something about it.

Aurel's request aside, we'd set out to do four other things.

The first was to level up. The second was to finish all the quests required for us to rank up. The third was to git gud and learn how to use all our current skills. The fourth and final was to get our hands on a skill that'd prevent us from being susceptible to skills that'd mess with our minds.

To be more specific, we were looking for a skill that'd prevent us from being affected by stuff like Coerced Camaraderie and Induced Thought.

Skills like those two only guided our thoughts, and didn't provide us with any obvious indicators like status conditions, hence why they were especially troublesome to deal with.

We ultimately managed to discover that there actually was a monster with the skill we were looking for here in Ulmutt's eastern dungeon, but it was one that only resided in the dungeon's deepest depths.

Dias and Solas both claimed that their skills simply didn't work on said monster.

Hence, we were currently giving ourselves a bit of practice while advancing towards our goal: the area at and beyond the dungeon's 18th floor. Getting there would allow us to finish Aurel's request too. It was a veritable two birds one stone type situation.

Our pace wasn't all that bad despite us actively looking for practice. We'd managed to make our way down to the dungeon's 14th floor after just 2 days worth of adventuring.

Dimensional Storage made it so that we didn't really have to worry too much about meals, baths, or bedding. More importantly, both Fran and Urushi still looked fairly motivated. In fact, the stronger enemies and more difficult traps were only getting the two even more pumped up.

Several large magic beasts had been standing in the 14th floor's first notable room.

「Growlllll.」

「Master. High Ogres.」

『I guess that means this room won't have any traps in it then.』

High Ogres, unlike the dungeon's other monsters, lacked the ability to deal with traps. None were placed in the rooms in which they were placed in order to avoid the possibility of them killing themselves.

They compensated for that weakness through pure power. They generally considered strong enough to give a D ranked adventurers a fairly hard time.

We could just flat out take them head on though, so to us, their spawn zones were more or less safe because they lacked traps.

『Here we go!』

「Nn.」

「Grrrrrrr!」

Our strategy was to wipe them all out in one go with a surprise attack. Fighting them for an extended amount of time was a bad idea, seeing as how other magic beasts could come back them up.

Urushi immediately leapt towards one of the high ogres and readied himself to bite it.

「Growl!」

A barrage of arrows flew straight towards us the moment he tried to take action.

『Holy shit! Air Shield!』

「Ruff?」

I repelled the projectiles with a spell as Urushi panicked and dove straight back into the shadows.

Apparently the room actually did have traps inside of it. I looked towards the high ogres only to find that the arrows had simply bounced off their skin.

Ahhh, I see. Traps like this can work with them because they can't damage the High Ogres at all. That said, they could prove rather lethal if they hit us.

Man, these traps just keep getting nastier.

『Alright, you know what, let's just quickly wipe them out. Inferno Burst!』

「Grooowl!」

The flame spell I used turned one of the High Ogres into a lump of coal as Urushi impaled another with a spear constructed of pure darkness.

『Well, so much for High Ogre zones being safe zones...』

「Bring it on.」

Well, I guess at least Fran's motivated, so there's that.

『Let's try being extra careful just in case. It looks like the traps are going to be getting even nastier from here on out.』

「Nn.」

『You be careful too, Urushi. We'll need to avoid stuff like what just happened.』

「Whimper...」

We discovered a type of trap we'd never seen before shortly after concluding that we'd do best to be a bit more prudent.

「Weird thread here.」

『Good job catching that. I only barely noticed it myself.』

「Trap?」

The thread Fran and I saw looked identical to the infrared sensors you'd normally see in movies and whatnot. The fact that it was visible meant that it was likely linked to some sort of magic, but I couldn't tell what would come out of popping it.

「Want to try activating?」

『Sounds like a plan. It'd be a good idea for us to know what happens when you pop it. You know, just for future reference.』

We triggered the trap with one of my doppelgangers after moving a fair ways back.

I heard a bit of an odd rumbling sound the moment my doppelganger stepped into one of the infrared-like lines.

「Master. Walls moving.」

『What?』

It was exactly as Fran described. The walls at the passage's rear slid along the floor and rearranged themselves. The former straight passageway now ended in a forced right turn.

I see, I see. The trap was on a rather large scale, and honestly, I had no idea how we were supposed to go about disarming. Just looking at it didn't really provide us many clues; we more or less had no choice but to just give it a shot.

The moment I thought that was the moment the walls started to move again.

「Master?」

『Don't look at me. My Doppelganger's already gone. Was it maybe cause of Urushi?』

「Woof woof!」

Urushi frantically shook his head. I guess that means it wasn't him either. So... who triggered it then? I mean, someone had to, the walls were moving.

My question was answered as the left wall vanished and opened up a passage that revealed a single High Ogre.

『Oh! I get it now! It was the High Ogre that popped the trap!』

It seemed that these traps were the kind that'd trigger regardless of how careful we were. That is, the High Ogres would pretty much just keep setting them off.

Huh, this looks pretty bad. You wouldn't be able to use a map here even if you had one. The traps would move around, so you'd never really be able to know what was coming at you next.

「Graaahhhhh!」

The ogre caught sight of us as we were thinking about the dungeon's traps.

『Alright, you know what, let's just get rid of that first, and then think.』

Man, this dungeon sure is one hell of a pain in the ass to deal with.

160. The 18th Floor

160. The 18th Floor

『Looks like we're finally here.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

We finally reached the the dungeon's 18th floor, the place that'd let us complete one of our overarching objectives.

The floors that extended beyond the 14th had given us one hell of an adventure. The number of magic beasts that attacked us multiplied exponentially, and we ended up activating more than 30 different traps as we traversed our way through the dungeon.

The most troublesome Magic Beasts we ran into were vapor-like creature whose species were simply known as "MIST." They could disperse their bodies and make themselves not only invulnerable to physical attacks, but also entirely undetectable to any that relied on Presence Detection. They even had the ability to activate traps if they chose to condense their bodies down to a smaller size. That in particular was something the MISTs did to us like n times. God, they were annoying as all hell.

Disposing of the MISTs was, in and of itself, rather easy. All we had to do was blast a few AOE spells every time we entered a new area. They kinda couldn't just stay in hiding if we flooded the entire area with our attacks. They'd more or less get destroyed immediately after two or three repetitions as their specs made it so that they weren't really suited to battle.

In some cases, us firing off AOE's like crazy also allowed us to set off a few traps in advance and save ourselves from having to deal with them.

The only issue with us doing that was that we more or less deprived Fran of a fair portion of her practice. That said though, we were already pretty deep in the dungeon, so I figured it was about time for us to focus on making sure she stayed unhurt instead.

Besides, I figured that it was a much better idea for us to focus our efforts on finding the magic beast that'd give us the skill we wanted anyways.

Specifically, we were looking for Dirty Wisps. They were rare apparitions that looked like black balls of light.

We walked around the 18th floor for quite some time, but we weren't able to find so much as a single one.

All our efforts ended up doing nothing but providing us exp and magic stones. Fran had leveled all the way up to 43, and I was on the verge of getting myself a rank up as well. Fran was pretty damn close to her level cap, and I was rather curious as to what would happen when she reached it. In fact, I was so curious that I even considered just having her grind out the last little bit on multiple occasions, but I ultimately ended up deciding against it..

『Oh well, I guess it can't be helped. Dirty Wisps are elusive. If we can't find them, we can't find them. Let's move on.』

「Nn..」

「Woof?」

『What's wrong, boy?』

「Growl!」

Urushi suddenly growled and used Dark Magic; he shot a jet black spear straight towards one of the dungeon's walls.

「Pigiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!」

『Dude, that's gross.』

A large, purple and orange caterpillar suddenly seemed to phase into existence. It wriggled about as it clung to the dungeon's wall and barged a strange, black liquid. A similar, putrid smelling substance spilled from the hole Urushi had opened up in the caterpillar's gut.

『Wait a sec, did I seriously not notice that thing till it got that close to us? Did you catch it at all, Fran?』

「Also missed.」

「Growl!」

Apparently the thing was called a Mimic Venom Crawler. It seemed to be the type of creature that'd wait for its prey to come to it. This was further evidenced by its skills, as it had Mimicry, Presence Isolation, and Muffled Action. As per its name, the Mimic Venom Crawler's offenses mostly stemmed from abilities related to poison. That is, it had Poison Fang, Poison Magic, and Poison Spray.

It seemed that Urushi happened to notice it because he'd detected its scent.

The intel we gathered before venturing into the dungeon suggested that Mimic Venom Crawlers were the dungeon's leading cause of casualties, and that adventurers should be as wary of them as possible. In fact, they were even thought of as more of a threat than High Ogres.

Now that we've seen them in the flesh, I pretty much came to the same conclusion. They were not only extremely stealthy but also had the ability to fell a man in a single blow by poisoning him. The only ones that could possibly deal with them were those that were highly skilled in detection, and hence, they seemed like they could cause an exorbitant amount of trouble even for adventurers of an intermediate skill level.

On the other hand, the materials you could get from subjugating Mimic Venom Crawlers made hunting them down well worth it. They were extremely useful, and four of the fetch quests we were assigned actually involved grabbing stuff from their corpses. Specifically, we needed their carapaces, their poison sacs, their venomous fangs, and their meat.

I couldn't really see anyone wanting to eat one of these things, but they were actually considered quite the delicacy. They were said to be like pufferfish in the sense that they were delicious, but could screw you over pretty hard if you didn't detoxify them properly.

Their magic stones didn't really give that many points, but absorbing them gave me opportunities to level up Presence Isolation and Poison Magic, so again, hunting them was hella worth.

Alright Urushi! It's all you, go go go!

「Urushi. Do your best.」

「Woof?」

Do nose things!

We spent the next two hours having Urushi, who'd more or less become a professional caterpillar hunter, lead us around.

Our little adventure had taken us all the way to the stairs that led down to the dungeon's 19th floor.

We had managed to take down a whole 10 of them. Hnnng.

「Master. What now?」

『Well, I mean, we're already here, so we might as well just move on. Dirty Wisps are supposed to spawn on every floor after the 17th, and we've already got all the caterpillar corpses we'll need, so there's not really any reason for us to go out of our way just to sit around on the 18th floor.』

「Nn. Got it.」

And so, we began descending the staircase.

「Woof?」

『What's wrong boy?』

「Woof woof!」

Urushi began barking at something. He seemed to be looking towards the ground.

I honestly couldn't tell what he was barking at. To me, it looked like he was just making a fuss about the stones paved below us. Only after activating all my detection based skills did I finally manage to notice that there actually was something there.

「Growllll!」

Urushi shot a jet black spear straight towards the floor. Man, what's with this deja vu? I swear this literally just happened.

「Aaaaaaahhhhh!!!」

The thing that Urushi had attacked screamed and almost seemed to ooze out of the floor in response to his strike. The form it took was like that of an orb giving off a dark light. Its identity was none other than that of the Dirty Wisp that we'd been looking for.

General Information

Race: Dirty Wisp. (Spirit/Magic Beast)

Level: 11

HP: 28

MP: 66

STR: 11

VIT: 17

AGI: 86

INT: 101

MGC: 151

DEX: 30

Skills

Presence Isolation: Lv 4

Thought Isolation: Lv 3

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 3

Magic Absorption: Lv 3

Dark Magic: Lv 6

Dark Resistance: Lv 2

—

It seemed like the Dirty Wisp had used Dark Magic in order to hide itself in the shadows. Urushi had probably only noticed it because he himself was well versed in Dark Magic.

Man, I swear Urushi's like perfect for this dungeon. I sure am glad he's with us. Shit would've been terrifying without him; Fran definitely

wouldn't have been able to get this far unscathed.

『Good job Urushi! I'll treat you to something nice later.』

「Woof!」

『How's some super spicy curry sound?』

「Woof woof!」

「Mmph. Will also do best.」

Fran took a stance; it seemed that hearing about Urushi's reward had gotten her all fired up.

『Make sure you don't let that Dirty Wisp get away.』

「Nn!」

The Thought Isolation skill that it had was exactly what we were after. No way in hell we're leaving without it!

『Urushi, make sure it doesn't teleport away!』

「Woof!」

161. The Night Fran Hit Level 44

161. The Night Fran Hit Level 44

「Hah!」

「Aaahh!」

Fran swung me straight at the Dirty Wisp, but my blade ended up passing through its body.

It looked like it used Dark Magic in order to defend itself. Specifically, it used a spell that made it momentarily immune to physical attacks.

「Fire Javelin!」

「Aaaahhh!」

『Tsk. Damn this thing's fast.』

The Dirty Wisp had managed to create a Dark Shield and fend off Fran's attack. It was not only swift as a coursing river, but also able to cast its spells at an extraordinary speed.

『Fire Arrow.』

『Fire Arrow.』

『Fire Arrow.』

I adapted to the Dirty Wisp's traits and fired off a larger number of spells in order to make sure it wouldn't be able to defend itself. I figured that the

barrage I shot at it would finally allow us to take it down, but apparently I was in the wrong.

「Aahh!」

『It disappeared...? Wait, no! The damn thing teleported!』

The Dirty Wisp appeared about 3 meters away from its prior location.

It didn't seem like it was capable of teleporting long distances, but still, it was a pain in the ass to deal with. We honestly probably could just spam at it till it died if we wanted, but we might end up breaking its magic stone if we used anything with too much power behind it. Destroying the thing we were after would kinda defeat the whole purpose of us hunting the thing down in the first place.

The issue we were plagued with was one that stemmed from the fact that the Dirty Wisp was actually quite weak. Stronger magic beasts would have harder magic stones, and thus, we could hit them harder without having to worry about smashing their cores to bits.

In that case, the best thing for us to do would be...

『Let's focus on speed and hit it before it can react.』

「Nn.」

『Urushi!』

「Woof! Growl!」

『Fire Arrow!』

「Aaahhh!」

The Dirty Wisp dove into the shadows in order to escape our attacks, and, in doing so, danced right to our tune.

Despite being quick as hell, the Dirty Wisp didn't have access to Chant Shortening, so it wasn't capable of teleporting in quick succession. In other words, all we needed to do was hit it the moment after it teleported.

We made use of our detection skills in order to predict where it'd teleport to, a feat only made possible through the experiences we gained throughout our exploration of Ulmutt's eastern dungeon.

「Ha!」

Fran's right hand flashed as she wreathed me in flame and cleaved straight through the Dirty Wisp.

『Nice!』

「Nn!」

『Alright, let's keep this up and have ourselves a wisp hunt!』

「Woof!」

And so, three hours flew right by.

『Fran, Urushi, dinner's ready.』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

We set up camp in one of the 19th floor's corners.

The combination of the tent we looted off Solas and the barriers Urushi and I put up practically made our little campsite the dungeon's safest spot.

We accomplished a lot today. We hunted ourselves some Dirty Wisps, got the skill we wanted, and even grinded Fran all the way up to level 44.

Tomorrow, we would finally reach reach the dungeon's 20th floor and maybe even have Fran hit her max level.

That was all fine and dandy in and of itself, but there was something I had to tell her before she capped.

『Hey, Fran. You got a bit?』

「Nn?」

『You're on the verge of hitting level 45.』

「Nn.」

『Appraisal's telling me that level 45 is also your max.』

「I know.」

『So uh... yeah...』

It was a bit hard for me to actually say it, but still, it was better to disappoint her now than later.

Hence, I steeled myself and decided to just be honest.

『I don't actually think hitting the level cap will let you evolve.』

It was just a prediction, but one I felt I simply had to say to her nonetheless.

I knew that the Black Cat Tribe was weak, but that didn't necessarily mean that all of its members were just flat out incapable of combat. She can't have been the only one to have ever hit level 45.

In other words, Black Catkin probably needed to do more than just hit the level cap if they wanted to evolve.

「Nn.」

Fran simply responded to the concern I voiced by nodding. She didn't seem particularly upset.

「Same as other beastkin. Satisfied conditions required for evolution. Example, fox tribes' conditions well known.」

High level foxkin were only able to evolve if they happened to possess Fox Fire, one of the tribe's inherent skills. Black Catkin also likely had some sort of restriction that would gate from evolution unless they managed to fulfill it.

「Don't know details, but heard White Wolf also needs special condition.」

『Really?』

「That's why want to talk with Gramps. Might be able to get hints.」

『So I'm guessing that's why you accepted his request?』

「Nn.」

I really should've realized that Fran was thinking more about her evolution than I was. It'd been her goal this whole time.

『Well, alright. All's well so long as you're aware.』

「No issues.」

162. The Boss Room

162. The Boss Room

「At dungeon's deepest part?」

『I think so. The boss should be on the other side of these doors.』

A day had passed since Fran and I discussed the terms of her evolution. And since then, we'd finally reached the dungeon's 20th floor, its deepest depths.

In front of us stood a single door. Its intimidating frame stood at a height of almost ten meters. It had a property that made it deflect magical energies, so we couldn't really discern as to what was in the room it led to.

We could feel a bit of bloodthirst leak through the door, but, that alone wasn't enough for us to discern the extent of the boss' strength. All it told us was that the boss was our foe.

「Dungeon Master inside?」

『Probably. My guess is that the answer is yes, but I don't really have anything to back it up.』

「I see.」

『The info we have on the boss is all over the place, so I honestly can't even make a good guess as to what we'll encounter.』

The eastern dungeon was the type that didn't have a set boss. Apparently, there were about 15 different bosses. The one that ended up appearing

would typically be the one that was best suited to combat the challenging party.

Weaker parties would sometimes be pitted against E ranked bosses, monsters even weaker than the High Ogres that one could encounter on the way to the boss room. More powerful parties would sometimes be faced by boss monsters labeled as C ranked threats. In other words, the bosses could be so powerful that they ended up transcending the dungeon's rank.

Mages have studied the dungeon and come up with a theory to describe the phenomenon. Said theory states that the precise boss that'd spawn was actually based off of the actions the party took as they made their way through the dungeon.

We did gather ourselves a bit of info on the stronger bosses that the dungeon was known to spawn, just in case.

The number of known C ranked possibilities totaled to 3. There was the Tyrant Saber Toothed Tiger that I'd fought in the past, the Smog Hydra, a six headed monster whose smoke would inflict all sorts of different status conditions, and the Specter Lord, a creature that'd summon and make use of the spirits of the dead.

Erza had fought both of the first two species. Amanda had stated that she fought the last back when she herself was a C ranker. In other words, both cases served to evidence that stronger individuals would end up facing off against stronger enemies.

Dias, on the other hand, seemed to be completely exempted from all combat. His face more or less served as a pass that'd let him get through the dungeon without having to face off against a boss.

I'm pretty curious as to the type of boss we'll end up having to face off against. We could take it easy if the boss turned out to be rather weak or something, but I'd end up feeling a bit miffed cause that'd mean that we were thought to be weak. That said, I'd really prefer if we weren't forced to face off against something that was too powerful.

Honestly, I was hoping for a D ranked spawn. That sounded like it'd be the most ideal.

That said though, there wasn't actually any issue in having a more powerful enemy spawn. Ulmutt's Eastern dungeon was unique in the sense that its boss room didn't lock you in.

You could make an escape so long as the boss didn't kill you instantly. Apparently that was one of the terms of the contract Dias and the Dungeon Master had signed.

We'd even be able to just use Dimension Jump to teleport out so long as there weren't any magic related restrictions in place too.

I planned to immediately test whether or not we actually could teleport out of the boss room. If so, I figured that we could totally just fight whatever was thrown at us regardless of how powerful it is, cause we'd at least have ourselves a life line.

『Alright, let's do this.』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

And so, Fran gave the door a push.

It groaned as it opened and revealed to us the boss room's contents.

「Ball?」

『Looks like one.』

「Woof?」

The thing that awaited us was exactly what Fran had described. It was... some sort of ball. Its shape was a bit irregular, so you couldn't really say that it was a perfect sphere or whatever, but it definitely was some sort of ball nonetheless.

Hmm... how do I put this? The boss looked like it was made out of a bunch of huge turtle shells stitched together to form a ball. It actually kind of resembled a gigantic, black pineapple of sorts. Its hard exterior looked to be about 20 meters in diameter.

I honestly couldn't tell what the hell it was based purely on how it looked, but it seemed pretty strong.

General Information

Species: Disaster Pill Bug (Insect-type Magic Beast)

Level: 45

HP: 522

MP: 521

STR: 335

VIT: 339

AGI: 412

INT: 101

MGC: 298

DEX: 151

Skills

Air Jump: Lv 5

Harden: Lv 8

Presence Detection: Lv 5

Regeneration: Lv 8

Vibration Strike: Lv 7

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 8

Resistance to Abnormal Status Conditions: Lv 8

Rush: Lv 9

Magic Resist: Lv 7

Magic Detection: Lv 5

Magic Emission: Lv 7

Reinforced Carapace

Lightweight Carapace

Hardened Carapace

Reinforced Regeneration

Automatic Mana Regeneration

Weight Boost

Greater Vitality Increase

Description: A pill bug that's undergone an abnormal evolution. It's body is covered in a hard shell. Its wings do not allow flight despite it being an insect-type magic beast. Its main method of attack is to charge at its target whilst relying on the weight of its massive body. It can use Magic Emission to suddenly change directions. It is very difficult to inflict damage upon. It is classified as a C ranked threat despite being roughly as powerful as a B ranked threat in combat.

Magic Stone Location: Heart (Center of Body).

—

The boss was a top tier C ranked threat, a foe of unquestionable strength.

I honestly wasn't really sure as to whether or not we'd actually be able to damage the damned thing. It had a whole tonne of resistances and could even regenerate. Luckily, it wasn't capable of casting any spells, but honestly, its inability to do so was more or less negligible given how powerful its charge could be.

『Fran! Urushi! Let's go all out!』

We started off with a preemptive strike. That is, all three of us fired off a spell.

『Inferno Burst!』

「Tornado Lance!」

「Grooowl!」

The pillbug moved at a near unbelievable speed and dodged all three spells in a heartbeat by rolling away.

Even just watching the action filled me with a sense of revulsion. There was no start up or anything like it. The pillbug simply went from being stationary to suddenly moving around at a super high speed. My guess was that it'd used its ability to emit Magical Energy.

This battle was one that was impossible for us to win lest we threw away the presumption that heavy things with massive frames were also slow and clunky.

「Enemy attacking.」

『Dodge it!』

The Magic Beast rolled in our direction as it used its Rush skill. This must be how Indi*na Jones felt when whenever he met himself a giant rock. The large black ball gave off an incredible sense of pressure.

「Kuh!」

『Are you okay, Fran!?』

「Nn... Just a scratch.」

『The fact that it's damaging you just by giving you a little bit of a scratch is one hell of a problem.』

Its high speed attacks were already capable of causing quite a bit of damage on their own. The fact that it had access to Vibration Strike only served to make it even more deadly. You could end up taking a lot of damage just from having it scrape you.

More important was the fact that it had magic resistance. We couldn't damage it from afar by bombarding it with spells.

『What a pain in the ass!』

「But first powerful enemy in long time.」

『What do you mean?』

「Given chance to become even stronger.」

God damn battle maniac!

But, you know what? I guess that's in part what makes her so reliable.

163. Disaster Pill Bug

163. Disaster Pill Bug

A large black ball, the Disaster Pill Bug, rapidly closed in on us.

Its massive body made its attacks incredibly powerful, but that wasn't all — the bug was extremely mobile. The combination of these two factors made it ridiculously difficult to deal with.

We'd already experienced the extent of this combination head on several times. We barely managed to dodge the bug's attacks only to have it suddenly turn on the spot and fly in our direction on several occasions. We would've long been squashed if not for our ability to teleport.

One couldn't even get away from the damn thing by taking to the air, as its Air Jump skill allowed it to chase its prey in all 3 dimensions.

Even more troublesome was the hardness of its shell. Poking at it with anything other than an all out attack would only leave it with a scratch. That would be fine and dandy and allow us to accumulate damage and all, if not for the fact that the insect could regenerate. Its defenses were as solid as Rynford's.

And if you thought that was all, then boy, you've got a whole 'nother thing coming. The Disaster Pill Bug was capable of throwing a counter with Vibration Strike the moment we tried to attack it. Its detection skills seemed to make it capable of figuring exactly when we were going to strike each and every single time.

It didn't seem like we were going to beat the bug by kiting it and poking at it sporadically. In fact, we were racking up more damage than it was.

But that honestly just made things a lot simpler.

「Nn. Same as usual.」

We just had to do as we always did and finish it off with a single powerful blow.

「Master.」

『Roger.』

Transform was one of the skills I'd used the most in our exploration of Ulmutt's Eastern Dungeon; I'd practiced it hundreds upon hundreds of times. The Katana form was one of the forms I'd assumed the most, and hence, I was now able to take it in an instant. I'd even become capable of maintaining it for an hour with relative ease.

「Master. Going.」

『Alright! Urushi, lure the boss real quick.』

「Ruff!」

We hid our presences as Urushi provoked the pill bug and got its attention.

The large black ball immediately turned in Urushi's direction the moment he threw a spell at it. The wolf was in his larger form, but he still looked puny next to the giant pill bug regardless.

「Grooowl!」

Urushi was not only more agile than Fran, but also capable of diving into the shadows if need be, so I was pretty sure that he wouldn't have any issues if all he needed to do was dodge the pill bug's attacks. His efficacy as bait was furthered by the fact that his magical strikes allowed him to ensure that the enemy stayed focused on him.

We finished all necessary preparations in a mere few moments.

That said, there wasn't actually enough space for us to use the thing we used on Rynford. The ceiling was too low; we couldn't fall far enough to build up all the kinetic energy we needed to make the technique work. I wasn't too sure how things would end up going, so I didn't dare pour every last bit of magical energy I had into my blade.

That said, we did have a plan. None of the dodging we did was aimless. We hadn't just been running away.

Fran waited for the exact moment the pill bug struck a wall and immediately went on the offensive right as it lost all momentum.

She used a combination of my threads and Air Compression to fire herself off in the bug's direction. That, of course, wasn't all. She threw both wind and fire magic into the mix to accelerate herself even further. She activated weight manipulation and cloaked my blade in the elements twice over as she drew me from a sheath of compressed air. Every last bit of destructive force she outputted was concentrated on the very tip of my blade.

「Haaah!」

『Nice!』

I'd been pretty sure of our victory, but it looked like I'd been underestimating the Disaster Pill Bug. It was a C ranked threat. C ranked threats were more than just one trick ponies. The bug was capable of much more than mere offense.

The pill bug suddenly used magic emission and caused its body to begin rotating in the slash's direction, an action that negated a fair portion of the damage that would have otherwise been inflicted.

As a result, her slash only managed to leave a large gash in the magic beast's shell; its internals remained unharmed.

『Damn!』

「Strong as expected.」

『But we've at least made enough progress.』

I mean, it would've been nice if we were able to finish him in just one hit, but not doing so was just fine as well. We'd already planned ahead, just in case.

We focused our attentions on the wound that we'd just opened.

『Looks like it worked just the way we thought it would.』

「Nn. Can't regenerate when frozen.」

Our element of choice hadn't been the combination of the usual fire and lighting that we'd always loved to use. It'd instead been ice/snow.

The experiments we conducted regarding elemental weaknesses had led us to come to realize that wounds inflicted through ice/snow magic would regenerate at an abnormally slow rate.

We'd created the perfect weakness. All we needed to do now was launch an attack into the crack we made in its shell and we'd be golden. In other words, we secured ourselves a means of attacking the bug's internals.

「Once more.」

『Let's finish it off!』

「Woof!」

The only problem was that the pill bug would likely rotate in much the same manner as it had earlier. It'd be pretty hard for Fran to attack the exact spot she was aiming for.

『Alright, here's the plan. We'll let Urushi attack immediately after he finishes one of those spins. It's gotta take a good amount of force for him to spin like that, and he probably uses a tonne of magical energy every time, so he probably can't do it in rapid succession.』

「Nn. Urushi, leave to you.」

「Woof!」

We kicked ourselves into gear so that we could bring the damned thing down. Urushi started spamming magic at it in order to draw its attention while Fran and I quietly awaited an opening.

It didn't take long for opportunity to knock.

The pill bug emitted a bunch of magical energy in order to hunt down Urushi, but missed and crashed into yet another wall.

Fran immediately leapt at the pillbug, whose open wound just so happened to be facing us. Everything was perfect. All we needed to do was hit the damned thing one more time.

『Let's do this!』

「Haaaah!」

We launched a second attack with everything we had behind it —

— Only to realize that we hadn't grasped the full extent of the pill bug's strength.

I'd thought that the tides of battle were in our favour and that victory would soon be in our grasp. In fact, I hadn't just thought it. I'd been convinced of it by none other than the Disaster Pill Bug itself.

Shit! How the hell!? I lost to a mere bug in a battle of wits!?

Something burst out from within the bug's wound the moment Fran was about to slash it.

It lured us in and made sure to attack from a range at which we would be unable to avoid its strike. That said, it seemed that it'd been pushing itself, as its actions had caused its MP to plummet.

「Nraaah!」

『Shittt!』

The insect compressed its magical energy and launched a projectile from within its broken carapace.

Our eyes were instantly filled with naught but a single flash of white.

—

I've got some good(?) news. I'm going to be picking up Nidome No Yuusha in the near future to make up for the fact that I can't find any good MMOs to play. I've spoken with the current translation team. They will be posting one more chapter as it was a sponsored chapter. I will be picking the project up thereafter.

Will this have an effect on TSKD's release schedule? It will when I'm busy or if I find a new game to play, but otherwise, hopefully not too much. (Note that the schedule will change on Monday regardless because I won't be on break anymore. It'll go back to what it was in like September/October.)

164. Level 45 And Self Evolution

Rank 12

164. Level 45 And Self Evolution Rank 12

The burst of magical energy that'd come from within the pill bug's carapace shattered it and caused its fragments to fly towards us at an incredible speed. The resulting attack that came at us was so fast and destructive that it was almost like that of a shotgun.

I hadn't realized that the pill bug could use its Magical Emission skill in such rapid succession. It hadn't done anything like this before despite having crashed into walls. In other words, the damned insect had been holding its trump card in reserve.

We'd been under the effects of Chronos Clock. As a result, everything was moving in slow motion, but the insect's projectile continued to move at a ridiculously high speed regardless. With the attack's absurd speed came an incredible amount of power. Even a single fragment of the insect's shell could probably inflict onto Fran a serious chunk of damage.

Shit. I can't deploy my full powered barriers in time.

I'd already created a set of magical and physical barriers purely out of reflex, but neither had been full forced, and as a result, the pill bug's attack had shattered them both with ease. The moment I realized that was the moment I played another one of the cards I had on hand. One of our contingencies was for me to use my Telekinetic Catapult. To that end, I'd been saving up a bunch of telekinetic energy. I immediately unleashed every single last bit of in order to form a defensive wall so I could protect Fran. However, there was a problem. I had to cover a rather large area, so I

wasn't able to exert all that much force. I was only capable of weakening the projectiles that came at us. Stopping them altogether was simply not an option.

Still, I at least had to try.

Fran had already pushed herself to the limit. She'd already started using several skills and spells in conjunction. Moreover was the fact that she'd also already initiated a full force charge in the pill bug's direction — there was no way for her to suddenly avoid the bug's counter. She simply didn't have the liberty to do so.

「Kuh!」

『Short Ju-』

I immediately tried teleporting us out the moment I heard Fran groan.

We needed to make a bit of distance between us and the pill bug if we wanted to be able to escape it.

(Don't!)

But Fran stopped me from actually casting the spell. Unlike me, she had yet to give up on the assault. She put the left half of her body forward in order to shield her dominant hand from harm. The black catgirl supported efforts further by cancelling some of her offensive skills in order to erect a barrier, one that would assist her in her charge. She even made use of the Air Jump skill in order to make sure she wouldn't get blown away.

Fran firmly held her ground, but as one could expect, she was unable to remain unscathed. The combination of Fran's barrier and my telekinesis were able to drastically reduce the attack's power, but each of the projectiles still held enough force to rend Fran's flesh; countless shell fragments embedded themselves inside of her.

The numerous wounds that'd been torn into her body were painful enough to make even the most mature adults scream in pain, but she managed to

endure the bug's last stand by gritting her teeth and grinding down on them.

「Burniaaaaaa!」

Fran used a flame spell to hit the gas yet again as she thrust me at the pill bug with all her might. The attack the magic beast fired off had rid it of its hard exterior and rendered it defenseless. Hence, my blade sank into its exposed body as easily as a hot knife would a block of butter.

I felt not the sensation of a hard exoskeleton, but instead the softness of tearing flesh as my body was driven inside of the insect's.

「Haah... Guh....」

Fran had managed to embed me within the pill bug's, but she'd lost a lot of her own strength and stamina in the process. She seemed completely exhausted and on the verge of going limp.

『Come on Fran. Hang in there, you've almost got it!』

「Will finish now...」

『Do it!』

Shit. I'm not sure she'll be able to fight much longer. It'd be best for me to try finishing the damned thing off here and now.

I already knew exactly what to do. A clear image of my intentions resonated within my mind as I solidified them.

I focused all my magical energies into my blade and activated Vibration Fang and Wind Elemental Blade simultaneously. I then directed my attention towards the use of transformation and manipulated my body in much the same way the System Announcer had done before me. I imitated the actions she took when she'd used thin, sharp strands of my blade to absorb the numerous Skeletons' magic stones. That is, I warped my body whilst retaining the image of having thin threads extend from my tip.

A hundred steel fibres parted from my body and began shredding the pill bug from inside out. I backed the effort further by throwing the Thread Manipulation skill into the mix. I forcibly controlled every last part of my body in order to have its strands run rampant within the pill bug's figure.

I wasn't able to manipulate myself nearly as skillfully as the System Announcer had, but that was honestly something I'd already been expecting.

「Nn!」

Fran pitched in as well and used Elemental Blade to cloak my body in lightning.

「Gigiii.... Giiiiiiii!!」

Fran's actions functioned as a finishing blow; her spell caused the pill bug to let out one last cry as it lost its life. The strength drained from its limbs. Its body's functions slowed to a stop.

〈Self Evolution has activated. You have gained 60 self-evolution points.〉

I ranked up. That was nice and all, but I had priorities. What mattered right now was Fran. I made use of my telekinetic abilities and gently laid her down on the boss room's floor.

『Greater Heal!』

「Uu...」

『Fran, are you alright?』

「Master...」

Whew, looked like I managed to heal her in time. Most of her larger wounds had closed up. She was still alive and kicking.

「Won...?」

『That we did.』

Fran pushed herself off the ground with both arms in response to my words.

「First victory in long time.」

『What do you mean?』

「First time in long time facing strong enemy head on and winning.」

Hearing Fran say that made me think about all the strong foes we had faced in the past.

The demon we fought hadn't been able to show its true potential, and we'd only won because it'd basically half screwed itself.

Amanda always completely rekt us every time we sparred her.

The Lich totally destroyed us. We probably would've died if not for the System Announcer.

Fran hadn't been able to engage in direct combat with the Midgard Wyrn. Plus, we didn't end up actually taking that one down either.

We only won against Rynford because of the people that'd helped us beat him back. We probably would've lost otherwise.

There was only a single instance in which we went head on against anything that was considered a C level threat or higher and won, and that was when we fought the Legendary Skeleton.

〈Fran has reached level 45.〉

「Nn!」

『Nice! You finally did it!』

General Information

Name: Fran

Age: 12

Race: Beastkin (Black Cat Tribe)

Job: Magic Warrior

State: Bound to Contract

Status Level: 45/45

HP: 551

MP: 432

STR: 286

VIT: 220

AGI: 275

INT: 192

MGC: 231

DEX: 190

Skills

Espionage: Lv 4

Wind Magic: Lv 2

Court Etiquette: Lv 4

Presence Detection: Lv 5

Sword Techniques: Lv 7

Sword Arts: Lv 7

Blink: Lv 6

Fire Magic: Lv 4

Cooking: Lv 2

Undead Killer

Evil Killer

Insect Killer

Vigour Manipulation

Goblin Killer

Evil Resistance: Lv 1

Mental Stability

Demon Killer

Skillful Dismantling

Resolute

Sense of Direction

Magic Manipulation

Night Vision

Innate Skills

Magic Convergence

Special Skills

Black Cat's Divine Protection

Titles

Undead Killer

Match For a Thousand

Evil Killer

Insect Killer

Lord of Dismantling

Healer

Goblin Killer

She Who Slaughters

Skill Collector

Skill Maniac

Dungeon Conqueror

Big Game Eater

Demon Killer

Wielder of Flames

Wielder of Wind

Lord of Cooking

Equipment

Black Cat Set (Body Armour, Gloves, Shoes, Earring, Cloak, Belt)

Bracelet of Herculean Strength

Sacrificial Bracelet

Magician's Necklace

—
Fran had finally hit level 45. She'd capped herself out.

『...』

「...」

「Woof...」

Urushi and I both watched over Fran with bated breath as she opened and closed her palms as if to verify whether or not there'd been any changes.

『...Doesn't look like anything's any different.』

「Nn.」

「Whimper...」

Damn it. It looked like my hunch had been right all along. Nothing happened to Fran; she didn't evolve.

『Don't worry about it too much, alright?』

「No problem.」

『Really?』

「Nn. More importantly. Master ranked up too?」

「Right, yeah I did. I totally forgot because I was too caught up in everything.」

General Information

Name: Master

Wielder: Fran

Race: Intelligent Weapon

Attack: 622

MP: 4150/4150

Durability: 3950/3950

Magical Conductivity: A+

Skills

Appraisal: MAX

Appraisal Jamming

Transform

High Speed Self-Repair

Self Evolution 〈Rank 12 | Magic Stones: 6689/7800 | Memory: 112 |
Evolution Points Remaining: 62〉

Self Modification (Superiorized)

Telekinesis

Lesser Telekinetic Amplification

Telepathy

Lesser Attack Boost

Space/Time Magic: MAX

Dimension Magic: Lv 1

Skill Sharing

Intermediate Status Boost (Wielder)

Lesser Recovery Boost (Wielder)

Eye of Empyrea

Unsealable

Lesser MP Boost

Knowledge of Magic Beasts

Sorcerer

Intermediate Memory Boost

Unique Skills

Principal of falsehood: Lv 5

Superior Skills

Sword Arts SP

Skill Taker SP

Doppelganger Synthesis SP

『I've got a whole 62 self evolution points. Looks like we'll be able to make ourselves a decent bit stronger.』

「Nn.」

I couldn't help but feel good about the fact that I finally had over 600 base attack. I'd only ever seen a few with numbers that high.

Heh, I was finally strong enough to be worthy of a sword with a name, even without all my skills and what not. I'm no longer the same sword I once was! No way in hell I'll ever get depressed by appraising one of Gallus' swords ever again!

「Master. Grats.」

「Woof.」

『Thanks! Don't worry, you're next. We'll definitely find a way for you to evolve!』

「Nn!」

To that end, we'd need more information. I didn't know if Aurel actually knew anything about how Black Catkin were supposed to evolve, but he himself was still a beastkin that'd undergone an evolution, and thus, he might at least be able to point us in the right direction.

『Alright! Let's go meet that Dungeon Master so we can get Aurel to tell us what we want to know.』

「Nn.」

「Woof!」

165. An Encounter With the Dungeon Master

165. An Encounter With the Dungeon Master

Urushi laid himself down at Fran's feet, as if trying to appeal for something.

「Woof!」

『Oh, right. Yup, you did level up, Urushi.』

Yeah I totally forgot that I was supposed to check Urushi's stats too.

General Information

Name: Urushi

Species: Darkness Wolf (Magic Wolf / Magic Beast)

State: Normal

Status Level: 30/50

HP: 754

MP: 865

STR: 401

VIT: 341

AGI: 507

INT: 317

MGC: 541

DEX: 271

Skills

Darkness Resistance: Lv 8

Darkness Magic: Lv 4

Sharp Nose: MAX

Espionage: Lv 7

Fang Techniques: Lv 6

Fang Arts: Lv 6

Shadow Dive: MAX

Shadow Transport: Lv 6

Air Jump: Lv 8

Fear: Lv 4

Vigilance: Lv 7

Presence Concealment: Lv 6

Regeneration: Lv 5

Deadly Poison Magic: Lv 2

Evil Energy Detection: Lv 1

Evil Energy Resistance: Lv 1

Blink: Lv 5

Muffle: Lv 6

Spirit Magic: Lv 5

Life Force Detection: Lv 8

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 6

Claw Arts: Lv 1

Poison Magic: MAX

Echolocation: Lv 8

Howl: Lv 8

Shadow Slip: MAX

Dark Magic: MAX

Night Vision

Greater Poison Fang

Automatic HP Recovery

Automatic MP Recovery

Immune to Poison

Metamorphosis

Magic Manipulation

Unique Skills

Prey Absorption

Titles

Kin to the Sword

Kin to the God of Wolves

Equipment

Claw of Capture

Defeating the pill bug had allowed Urushi to gain a level; he'd finally hit level 30. He needed way more exp than Fran to get anywhere at all, but he was still gradually making gains.

「Urushi, strong.」

『And I think he's learned a new skill too. I'm pretty sure he didn't used to have Claw Arts.』

He always did like battering his enemies with his front paws, but I guess he never really used his claws until after he equipped the Claw of Capture.

Urushi picked up a nearby rock and tossed it into the air. He watched it for a bit and used his hind legs to stand up while skillfully swiping at it with his front right paw. A series of claws extended the moment he attacked and easily split the rock in four. The attack appeared both fast and powerful, it could definitely be put to good use, especially when taking the Claw of Capture's paralysis effect into consideration.

「Nn. Urushi, cool.」

「Woof!」

The fact that Urushi was praised made him so happy he nearly jumped for joy.

You know, Urushi was actually pretty damned strong for a magic beast ranked in at a C ranked threat. His stats were relatively high, and he had an incredible amount of skills compared to the pill bug and basically everything else like it.

He might even end up being considered a B ranked threat if he just levels up and grows a bit more.

That said, he was lacking both in combat experience and composure. He also wasn't really like... wild enough. I guess that's kind of my fault because of how much I spoiled him, but how could I not? Just look at how adorable he is. He's capable of two way communication, and even listens to what we say even without the need for any sort of disciplinary action. He's practically a dog owner's wet dream.

In fact, he was only just responding to Fran petting his head by narrowing his eyes and wagging his tail. I mean, that's at least better than flipping over and showing his belly, but, still. It'd probably be better for us to be a bit more strict with him.

「Master. What next?」

『Oh, right, I got side tracked, my bad.』

We shouldn't just be hanging around like usual. We didn't come all the way here just so we could beat up the boss. We were here to see the Dungeon Master.

I shoved the Disaster Pill Bug's corpse in storage and had us survey the boss room for the time being.

We were currently at what was supposedly the dungeon's deepest depths, but I expected a door or pathway of some sort to open up after we beat the boss regardless.

What actually happened differed from, but still kinda resembled what I'd expected. That is, a glimmering pillar of light appeared at the room's center after a bit of a short wait.

「Master. Something appeared.」

『Looks like the info we got was spot on.』

The pillar was a teleportation device, specifically one that'd return all who entered it to the dungeon entrance. It'd normally be a helpful device as it'd save you the walk, but, it wasn't what we'd been looking for. Entering it would force us back out the dungeon.

『Let's try investigating the room and seeing if we can find anything.』

「Nn.」

We looked around for about 10 minutes, but we weren't able to find any sort of hidden area.

Er, actually that's not right. I mean, we did technically find a spot that seemed like it had something on the other side, but we couldn't figure out how we were supposed to get to it.

It wasn't like the other areas in the sense that the Dungeon Master had restricted access to it. Forcing ourselves in probably wasn't that great of an idea. We'd be putting not only the request, but also Fran's life at risk.

『Hmmm... What do?』

「Hmm?」

Oh wait. You know, thinking about it, it wasn't actually absolutely necessary for us to go to where the Dungeon Master was. We could just have her come out instead.

『Hey Fran, try showing off the pendant Aurel gave you.』

「Nn? Got it.」

Fran rummaged through her dimensional storage and pulled the pendant out from within it.

『Now try calling the Dungeon Master.』

「Got it. Dungeon Master. Delivery.」

She raised the pendant overhead as she spoke.

I was pretty sure that calling the Dungeon Master would work. We'd just beaten the boss, so chances were, the Dungeon Master probably had her eyes on us right about now.

And you know what, we can just try something else if it doesn't work. It's not like giving it a shot would cause any harm.

「Delivery here.」

「Woof woof!」

「Are you perhaps on one of Dias' or Aurel's errands?」

A young woman's, presumably the Dungeon Master's, voice resounded through the room after we tried calling out a few times.

「Nn. Aurel.」

「I see... Very well. I request you wait a brief moment.」

A hole appeared in one of the walls shortly after the woman voiced her agreement. It seemed to lead to the area that we'd suspected just a bit earlier.

「You may enter.」

The corridor didn't have any traps in it. Still, I couldn't help but worry that we'd be lead to a room full of magic beasts or traps. It wasn't impossible

for the Dungeon Master to choose to do precisely that, so we proceeded with caution. I made sure to have a bit of teleportation magic queued up just in case.

However, our concerns ended up appearing to be in excess. There weren't any magic beasts anywhere to be found. The path was, well, just a normal path.

The passage's only defining traits were its dimness and the softness of the light that seemed to shine through from where it lead.

A magnificent sight reached us once we finally arrived at the tunnel's exit. The room it lead to looked like it'd come straight out of some noble's mansion. It was incredibly wide, and filled to the brim with all sorts of gaudy furniture.

A beautiful woman of about 30 years stood in the room's centre. The robe-like thing she wore made it look like she was in the midst of enjoying a sort of leisurely respite. Her body was rather slim, and her face charming, but I still couldn't help but feel that she gave off the air of a warrior, a perfect balance of strength and beauty.

She was strong, incredibly so. I knew it from the moment I first laid eyes on her, but I couldn't tell exactly how strong she was. Either way, she was at least stronger than we were. In fact, she was probably at least a match for Amanda.

I didn't feel any bloodlust or malice from her, so I managed to avoid putting myself on guard. However, I surely would've immediately switched to battle mode if we came across her under any other set of circumstances, especially so if we were in a dungeon, seeing as how dungeon goers had the tendency to be more easily aggravated.

To be honest, I actually tried appraising her, but it seemed she had access to Appraisal Jamming, and thus, I wasn't able to really get many details out of it. I only managed to learn her name, confirm the fact that she was the Dungeon Master, and figure out a few of her skills.

That said though, my attention had already been drawn elsewhere.

Her head sported a pair of black cat ears, and her rear a black tail. Both of these identifying features were ones that I was rather familiar with. They practically looked identical to Fran's, after all.

『Is she a Black Catkin...?』

「You've done well to venture this far. I welcome you, fellow sister of the Black Cat Tribe.」

「Nn!」

Fran immediately took to her right knee with her left fist pressed against the ground the moment the woman welcomed her. She'd placed her right hand behind her back and placed it on her waist.

「Thank you for gracing me with your presence. I believe this to be our first meeting. I am Fran, of the Black Cat Tribe.」

Fran kicked her Court Etiquette skill into full swing and bowed whilst speaking in a manner that completely differed from her usual one. Her greeting was not like that of a retainer, but more so like that of someone acknowledging another's superiority. I guess that's just a beastkin thing?

「And I am Rumina, Warrior to the Black Cat Tribe and the master of this dungeon.」

I knew it, she was a Black Catkin, but that doesn't really explain why Fran suddenly went all out with the etiquette. I was confused, but didn't have to wait all that long to find out, as the pair's next exchange provided the answer I'd been looking for.

「Might I presume you to be a Black Tigerkin?」

「Fuhahaha, that is correct. Allow me to reintroduce myself. I am Rumina, one of the Black Cat Tribe's Black Tigerkin.」

Ah, so that's it. Fran's respect stemmed from the fact that the person that stood before her was one that'd achieved her goal.

「Again, I welcome you to my domain.」

166. Of Rumina and Hope

166. Of Rumina and Hope

『I'm honestly surprised you had it figured out.』

(Had what?)

『The fact that she was a Black Tigerkin in particular. I mean, this is your first time ever even hearing about the fact that Black Catkin could actually evolve, right?』

(Given, since same tribe. Can tell just by looking.)

Oh, right, I remember her saying a bit ago that Beastkin could differentiate between the evolved and unevolved. I guess the fact that they're both Black Catkin only deepens her understanding of Rumina's state all the more.

「I will prepare you a seat. Do make use of it.」

「Okay.」

Rumina, the Dungeon Master, went out of her way to procure Fran a chair. It seemed that she wasn't a bad person despite the fact that she was extremely intimidating.

Fran rose from her prior position and seated herself in the chair Rumina had prepped for her. You know, this is the first time I've ever seen her listen to anyone other than myself with such a degree of earnestness. She was acting in the same manner as one would upon meeting some sort of celebrity or hero that they'd always looked up to.

In fact, her eyes almost seemed to sparkle every time she looked in Rumina's direction. Likewise, her ears and tail both continued to move around restlessly. I could only gauge the manner in which she was acting to be normal. The person before her held the key that'd allow her realize her desires, or at least the closest thing to it.

「That wolf of yours... No, nevermind me. Let us disregard my mention of the topic and move on.」

「Woof.」

Urushi was sitting on the carpet with his limbs sprawled, not because he'd gotten attached to Rumina, but instead because he understood that he should listen to her because she was above him, and therefore should not be offended. Yup, that's a canine for you.

「I believe you stated that you came on Aurel's behalf?」

「This.」

「Oh...? So that is what he intended.」

Rumina nodded in acknowledgement after taking the pendant from Fran's hands and looking it over.

「It appears to be genuine.」

She fiddled with something at the pendant's centre and flipped it open to reveal a small piece of paper. It seemed that the paper was actually what we'd been tasked to deliver.

Rumina unfolded the piece of paper, the letter, and looked over its contents with a bit of a pondering expression.

「Nn!」

「Growl!」

An incredible amount of bloodlust leaked out of Rumina's body. It'd been sustained for but an instant, but the sheer strength of it had caused Fran to jump with a start, and Urushi to growl whilst raising his body.

「Apologies. I merely happened to recall an unpleasant memory.」

Rumina smiled a gentle, refreshing smile. The bloodlust that stemmed from her body was nowhere to be seen — not that it'd been directed towards us in the first place.

Whew, that had me on edge. It seemed that the same had happened to Fran, as she only just managed to sit herself back down.

「Provide that Aurel kid with my acknowledgement.」

Rumina handed Aurel's pendant back to Fran.

「Pendant?」

「I've no longer any need for it. Return it to Aurel.」

Turned out she really didn't care about the pendant itself.

「Got it.」

Wait, did she just call Aurel a kid? I swear the dude's like at least 70. The hell? Rumina looks like she's around 30.

「Rumina, seems young?」

「Hahaha! You are quite the brave one. I believe this to be the first time anyone has ever asked my age since I became this dungeon's master.」

Rumina's words didn't carry even the slightest hint of anger. In fact, she instead regarded Fran with a kind, grandmotherly expression. It seemed that she was acting a bit more relaxed than she otherwise would have because she and Fran were of the same tribe. Likewise, Fran was continuing to act rather respectfully despite having reverted back to her usual curt manner of

speech. I guess that's just what it meant to be of the same tribe; the relationship they shared was just flat out special.

「I've stopped keeping tally ever since becoming a Dungeon Master, but I believe I should at least be five hundred years of age.」

According to Rumina, she stopped aging the moment she became a Dungeon Master. She could apparently only die if the dungeon core was destroyed if someone was to actually just straight up murder her.

「It is possible for Dungeon Masters to alter their appearances through the use of magic, but I myself have chosen to remain as I was on the day that I was first changed.」

In other words, Rumina had lived a long life despite her appearance and attained evolution with her very own hands.

「Rumina.」

「What is it?」

Fran righted her seating posture and gazed in Rumina's direction. In doing so, she conveyed to the other party that she wanted to talk about something serious. Rumina seemed to catch her drift, as she returned the younger catgirl's gaze.

「Black catkin... can evolve?」

Fran cut straight to the point and asked the about the one thing she wanted to know about most.

Rumina had the answer and was right before us, but I still couldn't help but worry that she wouldn't be able to get her hands on what she sought.

「...」

Fran held her breath and squeezed her hands in anticipation; a moment of silence persisted as she stared straight at Rumina and awaited her answer.

「Without a doubt.」

「I see.」

Fran was flooded with a whole assortment of emotions, all at once. They were so fierce and numerous that they rendered her unable to provide anything but a short response. She didn't just feel joy or hope. She also recalled all the hardships that she'd gone through, all the her frustrations and pains. Above all, there was relief. She learned that the path she'd walked was not one travelled in vain.

That single short phrase of her's carried with it every single one of her feelings.

「I want... to evolve.」

「Yes, and?」

「Please tell me what I need to do to evolve.」

Fran immediately placed both her hands on the table and lowered her head as she awaited Rumina's answer. Chances were she probably would've totally genuflected or prostrated had she been on the ground.

I too focused all my attention on Rumina and awaited her reply.

「I would love to instruct you my method of evolution.」

「Then!」

Fran lifted her face as her body leaned itself in Rumina's direction. Her face was flushed, and her mouth half open. She was clearly as excited as could be.

But Rumina's next words cut it all short.

「But that is not meant to be... I cannot directly convey to you my methodologies in their entirety.」

「Why...?」

Fran's expression twisted into one of desperation.

「I am sorry...」

「...」

Fran fell back into her seat like a puppet with its strings cut. She probably would've totally fallen over if not for her chair's backrest.

She was very clearly disappointed. The key that'd allow her to achieve her goal had been dangled in front of her only to be taken away before she had any chance of actually grabbing at it.

Still, I think she did a good job holding in her discontent.

Rumina's expression did the same as Fran's and darkened. But unlike Fran, her eyes were filled with pain.

「My sincerest apologies. I would have been willing to tell you it all if I was not a Dungeon Master.」

「Meaning...?」

「The Goddess of Chaos grants upon Dungeon Masters a large number of blessings. We are given the ability to manage a dungeon and eternal youth, but blessings are not all we are given. The goddess also binds us with a curse.」

Rumina informed us that she wasn't able to tell us too much. She was restricted in her speech with regards to the dungeon and its workings.

She wasn't capable of conveying any restricted information, be it through speech or writing.

「So Goddess of Chaos related to Black Catkin evolution?」

「Indeed. We of the Black Cat Tribe were shackled by the will of the Gods five hundred years prior. Thus, I am now the last Black Tigerkin.」

「One question.」

「Very well. I shall answer any question I am capable of answering.」

「Black Catkin, evolution impossible?」

「That would be incorrect. It is simply difficult for our members to attain evolution.」

Rumina's answer hit Fran with a wave of relief. It seemed she could have hope so long as it was still possible.

「Okay. But, why Gods made more difficult?」

「That... I cannot tell you, for I know not the answer.」

「Then, how to evolve in the past?」

「Kuh... Apologies. I cannot tell you that either.」

Rumina clenched her teeth and lowered her gaze. It seemed that she was feeling just as frustrated as Fran was. She wanted to help her fellow tribesman evolve, but was simply unable to.

「What... if I was to tell you...」

「Nn?」

「What manner of choice would you make if I was to tell you that you could evolve if you simply chose to slay me?」

167. The Extent of a Black Tigerkin's Power

167. The Extent of a Black Tigerkin's Power

Rumina suddenly suggested something that I could only describe as outrageous.

「What manner of choice would you make if I was to tell you that you could evolve if you simply chose to slay me?」

「If I... kill you?」

「'Tis just hypothetical, but do give me an answer.」

「Won't kill.」

Fran's reaction came immediately.

Her response was exactly what I'd expected it to be. Fran wanted to evolve, not for vanity, but for the sake of her tribe's pride. There was simply no way she'd be willing to trade the life of one that'd accomplished her goal in order to fulfill it. Plus, Dias had totally nailed into us the fact that we weren't allowed to kill the Dungeon Master — not that I thought we were actually capable of doing so in the first place.

The guild would end up labeling us a traitor even if we actually did manage to kill her, so in that sense, we technically just couldn't.

「So that is your answer... It was exactly what I had expected it to be. Quite the resemblance you bear...」

「Nn?」

「I was merely rambling, do not mind me nor the odd question I posed. Unfortunately, that is all I have to tell you regarding evolution.」

Why'd she just ask us that? Could it maybe... be true? Nah, no way, right? I mean, she wouldn't have been able to ask us the question if that were to be the case. But like, would she really ask us something like that for literally no reason? It had to be some sort of hint, at the very least.

Was killing another member of the black cat tribe supposed to be what'd allow her to evolve? Or what about maybe just killing a Dungeon Master of some sort? Wait no, can't be that one. We'd already killed that one Goblin Dungeon Master guy already.

Hmmm, iunno. I don't get it.

「It is not much for consolation, but do have yourself a cup of a tea.」

Rumina offered Fran a drink and started talking to her about the Black Cat Tribe's village in an attempt to cheer her up. It seemed that the two were able to converse as much as they'd like so long as the topic didn't pertain to evolution.

She described that it was normal for Black Catkin to evolve 500 years ago, back before she became the dungeon's master. They didn't used to be considered as inferior to any of the other beastkin races. In fact, they'd been one of the most respected tribes. She wasn't able to tell us too many details about what had happened way back then, but, she recounted what she could.

I couldn't really understand the exact extent to which the Goddess restricted one's ability to disclose information, but it evidently stopped her from talking about evolution or the reasons for which the Black Catkin ended up under their current circumstances in the first place.

The Black Cat Tribe's history had practically been wiped clean off the board. The only people that still knew it were probably the elves, seeing as how they were long lived. I'd really like to talk to one and ask why the gods

wanted to go as far as even making it seem like Black Catkin were unable to evolve.

Fran and Rumina ended up having a fairly long conversation despite the fact that they weren't able to discuss evolution. Neither had met another Black Catkin in quite a long while, so they really hit it off.

「Ah, right... I do have one last matter I'd like to ask of you, if you would not mind it.」

「Nn. Won't mind anything.」

「Hahaha, worry not. It is nothing difficult. I would simply like to ask you to convey to Dias a message for me.」

「Dias? Not Aurel?」

「Yes, Dias. My message to him is but a single phrase: Fulfill the contract. Do well to remember it.」

「Got it.」

「Have you anything you would like to request of me in return? I will do for you anything that I am capable of.」

「Request?」

「Indeed.」

Rumina's question caused Fran to fall into thought. I was fairly certain that she was thinking of and dismissing a whole slew of ideas.

(Master?)

『She did say you ask for whatever you wanted, so just do that. Voice whatever happens to come to mind.』

「Got it.」

「Have you a request?」

「Nn.」

Fran quietly nodded as she looked at Rumina with a gaze like that of a warrior.

「Want to spar.」

「Oh?」

「Want to see extent of Black Tiger's power.」

I had to say, it really was like Fran to want something like this. She wanted to experience first hand the power that she sought.

Rumina responded to Fran's request with a heartfelt, entertained smile.

「Very well. I shall show you my strength. I will, however, first require a moment, as I must prepare.」

「Nn.」

「I shall provide you a servant for the time being. Order it as you will.」

A wooden doll, much like the ones used in character design, materialized in response to Rumina's words.

It refilled Fran's cup with movements as fluid as those of a human.

「Thanks.」

The doll not only nodded in response to Fran, but also retrieved some cookies and chocolate from a shelf in one of the room's corners before presenting them as if serving her.

From the aforementioned actions, I understood that it was basically Rumina's familiar despite the fact that it wasn't capable of speech.

「Nn. Tasty.」

「I seem to have kept you waiting for quite the amount of time.」

「Nn?」

Rumina returned after ten odd minutes. She claimed to be ready, but looked exactly the same as she had before setting out.

She was still wearing the same thing, a thin outfit made of cloth that seemed to resemble a noble's casual wear. Her body hadn't been decorated with even a single piece of armour.

Her sword was pretty sharp, but it didn't emanate any magical power; it didn't seem to have any special properties or abilities.

「Follow after me.」

Rumina lead us to a dome-shaped room with a diameter about a hundred meters across.

「I have only just made this room, and thus, 'tis a bit dreary. Unfortunately, it was all I could prepare as I hadn't a suitable space for us to spar in. Have you any particular complaints with this space?」

Apparently, Rumina hadn't gone off to prepare any sort of armour. She had instead been working on preparing a room. Yup, that's a Dungeon Master for ya. The scale she thinks on is completely different from our own.

(Master, just watch.)

『Yeah, I know. You do you.』

I mean, it's not like they're fighting for real. It's just a spar, so yeah.

「Shall we start?」

「No equipment?」

「Oh? Have you confidence in your ability to land a blow?」

「Of course.」

「Hahaha! How spirited you are. Fear not, my clothes have been enhanced through the magical arts. It offers greater defenses than most armours crafted of metal. I have also in my possession a Sacrificial Bracelet.」

「Got it.」

「Now then, I believe it should be time for us to begin?」

「Nn!」

And begin they did. Rumina, like Fran, was a swordsman. The way she traded blows with Fran demonstrated the fact that she was highly skilled.

Her Appraisal Jamming skill made it so I was only able to pick up on her detection based skills, so I was only now able to find out that she was capable of casting magic. That is, I could tell at a glance that she had access to the Magic Manipulation skill.

They began at a milder pace, and probed at each other for the sake of evaluating each other's skill. From there, the two gradually picked up the pace and started swinging in sharper, faster manners.

「Splendid! Your skill with the sword is incredible for one of such a young age.」

「Nn!」

「What? Can you no longer keep up?」

「Haaah!」

「You have erred! Your blow would have been much more effective had you taken another step forward.」

Rumina was, as one would expect, much more skilled than Fran. The older Black Catkin had the liberty to verbalize the other's mistakes despite her going all out. Her precise manner of doing so was like that of a coach or teacher.

「That is not all you have, is it? Display to me all you can!」

「Nn. Fire Javelin!」

Fran created a spear wreathed in flame as she threw yet another slash. Her plan had been to distract Rumina in order to land a blow with a two pronged attack, but her attempts ended in utter failure. The flames hadn't been enough to offer even the slightest distraction.

「You are far too naive! A spell like that fails to so much as even serve as a distraction!」

「Nn!」

Their battle transformed from one purely based in swordplay to a fierce exchange of spells. Rumina turned out to be capable of using both the fire and wind elements.

The two fought for what felt like an hour.

Fran was out of breath. Rumina, on the other hand, merely looked satisfied.

「You are incredibly strong for a Black Catkin that has yet to evolve. You will surely become strong enough to leave your name in history should you find a path to evolution.」

She spoke with a smile, but quickly twisted her expression into a more stern one.

「It is about time for us to bring this session to an end. I shall do you the favour of putting a portion of the very power you desire on display for my

last act. Worry not, I shan't kill you.」

「Bring it on.」

My blade trembled as an incredible amount of magical energy suddenly burst out of Rumina's body. Holy crap. She had to be at least as strong as Rynford.

「Then here I come.... Lightning Rush!」

I'm not sure if it was because of I was super focused on her or what, but everything Rumina had said sounded clear to me despite the fact that she'd muttered the first half of it. The attack she launched caused an incredibly bright flash and sent Fran flying across the room.

168. Lightning Rush

168. Lightning Rush

「Lightning Rush!」

Fran flew; the attack that followed Rumina's shout launched her a whole 30 meters. Her body sank into and shattered the wall despite it looking like it was made of a rather tough material.

Holy fuck! The hell just happened!? The attack was so quick that I couldn't see shit!

I had no idea exactly how it all happened, but Rumina was now standing exactly where Fran had been just a moment ago. We, on the other hand, had been sent flying. I mean, I did feel like we'd gotten hit by something, but I wasn't able to tell what that something had been.

Only a few moments after receiving the attack did I finally begin to process any information pertinent to it. The attack's name, the fact that I'd felt a slight shock right as Rumina collided with us, and the smoking burn mark on Fran's chest all pointed towards the fact that she'd attacked us with something based in the lightning element.

『Fran! You okay?』

「Ugh... Heal.」

Fran coughed up a wad of blood as if to evidence that her internals had suffered a good bit of damage. Luckily, it looked like she was still alive and kicking regardless.

Rumina really had followed through with her declaration. She'd inflicted a pretty major injury, but Fran had managed to live through it. It seemed that she'd only used this attack because she'd become convinced of the fact that Fran would be able to tank it.

「Are you alright? I accidentally put a slight excess of force into the attack as it has been far too long since I have had the chance to enjoy a battle like this one.」

Though it looked like she messed up a bit.

「I had only intended on blowing you aback.」

Rumina hurried over and used a potion on Fran.

Man, just what the hell was that Lightning Rush thing anyways? It was so damn fast that I honestly couldn't tell.

That, however, didn't mean I didn't have any idea as to its identity. The term Innate Skill floated through my mind despite the fact that I had no confirmation as to whether or not she'd even used a skill in the first place. Rumina's words had mentioned that she wanted to show Fran what was to come, that she would show her a Black Tigerkin's power. In other words, the attack she just showcased would logically be a skill innate to Black Tigerkin.

Though I hadn't been able to observe it, I had at least learned that the epitome of strength still lay far beyond.

「It is regrettable, but I must not keep you in a pen with me in perpetuity.」

Rumina spoke to Fran, whose wounds had been healed, in a tone filled with lament.

The younger Black Catkin seemed to feel the same, as her gaze was cast downwards in loneliness. However, her feelings were only second to her goal. It was mission critical for her to go back out into the world so she

could find out more about evolution. We were still betting on us being able to get a few hints from Aurel seeing as how he'd gone out of his way to ask us to do this and everything.

I mean, I didn't think him sending us here was just a coincidence, as he knew Rumina. He himself had evolved as well, so I figured there was no way he didn't know she herself was someone that'd evolved. He also knew that Fran was a Black Catkin. Throw in all those factors, and you have for yourself something that could only possibly be some sort of setup.

In fact, it almost felt like he'd only acted in order to acquaint Fran and Rumina with one another. It would only make sense for him to know something about the Black Cat Tribe's evolution, or at least something that'd be of help to us.

「The teleportation device left in the boss room has yet to deactivate. Entering it will allow you to return to the dungeon entrance.」

「Can meet again in future...?」

「Hahaha. That, I would enjoy. I shall arrange it so that you will have the opportunity to visit me simply by visiting the boss room. 」

「Nn. Got it.」

Rumina ruffled Fran's hair, which caused the younger girl's eyes to narrow and ears to twitch in delight.

『You sure you're all set?』

(Nn.)

The two stalled for about 10 or so minutes because they were rather reluctant to part. I myself thought it'd be fine for the two to enjoy a bit more time together, but Fran herself had decided it was time to go. She said goodbye to Rumina and started walking back towards the boss room.

「Farewell.」

「Nn.」

Fran turned back several times, but eventually managed to get herself to leave, albeit whilst looking back in Rumina's direction.

「Bye bye.」

「A path to your goal most definitely exists. 'Tis narrow and full of obstacles, but it is not one you will be unable to traverse so long as you persevere.」

「Nn!」

Rumina gave her one last shout of encouragement as the the teleportation circle's light enveloped us and brought us back up to the surface.

The dungeon's entrance looked just the same that it had a few days ago.

『I guess we might as well go hit up Aurel and tell him we're done.』

We tried to leave the fortress that surrounded the place in order to make our way over to Aurel's mansion, but we weren't able to as we were almost immediately swarmed by the guards and adventurers in the area.

Apparently the adventurers standing right outside the dungeon had noticed that we teleported in, and immediately started spreading the news.

「Damn! Looks like she's back in one piece.」

「You just teleported, right? Doesn't that mean you beat the boss?」

「Really gotta give it to her. That's the girl subjugated those dirty thieves for you.」

「You planning to stay solo? Cause my party would be glad to have ya.」

「She'd be much more at home in our party. We've got way more girls than you guys.」

Holy crap. Everyone was acting like they loved us.

It seemed that beating the boss, and by extension, teleporting back to town, was a status symbol of sorts, an act that earned the respect of Ulmutt's adventurers. This held especially true if the dungeon in question was the eastern one, seeing as how it was the more difficult of the two.

The fact that she was young and entirely solo, Urushi aside, only made her achievement shine all the more.

All ten or so of the adventurers bombarded us with their questions and comments. The answers she gave them caused their eyes to sparkle as they raised their voices in wonder. Even hardened veterans far older than herself were looking at her with admiration. I thought it to be a rather funny sight, but Fran seemed happy, so all was good.

「You charged into a horde of High Ogres all by yourself?」

「Wow, I can't believe you actually managed to disarm that trap!」

「What was the boss like?」

A certain blob of muscle raced over and liberated Fran from the onslaught shortly after it started.

「Mmkay everyone, that'll be it for questions.」

「Erza.」

「It's been so long since I last saw you! I was so worried cause you never came back out of the dungeon.」

「Nn. Was training.」

「I know, but I just couldn't help but be worried.」

Erza's eyes dampened as he twisted his body back and forth on the spot. It looked like he really was worried about her. I mean, I was grateful that he was, but I honestly couldn't stand how uncute his actions were.

「And I'm sure you're just exhausted from the boss fight, mh,m. This dungeon's really well known for how it likes to throw bosses that scale with you and work against your weaknesses. You're really strong Fran, so I'm sure you would've gotten a magic beast whose threat level was at least a C.」

「Nn. Got one.」

「Weally? Are you okay? You're not hurt, right?」

「Already healed.」

「Already? So you really did get hurt? Waaaaow, I really should've come with you. Everything would've been totally A-Ok.」

「But then not good for training.」

「Mhmm. That's true. You know, I really love how stoic you are Fran. It's so adorbs. Being able to beat a C ranked threat with just you and your puppers means you're reallllly strong too.」

Wait, why's Erza here anyways? Is this just a coincidence, or?

「Hey sis, Erza, weren't you here because you had something you wanted to talk about?」

「Ah, right! Yeah, I did!」

Apparently it wasn't any sort of coincidence, as one of the guards that'd promptly called out to the buff dude had also stated that he had actually asked to be notified when Fran appeared back in town. Said guard also reminded him that he apparently did have some sort of business.

「Whoopsie daisy. Sorry, I almost forgot. I was just super excited because I hadn't seen Fran in so long.」

Oh god why. Please, no. Please never stick your tongue out and wink at the same time ever again.

I mean, I knew Erza was actually a pretty good guy, but that's just gross.

「Something?」

「Mhm! But it's not something we can talk about out in the open, so let's head back to the guild first.」

「But need to tell Aurel quest clear.」

『We can have the Guildmaster just send him a message or something, so there shouldn't be any issue with us heading there first.』

「Nn? On second thought, will go to guild first.」

「Is that really okay? Are you sure you don't need to talk to the old man first?」

「No issues.」

And so, we had Erza lead us back to the guild.

169. The Lion-Topped Carriage

169. The Lion-Topped Carriage

A sudden but important reminder popped itself into my head as we made our way in the guild's direction.

『You think leveling up Thought Isolation might be a good idea seeing as how we're about to have to talk to the Guildmaster?』

(Nn. Sounds good since still level 1.)

『Yeah, but there kinda is a problem. Iunno how he'll react to us suddenly having the skill at a decent level.』

If I was him I'd think it pretty sketchy for us to suddenly have something that'd stop him from reading our minds.

(Already too late. Identity as intellegent weapon already exposed.)

『Hmm. Is it really too late?』

(Nn. Justification, can just say used Master's ability. Master just that amazing.)

『Seriously?』

(Nn. Since Intelligent Weapon.)

You know, now that I think about it, I might actually be pretty awesome. The fact that I knew about the Divine Blades had always made me think of myself as an inferior good. I mean, I at least had enough confidence to think if I'd be targeted if people found out about me, but that was pretty much it.

Reflecting on it from a more logical standpoint made me actually seem rather desirable, as Intelligent Weapons were better than Magic Swords, but not as good as Divine Blades.

In other words, the fact that I was an intelligent weapon could actually be used as a pretty decent arbitrary excuse for when we wanted to just bullshit through things. People wouldn't really find it odd because of how strange Intelligent Weapons were in the first place.

『True true.』

Eh, yeah, I was convinced that there weren't any detriments to actually going through with it, so I used up 18 of my self evolution points and just flat out maxed the skill.

〈Thought Isolation has reached its maximum level. It has evolved into the Perfect Thought Isolation skill.〉

Oh shit! The skill evolved? Sweet, Perfect Thought Isolation sounds hella awesome. Mind reading? Induced Thought? Come at me bro, I got this. The best part about the skill was that I could adjust the extent to which I blocked my thoughts out. I could use it to mess with people that could read minds by only allowing them to read specific thoughts.

(Other skills, what to do?)

『Would probably be better for us to just hold onto them for now and think things through a bit more carefully first.』

I had a limited number of points, so it'd be best for me to be a bit more prudent in their use.

『Let's think carefully about how we want to use them.』

(Nn. Got it.)

I was thinking of leveling up the Divine Sword Arts skill myself, but I didn't really mind relinquishing the points to some other skill if Fran

wanted to, seeing as how she was the one that was going to be using them and all.

That was especially true because of the fact that she was more creative than me. She came up with some pretty interesting stuff back when we were fighting Rynford, so I was really looking forward to seeing what she'd be able to think of and pull off in the future.

Erza stopped just a bit before we arrived at the guild.

「Hmph. It's started getting really crowded. Everyone's in our way.」

There were a lot more people here than there were where we were a few minutes ago. To make matters worse, they weren't just walking along or anything either. They'd all gathered up in a crowd, which in turn made it more difficult for us to get through them.

『You think something happened?』

「Erza. Something happened?」

「It seems like a bunch of high ranking foreign nobles have just arrived in town. They're here to watch the Martial Arts Tournament because it's coming up soon. It's just going to keep getting worse from here on out because we'll be getting a huge influx of nobles and adventurers. Everything always gets really crowded around this time of year. It's Ulmutt's busiest season.」

Ohhhhh. So the nobles are taking up basically the whole road and making everyone else sit off to the side while they do? I guess that means it's kinda like, but not as bad as the old Japanese Daimyo stuff they used to do; everyone here has to just sit and wait until they're through.

「I think we should just take the high road from here.」

「Got it.」

I looked down on the crowd from Fran's back as she leapt onto the rooftop

In doing so, I saw the most extravagant looking carriage I'd ever seen since reincarnating. The wooden lion stuck on its roof looked so real that could honestly see it coming to life at any given moment. Its body was crafted of a lustrous ebony, and its ornaments a gaudy mix of gold and silver. Much to my surprise, its near excessive decorations didn't make it look vulgar or over the top, but instead caused it to give off an elegant air.

Even a single glance was enough for me to tell that they weren't just your everyday low end nobles.

The only thing I didn't get was why they had so few escorts. Their carriage looked like something that'd normally be accompanied by dozens of guards.

I actually couldn't believe that it was totally exposed to danger save for the coachman and the pair of guards that stood to its left and right. It wasn't even a part of a caravan or anything like that either. I knew that we were in a in town right now and all that, but still, weren't the people inside of the damn thing being you know, a bit too careless?

Or so I thought... until I observed the coachman and the carriage's two guards in more detail.

『Damn, they look strong.』

Just looking at the way they carried themselves made me intuitively realize that they were extremely capable.

『Hmmm, I should be able to get away with it if I do it right now...』

I wanted to appraise all three of the people outside the carriage, but Fran was moving too quickly, and made it so I was only capable of appraising one of the two guards.

『Whaaaa?』

(Master. Problem?)

『Nothing really important. Just that carriage's guard is hella stronk.』

I knew he'd be strong, but I'd never been expecting him to be that strong.

General Information

Name: Goldalfa

Age: 44

Race: Beastkin (White Rhino Tribe / Black Steel Rhino)

Job: Sharpaxer

Status Level: 72/99

HP: 1256

MP: 422

STR: 654

VIT: 582

AGI: 267

INT: 173

MGC: 247

DEX: 299

Skills

Intimidation: Lv 8

Super Herculean Strength: Lv 8

Herculean Strength: MAX

Fist Techniques: Lv 5

Fist Arts: Lv 5

Presence Detection: Lv 3

High Speed Regeneration: Lv 4

Regeneration: MAX

Club Techniques: Lv 6

Club Arts: Lv 6

Mining: Lv 8

Resistance to Abnormal Status: Lv 7

Blink: Lv 3

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 7

Elemental Blade: Lv 8

Greater Earth Resistance: Lv 4

Charge: Lv 7

Axe Techniques: MAX

Axe Arts: MAX

Divine Axe Techniques: Lv 6

Divine Axe Arts: Lv 7

Magic Perception: Lv 3

Vigour Mastery

Goblin Killer

Dampened Sense of Pain

Dragon Killer

Strengthened Skin

Innate Skills

Awakening

Shockwave

Titles

He Who Protects

He Who Is Like a Great Mountain

Dungeon Conqueror

Dragon Killer

A Ranked Adventurer

Equipment

Earth Dragon Horn Great Axe

Earth Dragon Scale Armour

Sticky Flame Spirit Mantle

Bodyguard's Bracelet

Ring of Poison Detection

—

Shit, he's an A ranked adventurer, and an evolved beastkin too. He was just as strong as Amanda. Were the other two like that too? I guess that explains their lack of other guards. They literally don't need them. Actually, having three people that strong is already just flat out excessive. The three of them would honestly probably be able to just totally roll the entire city of Ulmutt all on their own.

Fran turned back in excitement the moment I told her about him.

(Amazing! Rhino tribe famous for strength, but few in number.)

『Wow, really?』

You know, thinking about it, this is actually my first time seeing any rhino beastkin, which kinda makes sense if they're really rare. That said, the guy just kinda just looks like a human with a big frame.

Both the Super Herculean Strength and Vigour Mastery skills caught my interest.

I didn't get to appraise either skill, but I figured they were the respective upgrades to Herculean Strength and Vigour Manipulation. I was interested in his innate skills as well, but I couldn't appraise or intuit either, so they were left as unknowns for the time being.

We might be able to find the answer if we do a bit of research at the guild or ask Aurel or something. He's got a tonne of experience, so he might know. Moreover, there's actually a fair chance he might have some info on the person himself as well.

(Nn. Will ask!)

It seemed Fran herself was totally on board and going full steam ahead.

170. Dias' Secret

170. Dias' Secret

Dias greeted us with a surprised look on his face upon our return to the guild and ascent into his room.

「You've already beat the boss? That was pretty quick.」

「Nn.」

It seemed he didn't expect us to already be done with the place, which I guess did make sense seeing as how we were training and all that. It probably would've taken like twice as long if not for my ability to level up skills through the absorption of magic stones.

「Message from Rumina. Fulfill contract.」

「Oh my. Who's Rumina?」

「Sorry Erza, that's a bit of a secret.」

Apparently everything about Rumina was supposed to be a secret kept even from Erza.

Whoops...

「Mmkay. Don't worry, I get it.」

「Sorry. Thanks.」

「Teehee. A good woman is one that doesn't ask too many questions.」

Erza seemed to catch onto to what was going on and dropped the topic immediately after winking. His quick response seemed to stem from the fact that he was completely aware of the difference in status between him and the Guildmaster, and that he wasn't qualified to listen in on what we almost started discussing.

It'd be better for us to just move on to the next topic for the time being.

「Finished several requests.」

「I see. What exactly have you finished? We might as well verify it all now.」

「This, this...」

Fran pulled out all the sheets representing requests she'd completed. She first started with the 9 kill quests before working her way into the fetch quests. Unfortunately, it didn't seem like we managed to hit the 23 quest threshold Dias had told us we needed.

「Mind showing me your dungeon card?」

「Nn. Here.」

「Hmmm, these are some nice results. You really have finished all the kill quests.」

「Wow Fran, you're so awesome. Mhmm, yes you are~」

Dias and Erza were both surprised by the results shown on Fran's dungeon card, as it informed them of all the magic beasts she'd slain.

Apparently, it was normal for adventurers to avoid battle if possible. We, on the other hand, did the exact opposite and basically mowed down everything in our way, so we ended up killing a tonne more monsters than they'd been expecting.

「Wow Fran! Even a whole party of D rankers would normally struggle to kill this many. Mhmm.」

「You should have enough materials to finish quite a few of your fetch quests too, right? Have you dismantled everything already?」

「Nn. Done already.」

「Could you put everything over there then?」

「Got it.」

Erza had already laid out a vinyl-like sheet for us to put stuff on so that we wouldn't dirty the floor with blood or whatever.

We laid our materials up on top of it, starting with the High Ogre's horns and the Mimic Venom Crawler's poison sacks. Erza was watching, so we made sure we made it look like we were taking things out of the cloth bag Fran had as opposed to my storage space.

Fran treated the poison sack with great care. Neither Erza nor Dias would probably die even if we messed up and popped the thing, but it'd still be a pain in the ass to clean up after. They'd probably still get mad at us anyways too.

「They're in good condition and of a pretty high quality. Do you want to turn them all in for your quests?」

「Yes.」

「All in all, you've completed a total of 17 quests. Actually, 18 counting the boss' subjugation. You'll be able to rank up if you do 5 more.」

「You're so close! Just a little bit more effort and you'll be there Fran!」

That posed us a bit of a problem. The only quests we had left required us to hunt rarer magic beasts like Dirty Wisps. It'd take us quite a bit of time to actually go through and get everything we needed.

Them being rare was bad enough, so the fact that they were also stealthy made finding them a nightmare. It was much harder for us to home in on them than it was for us to just kill whatever came at us.

We might end up having to spend even longer in the dungeon than we had last time.

◦

Oh well, whatever. We can figure that out after we check in with Aurel. The tourney's coming up, and there's a chance we might actually have to wait till after it's done to actually dive back into the dungeon and get the stuff we need to rank up.

Dias sank into thought as Fran informed him of her plans.

「Hmm... So you'd like to rank up as quickly as possible?」

「Mmmm, I don't really think it's necessary. You're already really well known for all the stuff you've done, so I don't think there'll really be anyone wanting to pick any fights with you anymore.」

Erza judged that it wasn't needed, but Dias offered a contrasting opinion.

「That may be true for now, but I doubt it'll apply for the adventurers that'll be entering the city in the coming days.」

「Trueeee.」

「I guess that's why she wants to rank herself up as soon as possible.」

「Nn.」

Again, there was something pretty important that was stopping us from running back into the dungeon and ranking up.

「Want to participate in tournament.」

You had to sign up at the Adventurer's Guild, the Arena, or one of the many other venues set throughout the city unless you had a letter of recommendation. Said sign up started in three days.

Anyone that signed up would be refused unless they went in person and presented their papers. Registration by proxy was simply disallowed.

「Oh, don't worry about that. I can just hold onto your application for you.」

「But need to sign up in person.」

「You see, the guild's actually got a fair number of recommendations left over, and we don't see any reason not to hand one to a competent C ranked adventurer.」

Is that... really okay? Isn't getting recommended by the guild kinda like a really big deal? It means effectively functioning as the guild's representative, right? Don't you need to not only be strong but also really polite and stuff?

「Don't worry about the technicalities, administrative stuff or anything else. We're the ones that asked you to rank yourself up in the first place, so there's no harm in us doing you a favour or two in exchange. We'll handle everything, so feel free to just go hole yourself up in the dungeon some more and get all your stuff done with.」

Dias was acting suspicious. I couldn't wrap my head around why he was treating us the way he was. I mean, I knew we had connections, and that both Amanda and Klimut were backing us, but he was still treating us way better than he should given that we were just D rankers. It was almost like he was doing everything he could to get us to go to and stay inside of the dungeon.

「Dias. Acting weird?」

「Hahaha, what're you talking about? I'm just acting the same way I always do.」

「Really weird.」

「I agree with Fran. It seems like you're a teensy bit rushed. It's kinda like you're up to something.」

Likewise, Erza also seemed to have realized that the old man wasn't acting as he usually would, and ended up tilting his head in confusion.

「You're just imagining things.」

「Are you trying to play some sort of prank on Fran again?」

「Again?」

「Nah, no way.」

Yeahhhhh, he's definitely up to something, but I don't think he's about to let us in on what that something is no matter how much we poke at him, least not right now. I was stuck trying to think of some sort of solution, or at least I was until I saw Erza bring his face right up to Dias' before speaking in a quiet tone of voice.

「I knew it. You really are up to something.」

「H-hahaha, you sure seem confident.」

「Call it the result of a woman's intuition!」

So uh... I decided to set aside the idea of how reliable Erza's "womanly intuition" would be and focused on something a bit more important: the fact that Erza, who'd known Dias for quite a long time, asserted that he was probably up to something, then he was probably up to something.

I guess it'd probably be best for us to play our trump card then.

『Fran, use that.』

「Nn!」

Fran pulled out Klimut's letter and held it up as if she was showing it off. That, of course, wasn't enough on its own, so she threw in a few extra lines

for added effect.

「Dias. Speak truth.」

「H-haha... I don't know what you're talking about.」

Dias' fear of Klimut was immediately demonstrated as his eyes began wavering the moment he saw the letter.

「Can tell you're hiding something.」

「Oh come on... I swear you're just imagining things.」

His voice wavered as well. Yeah, okay, I'm convinced now. He was definitely hiding something, and all we needed to figure out what that something was one last push.

「Will tell Klimut and Amanda that was pranked by Dias.」

「I'm sorry! I'm really sorry!」

The old Guildmaster leapt straight into the air before landing in a stance indicative of nothing but prostration. Yeah, gotta give it to him. He's really got the physical capabilities of an A ranked adventurer. The fact that he flew over his huge ass desk made it a 10/10 performance.

「I'm really, really sorry!」

「W-What just happened? Just what is that thing?」

Erza's eyes moved between Fran and Dias; the look on his face was one of clear confusion. The sight of an old man grinding his face into the ground whilst prostrating to a child was one that could bring a grown man to tears, so his confusion was only justified, especially seeing as it all happened just cause said old man happened to see a certain letter.

「Erza. This branch, any Carrier Hawks?」

「Yuppers.」

「Nn. First, will send letter to Klimut...」

「I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm really, really, really sorry. Please, anything but that.」

You know, he'd probably suffer a social death if word got out that he tried to play a prank on a little girl. Telling Amanda, however, would probably result in him experiencing an actual death.

「Then tell everything.」

「Alright. Maaaaan, you're so mean. Have you no mercy? I did so much for you too.」

We decided to wait till after we heard his case before we finally gave him a verdict.

171. The Beast Lord

171. The Beast Lord

「Are you aware of the fact that a large number of nobles have been visiting the city as of late?」

「Nn.」

We kinda just saw them on our way over, so yeah.

「One of the visitors I just mentioned happens to have a special sort of status.」

「Special status?」

「Well, let's just say said person happens to be the Beast Lord.」

「Really!? Wow, we've got some big names here this year.」

Erza's expression changed into one of honest surprise. It seemed that the Beast Lord was apparently someone famous.

「Big name?」

「Oh my. I guess that means you must not know much about the Beast Lord.」

「Only heard name before.」

I haven't.

「Well, you're a beastkin yourself, so I think it you should learn a bit more about it. Mhmm.」

The Beast Lord was apparently a self-evident name; it was the title granted to the person that ruled over the Beastkin's Country. The Beast Lord stood above all tribes and was respected by all beastkin regardless of whether or not they were the lord's countrymen. Its influence was so great that it held notable power within every single nation.

The Beastkin's Country itself was located on another one of the world's continent, but considered the Kingdom of Kranzel friendly regardless. The lord has been known to visit Ulmutt in order to watch it's famed Martial Arts Tournament once every few years as a show of goodwill.

「And this year just happens to be one of those years.」

「Well, you sure make it sound like you don't like the Beast Lord's visits.」

「That'd be because I already have enough on my plate. This year'll be especially busy with Fran here.」

「Nn?」

What's that supposed to mean? We'd never met anyone like the Beast Lord before, so why's this sound like it's supposed to be some sort of big deal that relates to us?

「You see, it was said that the Blue Cat Tribe was the first to sell the Black Cat Tribe into slavery, but some say that their actions had actually been ones ordered by the Beast Lord. Typically speaking, the Beast Lord is chosen from amongst the Red Cat Tribe, or more specifically, their evolved members, the Golden Lionkin. The Blue Cat Tribe is known for taking action as under the Beast Lord's orders..」

「Wow, really? I never knew.」

「That'd be because it's been considered a part of one of history's darker canals. Not even the citizens of the Beastkin's Country actively seek discussion about the topic.」

It seemed that Fran hadn't know much about what was said either, as she was listening to Dias with an earnest look on her face.

「I don't really think I need to say this because it's rather obvious, but it's been a long time since the Black Catkin were first sold into slavery, and the Beast Lord that ruled back then has long died. Though, they do say that the Blue Cat Tribe still does function as one of the Beast Lord's agents.」

Which means that it's possible that the Black Cat Tribe had been enslaved because the Beast Lord had willed it.

You know, thinking about it, that does actually seem quite possible. That kinda stuff happened back in my world too. History was stained with acts in which people used others as scapegoats and forced them into slavery and the other poor social circumstances in order to use them as scapegoats and appease the masses.

Selling off the Black Cat Tribe's members not only created said scapegoat and abated the common folk's dissatisfaction, but also also allowed the country to gain access to foreign currencies.

The Black Cat Tribe's members basically filled the role perfectly too, seeing as how they were both weak and unable to evolve.

「The current Beast Lord is especially unpopular. They pried the role from their predecessor in what may as well have been a coup d'etat.」

「Oh, I heard about that too. They say the newest Beast Lord is a parricidal thief.」

「I can't imagine a person like that having any good impressions on the Black Cat Tribe. In fact, it'll more likely than not be the opposite.」

That... was some pretty important but bad news. It meant we had to be on guard around basically all other beastkin.

(Beast Lord...)

『You think the Beast Lord might've been in the carriage we saw just a bit ago?』

I recalled the carriage and the ridiculously powerful guards that protected it. Yeah, that kinda looked like it was probably the Beast Lord's carriage. The Beast Lord being some sort of Lionkin explained the lion that decorated the carriage's top. Ugh, what a pain. The Beast Lord was a foe we wouldn't be able to overcome, be it through political power or brute force. It was also supposedly an evolved beastkin, so I didn't really think we'd be able to win in a fight if it came down to it. That said, it wasn't like we already knew for a fact that the Beast Lord would actually antagonize us.

(Then... Assassinate?)

『Just... no. You're being way too over the top as far as the violence goes. The Beast Lord might not end up antagonizing us at all.』

Aw crap. It looked like Fran'd already been convinced that the Beast Lord was basically Hitler. I figured it would best for me be on my toes if we ever happened run into it. I was pretty sure Fran wouldn't like just suddenly attempt murder, but you know, just in case, right?

「The Beast Lord may end up taking an interest in you if they happen to catch wind of you, and let's just say I can't imagine anything good coming out of that.」

「So you want her to stay in the dungeon so she can avoid meeting the Beast Lord?」

「Exactly. We can also protect her by giving her designated requests if she manages to hit C rank before the tournament starts.」

「Designated Requests?」

I'd never heard of them, so we ended up having Erza explain the fact that they were basically requests the guild would offer to specific adventurers.

Designated requests tended to be of high importance and taking on one went hand in hand with receiving every last bit of support the guild was capable of providing. Hence, messing with an adventurer working on a designated request was more or less equivalent with messing with the guild itself. That, by extension, meant that Fran would effectively remain under the guild's protection so long as she was on a designated request.

There kinda wasn't anyone brave enough to pick a fight with guild, seeing as it not only spanned what was basically the entire world, but also helped maintain the populace's everyday lives. The sheer amount of influence the guild held would then make it possible for it to function like a shield that'd stop Fran from being put under the influence of the Beast King's authority.

「I don't really think you can just kinda give out designated requests all willy nilly though, can you?」

「I've already got that covered. All I have to do is give her a designated request associated with the dungeon. I'm basically the only person the Dungeon Master is willing to negotiate with, so I can just say she's helping me look for something the Dungeon Master wants.」

「Ohhh~ So that's why you want to get her promoted. Mhmm, I get it now. It's because designated requests can only be given to adventurers that are at least C ranked.」

「Exactly.」

Huh, I guess that means he really was just doing everything he was doing for Fran's sake this whole time. I had to say, it really was hard for us to believe him because of how shady he was. In fact, I probably still wouldn't believe him if I hadn't the Principality of Falsehood.

「Why didn't you just tell her everything from the start?」

「I was worried she'd take an interest in the Beast Lord if she learned the truth.」

Well uh, can't say he's wrong, seeing as she kinda did exactly that.

「And that, Fran, is why I'm asking you to raise your rank as soon as possible.」

「Nn. Got it.」

「Try your best to get it done before the Martial Arts Tournament. As I said earlier, I'll get you a recommendation, so you at least won't have to worry about that.」

「Don't need recommendation.」

「Really? Why's that? It'll get you seeded so you can skip the prelims, you know?」

「Want to participate in prelims.」

「But Fran, the prelims are completely random. You might end up having to fight someone really strong.」

「Don't care.」

To Fran, the Martial Arts Tournament was effectively an event in which she'd have a chance to fight a bunch of people.

「T-That's fine. I can make it so you get registered like any other person and can take part in the prelims.」

「You sure do like fighting, Fran. Ermagawd, that part of you is just so adorable~」

It seemed like Dias was willing to comply with our request as he deemed it dangerous for Fran to meet the Beast Lord. He was all for having us hole ourselves up in the dungeon so we could rank ourselves up while also

avoiding the worst possible scenario. I got that and all, but I still couldn't help but feel that he was acting suspiciously.

「Why going so far?」

Fran's question hit the nail on the head and got to the exact thing that resulted in me feeling all suspicious. I understood that Dias, as Guildmaster, was obligated to protect the adventurers that worked under him. Still, I failed to see why he would go this far for us.

「I've got my reasons. For now, let's just say it's to fulfill a promise I happened to make with a certain someone.」

Oh. I get it now. It must've been because of that contract Rumina asked him to fulfill. Its contents probably mentioned touching on having Dias do his best to help any Black Catkin he happened across. This was further evidenced by his lack of ability to name her seeing as how Erza was still present.

「Do thank her next time you two meet.」

「Nn. Got it.」

「What's this? You two have got some sort of secret going? I'm soooo jealous.」

Well, we kinda are heading back to the dungeon anyways, so we might as well do that while we're at it. She really has made life a lot more convenient for us, after all.

172. The Black Cat

172. The Black Cat

The Disaster Pillbug's corpse was kinda a bit too big to fit in the Guildmaster's room, so we dumped it in the dismantling room together with all our other non-quest related materials. This action also served a second purpose. One of the guild's clerks would be helping us evaluate its worth.

I was a bit worried as to whether or not we'd actually be able to sell it seeing as how it wasn't dismantled, but I soon recalled that the guild did actually offer a dismantling service, albeit at a bit of a price.

According to Erza, the fee for said service wasn't fixed. It could vary based on how large and difficult to dismantle the magic beast in question happened to be.

「Hmmm... I don't think it'll cost you any more than 40k Golde. I think they only charged The Hundred Blade about 40k-50k for the B ranked Lesser Dragon he brought in that one time. Do you know about him? Hundred Blade Forrund, I mean.」

「Nn. Met in Barbra.」

「Wow! I'm so jealous! He's soooo cool! I just can't help but look up to him. Don't you think so too, Fran?」

「Nn. Very strong. Will become that strong too someday.」

「That's not what I mean! Come on Fran, don't you think he's really hot and dreamy? He's just my type.」

Erza started doing the usual thing and twisting his body back and forth whilst wearing an expression you probably wouldn't expect to see on anything other than a maiden in love. Honestly, at this point, I'd already gotten so used to him that he actually started kind of looking like a girl. Kinda.

「Nn?」

「Oh, how I'd love for him to embrace me with his thick burly arms while whispering words of love.」

Welp. Sure sucks to be Forrund right now. I actually just flat out feel sorry for him. You know, this is probably the first time I've ever felt any sympathy for any sort of super good looking guy. I guess being attractive isn't without its detriments after all.

Erza's words were explicit, but Fran didn't really seem to catch his drift regardless.

『I guess you might as well just nod along for now.』

「Nn.」

「Oh, you see where I'm coming from, Fran?」

「Nn.」

「He sure is hot, isn't he?」

「Nn.」

「It looks like we might just have similar tastes in men.」

「Nn.」

Fran casually nodded along and affirmed Erza's statements as brought out the materials she wanted to sell.

The staff member responsible for appraising the items Fran was selling had a look on his face that almost made it seem as if he'd completely lost all faith in humanity. He simply had nothing to say, and didn't know how to feel. On his left was a homo wriggling his body back and forth as he acted like a girl in love. On his right was a small child diligently sorting a whole slew of materials without even the slightest change in expression.

「Take pillbug out here too?」

「Huh? What? O-Oh, yeah, sure.」

「Nn.」

Fran dumped the Disaster Pillbug's corpse onto the floor. It had yet to be dismantled, so it was in the exact same state it'd been in right after its death. The room was immediately filled with a putrid stench as a result. It was one born from a mix of the creature's electric burns and the simple unpleasant odor its body's fluids happened to give off. Speaking of which, said fluid had yet to stop dripping out from within the insect's open wounds.

Insect-type magic beasts had the tendency to be much more grotesque than their beast-like counterparts, and this one in particular was especially so as a result of its massive size. In fact, it was so much more disgusting than usual that even the clerk in charge of dismantling ended up grimacing in response.

Despite that though, the clerk ended up approaching it. Wow. I really had to give it to him. Dude was one hell of a professional.

He, however, was pretty much the only man present capable of really keeping his cool. A certain other person happened to freak the hell out.

「Gyaaah!」

「Erza?」

「Eeeeeeeeeekkkkkk!」

The sudden throaty scream had sounded so panicked that I'd almost thought something serious had happened.

「Something wrong?」

「T-There's a bug!」

「Nn. Pillbug.」

「H-Hiiiiii!!」

Erza's face paled as he clasped both hands to his chest and started trembling in terror. His legs were shaking in much the same manner as those of a newly born deer.

The immediate conclusion I made was that Erza just wasn't a bug person. He didn't seem capable of handling them, and that was that. The pillbug's ridiculous size didn't really help his case either. In fact, it probably was doing the exact opposite.

The specific emotion reflected in his eyes wasn't disgust, but rather terror. God, is he actually supposed to be some sort of pure maiden? Er, I guess he does have a heart like one, soooo...

「Nn? Erza?」

「Aaahhh...」

Fran, on the other hand, didn't actually seem to have a particular disdain for any sort of creature whatsoever. She stared at Erza with a confused look on her face; she seemed not to have even the slightest bit of an understanding of the other party's fear of bugs.

Erza's screams started escalating in volume in the meantime, and his face had began warping to an even greater degree. That said though, his was no longer the face that contained in it the most fear. The clerk had gotten extremely pale for some odd reason, but spoke in as comforting a tone as he could manage regardless.

「P-Please calm down Erza! That isn't a bug!」

「I-It totally is!」

「It just happens to resemble one. That's it!」

「I don't believe you! It has to be a bug!」

「J-Just think about it for a second. T-There's no way a bug that big could actually exist.」

「Big bug...? Hiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!!」

「Aw shit!」

「Uguguguguguuuu!!!」

「Craap! Hey, you! Can you move that thing somewhere else? Like right now? Please?」

『Shove it in storage for now. I'm pretty sure the whole situation will spiral out of control if you don't.』

「Nn!」

Fran still didn't understand exactly what had happened, but she abided by the man's request and immediately shoved the pillbug into storage as she had at least got the fact that something was wrong given that Erza had started tensing up.

「Everything's okay Erza! It's not here anymore!」

「W-Where'd the bug go...?」

「Gone.」

「M-Mkay...」

The tension that'd filled the air around Erza dispersed as he fell flat on his butt. Seeing said action caused the clerk in charge of dismantling to breathe a sigh of relief.

「W-Whew. Thanks.」

「What happened to Erza?」

「Well, you see, Erza isn't exactly comfortable around anything that resembles an insect. She gets so terrified of them that they make her go berserk. The rampage that ensues tends to produce some pretty terrible results, as she's still capable of using her skills quite masterfully even when not fully conscious.」

「Any problems in dungeons?」

「Kinda, yeah.」

Erza was still just as capable of making use of his abilities when in his berserked state, so he wouldn't die or anything, but that didn't mean he was problem free. Not being in control meant that he would not only cause damage through friendly fire, but also completely obliterate any monster-related materials and hence reduce his party's income.

He could tolerate smaller bugs, but he was known to go crazy if he got surrounded. There'd also been a case in which he went on a rampage after having a cockroach lunge straight at his face.

「One of his incidents had even lead to him sending about 20 of the guild's clerks to the infirmary.」

「Sounds like dangerous event.」

「That's cause that's exactly what it is. Her rampages are so crazy and sudden that even A-rank adventurers find themselves having a fair bit of trouble dealing with them.」

The sudden appearance of a gigantic bug had pretty much put him on the verge of having one of his so called incidents.

「Erza, okay?」

「I'm sorry Fran... I just can't stand bugs!」

I wanted to ask him the reason for his fears, but refrained because I figured there was a chance that recalling the memory would make him lose it. It looked like just casually pretending nothing ever happened would probably be in our best interest for now.

「Erza, leave room.」

「I'll do exactly that. Check in with me once you're done, I'll go have some tea.」

With Erza's departure came a wave of silence; we finally found ourselves capable of selling our materials.

The pillbug sold for a total of 560k Golde. It was considered fairly difficult to dismantle, and thus, cost us about 30k, which meant we made an overall profit of 530k. The fact that it was worth way more than a high ogre's hide, which averaged in at about 40k a piece, really served to provide a sense of scale and show off just how ridiculously large the Disaster Pillbug really was.

All in all, we'd made a total of 800k Golde since departing Barbra.

I wasn't really sure how we should feel. It felt like we were earning ourselves a bunch of money really easily, but it also kind of felt like we'd kind of put our lives on the line at the same time, so I couldn't really tell if it was worth it. Oh well, whatever works, I guess.

「Are you all done now, Fran?」

We found Erza doing exactly what he said he'd be doing after we finished selling everything. He was sitting at the guild's bar, drinking a cup of tea together with an old man. The teapot he was using seemed rather stylish, whereas the cup was adorned with a bit of a floral design. The tea was

accompanied by a snack consisting of scones. The hell? Are we in a goddamn cafe or something?

「Done.」

「Would you like some too?」

「Okay.」

「I have red tea, black tea, and ulm tea. Which would you like?」

「That many choices?」

「Mhmm. I recommend scones for the red tea, cookies for the black tea, and pie for the ulm tea. 」

「...Will have all.」

「Oh my. Can you really eat that much?」

「Can.」

「Alright then. You heard the girl.」

「Sure did.」

The bartender had an old gentlemanly look to him. He didn't fit in with his rowdy surroundings. Fran seemed to feel the same way, as she had her head tilted in confusion.

「This place. Bar?」

「Mhmm.」

「Hahaha. I get that quite often. I can assure you that it is. However, I've started to stock a wider variety of tea and snacks at Erza's request.」

「Teehee. That'd be because the tea you make is always really delicious, which is also why I tend to punish everyone that troubles you just a teensy

bit more than I normally would. Doing so teaches them just how great tea can be too. I think it's become just about as popular as the alcoholic drinks you serve, right?」

「That's in part due to the rumours about how much you and the Guildmaster hate drinking. A fair number of our clients tend to pick tea over alcohol if either of the two of you are present.」

I guess it does only make sense for people to have an aversion to the stuff if the guild's two most influential figures have a dislike for it. In that sense, I guess you could say that Erza, like Dias, was abusing his power to do whatever he wanted. Er, actually I guess that's not quite right. It's more like he's throwing around the influence brought about by people's fear of and respect for him.

「Here's your first cup of tea, and a few snacks. I've started you off with the red tea.」

「Nn.」

Fran took a scone in each hand and devoured the entire plate's worth in an instant. I'm not even actually sure when it happened, but, she also somehow managed to down a tonne of cream and jam as well.

Erza enjoyed his team in a much more elegant manner as he watched over Fran with a smile. His hands were posed exactly as they should've been; his pinky was sticking up and out. The sheer refinement of his mannerisms almost seemed to serve as a testament to the fact that he was really girly.

I was a bit worried about as to whether or not the old man sitting across from us would think poorly of Fran as a result of her poor mannerisms, but that fortunately didn't end up being the case. He was instead gazing at her endearingly, as he likely would his own grandchild.

If I was to judge his occupation purely off his attire, I'd probably assume him to be some sort of adventurer.

「Fuofuofuo. The healthiest children are the ones with healthiest appetites..」

「Who?」

「Oh, excuse me, I must've forgotten to introduce myself. My name is Radyer, a mere C ranked adventurer.」

「He's known for being Ulmutt's oldest adventurer.」

The fact that he was a white haired magician instantly made me assume that he was someone really strong. I was basically completely convinced that his rank was lower than it should've been despite the vast extent of his experience because his body had gotten old and frail. I was also more or less sure of the fact that he used his wisdom and knowledge to compensate for his weaknesses.

「He's actually realllly strong. He'd be a B ranker if not for the sheer amount of time he spent as a court magician.」

「I'm fairly disheartened by the fact that you didn't claim me to be on par with an A ranker instead.」

「Well, that'd be because A ranked adventurers are far out of the norm.」

「That aside, Black Catkin adventurers sure are quite rare, aren't they?」

Radyer's evaluating gaze seemed to carry with it a hint of nostalgia.

「It's been about fifty years since I've last seen one, hasn't it?」

「Hmmm? Fran isn't the only Black Catkin adventurer around, you know? We've got quite the number of them. In fact, they make up many of our new recruits.」

「If you're talking in technical terms and including all Black Catkin that are adventurers, then yes. But, there aren't any others this young or capable.」

「Well, I guess that is true. So you're saying that there was another Black Catkin like Fran about fifty years ago?」

「There was. The lass here is nearly identical to the one I met back then. They've the same black hair and the same curt manner of speech. I can't recall her name, but I can still vividly recall the sharpness of her gaze.」

Radyr closed his eyes and stroked his beard in order to better recall his distant memories.

「I think she said she was 15. I also recall that she liked to solo, and would treat those that insulted her tribe without even the slightest shred of mercy. She would also attack Blue Catkin adventurers and violently perform acts of retribution. I believe she would cut off their tails as if it was nobody's business.」

「She really does sound just like Fran.」

「Doesn't she? I believe she used to be called The Black Cat. There used to be a rumour that said any that involved themselves with The Black Cat would but lose their lives.」

「That person, where now?」

「I have no idea. She just suddenly vanished one day. I've no idea as to whether she died, or simply happened to leave town.」

「Oh...」

If she was really that strong, then she, like Fran, had probably been seeking evolution. If this all happened 50 years ago, then there's actually a chance she's still alive. I'd like for us to talk to her and have her tell us everything she's learned. I'm also a bit curious about the part where she just upped and vanished.

「The reason I don't know is because The Black Cat and I weren't what one could call intimate. Aurel, one of my old party members, however, might.」

「That sounds just perfect. The two of us were planning to go see Grandpa Aurel soon anyway. Why do you think he'd know though?」

「There are quite a few reasons. The first is because they're both beastkin, and the second is because I happened to see them speaking with one another on multiple occasions. The third would likely be because she had apparently saved him once in the past. He warned us not to ever mess with her thereafter. It was a fair warning. I may very well have hit on her given her appearance and how I was in the past.」

「Was The Black Cat really cute?」

「She was. Just between you and me, I'm almost certain that Aurel had fallen for her.」

「Kyaaaah!! Wait, does that mean Gramps is a lolicon?」

「No, no, definitely not. He was still in his teens back then. It was way back when he was still known as a genius as a result of the fact that he'd broke the record for being the fastest adventurer to become a D ranker.」

Right. For some odd reason, I'd almost been under the impression that Dias, Aurel and Radyr had just always been old men. I almost forgot that they too had, at one point, been young. You know, to be honest, I can't even actually imagine them being young. Oh well, either way, I guess we've got one more reason to go hit Aurel up now.

173. Maintenance

173. Maintenance

We decided to stop by that one dwarven blacksmith's shop before heading over to Aurel's manor.

「Oh, hey. It's that little missy Gallus told me to take care of. You need something?」

「Want equipment repaired.」

We hadn't really bothered getting the Black Cat Set repaired up 'till now 'cause its self-repair function made it so we'd never really needed it. We technically didn't need it now either, but the pillbug had damaged the equips so badly that they had still yet to fully fix themselves. We'd also kind of never bothered maintaining the armour in any which way either, and figured we might as well.

The Martial Arts Tournament was coming up, so it'd probably be a good idea for us to have our gear in top shape.

「Sure thing! I, Zerld, will fix it right up. They don't call me Ulmutt's best blacksmith for nothing.」

Zerld procured a magic crystal and started setting up a magic circle after spending a bit of time inspecting Fran's gear. Most of the work seemed rather front loaded, as he instantly fixed it by casting Repair immediately after getting everything ready.

The 100k Golde price tag he slapped onto the service was pretty worth; all Fran's stuff was back in peak condition.

「That's that. Hand me your sword next.」

「Nn?」

「Well, I just thought your sword might be in tatters given how damaged your self-repairing armour was.」

Oh, right. I guess that would normally be how things go, huh? In my case, all the damage I take gets nullified over time by my Self-Repair and Regeneration skills.

「Here.」

『I-I'm perfectly okay. I don't need any repairs.』

I thought I was fine, but Fran took me off her back and handed me over to Zerld despite my protests.

(But better to have skilled blacksmith check just in case.)

It seemed that Zerld's words ended up making Fran feel a bit anxious. She herself wasn't really all that skilled at discerning my condition, and would normally have no choice but to just believe what I told her.

『Oh well. Whatever works, I guess.』

You know what, it might actually not be a bad idea to get a checkup every once in a while. There was always the possibility that there was something off about me, and I just didn't notice it.

「Hmmm, this sword is made of quite the metal.」

Zerld looked at me from a bunch of different angles before placing me on top of a table and tapping me a few times with a small hammer.

He continued hitting me with the hammer, and sent vibrations through my blade at regular intervals. It was a sensation I honestly couldn't bring myself to dislike. I could feel the seriousness and earnestly of the dwarven

craftsman's actions, and it was actually honestly quite a comfortable sensation.

He then put me inside a box full of water and shake it lightly before finally polishing me off with a nice clean cloth.

Wew, that felt great. I only barely managed to refrain from letting out a sigh because of how good it felt. The reason I managed to hold back wasn't something as mundane as wanting to keep my identity from Zerld. It was instead because I didn't want to moan in response to getting my blade stroked by another man. I'd rather kill myself.

Fortunately, I was capable of holding onto my will to live because the pleasure I felt wasn't sexual in any which way. It was instead more akin to what you'd feel when getting a massage. I guess one could say it didn't really matter which it was, but the part of me that was a middle aged man insisted otherwise.

I'm not quite sure how it happened, but, Fran somehow managed to catch onto the fact that I was internally gritting my teeth and holding myself back.

(Master, something wrong?)

『N-Nah, nothing's wrong.』

(Acting... weird.)

I decided to explain myself to Fran after realizing that I'd worried her for a reason I couldn't really call anything but ridiculous.

Still, I really had to admit that this felt hella good. Fran always wiped me off as well so I wouldn't get all dirty and stuff, but she never managed to make it feel this good.

If I had to guess, I'd say that the difference in the sensation stemmed from a difference in skill levels. Reason being that the difference between Zerld's touch felt like that of a real blacksmith, whereas Fran's felt like that of an amateur.

「And that's that. Your blade wasn't bent or scratched at all, so I just gave it a good old polish.」

Man, that was one helluva polish. Shit was relaxing as hell. I felt like I'd just gone to a super high end bath house, soaked in the water for half a day before getting a massage and sleeping all night. It was like I was totally exhilarated and rejuvenated all at once.

I'd already been in perfect condition to begin with, so that massage had only pushed me further beyond. It felt like I was in absolute peak form and ready to give it my 120%. That said, my stats hadn't changed at all, so I guess it was more of a mood thing than anything else. I did feel like the internal flow of my magical energy had improved, and that it was a bit easier than usual for me to use skills and whatnot, but I wasn't sure if that was actually a thing or just some sort of placebo.

「Nn. Blacksmith amazing.」

「Gahahaha. Where'd that come from?」

Fran spoke in a tone filled with admiration as she looked at how shiny my blade had become. You know, I really did feel better than usual. It'd probably be a good idea to do this more often, and not because it felt good!

...

Okay, well, maybe because it felt good, but you know what? Me being in good shape also means me being able to do more for Fran.

「Later.」

「Sure thing. I'll do all the maintenance you need, especially seeing as how the tourney's coming up.」

Not a lot of time had passed despite the fact that a bunch of different things had happened. It was still rather early, so we moved towards Aurel's manor at a rather leisurely pace.

In fact, Fran had started buying random stuff and just eating it as she slowly walked towards the hill on top of which the mansion was situated.

『These stalls sure are selling a tonne of magic beast meat. I guess that's just how life goes when you live in a city with two dungeons inside of it.』

Magic beast meat was treated as a luxury good back in Barbra, but here, it was literally all over the place. It was being treated like... well... regular meat.

「Nn. Tasty.」

「Woof.」

Apparently many of magic beasts one could find in dungeons meant for newbies were actually edible. I couldn't help but wonder, was that just how it was? Or was it only because of the deals made with the city's dungeon masters?

Fran and Urushi pretty much picked up food from every single street stall they came across. I'd been expecting them to do the usual thing in which they buy an armful of stuff, but they didn't actually do that this time around. Instead, they instantly consumed everything they bought.

It didn't take long for us to pass through the residential district and lay eyes on Aurel's mansion.

『Seems like there's a lot of people around there.』

「Nn. Lots.」

「Woof.」

It looked like 10 odd people were crowded around the manor's front gate.

174. Blue Pride

174. Blue Pride

A group of what seemed to be adventurers had gathered in front of Aurel's manor. I didn't know exactly who they were or why they were here in the first place, but, I could at least tell that they were only barely organised. They kind of resembled the hoodlums one would normally find loitering around in front of a convenience store. The only two members of the group that looked to have even the slightest bit of decency were the ones I presumed to be their leaders. There was a male and a female, with the latter looking to be around 17 or 18 years old.

I didn't really get what they were doing; the two were standing right in front of the guards with their arms crossed. It kind of looked like they were waiting on something, but I couldn't really say for sure as to whether or not that was the case.

Looking a bit closer allowed me to realize that the female was some sort of catkin. The same applied to the rest of the group's members as well.

(Mmph.)

『What's wrong, Fran?』

(All Blue Catkin.)

『Wait, really? All of them?』

(Nn.)

『I guess we'd best be on guard then,』

(Woof!)

I didn't think that they'd just attack us out of the blue, but hey, better safe than sorry.

Getting through the gate looked to be a huge pain, but I still figured it'd be fine. Aurel was apparently supposed to be really influential amongst beastkin, so I didn't think we'd have to worry about them trying to pushing through the gate even if the guards did let us in.

『Let's just ignore them and keep a move on, regardless of what they say.』

(...Got it.)

I was a bit worried despite the fact that Fran had agreed to my suggestion because she had hesitated before replying. Oh well, whatever. I figured I could always just teleport us through the gate If worse came to worst. Aurel seemed to have taken a liking to Fran, so we probably wouldn't be treated as trespassers or intruders so long as we explained ourselves.

Fran briskly approached the gate whilst keeping her guard up. She made use of the Presence Isolation and Stealth skills in order to make herself as difficult to notice as possible.

The male Blue Catkin were rather weak, so we were able to stop ourselves from attracting their attention so long as we avoided any direct lines of sight.

That, however, was slated to change the moment we actually tried entering the property. We would have to speak with one of the gatekeepers in order to gain access, and doing that would expose us to the teenage girl and her companion.

Oh well. We could probably just ignore them or something.

「Hello.」

「Huh? Oh, hello Fran. Feel free to enter.」

「Allowed to?」

Wait, they let us in? I was expecting them to have to go speak with a few other people and double check stuff first. We'd only ever been here once, so I really wasn't counting on us being allowed in just like that.

「You are. Master Aurel told us to let you in and prioritize you over all else.」

「The only other person we've ever been told to treat like that was Erza.」

Huh, I guess he took much more of a liking to Fran than I'd thought. Well, works for us, I guess.

「Nn. Will be entering then.」

「Please do.」

「Hey, what gives!?!」

「Yeah, what the hell is the meaning of this!?!」

「Nn?」

Both the male and female blue catkin standing by the gate raised their voices in protest as a result of the fact that Fran had easily been let inside.

The girl's expression warped from one that seemed to be waiting for something while stumped to one that was more so resembled an antagonizing glare.

「How come she gets to go through like that? Why do we have to wait even though we went out of our way to visit so we could exchange greetings?」

「Do you have any idea how long we've been standing out here?」

「I've already told you that you can't meet Master Aurel unless you've a prior appointment. You were the ones that insisted you wanted to see him no matter what.」

「Come on! We're Blue Pride! Don't you know how famous we are on the the Khrome Continent?」

「I'm our boss' proxy. Making me wait is basically the same thing as making our boss wait!」

The way they were boasting made it sound like Blue Pride was supposed to be a famous group of mercenaries whose very name inspired fear, which, given that they were from a different continent, could very well be possible.

「I don't care.」

However, their influence failed to extend past their area of origin. Here, their name seemed to be just like any other, as the gatekeeper just casually shook his head and denied the girl entry, which in turn caused the veins in her forehead to swell in anger. If I were to offer an opinion, I'd say that she was acting in an unbecoming manner. She ended up getting all mad because the gatekeeper had basically ignored her proclamation of how great she supposedly was. The emotional way in which she reacted was one that you really couldn't call anything but lame.

「We are granting Fran access because she is one of our lord's honoured guests.」

「Haaah? She's just a black catkin, and a little girl at that.」

A moment of pondering led me to realize that the group's name, Blue Pride, indicated that it was probably comprised solely of Blue Catkin, which in turn meant that it'd probably probably be best for us to stay as far away from them as possible.

My assumption was only supported by the way they looked at Fran. Their eyes were filled with contempt; it was obvious that they didn't think highly of her.

「So you're saying that this Black Catkin is more important than we are?」

「Just to be clear, her race has nothing to do with the fact that we're letting her inside.」

「She is simply one of our master's honoured guests. By extension, insulting her is no different from insulting our master.」

Aurel's two gatekeepers spoke in turn, with one supporting the argument made by the other.

「What are you saying!? Can't you see that she's a Black Catkin!」

Man, you know, this is why I hate Blue Catkin. I couldn't recall us ever meeting one that actually didn't look down on Black Catkin. They all just seemed to believe that every single last member of the Black Cat Tribe was useless, and that Black Catkin only existed so they could be sold into slavery and whatnot. Moreover, none of the Blue Catkin we'd met thus far had seemed even the slightest bit opposed to the idea. It'd almost seemed like it was something that came to them naturally.

『Let's just ignore them and go.』

(...)

Aw, crap.

It didn't really show on her face, but Fran had her foot on the gas and was ready to slam the hell out of it. She'd probably hit the limit of her tolerance if they said another one or two things.

『Urushi, push Fran forwards!』

「Woof.」

「Mmph...」

I pulled Fran forwards with Telekinesis whilst Urushi pushed her from behind; the two of us worked together in order to get her to move before she lost her temper. Unfortunately, our efforts didn't really amount to much, as Fran and the Blue Catkin girl glared at each other regardless.

『Come on, let's just get out of here.』

「Woof woof!」

「Nn.」

Fran reluctantly agreed to move after Urushi and I made a few more desperate attempts.

Whew.

Starting a fight here and now wasn't exactly be what I'd call a good idea.

That, however, didn't mean that she was going to let them off for looking down on her and her kin. She turned around right as she made her way through the gate and activated the Coercion, Intimidation, and Domination skills all at once whilst also directing at the girl and the man standing beside her a powerful wave of bloodlust.

「Hiii!」

「Kuh...」

The girl's face paled as fell flat on her butt, whereas the man ended up taking a few steps backwards. All their immediately ended up springing to their feet in surprise before sending their glares in Fran's direction. Though they tried, they were unable to hide their fear of her.

As mercenaries, and hence, people experienced in the art of combat, they were able to recognize Fran's overwhelming power.

「W-What...」

Fran calmly walked through the gate as she took note of the fact that the out of breath Blue Catkin girl behind her had muttered something in a lifeless tone.

『Look at you, all smug and stuff...』

「Heheh.」

『That wasn't a compliment, you know?』

「Nn?」

175. The Ten Original Tribes

175. The Ten Original Tribes

「Hey, welcome.」

「Nn.」

The maid we met the first time we visited, Shara, led us through Aurel's mansion and towards our destination, the dining room.

「Sorry it had to be here of all places. I was stuck in a meeting with a bigshot all day, so I haven't really had a chance to eat anything yet.」

「Don't mind.」

「Care to join me? My personal chef just happened to get back from Barbra last night. I'm sure his dishes will be able to catch your interest.」

Why the hell not? The fact that Aurel called the chef his personal one pretty much instantly convinced me that the person in question was incredibly skilled.

「Please.」

It looked like Fran shared the same sentiment, as she immediately consented to having another meal.

「Shara, make sure the chef makes enough for her as well.」

「Yes sir.」

It was only then that I finally realized the implication of Aurel's statement. He was a pretty influential figure, but he was so busy that he hadn't a chance to eat until the afternoon had come to pass. That could only mean that the person he'd been entertaining was even more influential than he was.

「Weird people outside.」

「Some sort of mercenary band, I hear.」

「Famous?」

「Well, it's not a group I've ever heard of, at least. My guess is they want to talk to me so they can boost their prestige.」

「Really?」

「Yeah, it's something that happens all the time. People love to make claims about how well known they are elsewhere. They'll boast about slaying powerful demons and knowing influential nobles.」

Oh, I get it. So everyone new in town is just desperate to leave an impression on all of Ulmutt's more important people.

「Aren't't they aware that I can tell how strong they are just by looking at them?」

「Blue Catkin mercs, all weaklings.」

「Gahahaha! That so? If so, then there's only be two possible ways for them to truly be well known. The first would be because one of their members happens to be incredibly strong. The second would be because they were cruel.」

「Nn.」

「To be honest, I didn't like their attitudes. Their leader had sent a representative instead of coming on his own. At first, I'd almost wondered

if said leader was a noble instead. Either way, I ended up deciding to just leave them be. I was hoping they'd eventually give up and go home.」

Huh, so they really were just scrubs after all. I guess that makes sense given that they seemed rather weak.

「Aurel. This.」

「Hmmm... I see, I take it you've completed my request then?」

Aurel opened the pendant and confirmed that we'd delivered the letter he wrote.

「Want to ask about evolution.」

「Well, it does look like you did as you were asked and got the pendant to Rumina.」

「Nn.」

「I guess that must mean I'll have to pay my dues.」

「Won't need payment if told about evolution.」

「I'm not capable of providing you enough knowledge to have made the request I gave you worth your time.」

「Really?」

「I wouldn't have sent you to see Rumina if I was capable of telling you what you wanted to know. I simply would have told you it myself. I myself have spent many years looking into the the Black Cat Tribe and its potential for evolution, but I've never been able to find satisfactory results. All I know is one has to do more than just reach a certain level.」

Damn... Not even Aurel's figured anything out after spending several years researching the topic despite the fact that he's an influential B ranked adventurer...?

「Then would like to ask about the Black Catkin in the past.」

「...Where'd you catch wind of that?」

「Radyr.」

「That loose-lipped son of a...!」

「Was told about incredible strength.」

「Yeah... She was quite the strong one...」

Aurel began speaking in a quieter tone as he recalled his youth. He told us about the Black Catkin he met, how she saved him, and how the two of them had hit it off.

「It's already been 53 years since then.」

「That person. Couldn't evolve?」

「She couldn't. She, like you, had been out on a journey in search of a way to evolve. She'd even visited Rumina fairly frequently in hopes of finding a clue.」

「But still failed?」

「I presume so.」

Wait, he presumed so? Did that mean he wasn't certain?

Fran had also caught onto his lack of confidence, and tilted her head in response.

「A few things happened, and she ended up leaving town. We haven't been in touch since then.」

「Few things?」

「A few things indeed. Anyways, that's enough of that. There's no point talking about someone that's been long gone. You'd best try talking to Dias if you'd like to know more about her. The two of them got along quite well. Anyway, why don't we get back on track?」

I didn't even need to activate the Principle of Falsehood in order to know that he was still hiding something, but I figure out exactly what that thing happened to be.

If I had to guess, I'd probably assume it was because she'd died off in a dungeon somewhere. If that were the case, then Aurel would probably find it rather difficult to talk about her. He also probably thought that Fran would end up mourning her predecessor's death as well. I figured that there was no point putting a damper on Aurel's mood, and that we could probably get Dias to tell us everything we wanted to know, so we just went with the flow and allowed him to change the topic.

「I'm sure you already know this seeing as how you've spoken to Rumina, but it used to be much less difficult for Black Catkin to attain evolution.」

「Nn.」

「That, however, has changed. It is exactly that change that leads us to our next question: why? Why did the circumstances change? I personally believe that the answer is that the change is most likely a result of divine retribution.」

「Divine retribution? Punished by Gods?」

「It's something often applied to those that have committed grave sins or opposed the Gods. The most famous example would be what occurred on the continent of Goldishia.」

Oh right. I remember hearing about that. Trismegistus, Lord of the Dragonmen, made use of the Evil God's power in order to create a magic beast. Said magic beast went berserk and basically fucked the whole continent. Trismegistus was punished by being forced to fight his creation for the all of eternity.

「I know that it's something that happened far in the past, but I still find it strange that there's so little information that links evolution to the Black Cat Tribe. It almost seems to be exactly like the method in which one manufactures magic beasts in the sense that all pertinent information is simply gone. It's like the Gods have simply erased all records of it. I dare say that they have even gone as far as to fiddle with people's memories.」

Well I mean, that does sound like something a God would be capable of.

「Some beastkin tribes practice the art of keeping their evolutionary methods a secret, but it's relatively easy for one to discover the methodologies so long as they refer to books or other works of literature. It's not like that with the Black Cat Tribe's evolutionary methods. Only a few works remain at best. I've also tried asking the Elves, but none of them seem to remember it at all. In fact, they seem to have completely forgotten the fact that the Black Cat Tribe was even capable of evolution to begin with.」

Okay yeah, that does sound pretty damn unnatural. I wouldn't really be surprised if the Gods had just tinkered with people's heads and forced them to forget stuff. Again, that sounds like something they'd be capable of.

I ruminated on it for a bit, but none of that God stuff actually served for anything more than an afterthought. I was much more focused on one of the other things that Aurel had said, as it simply couldn't be ignored.

「Still some remaining literature?」

Fran had addressed the exact same point I'd caught onto. Aurel hadn't stated that there were no longer any works of literature containing details regarding the Black Cat Tribe's evolutions. He'd only said that most were no longer present.

「Truth be told, I did happen to find a single work that contained a few pertinent details.」

「What kind?」

「Calm down. What I found was not something that addressed the matter directly.」

Aurel smiled bitterly at the fact that Fran had gotten so excited that she ended up slamming the table while rising to her feet. Apparently the book he found wasn't one that'd addressed the topic directly, but only mentioned it in passing.

「Have you ever heard of The Ten Original Tribes?」

「Ten original tribes? No.」

「The Ten Original Tribes refer to the first ten groups of beastkin that the God of Beasts and Insects had birthed into the world. Each is said to possess the power of a Divine Beast laying dormant within.」

「Divine Beast? Cool sounding.」

「Nine of the Ten Original Tribes have been known since ancient times: The Golden Flame Lionkin, The White Snow Wolfkin, The Yellow Dust Ratkin, The Purple Wind Elephantkin, The Orange Iron Foxkin, The Red Earth Horsekin, The Green Water Turtlekin, The Blue Life Snakekin, and The Cherry Blossom Cowkin. The tenth was, for some odd reason, unknown. For many years, its identity was thought of as one of the Beastkin's greatest mysteries...」

「Last is Black Catkin?」

「Possibly, yes. The work I happened to procure stated that the last tribe was the Black Heavenly Tigerkin, and it just so happens to be that Rumina is of the Black Tigerkin race.」

「Black Heavenly Tigerkin same as Black Tigerkin? Then, Aurel, White Wolfkin same as White Snow Wolfkin?」

「Not exactly. We, the White Dog Tribe's members, are capable of evolving into White Snow Wolfkin as opposed to White Wolfkin if we

happen to fulfill a certain set of conditions. I myself was only capable of becoming a White Wolfkin.」

According to Aurel, his species, the White Dogkin, descended from a line of White Snow Wolfkin. Hence, its members were also capable of becoming a White Snow Wolfkin so long as they were qualified to do so.

Through extrapolation, one could then assume that it was possible for Black Catkin to either evolve into Black Heavenly Tigerkin if they too met a certain set of conditions. Else, they do as Rumina did and simply evolve into Black Tigerkin instead.

As a tribe that descended from one of the ten, White Dogkin were and are to this day respected by their beastkin peers.

「And that is why I believe it to be odd for the beastkin to have simply forgotten about the Black Cat Tribe, which has likely also descended from one of The Original Ten Tribes.」

「Nn.」

Many tribes have performed investigations in order to determine which of the tribes was supposed to be the last of the ten, many of which ended in an assertion of the superiority of one's own lineage. Naturally, most of these assertions were false. Had he not known of Rumina, Aurel would have disregarded the work that made mention of the Black Heavenly Tigerkin as one of these false claims. But he didn't. His knowledge of her made it so he simply couldn't. Instead, he'd been convinced that the work he came across spoke merely of the truth.

But that, again, begged a question. Why exactly had that one work been left behind if all the rest had been purged?

「And that is all I have come to know.」

Aurel's face twisted in what could only be expressed as deep rooted frustration. He'd evidently thought at length about the topic, quite possibly because of the Black Catkin girl he'd known in the past.

「However, I do still have one thing to say. Divine retribution comes not without salvation. Even Trismegistus may one day be released from his curse if he simply defeats the magic beast he spawned. By that logic, the Black Cat Tribe must also be capable of the same. There must be a way for you and your kin to release yourselves from the fetters that bind you.」

「Nn.」

「But again, that is the extent of my knowledge. I'm sorry I wasn't able to be of much use.」

「Not useless. Helped lots. Thank you.」

「You really think so?」

「Nn.」

「That's quite comforting to hear.」

Fran's words caused Aurel's expression to blossom into a heartfelt smile.

176. Having Curry in Ulmutt

176. Having Curry in Ulmutt

Shara, the maid, brought Fran and Aurel their meals shortly after they finished discussing evolution. She was accompanied by a pudgy man, who I presumed to be the chef Aurel had mentioned earlier.

「I'm sorry about having kept you waiting.」

「No worries, Asuto. The dish you've prepared has quite the delicious smell to it.」

「It's one I learned of during my time in Barbra.」

Asuto, the chef, lifted the pot's lid and started to stir its insides with a ladle.

「Oh? I'm looking forward to giving it a try.」

「Don't expect too much. I'm still in the process of tuning the recipe.」

「And you're still serving it in spite of that?」

「I'm serving it to you because I know you've a very sharp sense of taste. I'd love for you to help me figure out what the dish is lacking. The version I tasted in Barbra was much more complete, and also the most delicious thing I've ever tasted in my life.」

「Well, now I'm really looking forward to trying the dish.」

「This prototype is already quite delicious in and of itself, but it seems to be missing something, so I'd really appreciate your opinion on it.」

「Hah hah hah. I'll give you as many opinions as you'd like so long as it means I get to enjoy delicious food.」

「I was also wondering whether or not it'd be best for me to make several of my regular dishes for the guest. Should I?」

「Well? What do you say?」

「Nn. Don't need.」

「Then please do give me your opinions on the dish as well.」

「Leave to me.」

「Woof woof!」

Urushi simply couldn't stand for missing out on a free meal, so he made sure to make his presence known.

Oh God damn it Urushi, stop drooling! We might have to pay for it if you mess it up!

「Some for Urushi too.」

「The taste might be a bit too strong for a dog.」

「Not problem. Urushi, Magic Beast.」

「Woof!」

「Oh, he's your familiar? He seemed so friendly that I didn't even realize. Alright then, I'll get some ready for him too.」

Asuto scooped the pot's contents, a thick, syrupy, brown liquid composed of potatoes and other vegetables, onto a plate of rice.

The dish the chef had created was one I'd seen before. Rather, it was one I had a vast amount of tucked away inside my dimensional storage. Hell,

there was no way I wouldn't recognize it. It was the dish I'd popularized back when we visited Barbra.

「Curry?」

「Wow, I'm surprised you knew. You hit the hammer right on the head, it's the dish that took this year's cooking contest by storm, curry.」

「Oh, right, you did say you were just in Barbra, right Fran?」

「Nn.」

「Then I take it you've had it before?」

「Nn.」

「Great! That's just perfect.」

Yeah uh, it was more like she ate the stuff every single day, but apparently that didn't matter, seeing as both she and Urushi were looking at it with their eyes sparkling regardless.

「Enjoy.」

「It looks a bit odd, but smells delicious.」

「Nom nom.」

「Worf worf. Bork bork.」

「That's a good appetite the two of you have there.」

The chef complimented Fran and Urushi with a smile.

「Hmmm... The taste is... unusual, but really fuels the appetite!」

Curry seemed to suit Aurel's palate. He'd initially started off eating at a rather slow pace, but soon began shoveling it into his mouth as quickly as he could.

「Seconds.」

「Woof.」

Fran and Urushi finished three plates each by the time Aurel finished his meal.

『Is it good?』

(Mediocre?)

She ended up eating five dishes despite not really being satisfied with the taste.

(Nn. Still tasty, but bad compared to Master's curry.)

「This is pretty good. What did you say it was called again?」

「It's called curry. Barbra's actually currently in the midst of a curry boom. Everyone's developing recipes for curry bread, curry pasta, and other things that make use of it. Dozens upon dozens of stores have also started putting it on their menus.」

「Given its taste, I'm not surprised. You said this recipe still needed some work?」

「It does. It can't hold a candle to the original I had in Barbra.」

「The original's that good?」

「Everyone there has been saying that it would've won had the cooking contest not been cancelled due to the incident.」

「Nn! Guaranteed victory.」

Fran nodded happily in order to assent to Asuto's statement.

We hadn't managed to win, but we'd still at least managed to get that one dude to acknowledge the dish, which in and of itself made me quite happy.

Likewise, the fact that the recipe had started becoming more and more widespread did the same. It looked people were already starting to come up with decently interesting spin offs too, like curry pasta, for example.

「Well, you sure seemed to suddenly get all giddy. Why the change?」

「Master won.」

「Master? Master who?」

「Oh, are you talking about the Master that everyone's been talking about? The Curry Master?」

Wait. Wait what? Did he just say what I thought he did? He was referring to me, right?

「Was your cooking Master the person that introduced curry to Barbra?」

「Not just cooking. Master for everything.」

「Magic and swordsmanship included?」

「Nn. Master capable of anything.」

「That's one impressive Master you've got right there. Wait, didn't you enter the city all on your own?」

「Nn. Master elusive like phantom.」

「Well, you're just as skilled as any full fledged adventurer, so I can't say I'd be surprised if you were going around without any supervision.」

「Huh? So you really are the Curry Master's disciple?」

Okay, yeah, apparently I actually heard him right. God dammit! Why did I end up with such a stupid sounding nickname!?

『Hey Fran, you mind double checking that by the Curry Master, he means me?』

「Asuto. Curry Master, who?」

「Wasn't he your Master?」

Aurel raised his brow; he was a bit confused.

「Oh, that may be because he doesn't actually refer to himself as such. The person responsible for inventing curry remained anonymous, and otherwise went only by Master. That's why people started calling him the Curry Master to begin with. I myself chose to follow the trend because a group of adventurers I am acquainted with calls him that, and because I only managed to get my hands on a recipe through my connections with said group.」

「Adventurers?」

「Yeah. They're a party by the name of the Scarlet Maidens. Do you acquainted with them?」

「Nn. Acquaintances.」

Oh god damn it! It was them? Zzz... My bet's on this all being Lydia's fault.

「So, what did you think of the curry I made?」

「Nn. Okay.」

「I see...」

Asuto's face clouded over; he immediately caught onto the fact that Fran hadn't been complimenting him.

『Why don't we give him a copy of the recipe?』

We owed Aurel, and we were probably going to be relying on him much more going forwards as well, so I figured we might as well do him a favour.

Fran told Asuto our curry rice recipe in exchange for his own. It turned out that some spices were rather hard to get in Ulmutt, so he'd been using different ones to fill in for the missing flavour.

I wasn't able to actually try what he'd made, but I was at least able to imagine it to some extent by making use of the Cooking skill. That, in turn, made it possible for me to give him a bit of advice.

As a result, we were able to create a type of curry that varied greatly from the one we made in Barbra, an Ulmuttian original.

I couldn't help but look forward to the possibility of curry spreading through Ulmutt as it had Barbra.

And so, an hour passed.

During said hour, Fran had asked Aurel about a few more things, most of which were with regards to the Beast Lord that Dias had told us about earlier in the day.

「And here's what I owe you for finishing the request I gave you, as well as a bit of an added bonus as thanks for the recipe.」

「Don't really need.」

「Please just accept it. You'd leave me feeling awkward if you didn't.」

Aurel handed us a leather bag containing 300k Golde.

I didn't really think we deserved it. He'd only given us the request so he could acquaint us with Rumina. Likewise, us giving him the recipe was just more or less our way of thanking him for what he'd told us, so I felt like we were still in his debt. That said, cash was cash, and he was kinda just giving it to us, so we decided to just accept it anyways.

「Thanks.」

「No problem. Do stop by again.」

「Nn.」

177. The Menace Known as the Beast Lord.

177. The Menace Known as the Beast Lord.

Fran left Aurel's manor after receiving her award. The blue catkin that'd been gathered outside earlier were already nowhere to be seen. They'd likely already given up and gone home.

『Alright, what now?』

「Will talk to Dias.」

『Good point. Let's go ask him about the Black Catkin he knew 53 years back, and get all our questions answered right away.』

「Nn.」

And so, we went to the Adventurer's Guild. The act of visiting it, however, in no way guaranteed our ability to actually meet with Dias. He was known for going in and out of the building, so our only choice was to just check if and hope that he was present.

But we couldn't.

We were instead ended up immediately taking a stance the moment we tried to enter the guild. More accurately, we became unable to resist the urge to ready ourselves for combat.

『Woah!』

「Nn!」

「Growl!」

The reason for which was the sheer extent of the pressure that'd suddenly assaulted us. Said pressure didn't contain any bloodlust or even the slightest hint of aggression, but, we felt overwhelmed and intimidated regardless. That was just how strong its source happened to be. We were the only people around, and hence, the only people on guard, but I was sure that any other adventurer would've reacted in the same manner.

I surveyed my surroundings, only to find what could only be described as a strange looking door. It was in the middle of the road and didn't have anything to support it. It was just there. I immediately interpreted it as something along the lines of a Dokodemo Door. a portal that could lead basically anywhere. Though, it was a bit different from the standard variant, seeing as how its appearance was that of a pair of super fancy double doors. The pressure's source was evidently whatever lay waiting for us on the door's other side.

I almost seemed to have jinxed it, as the door slowly began to open the moment I had that exact thought. In said moment, I managed to catch a quick glimpse of the furniture that lay beyond.

Okay, welp. I guess that must mean it really is a Dokodemo Door, huh?

「Right this way, Lord Rig.」

「Sure.」

A figure emerged from the door's other side. The man's frame was so massive that it put even Erza's to shame. He stood at almost two meters tall, and had pretty much built purely of muscle. The way his shimmering, yellow-gold hair was arranged to look like a lion's mane really seemed to match with the way his movements almost seemed to resemble those of a felines'.

I instantly appraised the man the moment I saw him.

General Information

Name: Rigdis Narasimha

Age: 38

Race Beastkin (Golden Flame Lionkin/Red Cat Tribe)

Job: Spearlord

Status Level: 71/99

HP: 1965

MP: 1081

STR: 1084

VIT: 840

AGI: 748

INT: 476

MGC: 587

DEX: 491

Skills

Sole Sense: Lv 8

Intimidation: MAX

Espionage: Lv 3

Super Herculean Strength: Lv 6

Flame Magic: Lv 7

Fire Magic: MAX

Mimicry: Lv 3

Confusion: Lv 8

Presence Detection: lv 8

Combat Qigong: Lv 7

Inner Qigong: Lv 8 [1]

Torture: lv 2

Herculean Strength: MAX

Claw/Fang Techniques: Lv 7

Claw/Fang Arts: Lv 7

Regeneration: Lv 8

Command: Lv 3

Raise Morale: Lv 6

Resistance to Abnormal Status Conditions: Lv 7

Limber: Lv 6

Blink: MAX

Blink Step: Lv 5

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 5

Elemental Blade: MAX

Threaten: Lv 3

Dominating Aura: Lv 8 [2]

Roar: Lv 8

Magic Resistance: Lv 3

Magic Perception: Lv 4

Magical Barrier: Lv 8

Flame Invalidation

Vigour Mastery

Intermediate Boost to All Stats

Enhanced Spear Techniques

Enhanced Spear Arts

Enhanced Elemental Blade

Enhanced Body Hair

Hardened Body Hair

Demon Killer

Dragon Slayer

Sense of Balance

Predation

Magic Manipulation

Night Vision

Unique Skills

Spear God's Grace

Spear Lord's Arts [3]

Spear Lord's Techniques [3]

Extra Skills

God of Beasts and Insects' Grace

Innate Skills

Awakening

Golden Flame of Extinction

Spear Deification

Titles

Kingslayer

Parricidal

Usurper

Beast Lord

Loved by the God of Beasts and Insects

Spearlord

Dungeon Conqueror

Demon Killer

Dragon Slayer

Flame User

S Ranked Adventurer

Equipment

Flame Dragon Fang Greatspear

Flame Dragon Scale Armour

Magical Poison Lord Snake Garments

Gold Flame Lion's Mantle

Sacrificial Bracelet

Ring of Reason

Proof of Beast Lordship

Ohhhhhhhhhhhh shiiiiiiiiiiiiieeeeeeeeeeeeeetttttt! The fuck is with his stats!? The hell!? Why does he have over 1k strength!? Holy shit, dude makes Amanda and Dias look like fucking kittens.

He also had a tonne of skills we hadn't seen before, alongside an extra skill and several unique and innate skills.

All those, however, were basically completely overshadowed by the two titles he held: Beast Lord and S Ranked Adventurer. Wait, wait, did that mean that he was the Beast Lord? The one paying Ulmutt a courtesy visit? He isn't just some really strong adventurer crowned the Lord of the Beasts, right? I mean, he is an S ranked adventurer, so that is at least a possibility of some sort, right...?

I wanted to examine his skills in more detail, but stopped myself as I noticed someone follow him out the door.

「What's wrong, girl?」

We looked up to see yet another man with a massive frame. His muscles were massive; they bulged to such an extent that I almost wanted to say he'd be able to beat a stone golem in a punch out. Unlike the Beast Lord, he was a man I at least knew of, one of the Beast Lord's two guards. I recalled him being named something along the lines of Goldalfa.

Apparently he thought Fran had seemed rather suspicious, given how she was staring at the pair in silence.

Crap. The Beast Lord'll probably end up making note of us at this rate.

『Hey Fran, let's get the hell out of here while we still have the chance.』

(...)

I figured that we'd best get out of here, so I tried calling out to Fran, but she didn't respond.

『Fran? Hey Fran, you alright?』

(...)

She instead continued to just stand there with a pale look on her face.

(Too strong... Can't win...)

Fran had always been able to keep her cool, even in front of beastkin that'd evolved, like Aurel or Rumina. Sure, she respected them, but she was capable of handling herself. But now, she was completely frozen over in fear.

Though, I guess it was kind of fair. The Beast Lord was a Golden Flame Lion, a member of the original ten tribes Aurel had just told us about. We'd imagined the tribes' members to be strong, but never could we have even fathomed for them to be this strong. He was already intimidating enough as he usually was. I could totally see him instantly killing any weaker foes just by throwing his bloodlust at them.

Beastkin seemed more or less capable of intuiting how strong other beastkin were, so I didn't really think it'd be weird for someone like Fran to get like this in front of one as strong as the Beast Lord.

「Huh? Oh, hey, you girl. Aren't you a Black Catkin?」

Shit. The Beast Lord actually noticed us. Worse, he was looking at Fran as if he was trying to evaluate her.

「It's pretty rare to see a Black Catkin adventurer.」

「Especially one with a decent amount of skill.」

Goldalfa added to his lord's comment with a compliment.

「She doesn't look skilled to me.」

「That is just because your standards are far too high, Lord Rig.」

「That so? Oh well, I can't say I'm not curious, so I guess I'll bite and show her a bit of affection.」

Tsk. Fran had caught his eye, and not in a good way.

The manner in which he looked at her was akin to that of a lion that'd found itself some prey; his gaze was full of fighting spirit.

Fran, on the other hand, was still completely frozen. The fact that she was in the beast lord's presence had already caused her to completely break down.

(No... Will be killed...)

(Whimper...)

Urushi was the same, despite the fact that he was still hidden away in the shadows.

I considered teleporting us out, but realized that it was possible that running away like that would just bring us even more trouble further down the road. In other words, warping was nothing but a last resort. Neither option was really much better than the other, so I decided to just prioritize Fran's will and go with what she wanted.

Or at least that's what I would have done had I needed to.

「I am sorry Lord Rig, but I do not think you have the time for it.」

「Ugh, come on, Royce.」

A third person emerged from the door and called out to the Beast Lord. He too was someone I remembered, the carriage's second guard.

The door almost seemed to melt away the moment he touched it. It was probably something he'd created with one of his abilities to begin with.

「We're already late for the meeting we scheduled with the Guildmaster. We really need to hurry it up.」

「Mannnn, I guess it can't be helped. Be grateful, girl. It looks like you'll get to keep your life, for now at least.」

「Lord Rig, the line you just said made you appear like a gangster.」

Goldalfa offered Rigdis some advice on his lack of etiquette, but was immediately shot down.

「There ain't much of a difference between a noble society and a mafia anyways.」

「I would very much beg to differ.」

Again, Goldalfa offered a correct, and again, his opinion was ignored.

「Yeah, yeah, yeah, shut up already. Let's just hurry the hell up and get a move on.」

Whew. Thankfully, it looked like Rigids ended up losing his interest in Fran, as he ended up going further into the guild whilst speaking with his bodyguards.

Fran collapsed onto her hands and knees the moment he vanished from her line of sight.

She was gasping desperately for air with all four of her limbs on the ground and sweat profusely dripping from her body, a miserable state.

『Hey, you still doing okay?』

「Nn...」

Yeah no. There was no way she was, but she nodded in a show of assent regardless. Well, at least she'd finally regained the ability to respond to me.

『Let's just get out of here, go back to the inn, and get ourselves rested up. We can head back into the dungeon first thing tomorrow morning and put off talking to Dias till some time later, alright?』

「Nn.」

I teleported us near the inn after helping Fran up with telekinesis. I knew it was flashy, and that people might see us, but I figured it would be best for us to have her get some rest right away, teleporting was still less conspicuous than having her walk through town in her current state.

『Can you still walk?』

「Still fine...」

She only barely managed to drag her feet along as she walked. She was clearly even more drained than she would be after a fierce battle.

『Man, the Beast Lord sure did live up to his name. Dude was a total monster. Let's try making sure we're C rankers by the next time we run into him.』

[1] Seems as good a time as any for me to explain the difference between the two types of Qigong. In Japan, Qigong is described as “Hard” and “Soft,” which I translated as “Combat” and “Inner” respectively. Combat Qigong is effectively the same thing as martial arts. You use it to punch people. Inner Qigong is what relates to the healing other people with your qi (ki) stuff and whatnot. Note that these are derived from Chinese meanings, and, funnily enough differ greatly from their roots due to some sort of ancient localization error. China doesn’t actually have the “hard qigong” or “soft qigong” terms. They do have the hard/soft strength concept, but it’s applied quite differently. The hard concept is when one strengthens one’s own body. The soft concept is when one makes one’s own body more flexible. Both can be applied in a combat sense; the first is related to brute force or head on strikes, whereas the second is more closely related to receiving another individual’s blow and returning with a counter, preferably one that uses the attacker’s strength against them. Do keep in mind that Qi (Ki) is still related to the concept of healing, and good fighters are commonly also people with great control over their ki, and therefore capable of healing others. It’s quite difficult to explain this in detail without like 5k words, so I’ll just leave it at this for now.

[2] One piece reference. I was going to localize it the same way they localized it in one piece, but the I found out that the lazy fucks didn’t... which I guess makes sense because they have to worry about lip sync, but still. Gdi, I wanted to slack off and not think.

[3] This is higher tier than “Divine” because Japan says so. I was thinking of not literally translating it and instead going with “Transcendent,” but I ultimately ended up just saying fuck it. I remember someone warning me about this, but I didn’t want to think of something to replace “Divine X Arts” at the time. I still don’t. Now, if the series was finished and I already knew all the tiers, then I’d actually bother, but it’s too much of a pain when the author can still introduce higher tier shit going forward.

178. Royce

178. Royce

We were currently back at the inn; 30 minutes had passed since we met the Beast Lord.

『Want to just call it a day?』

「Still okay.」

Fran, whose face finally had its colour restored to normal, shook her head. It seemed she'd fully recovered after staying away from the Beast Lord for long enough.

『You sure? Don't force yourself, alright?』

「Nn. Will go take bath.」

Fran liked baths, so having one for a change of pace sounded like a pretty good idea.

It would take her at least half hour to return. Normally, I would use the time she spent in the bath to practice using my skills, but today was going to be different. I happened to have a certain something else in mind.

『Hey Urushi, let's go appraise the Beast Lord and his companions.』

「Woof?」

『Let's go hang around the guild, appraise them the moment they leave it, and then run the hell away.』

「Ruff...」

『Don't sweat it, it's not like we're going to go pick a fight or anything.』

「Whimper...」

Urushi was scared of the Beast Lord, and therefore not exactly willing, but I insisted anyways because I wanted to know more about his abilities, especially seeing as it was possible for us to encounter a worst case scenario in which we ended up antagonizing them.

We needed to know if they had any skills that'd aid them in a pursuit. It'd be difficult to escape them if they did, but fairly easy otherwise. The former of these two possibilities implied that there was a chance we'd have to devise ourselves a few schemes ahead of time. There was also the fact that examining their skills in more detail would allow us to learn about what we might end up having in the future.

Things were looking pretty good so far. Goldalfa and the Beast Lord were both the more combat oriented types. Neither really had too many skills that'd help them in a chase or search. The ones they did have were rather high level, but still not enough for them to actually prevent us from escaping them. Hence, all our issues lay with the other guard and the coachman, both of which I'd missed the chance to appraise.

There was also always the possibility that the Beast Lord had a ninja-like covert ops division protecting him from the shadows.

『Don't worry. We won't need you to get really close to them or anything like that. In fact, it'd be better for us to stay rather far away.』

「...Woof.」

『Let's try looking for them real quick. We'll just totally back out if they're not in the guild anymore, alright?』

「...Woof.」

Urushi's fear of the Beast Lord made him reluctant to go with the plan I suggested.

Welp, just asking him didn't work. It looked like I had to try giving him the carrot.

Apparently, you weren't actually supposed to train dogs through a reward or merit based system, as it'd lead to them only doing things when also given treats. That said though, the same probably didn't apply to Urushi. I knew that I myself wasn't always exactly conscious of the it, but Urushi was in fact a Magic Beast, and not a dog.

『Well, how about this. I'll make you some super spicy curry after we get back. It'll be so spicy that not even Fran'll find it too hot to eat.』

「Growl...!」

Sweet. Looks like he's taken the bait.

『Alright! Let's do this!』

I situated myself on top of a roof that happened to have a good angle on the guild not too long after I finished negotiating with Urushi.

My wolf companion was hidden in a position a bit further distance away. It was safer for me to be alone. I was just a sword, so most people wouldn't notice me so long as I made sure to use Presence Isolation. It didn't even matter whether or not they happened to have Appraisal Detection, as they'd probably just think of me as a mysterious item that was capable of appraising things at most. Besides, it probably wouldn't even come to that. Appraisal Detection simply told its user that they were being appraised. It wouldn't be able to pinpoint me as the thing doing the appraising in the first place. Plus, they probably wouldn't be able to trace me back to Fran even if they did. Who in their right mind would suspect that the sword she was carrying around was the same as the one that'd appraised them?

That said, one could never be too careful, so I made sure to shrink my body down as much as possible whilst also changing its shape.

『Hmmm, should be good.』

The form I took was like that of an odd looking metal ball, and hence, functioned for more than enough of a disguise.

The reason I had Urushi accompany me is because I needed a pair of feet to get around town. I was a sword, so I kinda couldn't just randomly head out. I mean, I'd considered using a doppelganger, but, my doppelgangers' skills had their levels reduced, which in turn would make me more susceptible to being discovered. I figured stealth was more important than anything else at this point in time, so I chose that over the ability to carry out the whole operation alone.

The Beast Lord's presence was a fairly obvious one, especially seeing as how he wasn't trying to hide his presence. Thanks to all that, I managed to sense him fairly easily even from outside the guild.

After thinking about it a bit, I realized that the Beast Lord hadn't actually seemed all that intimidating at all when he was riding the carriage earlier in the day. The discrepancy between the two states caused me to immediately question it. Had he been trying to hide his aura back then? Or was it the opposite? Did he just recently decide to start seeming all terrifying because he had to deal with Dias or something?

Welp, Dias seems kinda young and all, but he is still technically an old man. Hopefully the guy doesn't give a heart attack.

One of the only issues that I could really see with this whole plan of mine was the fact that I didn't know how long the meeting was going to last. Ideally, I wanted to get back before Fran finished with her bath, so we probably only had around another 15 minutes.

The other thing that could totally mess up my plans was the possibility of the Beast Lord's party choosing to leave Dias' room through the Dokodemo Door they used to port into the guild in the first place. I wouldn't even so

much as have a chance to appraise them if they didn't leave through the Guild's front door.

Fortunately, I soon discovered that my worries were needless, as I sensed that they began moving, and more specifically, heading in the direction of the building's entrance.

『Alright, I've only got one shot at this. I'm going to have to get the hell out of here the moment I finish appraising them.』

It probably wouldn't be an issue if none of them had Appraisal Detection, but you know, just in case.

『There they are!』

The Beast Lord stood at the forefront. He was immediately followed by Goldalfa. The shorter guard we spotted earlier had taken up the rear. The coachman guy was missing, so I decided to just appraise the third guy and call it a day for now.

『Fuck yeah! It worked! I'm out of here!』

I executed the escape plan I thought up just in case they happened to have skills that would allow them to chase me down. That is, I warped over to Urushi, grabbed him, and started spamming Long Jump in the inn's direction while also consciously hiding my presence. I figured I was probably going a bit overboard, but ended up carrying it through just in case. I chose the safest possible option because peeking at the Beast Lord's status had caused me to feel a bit nervous.

It turned out the last guard was just as ridiculously strong as I'd been expecting him to be.

General Information

Name: Royce

Age: 46

Race: Beastkin (Grey Rabbit Tribe/Silver Rabbitkin)

Job: Transporter

Status Level: 74/99

HP: 401

MP: 1199

STR: 151

VIT: 212

AGI: 419

INT: 401

MGC: 709

DEX: 127

Skills

Sole Sense: Lv 4

Digging: Lv 2

Espionage: Lv 2

Recovery Magic: Lv 8

Moonlight Magic: Lv 4

Presence Detection: Lv 7

Presence Isolation: Lv 4

Space/Time Magic: Lv 4

Kicking Techniques: Lv 4

Kicking Arts: Lv 4

Blink: Lv 4

Purification Magic: Lv 3

Resistance to Abnormal Status Conditions: Lv 4

Vibration Sense: Lv 3

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 7

Staff Techniques: Lv 5

Staff Arts: Lv 6

Earth Magic: Lv 3

Leap: Lv 4

Soil Magic: MAX

Support Magic: Lv 5

Magic Resistance: Lv 8

Magic Detection: Lv 4

Magic Mastery

Orc Killer

Goblin Killer

Automatic MP Regeneration

Enhanced Hearing

Innate Skills

Awakening

Dimensional Gate

Crescent Moon's Crest

Titles

Orc Killer

Goblin Killer

He Who Protects

Dungeon Conqueror

Earth Mage

A Ranked Adventurer

Equipment

Silver Moonstone Staff

Crescent Moon Rabbit's Robe

Earth Spirit's Mantle

Bodyguard's Bracelet

Suction Magic Ring

It looked like the Dokodemo Door he had came from his job in the form of an innate skill, and was actually referred to as the Dimensional Gate skill.

Man, that was nerve racking.

『We're back~』

「Woof.」

It seemed I messed up and ended up eating up a bit too much time, as Fran had gotten back before us.

I immediately recognized the state she was in as a bit abnormal. The lights were off, and she was on top of the bed with her face in her knees and her arms around them.

『Hey Fran, why are the lights off?』

「Nn...!」

Fran rushed towards us the moment we called out to her. She then wrapped her arms around Urushi and buried her face in his fur.

『Woah. What's up?』

「Woof?」

「Master... Urushi...」

『What's with you all of a sudden?』

「Nothing...」

Her words were in direct contrast to her expression. Her eyes were red, and she seemed rather uneasy. It looked as if she'd just been crying.

「Woof woof?」

「Nn. Ticks.」

She didn't end up cheering up and smiling until after Urushi started to lick her.

That was when it finally hit me. The Beast Lord's strength had totally broken her will, there was no way for her to have already recovered from it. She'd merely been putting up a front so she wouldn't worry me.

And then there was the fact that we were just flat out gone by the time she got back. She wasn't in exactly what I'd call mentally secure right now, so she ended up in a state of anxiety; she worried that we'd abandoned her.

And hence, Fran, a girl I'd always thought to have nerves of steel, had ended up crying.

I was assaulted by a sense of guilt. It was all my fault. I could've just appraised the Beast Lord's guard whenever. There wasn't really much of a point in going out of my way and doing it now of all times, even if I did feel a bit worried that we'd end up making enemies of them. I shouldn't have acted on my impulses. I shouldn't have let Fran all on her own.

『Sorry.』

「Not problem. But sleep together tonight.」

『Huh? Wait, what? You're talking to me, right?』

「Nn.」

『But I'm a sword you know? I'm not exactly what you'd call huggable.』

「Don't care.」

『Well, as long as you're fine with it.』

「Urushi too.」

「Woof?」

And so, I ended up spending the night as Fran's body pillow. I mean, I did have a sheath and all that, but I was still technically a sword, so... I didn't exactly see how it was even the slightest bit comfortable, but whatever.

Fran ended up falling asleep wrapped in Urushi's fur while also desperately clinging onto me with both arms.

『Welp. I got nothing to do.』

I wasn't exactly able to mess around with my skills given that I didn't want to wake Fran up. The only thing there really was for me to do was to stare at her face as she slept.

You know, this doesn't seem too bad from time to time.

179. Rumina's Oddity

Chapter 179. Rumina's Oddity

Rumina's Oddity

The night passed, and with it, almost every remaining trace of Fran's display of weakness. She still seemed a bit frailer than usual, but the look on her face demonstrated that she was back to being herself.

I decided not to pursue the topic any further, and instead decided to discuss the day's plans with her over breakfast.

『How about diving back into the eastern dungeon and getting stuff done? You know, so we can rank up and all that.』

「Nn. Agreed.」

「Woof.」

Both seemed totally on board with my suggestion, possibly in part because they'd seen the extent of the Beast Lord's strength with their very own eyes.

I myself felt the same way. We would probably be able to take either Goldalfa or Royce one on one and somehow manage to win so long as we used everything we had at our disposal. It'd be pretty close, but not something we wouldn't be able to handle. The Beast Lord, on the other hand, was on a whole new level. Beating him in our current state was more or less just flat out impossible.

First was the fact that his stats were through the roof. He simply overwhelmed us from a numerical standpoint. We didn't even come close to holding a candle to his might. His skills more or less gave off the same impression. That is, he had a tonne of high leveled abilities we knew nothing about. He'd be able to exploit our lack of knowledge and completely obliterate us. The icing on the cake was his aura. He simply radiated an air of superiority. The way he carried and projected himself made him incredibly difficult to oppose.

The Beast Lord was a freak of nature, a walking natural disaster, and last but not least, an entity that could turn into to an enemy of ours at any given moment. To be honest, that very fact almost made me want to just instantly throw in the towel.

『Let's just focus on finishing our quests as soon as possible instead of worrying about training and whatnot.』

「Nn.」

We decided to try finishing all the requests we had on hand by the day's end if possible. We knew for a fact that we'd be able to finish them some time tomorrow at the latest.

The reason we thought such a tight schedule was even remotely possible was because we already knew where the monsters and traps spawned. Hence, we figured that it wouldn't take long for us to reach the dungeon's lower levels so long as we went all out.

It took us about an hour to get everything ready and arrive at the dungeon's entrance.

「Hey there little missy. You're headed back in already?」

「Nn.」

「Alright. I know you're really skilled, so I think you'll probably be fine anyways, but I guess I'll tell you what I've been telling everyone else just in case. Be careful, the dungeon's been acting up a bit as of late.」

「Acting up? Something happened?」

「Apparently the place has started to spawn magic beasts it didn't used to spawn in the past.」

The guard cum dungeon receptionist stated that Evil Beings had been spotted within the dungeon's confines. The specific species discovered were

all variants of goblins or orcs.

「The dungeon's structure hasn't seemed to have changed yet, but, there does seem to be something odd going on inside of it, so you'd best be on your guard.」

「Got it.」

We entered the dungeon while heeding the guard's advice, only to run into a goblin almost immediately after entering the dungeon.

The goblin left me a bit confused, as it was several times weaker than all the other stuff the dungeon typically spawned.

If anything, it made it seem like the dungeon had gotten much easier to handle than it'd been before, especially seeing as how its structure and trap placement had yet to change.

Getting on Urushi's back and having him dash through the place made clearing the dungeon a ridiculously simple feat. It only took us about 3 hours to reach the 15th floor.

We spotted Evil Beings in the forms of orcs, goblins, and kobolds as we engaged in our descent. Again, I noted that all three species felt out of place, as none of them fit the dungeon's theme or feel.

They didn't really have any stealth skills, nor did they take advantage of the traps that happened to be lying around. If anything, it was the opposite. They'd end up popping and getting screwed by the traps more often than they'd actually make decent use of them.

I couldn't help but wonder what'd happened. I mean, the fact that Rumina had done something was a given, but the things she'd done made absolutely no sense whatsoever.

「Evil beings. Weak.」

『Yeah, but they've kinda made clearing through the place a lot easier than usual.』

An easier clear wasn't the only benefit we derived from whatever it was Rumina was doing either. We also managed to get a tonne of creation-type skills from the monsters we encountered, something we hadn't really had any chances to get much of up till now.

The High Ogres we met starting at the 12th floor were especially helpful in that regard, as some had smithing and leather crafting skills that went all the way up to level 5. Naturally, they also had pretty decent combat skills, so I was able to profit out the ass by absorbing their magic stones.

The smithing and leather crafting skills were the ones that leveled the most though, as both hit level 3. None of the other skills gained nearly as many levels, but we still managed to give a boost to what was almost 20 different skills for free, so I wasn't complaining.

Again, I wasn't really complaining, but I did happen to notice an issue. It felt that more and more of the magic beasts were slowly getting swapped out for Evil Beings, which in turn meant that we were going to have trouble finishing the requests we'd set out to complete, as they required us to hunt certain magic beasts in particular.

『We should probably be a bit more careful of the traps from here on out. That said, let's keep pushing forward.』

「Nn.」

『Urushi, you keep an eye out for enemies, alright boy?』

「Woof.」

The only requests we had left to complete all involved retrieving materials from magic beasts that'd been rare and difficult to come across to begin with. It getting harder for us to find them only meant that actually finishing the requests would end up being a huge pain in the ass.

Or at least that's how things would've been had I been right.

『Sweet. That's one request out of the way.』

There basically weren't any Evil Beings past the 15th floor. If anything, there seemed to be more monsters than usual, so we actually managed to finish all the stuff we had to do without really eating up all that much time at all. I didn't get why everything had ended up the way it was, but it worked for us, so again, I didn't really mind it. That said, I figured it'd probably be a good idea for us to ask Rumina what was going on seeing as how we happened to be in the area anyways.

『Looks like we're done. Should still be around evening right now.』

「Will go visit Rumina.」

『Go for it.』

I didn't know whether or not Dungeon Masters actually slept, so I actually would've been a bit concerned about visiting her if it was any later in the day. Fortunately for us, it wasn't.

We kept on guard as we entered the boss room, the room in which we defeated the Disaster Pillbug. Rumina had said that we'd be able to pass right through it, but we were a bit concerned that may no longer be the case given that there seemed to be something wrong with the dungeon.

But once again, my suspicions turned out to be needless. The worry we'd spent was completely wasted, as we were promptly greeted by both the teleporter that led back up to the dungeon's entrance and the passage that led to Rumina's quarters.

Naturally, Fran, Urushi and I chose to enter the latter of the two options presented, and made our way over to the room Rumina had invited us to last time.

She was in a bit of an unusual state; she was kind of just sitting there, completely zoned out. She didn't actually raise her face till after Fran called out to her.

「Hello.」

「Why... Good evening, Fran...」

Wait, did she not actually realize that Fran'd been here? Was she maybe feeling a bit under the weather?

I couldn't tell. What I could tell was that she began beaming the moment she saw Fran, but reverted to a stern looking expression shortly after.

「Nn. Visiting.」

「I see.」

She was acting a bit cold. Last time, she welcomed us. This time, she didn't even do so much as even offer Fran a seat.

「Evil Beings appearing in dungeon.」

「I see.」

She barely responded even when Fran tried talking to her. It almost looked like she didn't want to welcome the younger black catgirl.

「Um...」

「Fran, it would be best for you to leave.」

「What?」

「I have much to attend to, and very little time to mind you.」

Rumina grabbed Fran, who was staring in blank surprise, by the shoulders and started pushing her towards the exit.

Wait what? Why was she acting so different?

I figured she probably had a reason of sorts, but I couldn't bring myself to accept her actions.

「Leave. You are disrupting me.」

「Um...」

「Never return to my quarters.」

Fran was, once again, flabbergasted. It didn't look like she could grasp Rumina's sudden change in attitude either.

I'd tried using the Principle of Falsehood real quick to double check whether or not she was just bullshitting us, but apparently she was telling the truth, Fran really was getting in her way. That, however, didn't necessarily mean that she really wanted to treat Fran the way she was. The Principle of Falsehood wasn't almighty. It could tell the difference between a true statement and a false one, but it wasn't capable of figuring out the emotion that drove the statement. That was left to its user.

In my opinion, it'd be best for us to straight up ask her what was going on, for Fran's sake. Leaving the dungeon here and now, and thereby not fishing out Rumina's emotions, would lead to uncertainty. Fran would never know whether or not Rumina had really come to hate her, especially seeing as how it'd also become extremely difficult for the two to ever meet again.

Fran, however, would never be able to actually ask Rumina for the truth herself. She was too crestfallen, too... afraid. The fear she felt wasn't the same type of terror she'd felt when she met the Beast Lord. It was a sentiment much more emotional in origin than the primal, instinctual rejection of death. Fran was instead afraid of losing someone she'd grown attached to. She was afraid of being disliked by one of the few people she admired.

Rumina was the first fellow Black Catkin Fran had met after a life of solitude, the life she'd lived after losing both her parents and being sold into slavery. Moreover, she was someone that not only earned Fran's respect, but also treated her with affection. That was precisely why I found Fran's confusion to be completely understandable. She was in shock. There was no way she'd be able to doubt Rumina, let alone analyze her given the circumstances.

And that, in turn, meant that it was up to me to ask the question. It meant that I would have to expose myself, but I honestly could care less so long as it cleared things up between the two catgirls.

Given that, I steeled myself and spoke.

『So, are you really trying to reject Fran?』

180. Of Master And Godblades

180. Of Master And Godblades

『So, are you really trying to reject Fran?』

「Who...exactly was that...?」

『Me.』

「A sword capable of speech...!? Are you perhaps an Intelligent Weapon?」

『I am.』

「Well... I am quite surprised to see that your race is one that truly exists.」

「Master. Exposed, okay?」

『Of course not. But it can't be helped at this point.』

This was my first time intentionally exposing myself to anyone other than Fran of my own accord, and to be honest, doing it made me feel like a fool. I immediately regretted my actions because I knew they were incredibly stupid, but ultimately ended up deciding that all was fine. As of this moment, my highest priority was no longer keeping my identity a secret. Nor was it minimizing the number of eyes on us. What mattered most right now was Fran. I couldn't let Rumina do something as detrimental to her as cutting all ties with us here and now.

While that was the driving force behind my decision, it wasn't the only one that'd pushed me to expose myself. To be frank, it was in part because I felt

apologetic. Fran had made sure not to tell Rumina about me. She'd gone out of her way to keep a secret from the predecessor she respected from the bottom of her heart.

All for my sake.

The stress the act had caused her was only further evidenced by the light sigh she breathed as I announced my identity.

「I see... And that would mean that your journey was not one spent in solitude... Knowing that puts my heart at ease.」

「Nn?」

「Mind me not. 'Twas nothing.」

Nothing my ass. She too had clearly breathed a sigh of relief, one that proved she still cared for Fran. I mean, I'd clearly heard her. She'd even muttered that knowing Fran wasn't alone had put her at ease.

It seemed that she really had just been putting on an act in order to keep Fran at bay.

「L-Let us move on and discuss matters of greater interest. Sword, are you by any chance a Godblade?」

Rumina brute forced her way through the conversation and blatantly changed the topic — not that I minded. We'd already gotten proof that her feelings for Fran hadn't changed. In that sense, it was safe to say that I'd accomplished my goal.

『Unfortunately not. I was told by a famous blacksmith that I was nothing more than a sword with a strange ability.』

「And what precisely might this strange ability be?」

Hmmm... what do? I accidentally told her a bit more than I'd been intending to. In doing so, I allowed her to catch onto something that could

lead all the way down the rabbit hole, and I wasn't really sure exactly how much it would be best for me to say.

『Hey Fran, what do you think? Personally, I don't really think we need to do anything more than just make a few brief mentions.』

(Can't... just say everything...?)

Her response was exactly what I'd been expecting it to be. She didn't want to keep any more secrets from Rumina. Besides, it seemed that the only other person the older Black Catkin was willing to meet face to face was Dias, and Dias already knew I was an Intelligent Weapon anyways, so there kinda wasn't really that much of a point in hiding my abilities from her.

Besides, I wanted to abide by Fran's will. She really seemed eager to tell Rumina, and that alone was enough to convince me to give her the green light.

『You know what? Just go for it.』

(Thanks.)

And so, Fran began to speak. She told Rumina everything she knew about me. She told her how I used to be human, how I had the ability to absorb skills and magic stones, and how I had somehow first come to inside the centermost part of the Maohkami Plains.

To be fair, Fran wasn't the only one all gung ho about telling Rumina about me. The older Black Catkin was a Dungeon Master and one that'd lived for over 500 years at that. There was a chance she'd know a bit more than us about the circumstances surrounding my origin.

「Your sword can absorb skills by absorbing magic stones, you say? That is quite an interesting ability to have. C-Can it absorb any sort of skill whatsoever? Does it function with Unique Skills? What about Extra Skills?」

『I've pretty much been able to absorb any and every type of skill I've ever encountered so long as it comes from a magic stone.』

「So you truly have the ability to attain any skill you wish for...」

『Only if you can find a magic stone that happens to have it.』

「How... splendid! Hahahahahaha!」

「Something matter?」

Rumina suddenly broke out in a fit of laughter. I was a bit surprised, but could tell from the bright smile she wore on her face that she was still both lucid and sane.

「No, no, 'tis nothing. I simply laughed in response to what I had just come to realize.」

『Right, I've been meaning to ask you. Why exactly were you rejecting Fran just now?』

「I have my reasons.」

『And those reasons are...?』

「I must apologize. I cannot inform you of them. It is unfortunate, but I have no choice but to ask you to believe that my actions serve to Fran's benefit.」

That, in other words, meant that whatever she'd been doing must be related in some way to Fran's evolution. Could she maybe have been doing something that would allow for Fran to evolve?

『But then why were you trying to distance yourself from her?』

「I wished to create distance between the two of us in order to prevent myself from harming her. It seems, however, that my efforts were in vain, as I have done precisely that regardless.」

Rumina's expression wavered as she spoke.

「Fran...」

「Nn?」

「I am sorry.」

Fran and I both stared in confusion as Rumina began bowing and apologizing immediately after she finished laughing.

「I have done you harm by making for myself a foolish choice. I would like to apologize to you from the bottom of my heart; I am truly sorry. My actions contained within them far too much haste.」

「Doesn't matter if Rumina doesn't hate me.」

「My emotions are all but given. I could not possibly bring myself to hate you, Fran.」

「Thank goodness.」

That was great and all, but her sudden change in attitude could only be described as odd. There had to be a reason for it. Looking back, I realized that Rumina stopped wanting to distance herself from Fran the moment she heard about my abilities, which in turn meant that my ability to absorb skills must be in some way related to Fran evolving. I wanted to pursue the topic further, but it didn't seem like something she'd be able to tell us more about.

「Your potential is truly astounding. Are you absolutely certain that you are not a Godblade?」

『Apparently I don't qualify because my stats are too low.』

「It appears that you are misinformed. Not all Godblades have been deemed so for their offensive abilities.」

『Really?』

「Indeed. Hold for just a moment.」

Rumina headed deeper into her quarters, only to return a bit later on with a scroll in hand.

「I apologize for the delay. Behold.」

『What's this supposed to be?』

「'Tis an incomplete list of Godblades, one I obtained long in the past.」

『Holy crap! You serious?』

I couldn't help but feel excited as hell after finding out what we had right in front of us.

The Godblade of Origin — Alpha — Ulmer

The Godblade of Insanity — Berserk — Dionysius

×The Blade of Wisdom — Cherubim — Ermella

The Warmount Blade — Chariot — Folkan

The Demon Lord's Blade — Diablo — Dionysius

The Seeker's Godblade — Explorer — Ermella

×The Blade of Zealotry — Fanatic — Dionysius

The Earth's Edge — Gaia — Ulmer

×The Holy Spirit Blade — Holy Order — Ulmer

The Blade of Imprisonment — Hell — Folkan

The Brilliant Flameblade — Ignius — Ulmer

×The Blade of Conviction — Judgement — Ulmer

The Emperor Serpent Blade — Jormungandr — Fargo

The Sacred Blade of Water — Krystalos — Ulmer

The Raging Dragonblade — Lindwurm — Fargo

×The Nuclear Strikeblade — Meltdown — Ulmer

The Moonbeam Blade — Moonlight — Kruselka

The Blade of Sorcery — Necronomicon — Ermella

The Divine Songblade — Oratorio — Kruselka

The Blade of Hypocrisy — Pacifist — Dionysius

The Winged Rainbow Blade — Quetzal — ——

The list contained the names of a bunch of different Godblades alongside what I assumed to be the smiths that'd crafted them. Some were marked with an x, but I couldn't really figure out why.

「Do you happen to be familiar with the Extra Skill by the name of “Oracle?”」

「No.」

「It is a skill that allows one to pose questions to the Gods in exchange for a proportional amount of magical energy through the act of manifesting a God within one's body. This list was one created through said method, as there once existed an individual that had asked the Gods for the Godblades' locations.」

But wait, why would the list be incomplete then? Was it because the guy cancelled his skill so he could start writing, or what?

「It appeared that the individual did not have enough magical energy for the Gods to heed his request. Thus, the skill began to drain his life force instead. Still, he hungered for knowledge and continued to write to his last

breath. He was a fool to the end, and failed to even record all of the blades' names and creators.」

『So why do some of them have x's beside their names?』

「The blades marked are blades that exist no more. I am unsure as to how they were lost, as I am doubtful as to how one would go about destroying a Godblade to begin with.」

So I guess that means Cherubim, Fanatic, Holy Order, Judgement, and Meltdown all got destroyed then.

「Alas, the list I have here is one over 500 years old. The information contained within it may no longer be accurate, as some of the list's items may have long been replaced」

「I see.」

「Now, I would like to redirect your attention to a matter I wish to discuss. Specifically, I would like to direct your attention to the blade named Explorer.」

「Seeker's Godblade.」

「Indeed. There exists another skill possesses a skill not too different from the Oracle skill I had just informed you of. It, Named Index, has the ability to provide additional information on whatever topic one wishes, so long as they know its name. The compensation required to activate this ability is, once again, magical energy.」

『I'm getting a bad feeling about this.』

「It is as per your conjectures. There once existed a man that had tried to use the skill in order to learn more about Explorer. He too had lost his life in the process.」

『I knew it!』

「He too left behind a document as death came knocking on his door. He testified that, while Explorer was capable of granting its user high leveled search and detection based abilities, it was in fact not exceptional in terms of its other specifications. It bore only the same strength as an average Magic Sword.」

『You serious?』

「Indeed. These two pieces of knowledge lead us but to a single conclusion. Not all Godblades are named as such for the sheer destructive force they provide. Given that, I feel the temptation to classify you as a Godblade, but I cannot. For if you were truly a Godblade, you would possess a name granted by a God. Your lack of such a name can only serve to evidence that you are by no means a Godblade.」

You know, I actually kinda figured that after looking over the list she'd shown us. I didn't really have the sort of fancy title you'd find attached to a Godblade. The only name I had was the one Fran gave me, and honestly, it was all I needed. At this point, being called Master made me proud. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that I wouldn't actually be able to stand being referred to as anything else.

「Fret not. You may be no Godblade, but you are still an Intelligent Weapon, a sword that one could only deem as legendary.」

「Nn. Master amazing.」

I was glad she was trying to cheer me up and all, but it also kinda made me feel all embarrassed

.

『So who do you think might've made me anyways?』

「I have not the faintest idea. I have never seen any other Intelligent Weapons before you, nor do I know much of the altar situated within the Maohkami plains. I do, however, have a piece of information that you may find useful as a clue.」

『Do tell.』

「You simply must be the work of a God tier blacksmith.」

『But didn't you just say I'm not a Godblade?』

「God blades are not all God tier blacksmiths work to create. Their reasons are numerous. Godblades are super weapons, and only 26 are ever allowed to exist in conjunction. Further, I have heard rumours that the crafting of such a blade takes upwards of 10 entire years worth of preparation.」

『10 whole years? The hell do use all that time for?』

「That is not a question I have the answer you, as, once again, the information's source is but a mere rumour.」

『Right. I guess that means I'm something someone happened to make between a few Godblade projects or something?』

「I believe that is indeed a possibility.」

I wasn't sure whether I was supposed to be proud of the fact I was made by a God tiered blacksmith, or sad about not being a Godblade. But either way, I figured it'd probably be best for us to do a bit of research on God tiered blacksmiths, as it could potentially allow me to find out a bit more about how I came to be. Our conversation with Rumina made it so we now knew what we didn't know, which, in and of itself, was a pretty decent bit of progress already.

181. The Trio's Reasons

181. The Trio's Reasons

It turned out that Rumina really hadn't been lying about being busy. Her familiars came to consult her almost constantly, to which she would always respond by giving out a series of orders. The familiars she had out this time around seemed to be designed a bit differently from the one we saw last time we visited. They looked more like mannequins and had the ability to communicate through human speech.

「Do we need to summon any more go-」

「No, that is enough.」

「Understood, ma'am.」

「In fact, I believe it is time for us to stop summoning Evil Beings altogether.」

「Yes, ma'am.」

Given that she was still in the middle of something, we decided to ask her a few final questions before heading back on our way.

『Is it true that the only reason it's hard for Black Catkin to evolve is because the tribe suffered from from Divine Retribution?』

「Indeed. That is precisely the truth.」

『So what happened? Why'd they get punished in the first place?』

「That... I cannot say.」

Damn it, I figured as much. Her answer was a bit disappointing, but I was satisfied nonetheless. We weren't able to learn the juicy details we wanted to hear, but I was at least able to verify that Aurel's theory had been on the mark.

『So Aurel told us about that whole Ten Original Tribes thing. Was the Black Cat Tribe one of them?』

「I cannot say.」

It seemed that her saying she couldn't tell us was more or less equivalent to her affirming our statements, so I decided to continue asking her stuff to see if we could really dig at what we wanted to know. Naturally, the whole affirmative thing was just an assumption on my part, but something was better than nothing, and I was pretty confident I was right.

『So I remember seeing a cloak by the name of the “Black Heavenly Tiger's Mantle.” Does it have anything to do with the Black Catkin?』

The item I happened to be thinking of was one of the things Salrut had been wearing. Taking the item's name and assuming the worst possible scenario allowed me to come up with the conjecture that it was something made out of one or more evolved Black Catkin. Using a deceased beastkin as a material wasn't something that you could call within the realm of common sense, but the fact that he was a Reidosian made it so it didn't actually seem like too far a stretch.

「I believe that the most understandable reply to your inquiry would be one that comes in the form of an example. You are aware of the White Snow Wolves of the White Dog Tribe, correct? There used to exist a monster that shared the same name. It was referred to as the White Snow Wolf, and, like the Beastkin Tribe, descended from the Divine Beast. The difference between the two is that one was created through the union of a Divine Beast and a human, whereas the other was born from the union of the Divine Beast and an animal.」

You know, that actually doesn't even weird me out or anything. Earth's supposed Gods would do stuff like that too. Some went around taking

different forms and having children with pretty much anything and everything.

「The two were once the same, but have now been separated in classification. One side is treated as would a human, while the other, as would a magic beast, a definition born from a time in which there was no choice but for them to consume one another for sustenance. But again, 'tis simply the talk of old. The magic beasts have long devolved and lost all resemblance to the Divine Beast save for their form. Moreover, the White Dog Tribe cares not whether one hunts the White Snow Wolf magic beast. This same concept also applies to all the remaining nine original tribes.」

I guess that made sense. It seemed to be kinda like how I wouldn't think much of people killing monkeys. There wasn't any reason for me to accuse them for picking a fight with one of my ancestors just because they happened to murder one.

Welp, that was all I happened to want to know for now, so I figured it was time to go.

「I have heard that the Beast Lord has come to Ulmutt. Do be on your guard. Very little good is said of him.」

「Nn...」

Fran grimaced in response to Rumina mentioning the Beast Lord; she wasn't completely over what'd happened yet.

『We've already met him.』

「What!? Has he done anything to you? Are you unharmed?」

『We're fine, least for now. All he did was intimidate us a bit.』

The way I saw it, the Beast Lord hadn't been intending on completely crushing Fran's will. He just happened to be a bit too strong for his own good was all.

「Alright now.」

「A-Are you certain?」

「Nn.」

「S-Still, I believe it would be best for you to be on your toes. Not even I have the slightest clue as to the manner in which he will act.」

「Got it.」

「The current Beast Lord is known for the act of parricide. I doubt it is even possible to be too careful when in his vicinity.」

Rumina made a bit of a dreadful face as she issued us a warning. She bore for the Beast Lord what appeared to be a rather deep seated sense of resentment, one that I couldn't help but want to assume came from a personal grudge she bore for one of his ancestors.

The thought jogged my memory and reminded me about something we'd heard from Dias. He'd said that the Beast Lord was the first to order the Black Cat Tribe to be sold into slavery. If that were true, then Rumina herself most likely knew quite a bit more about it, not that she'd be able tell us anything either way.

「I would just like to say it once more to emphasize that I really do mean it. Be careful, the both of you.」

「Nn.」

『Yeah, we know.』

「Good.」

Rumina nodded before continuing.

「Ah, right. Before you leave, I would like to ask you to complete a task. Could you relay for me a message to Dias?」

「Message?」

「I would simply like for you to ask him to come see me.」

「Got it.」

「Now go. Do be careful on your way back, and look forward to what is to come.」

「Nn?」

『Look forward to what now?』

「Hahaha! That, I cannot say. What I can say, however, is that Fran was lucky to have met you, Master. And for that, I am thankful.」

Rumina refused to say another word, so ended up bidding her farewell without learning any additional details.

We hurried over to the guild the moment we left the dungeon. This time, we'd actually managed to get ahold of Dias. We weren't unlucky enough to actually end up having a second run in with the Beast Lord.

「Have you already completed all your remaining requests?」

「Nn. Here.」

Fran handed the materials we'd gotten over to Dias, who immediately confirmed that there wasn't anything wrong with any of the stuff we'd procured. He was a bit surprised at how quick we managed to get everything done, but ended up confirming he could now elevate Fran's rank regardless.

Dias called over one of his subordinates and issued to him a few orders. Specifically, he told him to queue two announcements. The first was that Fran had been promoted to C rank. The second was that she'd accepted a designated request.

『You sure it's okay to announce that she's accepted a designated request?』

「Don't sweat it. It's just a little something I'm doing to keep a few certain individuals in check. I know for sure that the Beast Lord wouldn't want to antagonize us in any which way.」

Well, I guess that's fine then.

「Want to ask something.」

「What is it?」

『You remember the Black Catkin you used to talk to about 53 years ago?』

「I see... I guess that means Aurel let the cat out of the bag.」

「Nn.」

「Oh, right, that reminds me. Did you guys happen to have some sort of run in with the Beast Lord?」

『How'd you know?』

I had Perfect Thought Isolation up and running, so there was no way for him to have read our minds.

「Heh. Just wanted to remind you that I am technically a professional. Did you really think I wouldn't be able to read you just because I'm not actually reading your mind anymore? I'm not actually totally reliant on the skill, you know?」

『Seriously?』

「Seriously. It's mostly because Fran happened to react the moment I mentioned the Beast Lord is all.」

Honestly, I should've seen this coming. Dias was not only a Guildmaster, but also someone whose skills focused around the concept of taking advantage of other people's weaknesses.

「Met in front of guild.」

「I'm guessing you ran into him yesterday then?」

「Nn.」

『We happened to run into him when we tried checking in with you yesterday.』

「That's unfortunate. He happens to be the type of person that considers intimidation as a method of negotiation. You know how he was pretty much full force when he came to visit? I guess it still is a passable behaviour though, since it stops people from picking fights with him...」

『What's that supposed to mean?』

「Well, I guess I might as well tell you. Have a seat.」

「Nn. Got it.」

Dias personally brewed us a pot of tea, sat down, and started to speak.

「It all happened 53 years ago. Both Aurel and I were still just D ranked newbies back then.」

Wait wait, wouldn't that mean they managed to become D rankers while they were still in their teens? Honestly, that sounded pretty damned impressive if you asked me.

「I was really proud back then. I loved to brag about all my achievements. But one day, she showed up, and in doing so, tore my beloved pride to shreds.」

「Black catkin girl?」

「The Black Catkin girl indeed. Her name was Kiara, and back then, she'd only been a mere 15 years old. Me and Aurel, we honestly used to look down on her, but not because she was a Black Catkin. The reason we didn't

really approve of her was because she was younger than us. We didn't really think adventuring was something a kid could pull off.」

I guess adventurer culture really hasn't changed in the last 50 odd years, has it?

「Our negative view of her, however, was incredibly short lived. She shut us up almost immediately by putting her strength on display, as she would always beat up anyone that mocked her. I can't deny that she had the tendency to go a bit overboard, but that only served to emphasize her ability. Though she only went solo, her dungeon raids could only be described as extremely successful. I don't know exactly when it happened, but she ended up earning herself a nickname, we adventurers had started referring to her as "The Black Cat." 」

That's pretty damned impressive. I wonder, did she have some sort of magic item that assisted her? Or was she simply a genius of some sort?

「So a few things happened, and she ended up saving both Aurel and I from certain death. The three of us started partying up thereafter from time to time. Honestly, she was a lot of fun to be around. I don't recall ever being bored in her presence.」

「Fell in love?」

「Ahahahaha! Man, you just went straight there without a moment's hesitation. Hmmm... I'm not quite sure, to be honest. What I can say for sure though is that I used to look up to her, and that she was indeed quite the beauty.」

Dias' smile was tinged with an ever so slight bit of sadness. It seemed he still missed her.

「Kiara... wanted to evolve. She'd already hit her maximum level, but didn't know what to do thereafter, or at least until she met Rumina. The two talked about several different things on several different occasions. One of their conversations seemed to have ended up giving Kiara a hint as to what she needed to do, and thus, prompted her disappearance.」

「Seemed?」

「I put it that way because I don't actually know what happened to her. She disappeared before telling me any details.」

『Did she disappear so she could go evolve?』

「I doubt it. At one point, she'd told both Aurel and I that she wanted to us to accompany her and lend her our abilities so that she could evolve.」

Huh, then why'd she end up leaving without saying anything to either of them then? She had to have a pretty damned good reason to just up and vanish.

「Aurel and I both came to the conclusion that she got involved in some sort of incident, so we tried our best to find her. In the end, all we managed to get were a few hints.」

「Details?」

「The first hint was that Rumina and Kiara seemed to have ended up arguing with each other just before it happened. Aurel happened to overhear the latter shout at the former while telling her to mind her own business, and that she was going too far.」

I wonder what ended up leading to that? Rumina didn't really seem to be the type that'd try to harm a Black Catkin.

「Well, that part's actually not too relevant. Kiara's disappearance wasn't Rumina's fault. That much, I verified with by reading Rumina's mind.」

Specifically, he'd drawn the conclusion because Rumina had ended up reacting with both surprise and sorrow when she caught wind of Kiara's disappearance.

「However, it seemed that Kiara really had caught on to what Black Catkin needed to do to evolve. Hence why I thought it to be something to do with her disappearing.」

『Did someone end up targeting her because they found out she knew what to do in order to evolve?』

「That's what I thought too. I even actually ended up identifying the person likely responsible for her disappearance..」

「Who?」

「I was convinced it was the Beast Lord that happened to be in power at the time, the current Beast Lord's father. To be more exact, the perpetrators had been the Blue Catkin that worked under him. I don't have any real proof, but I did manage to get myself enough evidence to at least make them out to be suspects.」

Dias and Aurel had heard rumours of several Blue Catkin often visiting the place she stayed at immediately following her disappearance. Thus, they investigated them.

They used Aurel's influence and information network to snoop around until they came across a piece of information that stated that the the Beast Lords of old weren't actually Golden Lionkin, but instead Black Tigerkin.

From that, the two came to the conclusion that the Golden Lionkin had ended up usurping the Black Tigerkin after the latter incurred the Gods' wrath.

The Golden Lionkin had obtained dominion over the Beastkin. But even then, they were still afraid, terrified that the Black Tigerkin may one day reclaim what was once theirs. Hence, they eliminated any and all documents pertaining to the the past, destroyed anything that would hint at what the Black Catkin needed to do in order to evolve, and ordered the Blue Catkin to persecute them and keep them as weak as possible. And that, in turn, explained precisely why none of the other tribes give the Blue Cat Tribe flak for selling their fellow beastkin into slavery; the ruling tribe had their backs.

It was a deal the Blue Cat Tribe only derived benefit from. They not only rose in prestige, but also gained a significant source of income from their

dealings in the slave trade. Plus, it was an opportunity for them to trample upon those that'd been thought of as superior to them, an opportunity they took with glee. Through this, one could clearly tell that the Blue Cat Tribe's disdain for the Black Cat Tribe remained despite the fact that the Gods had erased from their memories the other tribe's sins.

「We tortured and interrogated all the Blue Catkin in town at the time, only to find that one of their higher ups, one that still resided within the Beastkin's country, had ordered Kiara's capture. Through that, we also learned that the Beast Lord had sent a skilled warrior that hailed from a tribe that'd served by his side for generations, and that said warrior had happened to come in contact with Kiara.」

In other words, the Beast Lord had either killed, kidnapped, or silenced Kiara...

Hearing Dias' tale had caused Fran to become angrier than I'd ever seen her before. She trembled in rage and irradiated an air of bloodlust so powerful that I actually felt grateful we were talking to Dias in particular. Her desire to kill had swollen up to the point where it'd probably terrify just about anyone else.

「Truth?」

「Again, I can't really say 100% for certain, as these are just my deductions, nothing more, nothing less. That said, I'm convinced that she did end up getting involved with the Beast Lord.」

「Ok.」

Fran's expression turned dark. I felt as if she probably would've charged straight at the Beast Lord and challenged him had she not been aware of the extent of his strength. Having met him, she and I were now both aware just how bad an idea that was. Approaching him without a plan could only lead to death. To make matters worse, his guards were highly capable. We'd at least need Fran to evolve before even thinking of challenging him. Knowing that, Fran held herself back, but in doing so, ended up clenching her fists so hard that she started bleeding.

「I know you're angry, but don't go challenging the Beast Lord, alright?」

「Nn...」

Fran nodded despite being about as frustrated as could be. She probably would've immediately stormed over, beat the crap out of him, and made him divulge everything she knew if she could.

「Listen. Don't throw your life away. Evolve and get stronger before even thinking of challenging him.」

「Nn.」

Dias shifted gears and began talking about his association with Rumina.

The two of them suffered a mental blow from Kiara's disappearance, and thus, ended up agreeing to a pact, one in which both parties would work to support any Black Catkin that happened to follow in her footsteps, any Black Catkin that sought evolution.

Rumina used her abilities in order to create a second dungeon, Ulmutt's western dungeon. She'd intentionally crafted it as a training ground for new adventurers, for Black Catkin that wished to become more powerful. The western dungeon was advertised as a second dungeon, its own independent labyrinth. But in reality, that wasn't the case. It was merely an extension of the eastern one. There was no second Dungeon Master. The role had simply been played by Rumina all along.

That wasn't all she did either. She'd also saved up as much strength as she could in order to assist any and all Black Catkin that'd reached their level caps in the process of evolution. Dias didn't know the particulars himself. Rumina couldn't tell him what was needed for Black Catkin to evolve. However, she was able to tell him that he was still able to be of assistance. She would need an exorbitant amount of magical energy in order to provide the assistance she wished to. It wasn't an amount that was outside of the scope of her abilities so long as she conserved as much as she could over the course of several decades. That, however, wasn't something she could just do. There were naturally downsides to her actively conserving her

magical energy. The act of it left the dungeon defenseless. She needed a method by which she could ward off powerful adventurers in the meantime.

And that was where Dias came in.

He reported to the Adventurer's Guild and state that he'd managed to negotiate with the Dungeon Master. That, of course, wasn't all. He also spoke to the country's leaders and convinced them that the dungeon was valuable, both for its resources and for its ability to rear new adventurers. The scheme paid off. The Kingdom viewed his contributions as phenomenal, and hence, he was not only able to guarantee Rumina's safety, but also become the city's Guildmaster.

Dias had done it.

He'd obtained all the power he needed in order to protect the Black Cat Tribe.

The elderly adventurer's words hadn't contained even the slightest shred of falsehood. He, Aurel and Rumina were all truly working towards the same two goals: identifying Kiara's enemies and protecting the Black Cat Tribe as a whole. That was why all three individuals had treated Fran so favourably.

「We'll announce that you've ranked up some time tomorrow.」

「Nn. Got it.」

「That said, there is an official process that we need to go through. Why don't we go ahead and get all that out of the way right here and now?」

182. Getting One's Thoughts in Order

182. Getting One's Thoughts in Order

We headed back to the inn after we finished going through the formal rank up procedure.

『Looks like we're finally officially C rankers.』

「Nn.」

『Let's throw a bit of a celebration. How about this, I'll let you guys can eat as much curry as you want tonight. There won't be any limit on the number of toppings you can have either.』

「Nn! Want curry with hamburgers, karaage, tonkatsu, egg on top. Extra large.」

I gave Fran exactly what she asked for. The end result turned into something that looked like it came straight out of a food challenge, but whatever. She was happy, and that was all that mattered.

『Try not to bloat yourself too much, alright?』

「No problem.」

『And as for you, Urushi, I've finally made that super spicy stuff I promised you yesterday.』

「Bark bark.」

The pot of curry I showed Urushi was a modified version of the spiciest curry I had sitting around in storage. I added a whole sloth of extra spice to it and caused the amount of capsaicin within to skyrocket. The liquid within had been turned crimson, and almost looked like a boiling vat of blood that'd come straight out of hell. To Urushi, however, the mixture evidently looked and smelled delicious, as he immediately began to drool the moment I procured it.

I honestly didn't really get how or why he was actually looking forward to consuming the stuff. It was so spicy that it even caused Fran to reel back; she didn't even want to try it. I felt that I probably would've reacted the exact same way had I still been human.

The pair went through their curry incredibly quickly, so I decided to serve them some desert in the form of ice cream as I began getting my thoughts in order. I decided not to think about the possibility of me having been made by a God-tier blacksmith, and only focused on concepts related to Fran and evolution.

The Black Cat Tribe was one of the original ten, and the tribe had originally held either the Beast Lord's position or something similar. That, however, all changed somewhere in the neighborhood of 500 years ago.

We were never able to figure out exactly what the Black Cat Tribe's sin had been, but whatever it was, it was enough to merit having the Gods deliver onto them Divine Retribution. Specifically, the Gods changed the conditions under which Black Catkin evolved; they made it much more difficult. Not a single individual had managed to fulfill the necessary requirements ever since.

And that was when the Red Cat Tribe's Golden Lionkin stepped in. They toppled the powerless Black Cat Tribe's rule, and stole for themselves the Beast Lord's seat. They then ordered the Blue Cat Tribe's members to persecute the Black Catkin in order to prevent them from ever regaining their former glory. It was an order the Blue Cat Tribe had likely abided by due to the fact that the Red Cat Tribe was one of the original 10, and therefore of a higher status. It was a firm measure, but it alone failed to sate the Red Cat Tribe's concerns. They still feared that the Black Cat Tribe

could one day rise again to power, and thus, they destroyed any and all texts relating to the Black Cat Tribe's evolution. It was a plan that, in their eyes, ensured that no Black Catkin would ever evolve again.

Their efforts paid off; the combination of the Gods manipulating everyone's memory and the Red Cat Tribe eliminating all the relevant documentation made it so that the Black Cat Tribe's history had almost been forgotten. The number of people possessing knowledge of their ability to evolve had been cut down to just a few handfuls at best.

But, 53 years ago, someone had pulled off the nigh impossible. That someone, Kiara, had started solving the mysteries that shrouded the Black Cat Tribe's past. She managed to get in touch with Rumina, and in doing so, somehow managed to find a clue that led her towards her goal, evolution. She'd asked both Dias and Aurel for their assistance in evolving, but disappeared before telling either of the two any further details.

All three of the people that Kiara had bonded with, Rumina, Dias, and Aurel, attempted to figure out what had happened to her. They gathered information from all over, only to ultimately arrive at the deduction that her disappearance most likely had something to do with the Beast Lord. They were fairly confident in what they'd thought up, but had no way of confirming it for certain. For that reason, all three individuals happened to regard the Beast Lord with a sense of animosity.

To be frank, I thought their theory seemed like it'd pretty much hit the nail on the head. The royal family being afraid Black Catkin even to this very day was honestly quite plausible.

Either way, Kiara's whereabouts ended up remaining as an unknown. None of the three were really ever able to move on, and so, they ended up banding together in order to protect any that followed in their friend's footsteps.

Dias was unaware as to the details, and hence, unable to inform us, but we were still made to know that Rumina had been storing magical energy for decades, and that said magical energy would be used in order to aid one or more Black Catkin in their quest for evolution. Both Aurel and Dias were

assigned the role of protecting her in the meantime, as saving up her magical energy was equivalent to her lowering her defenses. I'd say the two were quite persistent in their task. Dias had even gone as far as becoming the master of Ulmutt's Adventurer's Guild.

Fast forward a few years to present day, and finally, enter Fran, a young Black Catkin girl out on a journey to achieve the exact thing they'd been looking to facilitate. Unaware to us, the three had played a bunch of cards under the table in order to assist us in the whole ordeal. Specifically, Aurel had arranged for us to meet Rumina while Dias had tried his best to help us rank up so he could confer upon us the guild's protection.

Rumina had also started setting something up. I didn't know exactly what that something was, but I did know that it was something that'd work to Fran's benefit.

My lack of understanding was precisely what fueled me to think further on the topic. Why exactly did she start summoning Evil Beings? For what reason did she try driving Fran away? Her changing her attitude the moment she heard about my ability to absorb skills made it obvious that said ability must in some way be related to helping Fran evolve, but how? Did I need some sort of skill in particular? Was it something we could get from Evil Beings?

There were too many holes and missing links for me to go any further with my deductions. I couldn't figure out anything unless I had a bit more information, and so, I decided to shelve my thoughts for the time being. The Martial Arts Tournament was coming up, we didn't have time for me to just sit around and think myself into a ditch. What we needed to do now was to train and level our skills if possible.

『Oh yeah, Fran, remember how I told you to think about how you wanted me to use my Self-Evolution Points? Did you ever end up figuring out what skills you wanted to level?』

「Nn.」

I'd originally been planning to ask her about this last night, but you know, shit happened.

My guess was that she probably wanted to at least put a few points in both Divine Sword Arts and Divine Sword Techniques, as they were straight forward, something she used often, and probably two of the skills that'd give us the greatest boost in strength.

Presence Detection was a pretty likely contender as well. It was pretty close to its maximum level, and could see some decent use in battle. Its sensing abilities aided us in reading the opponent's next move.

The other fairly likely contenders were Flame Magic, Lightning Magic, and Elemental Blade.

『So what've you decided on?』

I was fairly confident in my deductions.

「Blacksmithing.」

But I was wrong nonetheless.

『Wait. What? Blacksmithing!?!』

My predictions were off by a mile. They were so far off, in fact, that I ended up shouting in surprise.

「Nn.」

『What? I don't recall you ever having even the slightest interest in Blacksmithing. Shouldn't you try investing in something that'll help you out in battle seeing as how the tourney's right around the corner? Why choose it all of a sudden?』

「Because Blacksmithing.」

It seemed that Fran had totally made up her mind, and that I wasn't going to be able to convince her to change it.

「Master's maintenance, important.」

『That's why you wanted to level up the Blacksmithing skill? I really appreciate the thought, but I don't think you need to use points on it. Go ahead and just level up the skills you actually want.』

「Blacksmithing.」

And so, given the fact that Fran was being stubborn, I ended up maxing out the Blacksmithing skill.

《Blacksmithing has reached its maximum level. You have obtained the Blacksmith Magic skill. It is currently at level 1.》

I ended up getting the Blacksmith Magic skill as an added bonus. That was nice and all, seeing as how it became possible for me to maintain myself and whatnot, but I had a bit of a hard time accepting the fact that we ended up using my self evolution points for Blacksmithing of all things. It just felt wasteful.

「Nn!」

『Wait, Fran, what're you doing?』

「Maintenance.」

『Right now?』

「Nn.」

I really had to admit, Lv 10 Blacksmithing really did prove quite effective. Fran was pretty much doing exactly the same thing she'd always been doing, but it ended up feeling just as good as when Zerld did it. Fran rubbing a cloth across my blade felt as good as a full body massage.

『Ahhhhhh, yeahhhhh, that's the spot.』

I ended up getting polished for a whole 30 minutes; I wasn't really able to ask her to stop because of how good it felt.

Thinking about the fact that Fran planned to polish me every day put a huge grin on my face. Man, this is the life. I guess I finally understand why fathers love it so much when their daughters give them backrubs.

『Oh man, that was refreshing. Thanks.』

「Will polish more in future.」

『Please do.』

I'd been planning on using most of the rest of my remaining self-evolution points on a few specific skills, but realized that Fran hadn't benefited at all from me maxing out Blacksmithing, so I offered to let her use all the points I had left on whatever she wanted.

「Already chose what wanted. Will let Master use rest.」

『But...』

「Just use.」

I ended up conceding to Fran and spending points on whatever I wanted. Specifically, I ended up throwing a bunch into Divine Sword Arts. It went without saying that leveling the skill worked to Fran's benefit, but that wasn't the only reason I pointed it.

The other was something that I'd ended up becoming curious about after seeing the Beast Lord's skillset. He was a bonafide spearman. His job described him as a Spear Lord and he evidently had one equipped. However, he didn't have access to Spear Arts or Divine Spear Arts. He instead had a skill by the name of Spear Lord Arts.

Spear Lord Arts was, in all likelihood, what one would obtain after completely maxing out one's Divine Spear Arts. From that, I figured that maxing Divine Sword Arts could potentially unlock a new skill, and hence, wanted to try getting my hands on it.

『Alright, here we go.』

Maxing both Blacksmithing and Divine Sword Arts ended up eating a total of 34 points, and left me with only 20 remaining.

《Divine Sword Arts has reached its maximum level. You have obtained the Enhanced Sword Arts skill.》

Well, that wasn't what I was expecting, but hey, that works too I guess.

《You have unlocked a unique skill by the name of Sword Lord Arts, as all necessary requirements have been fulfilled. All Sword Art related skills have been merged into the Sword Lord arts skill. Acquisition of the Sword Lord Arts skill has caused your wielder, Fran, to obtain the Sword Lord title.》

Woah, that was a lot all at once! It looked like I actually did manage to get the Sword Lord Arts skill that I'd been hoping for. The merged part confused me, so I quickly appraised myself. Every single last one of my Sword Art related skills had ended up disappearing. Naturally, I wasn't just referring to the Divine Sword Arts skill, but also stuff like Short Sword Arts and Katana Arts.

For a moment, I was tempted to immediately begin screaming in frustration, but stopped almost immediately as I realized what the word "merged" meant. I decided to give the skill a quick once over just to be sure.

Sword Lord Arts: Allows use of all swords.

Oh hell yes. This means what I think it means, right?

『Hey Fran.』

「Nn?」

『I'm going to shapeshift a bit. Do me a favour and try swinging me around when I do.』

「Got it.」

The first form I took was that of a dagger, otherwise known as a short sword. Fran readily grabbed ahold of me and began swinging me around. She cycled between a series of relaxed and more intense actions so easily that one could probably mistake her as a sword dancer.

『Alright, how about this?』

The next form I took was that of a foil, a fencer's sword. Again, Fran managed to wield me with ease. The way she moved around and used the sword's flexibility made it seem like she'd trained with a foil for years and in doing so, completely mastered the blade's use.

「Interesting to use. Boingy.」

『Does it feel even the slightest bit unnatural?』

「Nope. No issues.」

『Sweet.』

The skill did exactly what I thought it did. It basically allowed the person that had it to use any type of sword they wished. Better yet, they'd be able to use it just as well as if they had they maxed out the divine arts for whatever sword subcategory they happened to be working with. To us, that was nothing but good news, as it meant that there wouldn't be any issues even if I was to warp myself into an actual katana and not just something that happened to resemble one.

With that out of the way, I decided to check Fran's new title.

Sword Lord: A title granted to one that mastered the way of the sword and obtained the Sword Lord skill.

Effect: All stats increased by 20. Bolsters the Enhanced Sword Arts skill. Allows one to judge the quality of a sword.

Sword Lord looked to be even more effective a title than both Match For a Thousand and Big Game Eater despite the fact that both titles were

typically only bestowed to heroes. Boosting all one's stats by 20 provided the same amount of effective strength as four or five levels.

Though, thinking about it, I realized that maxing out one's Divine Weapon Arts was actually incredibly difficult under normal circumstances. In fact, neither Amanda nor Forrund had actually managed to do so, and they were both famous A ranked adventurers.

It looked like maxing out Divine Sword Arts was indeed the right choice to make. I immediately considered maxing out Divine Sword Techniques to match, but I wasn't 100% sure if that was the best idea. I had a few other skills I wanted to pump points into as well.

『Hey Fran, you sure you didn't want me to point anything else in particular?』

「Nn... Dimensional Magic?」

183. Dimension Gate

183. Dimension Gate

Fran's reply to my query caught me off guard. The fact that she was interested in Dimension Magic wasn't something I'd been aware of.

That said, I could easily see why she felt the way she did, as I shared her interest in it.

『You sure you don't want to pump a few points into Divine Sword Techniques first?』

「More curious about Dimension Magic.」

『Why's that?』

「Door used by Beast Lord's guard.」

『Oh nice. Looks like we're on the same page then.』

Royce's skill, Dimensional Gate, sounded like something one would probably learn if they pumped a few levels into Dimension Magic. It looked super convenient to use, and it seemed that having it could potentially make visiting Rumina a hell of a lot easier.

Long Jump was nice and all, but it was too limited in its use.

The number of things that bothered us about it numbered two, with the first being its carrying capacity and the second being its ease of use, or rather, its lack thereof. Its carrying capacity was limited by mass, and was actually so lacking that it couldn't even allow us to warp Urushi unless he shrank himself down. Even then, the distance that could be teleported was

inversely proportional with the mass, so we weren't really able to go all that far. The furthest we could go, even without Urushi, was like five or six floors worth of distance at best; we weren't able to instantly warp ourselves over to Rumina's place of residence. The ease of use part pertained to the fact the only objects that could get warped were ones the caster was in direct contact with.

Dimension Gate looked like the type of skill that didn't really care about the mass of whatever it transported so long as you plopped a pair of doors down. It didn't look like the type of skill that really had much use in battle, but, man did it make getting around a helluva lot easier. The convenience factor alone made it look like something that was honestly well worth investing in.

『Alright. I guess I'll try feeding Dimension Magic a bit and seeing what happens.』

I only had 20 self evolution points remaining, so I decided to give the skill one level at a time.

「That's level 2... Looks like I learned how to do two new things?」

Pointing the skill once had allowed me to obtain a skill by the name of Turn Shield. It allowed one to block long ranged attacks and disrupt enemies by twisting space itself. The amount of magical energy the skill consumed scaled with the size of the spatial distortion created. Unleashing something on a scale large enough to completely engulf my surroundings seemed like it would end up eating somewhere in the neighborhood of 2k mana. The skill seemed pretty decent, and appeared to have a whole slew of different use cases.

The other spell I learned was named Beacon. It allowed me to sense the areas in which and objects on which I cast it, even from a fair distance away. It was pretty convenient, but I didn't immediately see why it was something I got from leveling up Dimension Magic of all things. I only came to realize why it was classified as it was after giving its parent skill another level.

Getting Dimension Magic to level 3 unlocked a skill by the name of Apport. Apport allowed me to pull anything within sight towards me. It didn't seem all that special at first glance, but thinking about it made me to realize that moving an object towards oneself was actually a step up on moving oneself over to an object.

Combining it with Beacon only made it even more impressive; Apport became able grab anything I wanted so long as it happened to have a beacon placed on it ahead of time. This use case immediately caused me to realized that Beacon was capable of working with more than just Apport. It also enhanced Long Jump, and allowed me to teleport even greater distances with it. Beacon had seemed rather plain at first, but it turned out to be something hella useful.

Apport wasn't all I got from level 3 Dimension Magic. I also managed to learn Over Haste, which was basically just the same thing as regular Haste, save for the fact that it had a bit of an AOE to it.

Only after pointing Dimension Magic all the way to level 4 did we finally get the skill we'd been gunning for.

『Sweet, looks like I finally learned how to use Dimension Gate.』

Dimension Gate's ability was to create a pair of doors. The first would always appear at the caster's present location. The second, on the other hand, was up to the caster's discretion, but could only be placed in an areas that lay within the caster's memory. Anything could pass through the gate, so long as it fit, which was just perfect seeing as how the gate's size would grow based on the amount of magical energy used. I was capable of creating one big enough to fit Urushi at his largest if I didn't mind throwing in all my mana.

Our skill, Dimension Gate, was actually slightly different from the Dimensional Gate skill that we'd seen on Royce. Though their names were similar, the two actually functioned completely differently, as ours basically just ripped a hole in space, whereas Royce's seemed to operate based on a different sort of mechanism altogether.

Dimension Gate was like every other spell derived from the Dimension Magic family; its performance could be improved upon through the use of Beacon.

Specifically, Dimension Gate was capable of opening doors to places I'd never been before so long as there happened to be a beacon present — we'd confirmed this functionality by casting Beacon on a random rock and having Urushi carry it off somewhere.

The spell seemed like it could be really handy so long as we were careful and placed a few beacons at a few critical junctions ahead of time.

Under normal circumstances, Beacons would expire after a few days. The caster could extend this preset duration by increasing the amount of mana used in the spell's initial casting. It seemed like I'd be able to leave a beacon somewhere for about a year so long as I put every single last drop of mana I had into crafting it.

I figured it'd be a pretty good idea for us to just casually dump a beacon somewhere in Rumina's living quarters in order to make it easier for us to visit her whenever. The gate's size would decrease as distance to its target location increased, but it didn't seem like it'd be too hard for us to somehow fit ourselves through it regardless.

The other spell I was granted for leveling Dimension Magic to level 4 was called Slow Mine, and more or less allowed us to deploy triggerable debuff zones. They were hard to detect, and could be placed both on the ground and in the air. Our ability to deploy multiple at once seemed pretty useful for allowing us to catch someone off guard.

『Looks like we managed to get the skill we wanted. Did you happen to have anything else in mind?』

Each level in Dimension magic ate up 3 self evolution points, so getting the skill all the way to level 4 left us with only 11 remaining.

I mean, we could've just kept pumping points into Dimension Magic regardless, but we did always have the option of just doing something else

instead. It wasn't like we were locked into it or anything.

「Vigour Mastery...?」

『Why that one in particular?』

「Beast Lord had. Might have connection with evolution.」

Looking at the Beast Lord's stat sheet had more or less convinced us that Vigour Mastery was basically an upgraded version of Vigour Manipulation. The reason she wanted it was pretty clear as well. She wanted get all the skills the Beast Lord had that we didn't, as it was possible that evolution was something linked to a skill.

『Sure. Let's give it a shot then.』

「Nn.」

I spent 5 points on Vigour Manipulation, which in turn unlocked Vigour Mastery as expected.

『So? How do you feel?』

「...?」

It turned out that Vigour Mastery didn't have anything to do with evolution. However, it had a clear, immediate effect nonetheless. The manner in which my mana flowed through my body seemed to change. It became much smoother, and I could feel my detection-based skills growing much more sensitive as a result.

But that wasn't all.

『I feel like my body just got easier to control.』

I activated Shape Shift and transformed a part of my body into a series of threads. The threads seemed quite easy to manipulate; I'd managed to use them to form a number of different geometrical patterns with ease. I then split my blade into ten smaller pieces, and moved them all around

simultaneously. I was able to do what the System Announcer did to the Legendary Skeletons did back when we fought a whole bunch of them at once. That is, I was able to form each into a thin but solid thread and thrust them in different directions.

My blade deformed and moved exactly how I wanted it to; I became capable of manipulating it to much finer a degree, and at a much lower mana cost to boot.

Vigour Mastery hadn't seemed like anything too fancy, but it turned out to be useful as hell.

『Want to just hold onto the last few points for now?』

「Nn. Sounds good.」

184. The Dungeon's Barrier

t184. The Dungeon's Barrier

We immediately headed back into the dungeon the day after we ranked up, reason being that it was critical for us to get as strong as possible as quickly as possible given that the tourney was right around the corner.

Both Sword Lord Arts and Dimension Magic were incredibly potent skills in and of themselves, but we wouldn't be able to use either properly if we didn't first accustom ourselves to them. To that end, we decided to fight while purposefully imposing upon ourselves a series of heavy restrictions.

Doing combat training also doubled up as grinding magic stones, as we'd be able to earn another batch of self-evolution points if we did enough of it. Training was a reliable, proven way for us to get stronger. Though it was definitely important, it didn't end up being the only thing we did. We had also visited the guild prior to heading out in order to check whether or not it'd be possible for Fran to undergo a class change and beef up her stats.

One would assume that obtaining the Sword Lord title would also unlock the Sword Lord class, but unfortunately, it didn't. She did, however, unlock a whole slew of other classes, many of which centered around smithing or advanced magic. The training she'd gone through had also allowed her to unlock several stealth and scout-like classes as well, but none were to our fancy. Thus, she ended up remaining a Magic Warrior.

Upon entering the dungeon, we discovered that it'd turned back to normal. The Evil Beings that'd flooded it were nowhere to be seen. They'd been replaced by the magic beasts we saw on our first pass through. In other words, Rumina had reverted all the changes she'd made.

Knowing that, we cut our way through dungeon and slowly progressed towards its depths.

Fran needed to be back in town within 4 days, as that was when the tourney's prelims were set to begin. For us, however, heading back to town was a trivial non-issue, as we'd already set up several beacons that'd facilitate the process. Specifically, we'd placed one at the inn and several others just outside the city. Thanks to that, we'd be able to keep training until the very moment we needed to show up in person.

That said, we did have something to do prior to actually heading back, so it wasn't like we could just spend the whole four days wandering.

Specifically, Fran and I had been planning on setting up an addition beacon inside Rumina's room, as it'd make visiting her much more convenient.

We'd spent some time experimenting with the Beacon spell in order to figure out its limitations. It turned out that we could only actually have 8 active beacons at any given point in time. The skill followed a first in first out methodology, as creating a 9th beacon would immediately cause the 1st we made to disappear. Moreover, its range wasn't actually unlimited. Beacons would only remain active so long as they were within a radius of about 10 kilometers.

Now, one might wonder how exactly we managed to figure out that 10km was our upper limit. The answer to that question was actually a rather simple one; we had Urushi grab a rock with a beacon on it and just run off into the sunset. We made him keep going until we could no longer pick up on the beacon's signal.

We also discovered that Dimension Gate's mana consumption varied with the amount of distance between it and its target. It normally ate up about 100 mana, but could consume up to 500 if we tried to jump a whole 10 km in one go.

I'd originally been expecting to be able to use the spell to teleport back and forth between Barbra and Alessa, but that unfortunately didn't actually seem all that practical. That said, it could potentially be possible if we set up a whole slew of beacons along the way and warped between them till we

hit our destination. Fortunately, that issue wasn't one we had to consider when contemplating whether or not we'd be able to tele into Rumina's room, as we'd only need to set a single beacon for it to be in range.

And so, with a clearly defined goal in mind, we spent the rest of our day grinding our way down into the dungeon's depths. It was already our third time through, and we'd already committed all the traps to memory, so it'd ended up turning quite the easy excursion.

The manner in which Rumina greeted us this time around was completely different than it'd been just yesterday. Moreover, her expression was bright, and her skin, which'd been a bit darker than usual, had reverted to its usual shade. I was glad to see that she was in good health, and that the light had returned to her eyes.

「Welcome. And for what purpose should I attribute your visit to on this fine day?」

「Wanted to ask favour.」

『You see...』

I told her about the Beacon spell we'd recently obtained, and asked if we could put one in her room in order to make it easier for us to visit.

「I mind it not at all. In fact, I would have very much wanted for you to place one in my place of residence.」

『Would have?』

「The answer to that question shall come to you should you make an attempt. Fret not, no harm shall come to you in the process.」

She seemed rather convinced that we'd fail, and implied it in her speech. However, we decided to give it a shot anyways since she affirmed it wasn't dangerous.

『Beacon.』

I placed a beacon on the floor in one of the room's corners and in doing so, made it so I'd be able to teleport back.

『Alright, let's head back up a few floors.』

「Nn.」

We made our way back up to the dungeon's 14th floor before attempting to activate Dimension Gate — only to have the spell totally fizz out and fail despite consuming mana.

I could still feel the beacon we'd set, and Rumina's room was naturally still in memory, so I didn't really see why the skill would fail to function. We'd fulfilled all its conditions, after all.

I purposefully activated the skill several times, but to no avail. It was never capable of doing much besides just fizzing away.

「Not working?」

『Yeah. It looks like something's preventing the skill from actually activating.』

The sensation I felt was fairly similar to the one I had when we were stuck inside Rynford's barrier. It was like something was getting in the way and interrupting the skill before it went off. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to discern exactly what that something was, nor even really sense its identity or location despite the fact that I could feel it interfering with the casting process.

Going back and checking in with Rumina allowed me to verify that I'd been in the right.

「It appears that you were unable to break past the Goddess' barrier.」

Her words made me realize that her having a barrier of some sort should've been something I'd taken as a given from the very start.

Dungeons were supposed to be extremely difficult to conquer. Even something like a D ranked dungeon could lead to a whole slew of casualties. Higher ranking adventurers were generally better at eluding death, but even they could meet their ends if they got caught off guard by traps, or ran into a magic beast that just happened to be able to take advantage of their weaknesses.

That, of course, naturally begged a question: what was the most risk free way for one to conquer a dungeon? I was sure that many would claim that it'd best be done by training up one's detection based skills, joining balanced parties or bringing a ton of potions, but none of those answers were in fact correct.

The simplest and safest way to conquer a dungeon was to not conquer a dungeon in what you'd call a traditional manner.

I could imagine a whole slew of methods that worked off that precise paradigm of thought. You could teleport into the core room, blast magic into said room from afar, or pull off many other similar tricks that'd allow you to destroy the dungeon's core without having to go through a series of challenges.

Though the methods I imagined had many strict requirements, they were by no means unrealistic. Teleporting directly into a dungeon's core room sounded like something that was honestly quite easy so long as one maxed out Dimension Magic and threw in a magic item or two for a bit of extra assistance.

Plus, it wasn't like you could just not take the fact that Godblades existed into account. Godblades were known for their incredible power, and frankly, they seemed like items that could defy what one viewed as common sense altogether. Meltdown no longer existed, but its title had implied that it was a nothing less than a veritable nuke, a weapon of mass destruction that was most likely capable of completely wiping a dungeon and everything around it off the map with ease.

I thought it seemed fairly logical for dungeons to have defensive mechanisms built in to prevent scenarios like that from happening.

Dungeons more or less seemed to be equivalent to trials imposed by the Gods, so there was no way for them to not have mechanisms that would prevent you from totally cheating your way through them.

The barrier being something created by a God only made the fact that I couldn't sense it all the more understandable as well.

「I advise you attempt placing the beacon just outside my room instead.」

『Iunno if that's the best place for it. Someone might accidentally blow it up while fighting a boss or something.』

We couldn't put it on any floor above the boss floor either, seeing as how people might see us using the gate and whatnot.

「Am I correct in assuming that it will function so long as the barrier does not prevent your spell from activating?」

「Nn.」

「In that case, I ask that you wait while I make accomodations.」

Rumina headed deeper inside her chambers and didn't come out until after we'd heard the sound of something heavy scraping against something else of equal mass.

A brand new corridor had spawned along a nearby wall.

「I thank you for your patience. The room that lies beyond this corridor is outside of the core room's territory, and thus, is treated as any other one of the dungeon's rooms would be. It will be possible for you to teleport inside of it.」

Rumina had made use of her Dungeon Master abilities in order to create a brand new room.

Man, that's a Dungeon Master for you. She and I think on totally different scales.

「Thanks.」

「You need not thank me. As I stated prior to your excursion, our wills had happened to align. I too wish for it to be easier for you to visit.」

We ran a second experiment and confirmed that Rumina had been spot on.

The inn we were staying at was rather close to the dungeon, so placing a beacon in Rumina's newly created room had made it super convenient for us to go back and forth between the two locations with ease. Moreover, it was basically impossible for anyone to catch us in the act. We'd ran into a few unexpected mishaps along the way, but ultimately accomplished our goal and met every single requirement we'd set for it along the way.

「Please, visit as you see fit. I will welcome you at any time.」

「Nn.」

『Alright, see ya. We'll make sure to stop by.』

185. Reunion

Chapter 185. Reunion

Reunion

『You ready to get going?』

「Nn.」

We had breakfast, checked to make sure all our equipment was in good form, and headed out.

Our destination was one of the many venues in which the tournament would be hosted. The tournament had actually started yesterday, but today was more so the one Fran had been looking forward to, as it had finally come time for her first match. According to the schedule we got from Dias, the tournament was to last for 14 days, with the first 4 dedicated to the preliminaries. The preliminaries were defined as a 2 step process, with each of the 2 taking up half the allotted time.

Over 1000 people had signed up for the tourney, and thus, there simply wasn't enough time for the preliminaries to be done in the usual 1 on 1 style. They were instead organised such that they'd allow for four people to be eliminated at once. That is, the preliminaries consisted solely of 5 person battle royales in which only the last man standing would be allowed to progress.

Not surprisingly, the tournament's managers knew exactly what they were doing. They understood that the only way for them to complete all 200 plus preliminary matches within the 2 day timebox was for them to have multiple matches running at once. Thus, they had set up a series of locations around town in order to facilitate the process, a feat only made capable precisely because the tournament happened to take place in Ulmutt. Ulmutt was unique in the sense that it existed for and because of adventurers. Hence, its city plan included a great number of open areas that often saw use as training or dueling grounds.

The second preliminary round would have far fewer participants than the first, and thus, they had it hosted within a pair of larger stadiums instead of a bunch of smaller ones scattered all over. Unlike the first, the second also allowed for spectators.

The main event consisted of 6 rounds, which meant a total of 64 participants. About 50 of the combatants typically came from the prelims. The rest were seeded and thereby excluded from the qualification process.

Interestingly, killing one's opponent was not actually considered a crime, as you weren't allowed to participate in the tournament unless you signed a waiver. Said waiver included a statement about the fact that you knew you were going into something that might lead to your death. Honestly, I'm not really sure what else I should've expected from a world as violent as this one.

That said, I had to admit that it wasn't actually as bad as it may have otherwise seemed. After all, health potions were a thing, so you probably wouldn't die unless you were killed instantly. That said, the organisers only really supplied that kinda stuff to the main event's participants. You could say it was rather cold hearted for them to not assist those that got eliminated early on, but I couldn't really blame or antagonize them for it. Culling the weak was kind of what this tournament was all about in the first place. Besides, distributing potions to all thousand or so participants would probably put the organisers well in the red, so it was honestly only fair. There was also always healing magic for people that couldn't afford potions, though again, healers weren't really something supplied to people participating in the prelims.

Speaking of which, healing magic was precisely what made it possible for the tourney to take over the course of such a short time period. Its effects were more or less instant, so injured participants didn't have to wait for their injuries to heal. All they needed was for someone to say the word, and they'd be back in tip top shape.

『You feeling nervous at all?』

「Nn. Fine.」

Fran nodded. We'd done everything we could these past few days to get ourselves as ready as we could possibly be, and so, the look on her face almost seemed to be the spitting image of confidence.

『I'll just stay on the sidelines and watch unless we run into someone really strong. Alright?』

「Nn. Want to know how far we can go.」

Fran wanted to both test her own strength and see how much stronger she was when we fought together.

There was still a decent bit of time before the match started, so we walked through town at a rather leisurely pace. The venue we were headed to happened to be right by the guild, so we weren't even the slightest bit worried about getting lost.

I made use of our travel time by explaining to Fran the tourney's rules.

Given that this was a martial arts tournament, an event that almost seemed to ooze with violence, there weren't actually all that many restrictions. We just had to be careful not to consume any potions mid-combat, and we were pretty much good. There weren't any rules against any skills and spells, you were pretty much allowed to do whatever. The only thing one would probably want to avoid would be the Evil Arts, as using them would more likely than not cause one to get instantly mobbed by any and all nearby adventurers.

The only part of the rules that we really had to pay attention to was the part that detailed what you could and couldn't do with summons. Any non-human summons were in fact allowed, but only under the condition that they weren't summoned ahead of time. In other words, we could bring Urushi so long as we had him hide in Fran's shadow and have him not come out until she pretended to summon him. The reason that this was in fact legal, and not against the rules, was because they stated that rules regarding summons applied not just to summons, but also to anything else that happened to function in a similar manner. Specifically, the rules would

apply so long as the creature you called was initially either not present or hidden from sight.

Fortunately, there weren't any restrictions with regards to magic items, you could use whatever you wanted. It seemed that what this tournament cared about wasn't one's base stats, but rather how strong one was with all one's gear and familiars factored in as well.

There were only two possible ways to get disqualified. The first was to leave the ring, and the second, to deliberately attack someone that'd already surrendered.

Fran looked at all the stalls around her as she slowly made her way forwards, but as one could expect, not even she was enough of a glutton to start chowing down the moment before she had to fight her first match.

『You can eat as much as you want after we're done, so sit tight for now, alright?』

「Nn.」

She continued glancing at the stalls in our vicinity despite voicing her agreement. It was simply something that couldn't be helped. Stalls started appearing en masse the moment the tournament began, and their merchandise honestly looked nothing short of delicious.

Her staring any longer would only serve to tempt her, so I had her rush back over to the guild. I didn't think we'd end up stopping on our way there given that she'd hit the gas, but for some odd reason, we did.

『Is something the matter, Fran?』

「That.」

I looked in the direction Fran's finger was pointing, only to find a stall that almost seemed a bit familiar.

『Wait, isn't that... The Dragon's Table?』

The Dragon's Table, one of the stores that'd competed against us back in Barbra, had a stall set up right by the Adventurer's Guild. Upon closer inspection, I discovered that they seemed to be selling the Dragon Bone Soup they happened to be famous for. Standing behind the counter was a familiar face, a tall, A ranked adventurer by the name of Fermus. He was looking just as sharp as he was the last time we saw him.

「Oh, well if it isn't the Black Tail's Fran.」

「Nn. Long time no see.」

「It has been quite a while. Are you perhaps here in order to participate in the tournament?」

「Nn.」

「Well, then please do try your best.」

Fran ended up speaking with Fermus till we had to go.

It turned out that he was also taking part in the tourney. But as one would expect of a former A ranked adventurer, he'd been seeded and wouldn't be going through the prelims.

「I would normally opt out of participating seeing as my age is what it is, but this year happens to be a bit special, as one of my acquaintances asked me to participate. I was unable to turn him down because I owed him a favour.」

He had nothing to do in the meantime, so he ended up deciding to set up shop for publicity's sake. I had to say, Fermus seemed really into this whole merchanting thing. Dude's spirit was brimming with entrepreneurship.

Well, that's one more powerful foe we might end up running into. He's literally killed dragons. Like shit, no way in hell we'll be able to beat him easily.

Fermus also told us a bunch about what happened to Barbra in the event's aftermath. The former Lords, the Krystens, had effectively thrown away

their fortune by using it to fund the city's reconstruction. The guild had helped out as well, so the reconstruction was pretty much right on schedule.

Amanda's support had allowed the orphanage to get back on its feet, which in turn allowed Io go all out and do cook to the best of her ability. The soup Io made was ridiculously delicious despite the fact that she used nothing but super low quality vegetables in it. I really couldn't help but wonder just how delicious the stuff she was making now was, given that she finally had access to all the spices and condiments she could ever dream of.

Last but not least, he mentioned that Barbra was currently going through what could only be described as a curry boom. People were setting up curry stalls all over and naming them after our own. They'd call themselves the X Tail, or the Black Y, with X and Y being substituted out for random words. Many of these stalls would claim that they'd inherited our recipes, which I guess wasn't entirely false seeing as how I'd handed the recipe over to the Chef's Guild and told them to do whatever with it.

Fran was really engaged in the conversation, and seemed really interested in everything else Fermus had to say, but we had to go.

『Hey Fran, it's time.』

「Nn. Time for match.」

「Well, I won't keep you any longer then. Sorry for the hold up.」

「Not problem. Wanted to talk about Barbra.」

「Great. Then I'll look forward to trading blows with you in the ring.」

「Nn. Got it.」

「Fufu. You sure do seem eager.」

It seemed that Fermus' words had flipped Fran's switch, as the smile she flashed him was one filled with drive and battlelust.

Welp, here's to hoping she doesn't hit the people we'll be facing in the prelims too too hard.

186. The First Preliminary Round

Chapter 186. The First Preliminary Round

The First Preliminary Round

Upon arriving, we found the venue to be surprisingly quiet. Further consideration made me feel like I'd stated the obvious given that the first preliminary round wasn't actually open to the public.

Men we presumed to be adventurers were entering and leaving the building, their bodies exuding auras of passion and excitement.

『It looks like they're handling all the reception stuff over by the entrance.』

「Nn.」

Fran approached the receptionist in her usual, calm manner, with Urushi hidden in her shadow. He'd actually chosen to hide there on his own volition, as he knew he would've ended up having to do once we got into the waiting room anyways.

「I'm sorry, we aren't allowing spectators today. The second preliminary round starts tomorrow. You'll have to come back then.」

The receptionist did the usual thing and treated Fran as a non-participant despite the fact that she had me shouldered. It seemed that the receptionist had thought Fran to be an adventurer that'd just joined up or something.

I was a bit confused as to why the receptionist didn't recognize Fran given the guild had announced that she'd hit C rank and all that. I only came to understand exactly why it'd happened after appraising the receptionist and finding out that he wasn't actually associated with the guild, and was instead a civil servant working under the local lord.

「Participant.」

「R-Really? What's your name?」

「Fran.」

「Let's see... Oh, there it is. Wait, you really are participating in the tournament?」

「Nn.」

「Are you sure you want to? There aren't any healing services available for the first preliminary round, so you can get hurt really badly. It's okay for you to back out if you want.」

The receptionist seemed like a pretty good guy, but he wasn't really doing Fran any favours. That said, she wasn't getting irritated either, seeing as how she could tell that he was only saying what he was because he was actually concerned for her safety.

「Not problem.」

「I'm serious. It really is dangerous, alright?」

「Thanks. Bye.」

「Make sure you surrender if you feel like you're outclassed, okay!? And do it before you get hurt! It'll be too late for you to regret your choices if you do!」

The receptionist wasn't able to leave his desk, so he ended up voicing his concerns by shouting them at Fran as she headed inside.

Meeting the receptionist was pretty much the only hiccup we encountered along the way; everything that happened thereafter went rather smoothly. The person that showed us around after we got inside was an old adventurer, one skilled enough to tell that Fran was much stronger than she looked.

In fact, he'd even ended up looking at the other participants with a look of pity, as most seemed to be grinning at her as if she was mere prey.

「Heh. Looks like the last participant's just a brat!」

「I guess that means this'll effectively just be a 4 way free for all then.」

「You do know that this tournament isn't some sort of game, right? I'm supposed to be winning it big and making a name for myself, not playing with some kid.」

The other 4 participants were already present. Half of them looked like mercenaries, and the other half like adventurers.

All but 1 of the participants had ended up looking down on Fran. The sole individual to regard her with a stern gaze was also the only person bothered appraising immediately. It turned out that he was actually a decently strong adventurer; his stats indicated that he was at least D ranked, which in turn meant he probably knew exactly who we were.

「Take your places, we'll soon begin.」

The old man that guided us over immediately began acting like a referee. However, he was interrupted by the less skilled adventurer before he could continue giving directions.

He approached the old man and asked him to remove Fran from the fight.

「Look, I get that kid's qualified for this and all, but she really shouldn't be here. I'm only taking part in this tournament in order to make myself famous. I'll probably end up going down in infamy instead if word gets out that I ended up hurting a little girl like her just to get past the preliminaries!」

「Say what you want. I don't have the authority to disqualify her.」

「Hey kid! Back out, right now! This is a martial arts tournament, not some sort of children's game!」

He likely would have continued yelling at us if the other adventurer hadn't called out to him.

「I'm guessing you just got here then?」

「Arrived yesterday. What of it?」

「I see...」

The more skilled of the two adventurers breathed a bit of a sigh. He seemed to have guessed that the other adventurer had only just in Ulmutt, and hence, had yet to hear about Fran. From that, he determined that convincing the other man was impossible, so he instead turned towards the judge and urged him to start the match.

「We should probably begin if you want the tourney to stay on schedule.」

「Come on! You've got to be kidding me!」

「Look, man, you're wasting everyone's time. If you don't want to fight the kid, then just forfeit.」

「He's right. You're getting really annoying.」

「What did you say!?!」

The two mercenaries joined the fray, which ultimately caused the four men to enter a staring contest in which they all glared at one another.

(Master. Can't just send flying?)

『Not right now. You'll end up getting disqualified if you do.』

Fran was starting to get a bit frustrated.

The old man responsible for doing all the rep work seemed to feel the same way; he started the match because he didn't really want to put up with everyone's bickering.

「The match will begin in 5, 4, 3—」

「Hey, wait, what the hell!」

「—2, 1, start! 」

And so, the match ended up starting despite the weaker adventurer's complaints.

Both mercenaries immediately kicked off the moment the ref said the word 'start.'

「Heh heh heh. Best thing to do at a time like this...」

「...Is to immediately team up and jump the strongest guy!」

Though both mercs were rather weak, they still did have a fair amount of experience in combat. As they worked in the same field, the two established a mutual understanding and immediately began working together.

I'd always thought of mercenaries to be the type of people that were capable of using all sorts of different weapons, but weak nonetheless. However, after being presented with live samples, I came to realize that they were in fact individuals rather skilled at cooperating. My guess was that they were most likely even more skilled than adventurers were in that regard.

The weaker adventurer immediately reacted to their words.

「Kuh! How cowardly! I can't believe you'd gang up on me right off the bat!」

Wait, did he seriously think that he was the one that was going to get ganged? Just how in the world did someone as weak as him end up with that much confidence? Dude's been rattling on about getting famous and all that, but as far as I could tell, his attitude wasn't backed by his ability. I didn't understand why he assumed he'd be actually able to get past the first round of the prelims.

「First up is you!」

「Oraaahh! Go to hell!」

The individual the two mercenaries immediately approached was naturally the more powerful of the two adventurers; they closed in on him from both directions while swinging their blades. Their choice seemed logical, as the man did give off the sense that he was rather strong.

But they were simply too weak in comparison. Both were sent flying out of bounds with a single swing of the adventurer's sword.

「No way!」

「He was way too strong!」

Fran faced off against the other adventurer in the meantime. He really seemed to be the type of guy who wasn't good at reading the mood, as he ended up trying to convince her to forfeit even now.

「Listen here kid. I hit ranked all the way up to E faster than of Corrent Village's other adventurers. There's no way a little girl like you could possibly match up to my genius! Forfeit, walk yourself out of bounds right now if you don't want me to hurt you. This is your final warning, you hear!」

Did he end up turning out the way he did because the tiny ass village he came from thought him to be a genius or something? Is that how all this happened?

「So yo—」

「Shut up.」

Fran interrupted the weaker adventurer by kicking him in the stomach and sending him flying so far he almost fell out of bounds.

「Urgh!!」

He held his stomach and looked up at Fran with eyes filled with disbelief as he vomited all sorts of different things. It seemed he was incapable of comprehending the fact that she'd just sent him flying about 10 meters back.

「Will get serious next time if you still want to fight.」

「Hiiii...」

The adventurer lying on the ground in front of us was rather unskilled, but, even he could feel the aura of intimidation that Fran's body had began exuding. He finally shut up and immediately rolled himself right out of bounds without even bothering to voice anything about shame or dishonor.

『Why'd you purposefully make him not go out of bounds?』

(Stupid and annoying, but wasn't bad person.)

For that reason, she'd intentionally allowed him to choose whether or not he wanted to back off as opposed to just sending him flying further. I got where she was coming from, but honestly, I almost wanted to say that the way she did it was even more cruel than just finishing him in one hit. The way she attacked him made it so he wouldn't be able to make excuses or say that he'd been caught off guard, which in turn might've just broke his spirit and made him lose heart.

「I knew this would be how things turned out...」

「Nn.」

「I doubt I'll be able to triumph over you, but I will at least get a hit in!」

He drew his blade and attacked in a fluid, skillful motion, but failed to damage Fran regardless.

She swung her left fist, smacked him with a counter, broke his stance, and caused him to collapse on the spot.

「How... mortifying...」

And so, Fran ended up moving onto the second round of the preliminaries.

187. In the Waiting Room

Chapter 187. In the Waiting Room

In the Waiting Room

Today was the day we would fight our second preliminary match.

Its location, a large stadium, was practically the exact opposite of the the puny training ground in which we'd fought the first round.

The first round's 1000 plus participants had been cut down to a measly 240. Soon, that 240 would be further reduced all the way down to 48.

The participants were split into 2 groups of 120, with each assigned to one of the two larger stadiums the event was to be hosted in. Both stadiums were known to get pretty full seeing as how the second preliminary round not only functioned as the first round open to spectators, but also the only public round that featured battle royale style matches. The 5 FFA format was actually quite popular, as people thought it fresh compared to the standard 1v1 format used throughout the rest of the tourney.

Another reason spectators enjoyed flocking to both this round and the tournament as a whole was the fact that one could gamble. Everyone other than the match's participants would be allowed to bet to their hearts' content. Participants were banned from placing bets in order to discourage them from fixing their matches. Match fixing was considered a serious crime and any found guilty of it would be put to death.

In my world, gambling had been an act that was often associated with organized crime and the underworld as a whole, but that apparently wasn't something we had to be concerned with. Dias was rather strict, he was known for cracking down on and preventing it. Larger criminal organisations would always be destroyed the moment they were discovered. Smaller scaled organisations sometimes managed to find themselves staying off the radar, but none of them held nearly enough power to have their way.

Plus, the Adventurer's Guild was the entity responsible for all the bookkeeping. They possessed the power, authority, and talent necessary to make sure nothing happened, so there really wasn't much to worry about.

『Alright, let's go.』

「Nn.」

We still had a fair chunk of time before Fran's match began, but apparently, all participants actually needed to arrive earlier than was scheduled. Hence, we'd planned to spend about 30 minutes in the venue's waiting room.

Fran didn't actually seem nervous. She was still her usual taciturn self despite the upcoming second preliminary round. Since we had a bit more time to spare today, she even ended up buying and eating a bunch of stuff on her way over to the stadium.

『Man, this place is huge.』

「Nn.」

The venue was a massive cylindrical building that looked almost exactly like a colosseum. Today was our first time viewing it from up close, but I could feel the excitement contained within nonetheless. The sheer hype amount of hype that filled the arena was only evidenced by the ridiculously loud cheers we heard booming out from within.

Fran headed inside through the combatants' entrance at the building's rear. Today's receptionist seemed to be the kind that had their shit together, and so, we managed to make into the waiting room without anyone stopping us in our tracks. All of the other participants immediately turned towards Fran the moment she entered the waiting room. Most regarded her with surprise, contempt, or a sense of bewilderment, but she ignored them and found herself a seat.

To her, this was only normal.

There were a total of 5 different waiting rooms. The tournament's organisers had intentionally made it so people wouldn't run into their opponents prior to actually entering the arena in order to minimize the amount of potential conflict. They'd also even gone as far as to set a rule stating that combat was banned within the waiting rooms' confines.

「The hell's a brat like you doing here? Scram!」

Unfortunately, people were people, and rules weren't always respected.

One of the second round's participants immediately started blabbing off to Fran despite the fact that he would've realized that she wasn't just some random kid if he'd so much as just used his brain. A mere moment worth of thought would've allowed him to realize that she'd had to at least have some ability given that she'd gotten through the first preliminary round.

The man in question, a dude with a vulgar look on his face, went out of his way to rise to his feet and approach Fran. The fact that combat was against the rules put me at a loss. I wasn't really sure how to handle the situation given that we weren't allowed to do the usual thing and just smack him to shut him up.

It turned out that Fran didn't share my sentiments. She knew exactly what to do, as evidenced by the fact that she activated all her intimidation-type skills without a moment's hesitation. That is, she immediately filled the entire room with an incredible amount of pressure.

『Hey Fran, you're going a bit overboard there.』

「Nn?」

Fran's aura had caused many of the other participants to rise to their feet with the faces paled and their weapons drawn out of sheer habit — and they'd only been hit with collateral damage.

The man Fran had been aiming her bloodlust at had lost control of his legs and fallen flat on his ass. He was trembling in fear and almost on the verge of passing out.

「Nn.」

「Hii....」

He even went as far as immediately scuttling backwards the moment Fran laid eyes on him.

Welp. It getting all quiet was good and all, but I kinda felt bad for what we did to all the other contestants.

They weren't able to relax until after Fran cancelled the skills and bowed her head in apology. That said, their expressions had ultimately ended up remaining stern; most seemed to have come to understand their own relative weakness.

Yup, she definitely went overboard.

Everyone present remained dead silent, which in turn made the cheers coming from the colosseum's arena sound strangely distant. Fran, however, literally didn't give a shit. She simply sat down, pulled a glass of juice out of her dimensional storage, and started drinking it with an innocent look on her face like it was nobody's business.

The atmosphere ended up remaining as is until another contestant ended up entering the room.

「Oh hey, well if it isn't the Magic Sword Girl.」

「Nn? Lydia?」

「Hey, long time no see. So you're taking part in the tourney too?」

The girl that walked into the otherwise tense room was Lydia, an adventurer we met back in Barbra, and a member of the Scarlet Maidens. She was fairly easy to recognize, as her face was currently decorated with its usual expressionless mask.

The fact that she was here immediately led me to assume that the other two members of her party were also actively participating.

「Judith and Maia here too?」

「Yup, they've also both signed up for the tourney. Judith's over in one of the other rooms. Maia had to go to the other venue instead. But seriously, whew.」

「Nn?」

「Well, it's just that you being here means I won't have to worry about fighting you.」

Lydia had seen the extent of Fran's strength back in Barbra, so learning that she wouldn't have to fight her had caused the older girl to breathe a sigh of relief.

「Our goal is to make it past the preliminaries.」

「Not win?」

「That's just not something that's going to happen. Both Colbert and Forrund are going to be participating, and there's no way any of us could even imagine matching up to them. To be honest, we're just entering in order to make ourselves better known so people won't look down on us. Our party only has girls in it, so it's a necessary measure.」

The reason the Scarlet Maidens had decided to take part in the tourney seemed like one of the more common ones. It did make sense though. Getting filtered through the preliminaries despite the tournament's scale really would serve to evidence one's skill to some extent. I mean, that was interesting and all, but I cared much less about the reasons he was participating than I did about the other participants she had just mentioned.

「Colbert and Forrund participating too?」

After all, it seemed that two more powerful opponents had joined the fray.

「Uhhmmm... Could you not smile like that? It's kinda scary!」

Hearing that Colbert and Forrund had come seemed to light both Fran's spirit and her desire to fight aflame, as she immediately smiled a belligerent smile.

「Oh, yeah! Congrats on ranking up! The fact that you're already a C ranker is really impressive.」

「Thanks.」

「Please go easy on me if we happen to happen to get matched up against each other after the prelims are done with. Please try not to hurt me, 'kay?」

「Nn.」

「I'll hold you to it then! I swear I'll get really mad if you make me hurt all over!」

I honestly couldn't tell if Lydia was weak or strong from a psychological standpoint. But either way, Fran ended up getting called shortly after the two started to converse.

The clerk that called for us led us through a narrow passageway. Blinding sunlight flooded into it as we made our way through; it almost seemed to emphasize that the arena lay beyond.

『Are you ready, Fran?』

「Nn.」

『This is your last chance to avoid garnering the Beast Lord's attention, so if you want to back out, it'll be now or never.』

「Won't forfeit.」

『You sure? Even though the Beast Lord might end up making note of you?』

「Nn!」

The Beast Lord had broken Fran's spirit and left her trembling thereafter simply by standing before her.

But it didn't matter.

Fran didn't care that the actions she was about to take were ones that could ultimately attract his attention. The moment she learned of Kiara's fate was the moment she threw away the very consideration of backing down. Doing so, running away with her tail between her legs, had become equivalent to casting away her tribe's pride.

And that, she simply refused to do.

『Go all out, do whatever it is you want. Don't worry about the Beast Lord. We can always just teleport the hell away, find ourselves a ship, and sail off to another continent if really need be. But that's not something you'll have to worry about, I'll take care of everything if worse comes to worst, so don't let your fears hold you back.』

「Thanks.」

『Alright, that's all I had to say.』

There was no point in dwelling on what ifs. All we needed to do for now was focus on and conquer the second preliminary round.

『Let's do this!』

「Nn!」

188. The Second Preliminary Round

Chapter 188. The Second Preliminary Round

The Second Preliminary Round

Fran pumped herself up and stepped into the arena, only to be greeted by a stage of epic proportions, one so massive and well decorated that it simply couldn't be compared to the dingy thing used in the first preliminary round. Its construction consisted of two parts, a round platform and the larger cylindrical wall that enclosed it, a large cylindrical wall. Around the arena were enough seats to fit over a thousand spectators. The place was beyond packed; every single seat was filled and then some.

Our entrance was welcomed by a set cheers from the audience, cheers so deafeningly loud that they caused my blade to tremble in response.

In spite of all that, Fran was as usual; she literally didn't care about her surroundings.

Three of our four foes already stood atop the stage, one of which we happened to recognize.

「Huh? Fran!?!」

「Judith?!」

「Oh come on! Now I'm sure to lose!」

Judith fell forward onto her knees the moment she realized she was up against us. It was an action I honestly couldn't blame her for. There was basically no way for her to win given how the fact that Fran was way stronger than she was..

Apparently she wasn't the only one to have recognized Fran, as the other contestants had also adopted similar expressions of unease.

「So that's the Magic Sword Girl...? Huh, she really was just a kid.」

「Don't let your guard down. Her ranks even higher than ours are. I hear she's a C ranker now.」

The first round of the preliminaries seemed to have filtered out most of the weaker adventurers, as the only one of the contestants present understood that Fran was no weakling. The only one that failed to recognize her strength was the last to enter the ring.

「Hahahah! Why's there a brat here? Isn't this supposed to be a Martial Arts Tournament?」

The obnoxiously loud Blue Catkin that joined the fray laughed before taking a closer look at her and furrowing his brows.

「How the hell did you manage to get past the first round? Did you bribe all your opponents? Or were they just all pedophiles?」

「Strength.」

「Heh. Bullshit! You're a god damned Black Catkin! No way in hell a wimp catkin like you could actually put up a decent fight. Know your place. Wait, I know. That old White Dogkin geezer must've pulled a few strings. That has to have been it.」

Getting a closer look at him allowed me to recognize that he was in fact a member of Blue Pride. Specifically, he was one of the two people that'd been standing by the gate and trying to convince Aurel to see them.

The realisation immediately explained why he was aggressive on both Fran and her benefactor.

「Just you wait, wimp cat. I'll tear your jaw off so you can't surrender, strip you nude and embarrassed the hell out of you before finally slowly beating you death.」

「...Talking really big for just Blue Pride.」

「Haah? What'd you just say?」

「You tried to visit aurel by lying and claiming you were famous, but you were turned away at the gates because your lie seen through right away. You're just a group of weak, pathetic, small time mercenaries. And stay away from me. You stink.」

Fran seemed to have snapped given that she'd started speaking in longer, more drawn out sentences.

「You little bitch...!」

A large screen that resembled the kind you'd see in a sports stadium decorated one of the stadium's sides. It seemed to be some sort of magic item, as it was doing as a monitor would, and displayed a blown up version of the interaction that'd just occurred in real time.

The crowd's response to the Blue Catkin's remarks was rather poor. A few of the men had urged him on, but a greater number of women had ended up booing. Fran's rebuttal, on the other hand, had caused the entire stadium to erupt into cheers. The man immediately popped a vein in rage, but Fran just totally ignored him and everything he said from that point onward, which, as one might suspect, only caused him to get even angrier.

Their interaction was one the crowd really seemed to like, as its members began to jeer in an attempt to urge the two on.

With the mood set, the match finally began.

The Blue Catkin immediately locked his eyes to Fran's position and lunged straight at her. His skill with the sword wasn't too shabby, and he came at her with nothing held back; it was clear that he planned to kill her. His actions caused me to want to scoff at how childish he was. He ended up completely losing all sense of rationality just because of the slightest bit of mockery.

Though, that much, I'd honestly expected.

What I didn't expect, however, was for the three other contestants to join him. They all immediately decided to cooperate in order to eliminate Fran,

as, the Blue Catkin aside, they were aware that she was the strongest in the group. Judith happened to stand out from her peers, as she purposefully placed herself at the rear so she could use the other three contestants as meat shields.

Both Fran and I were rather impressed by her actions. She hadn't given up on winning despite the fact that she knew we'd be able to overwhelm her.

The unexpected four versus one situation put Fran in what could be thought of a numerical disadvantage, but she didn't mind. Fran simply didn't care that all four other contestants had ganged up her. She didn't complain, nor did she bother calling any of the four out for unfairness.

Instead, she simply retaliated.

「Fmph.」

「Guahhh!」

She swung me without bothering to draw my blade from its sheath and hit the Blue Catkin right in the jaw. The impact caused him to fly into the air before spiraling back down towards the ground.

Fran then struck again; she used the rising momentum that accompanied her first strike in order to deliver a powerful horizontal blow.

「Heavy Slash.」

「Kyaah!」

「What!?!」

「Gyaaahhh!」

Heavy Slash was considered a relatively low tier skill, but it'd proven to be more than effective enough given just how powerful Fran had become. The attack sent the swordsman and spearman that followed the Blue Catkin tumbling back into Judith. Neither of the three were capable of recovering from the attack and so, they were all forced out of bounds.

Only a few seconds had passed, but Fran had already eliminated three of her four opponents. She could've easily done the same to the last of the bunch, but instead, intentionally chose to draw out her assault.

「Hiiii! F-Fwelp me...!」

She swung me downwards. In doing so, she caught the Blue Catkin in midair, smashed him into the ground, and caused a dull crack to reverberate through it.

「Gahiii... fuaarghh...!」

The blood in the Blue Catkin's mouth rendered him incapable of anything but a few groans. He'd barely managed to hang onto his consciousness, not because he was sturdy, but because Fran had made sure to hold back just enough for him to do so.

「I... huwwenda! I huwwenda!」

「Don't understand.」

「Horheit!」

「Still don't understand.」

Well, yeah, it's kinda hard for him to actually speak given that he doesn't have a jaw or chin anymore.

「I horheit da hatsh!」

「Too stupid to know how to surrender? Well, can't be helped since Blue Catkin.」

Fran basically totally admitted to knowing exactly what he was trying to say, but it didn't matter. What did was the fact that she'd done onto him exactly what he claimed he'd wanted to do to her.

「Should strip and humiliate you?」

「Hiiii! I'm hwory! I'm hworry! Pweave, htop! Haf murhy!」

The sheer amount of bloodlust Fran'd been emanating caused the Blue Catkin to become as scared as he could possibly be; a warm, wet patch spread across his nether regions as he deliriously begged for her forgiveness.

Naturally, the referee had realized that the match couldn't go on, and so, he hurried over to the stage and attempted to climb atop it.

Fran noticed him approach, so she immediately moved to deliver the finishing blow before he could stop her.

「Will end as requested.」

「Gobaaarrgggh!」

She muttered a few words under her breath while swinging me like a golf club and sending the Blue Catkin fly right off the stage. She seemed to have gone a bit overboard, as he soared for what looked like 10 whole meters before finally hitting the ground.

I was a bit worried that the crowd would end up finding her actions distasteful, but it turned out that they actually ended up liking them as they immediately broke into applause.

「And it's over! The young lady just pulled off the impossible and sent a full grown man flying off the stage with just one hit! Ain't that just incredible ladies and gentlemen? It's not something you'd expect from someone with such a cute face, that's for sure!」

Wait, there's been a shoutcaster this whole time? How the hell did I not notice?

The caster's announcement caused the crowd to break out into an extra loud cheer.

「And with that C rank adventurer Fran, the Magic Sword Girl, wins the 11th west block and secures herself a spot in the main event without even

drawing the blade she's nicknamed after!」

189. The Brackets

Chapter 189. The Brackets

The Brackets

「Congratulations, Miss Fran. You have earned the right to participate in the main event.」

「Nn.」

Fran ended up having to visit what almost looked to be yet another waiting room after winning the match. There, she was met by a clerk who explained how things would work from here on out.

The tournament wasn't set to start till the day after tomorrow, but, tomorrow was going to be a busy day regardless. The matchups and brackets were to be posted in the morning and an opening ceremony was to take place around noon. The tournament's participants didn't actually have to participate in the opening ceremony. In fact, the clerk's tone made it seemed like we were or more or less discouraged from doing so, which honestly only made sense. Putting a bunch of hot blooded warriors in one spot sounded like a terrible idea no matter how you spun it.

They pushed the idea even further by stating that copies of the brackets would be delivered straight to the inn we were staying at so we wouldn't even have head out in order to check them.

To us, not having to attend the ceremony was nothing short of a blessing. Fran wasn't the type of girl that'd be able to sit still while nobles and other bigwigs went about with their long speeches and whatnot. Plus, the Beast Lord was pretty much guaranteed to be present as a VIP of sorts, and being around him didn't quite seem like what one would call the best idea ever.

We were also informed that the main tournament's participants would be given preferential treatment at all smithies throughout the city for the event's duration. Injuries could be fixed on the spot with ease. All one would need to do to restore themselves to perfect health was to either chug

a potion or two, or have someone cast a few healing spells. Gear, however, couldn't really be fixed unless you took it in for maintenance.

Luckily, there wasn't too much new information to absorb, so we ended up leaving the arena not too long after our victory — only to immediately run into Judith.

「Hey Fran. It looked like I really didn't even stand a chance.」

「Not hurt?」

「Haha... Only because you held back enough for me not to be.」

The way she spoke made it clear that she was feeling a bit down. Fran had no idea what to say given the circumstances, and so, she just ended up not saying anything at all. Instead, she simply looked at the other girl with a bit of a troubled expression.

「Oh uh, sorry, don't mind me. I just wanted to wish you good luck and to tell you to give it your all, in part for my sake.」

「Nn.」

「Oh, and make sure you win the first round! I'll be betting all the spare cash I have on you!」

「Might fight Lydia if she wins prelims.」

「That doesn't matter! I'll still be betting on you anyway」

Judith smiled cheerfully while giving us a thumbs up.

With that, we departed, our minds and hearts filled with Judith's half sincere, half greed-driven words of encouragement.

「Will do best.」

『That you should, for Judith's wallet's sake.』

The tournament brackets were delivered to us the next afternoon.

We immediately began looking them over the moment we got them. The brackets were split into four distinct blocks, labeled A, B, C, and D respectively. Each naturally contained 16 of the tourney's 64 contestants.

Fran'd been placed in slot A-11, which... honestly didn't really mean much to us. It told us who we were up against and all, but did nothing to tell us how strong he or she was supposed to be.

『Looks like we're up against someone named Zefmate...?』

「Don't recognize.」

『He isn't seeded, so I guess that means he must've at least been strong enough to win his way through the prelims.』

We decided to put Zefmate aside for the time being and look into him a bit later on. I figured we'd at least be able to learn a bit about his fighting style if we just asked Erza.

After shelving the thought and putting something on our to-do list, Fran and I immediately looked over all the seeded combatants.

「Forrund and Amanda.」

『Royce and Goldalfa are on here too.』

The four A ranked adventurers looked to be the tourney's top seed, as their names were placed in the page's four corners. Though some tournaments involved having seeded individuals fight less matches, this one didn't. There were exactly 64 participants, so it was fair in the sense that each and every single individual would have to fight the exact same number of battles to win the event.

As were were in Block A, the first top seed we'd end up encountering, if any, would have to be Goldalfa, one of the Beast Lord's escorts. He was in

the same block as us, and specifically had been placed in slot A-1. Block A's second seed, Colbert, had been placed opposite him in slot A-16.

Having 16 seeded combatants meant that there were naturally four in each block. They all seemed to be quite strong, but Goldalfa and Colbert, the ones we'd have to fight, seemed especially intimidating. Both were capable of bringing Fran to the verge of death with a single strike. Fortunately, we knew about both their abilities to an extent, so we could at least begin thinking up how we could best deal with them ahead of time.

The first of the two we would face would be Colbert, which in turn meant we'd need to be able to do something about opponents that made use of Martial Arts. But again, he wasn't the only person we needed to defeat. There were so just many people we needed to look up and do research on — a fact that worried me to the point where I'd started doing mental laps.

「Kufu.」

Fran, however, wasn't. The possibility of having to go up against one of the Beast Lord's guards failed to frighten or worry her. In fact, it'd done the exact opposite. Hearing that she might get to fight Goldafa had pushed her battlelust over the edge and caused her to break into a smile.

『So if we win the first round, we'll probably have to fight... Wait, seriously? Him?』

「Kurusu Ryuuzel? Don't really remember?」

『I'm not surprised you don't remember him, but he was that one C ranked guy that was there when we went dungeon diving with Amanda.』

「Nn?」

『Oh come. He was the one guy that kinda functioned as both a guide and examiner at the same time. Dude was kinda handsome, but almost seemed kinda pitiable given how worldly-wise he was. He must've seen some shit.』

「Maybe vaguely recalling?」

Welp... It didn't look like I'd be able to jog her memory, so I just gave up. I figured she'd probably remember him if she saw him. I was fairly confident Kurusu himself would likely recognize her on sight, as the impression she'd left on him had been a pretty deep one. It'd probably get all awkward if Fran ended up treating him like a total stranger, so I decided to make a mental note to remind myself to remind her that she knew him the moment we came across him.

That said, the mental note I made wasn't really one I'd classified as anything even remotely close to high priority. There was a fair chance we wouldn't actually end up getting pit against Kurusu anyways. He would have to win against the individual seeded into slot A-9 in order to actually see us in the ring.

『Looks like Kurusu's going to have to fight that old guy, Radyer.』

「Said he was C ranked?」

『Yeah, but he's apparently as strong as a B ranker and even used to serve as a court magician.』

Radyer getting seeded honestly seemed nothing short of reasonable. I kinda felt a bit sorry for Kurusu; I really couldn't see him winning against the old mage.

「Radyer will win.」

Fran voiced her agreement.

Well, I guess we'll have to figure out how to best fight mages if we wanted to beat Radyer.

『And if we manage to make it past Radyer, we'll have to face off against Colbert.』

「Nn! Will need to try hard. Excited.」

Colbert was much more experienced than us, and even had a trick or two up his sleeve. He'd had something that disguised his stats, so we didn't even know if the values we'd seen back then had really been his actual ones. All I really knew about him was that he had that a mysterious martial arts-type skill referred to as Dimitris-Style Martial Arts, which was yet another thing we'd have to look into.

『And if we beat Colbert, we'll have to fight Goldalfa.』

「Nn.」

Goldalfa, like Colbert, seemed to be fairly strong, so I didn't doubt that he'd win his first three matches. I wasn't really confident as to whether or not we'd be able to bring him down ourselves; there was a fair chance he'd be able to plow through us and win his fourth match as well.

「Will win!」

『Hell yeah we will!』

If we did beat him, then I'd say we actually had a fair chance of actually winning the whole goddamn tourney. He, as an A ranked adventurer, was someone strong enough to single handedly upset the balance of of a country's military power so it went without saying that he was a likely contender for the championship title.

『Though, beating him isn't really going to get us out of fighting all the other A ranked adventurers present.』

If all went well, Fran would have to fight Amanda in the semis, and Forrund in the finals, the realisation of which practically left her trembling in excitement. Both gave off the impression that they were even stronger than Goldalfa, especially since we'd witnessed their power first hand back in Barbra.

「But will still win.」

『That we will.』

They were extremely formidable, but I refused to back down. There was no point in me doing so if Fran actually intended on giving it her all. After all, victory was something that necessitated the right mindset; there was no way for us win unless we fought with that precise purpose in mind.

『Fuck yeah! Let's do this!』

「Master?」

『I was just getting myself pumped, cause we're gunna win this shit!』

「Nn!」

We'd identified what seemed to be our main threats, but that didn't mean we could actually let our guards down. As there were many other strong contestants, there was a chance we could be caught off guard and completely obliterated by someone we hadn't expected to fight if we didn't remain vigilant.

Having come to that conclusion, we decided to once again look through the brackets in order to identify our acquaintances.

The first name that happened to catch our eyes was Fermus'. He happened to be in Block D together with Royce.

The second name we noticed was Erza's. It seemed the tournament was fairly flexible and its managers were willing to accommodate people's needs, as they hadn't listed him by his real name. Erza, like Amanda, was placed in the Block B. I kinda wanted to see the two fight, but also kinda didn't, as it'd likely be a showdown that'd determine which was the more fearsome woman.

The third name that caught our eye was the name "Phillip Krysten," which happened to be listed alongside Forrund's in Block C. I was a bit unsure as to whether or not he should actually be here given Barbra's status quo, but figured he probably had his reasons for participating. Plus, he honestly had seemed pretty damned strong given what he was able to do to Rynford, so I

was looking forward to seeing the full extent of abilities; Phillip vs Forrund was a match I didn't want to miss.

Our eyes moved around the page a bit more and located the name Charlotte. I recalled her immediately. She was the young War Dancer that'd helped us out back in Barbra. She seemed to me like the type of person that'd fight through the rituals she performed with her dance as opposed to engaging in direct combat... which wouldn't really help her given that her first match was against Erza. I felt pretty bad for her, so I at least, in my mind, offered her my heartfelt condolences.

Her name was the last familiar one we found.

The person we'd been looking for hadn't made the list.

「Lydia missing.」

Wait, didn't she ask Fran not to hurt her too much if they came across each other during the main event and all that? How could she actually not make it after saying something like that?

God damn it, Lydia! What the hell!?

190. Gathering Intel

Chapter 190. Gathering Intel

Gathering Intel

Fran and I stopped by the Adventurer's Guild not too long after we finished staring down the brackets. Our goal was to figure out as much as we could with regards to all the other participants.

「Erza not here.」

『I'm honestly not all that sure he would've told us what we wanted to know anyways.』

「Nn?」

『I mean, he's technically one of our competitors, you know? Though, I guess he does seem like he'd gladly comply so long as it's you that's asking...』

Relying on someone we might have to fight against for information just didn't sit quite right with me.

『How 'bout asking Dias or some other adventurers instead?』

「Got it.」

Fran began moving towards a group of nearby adventurers so she could ask for a bit of information — only to be immediately denied the chance by the person she'd originally been looking for.

「Congratulations Fran! You did it! You made it to the main event!」

Erza dashed right over with a huge grin on his face, one so friendly it made me feel like an idiot for even considering him a rival of sorts.

「I watched your match! You did soooo well!」

「Nn.」

「That Blue Catkin was really rude... You should've beat him up some more, mhm!」

「But might've been disqualified.」

「Oh... right, I almost forgot you weren't allowed to attack people that've already surrendered. Oh well, I guess he gets off easy then... More importantly, Fran, something about you seems a bit different.」

「Nn?」

「Let's see... It's kinda like you've gotten a more reliable. You've really got this huge sense of presence.」

「Trained hard.」

「Is that really it? Mmm... I guess that does make sense. You seem like the type that'll grow at an explosive rate the moment I take my eyes off of you. I'm sure the tournament will help you get way stronger.」

「Nn.」

「So what made you want to come to the guild today?」

「Wanted to research opponents.」

「Really? I always thought you were the type that wouldn't really care who you were up against.」

「Intel very important.」

「Yup yup! Totally! As for the person you'll be going up against first... Hmm... I don't know anything about him.」

「Don't know?」

「Mhm. I've never heard of any adventurers named Zefmate before.」

Erza not recognizing Zefmate meant two things: he wasn't from Ulmutt and he wasn't anyone really famous.

「Let's try asking someone else.」

Erza approached the adventurers seated at the bar and asked them if they knew of Zefmate.

「Do any of you know an adventurer named Zefmate?」

「Zefmate? Never heard of him.」

「Me either.」

None of the ten adventurers present had any idea who he was, which in turn led me to suspect that Zefmate wasn't actually an adventurer given that some of the participants were in fact not.

There were also mercenaries, Knights like Phillip, mages, and other decently strong non-adventurers present as well.

『Alright, looks like he isn't someone anyone around here knows. Let's try switching gears.』

「Nn. Would like information on Dimitris-Style Martial Arts instead.」

「Oh my. Whyever would you need that?」

「Might have to fight person with it.」

「I didn't know any of the tournament's entrants knew how to use Dimitris-Style Martial Arts.」

「Don't know why, but won't use.」

「Oh, I guess that must mean the person you're talking about is going through his trial.」

「Trial?」

「You didn't know about the Dimitris Trial? They're really famous. Anyone that wants to be an official disciple has to go through one of them. The trial goer needs to become an A ranked adventurer with a part of their strength sealed by a really special magic item.」

The trial apparently really was famous, as all the other adventurers seemed to know about it and filled us in with a few additional details. They told us that the magic item sealed away both a portion of one's skills and stats.

No one present knew the exact details, but it seemed that one's stats would drop by a minimum of 20 percent upon equipping the sealing item. It prevented one from using many of the Dimitris-Styled Martial Arts and also pretty much lowered the level of every single skill one happened to have.

Learning that promptly allowed us to understand why Colbert had suddenly gotten stronger the moment Barbra fell into chaos. He must've undone his seal in order to help us kill Rynford.

Erza himself had partied with someone familiar with the Dimitris-Style Martial Art in the past, and had the opportunity to witness its techniques from up close.

「Though, she wasn't too high ranked, and couldn't do anything too incredible at the time.」

Apparently, the thing that made the Dimitris-Style so amazing was its focus on Qi.

Qi was defined as the act of applying one's energy either within or on the surface of one's body in order to either use it as a weapon or simply reinforce oneself. It was similar to magic, which used the exact same energy source to create the phenomenon known as a spell. The distinction between the two basically lay in the manner in which the energy was directed. Like magic, Qi's strengths and weaknesses were dependant on its users skills and natural disposition.

「Dimitris-Style Martial Arts take the concept of Qi to a whole new level. I don't know too many details, but I think they've started to mix the concepts

of Qi and Magic together. Mhm.」

「Qi and Magic at same time?」

「Yup yup. Dimitris-Style martial artists can send their Qi flying or deploy it as a shield. I think they can also send their Qi into their opponents' bodies in order to destroy it from the inside out. I've heard that the style's more experienced users can do even more than just that, but I haven't really heard any details.」

Apparently Dimitris-Style martial artists were able to do a lot more than just fire off the Kamehameha. Being able to totally wreck someone's body from inside out sounded really troublesome to deal with.

「I don't really think you need to worry about it though. At least not for the purposes of the tourney.」

「Why?」

「Trial goers aren't supposed to be allowed to lift the seal unless it's to help people or defeat someone thought to be evil. You aren't supposed to release the seal out of self-interest.」

Doing well in the tourney pretty much fell into the self-interest category, which meant we probably wouldn't have to worry about Colbert undoing his seal, which, to us, was fairly beneficial. It boosted the hell out of our chances of victory.

「Nn. Understood.」

「Is there anything else you wanted to ask?」

We asked for details about Royce, Goldalfa, Amanda, Forrund and last but not least, Radyer.

「Radyer?」

「Good old Radyer? He's a strong one~ He doesn't have too much stamina due to his age, but he's really well experienced. You'll need to be able to

deal with all sorts of magic if you want to beat him.」

「What kinds?」

「As far as I know, he can use Greater Earth Magic, Greater Water Magic, and Storm Magic.」

Radyr sounded hella tough. He was the only mages we heard of capable of using three different advanced magics. The closest to his level would be Royce, who was capable of using Greater Earth Magic, Moonlight Magic and Space/Time Magic.

We didn't really know much about Greater Earth Magic or Greater Water Magic, so we were going to have to proceed with utmost care.

「Did you want to know anything else, or is that all?」

「Nn. All for now.」

「Mkay. Tell me if you ever want to know anything else. I'll tell you everything I can!」

「Nn.」

「But that doesn't mean I'll go easy on you if we end up getting matched against each other, mkay? We'll have to fight it out fair and square. That'd be rude.」

「Know already.」

「Oh my, you seem really pumped and willing to go already. Fufufu.」

Erza was a bit surprised by Fran's happy looking smile, but soon began matching it with his own while also returning her aura of belligerence.

Oh god damn it! Erza was a battle junkie too!?

191. The Morning of the First Round

Chapter 191. The Morning of the First Round

The Morning of the First Round

『Morning Fran, you get a good night's sleep?』

「Nn...」

Fran was still only half awake, but somehow managed to have absolutely no difficulty shoveling her breakfast down her throat regardless.

『Today's the day. The tourney's finally starting.』

「Nn...」

I'd been a bit worried as to whether or not Fran would actually be able to get a good night's rest, but it turned out that my concerns had been totally needless. To her, today was honestly just another day.

Our morning routine went just as usual. I washed her face, dried her hair with warm air, and gave it a good brushing.

『Today's your big day, so we'll have to make sure you look even cuter than usual.』

「Doesn't matter.」

『Don't be silly. Of course it's going to matter, you're practically going to be put on display.』

I finished styling her hair as I responded to her. Only after I finished that did her eyes finally snap open and fill with energy. She promptly began imitating my actions by brushing Urushi's. The wolf narrowed his eyes and enjoyed the sensation for a few moments before flipping onto his back and demanding more affection. The way he acted reminded me of the Golden Retriever one of my older neighbors had in the past. He seriously didn't

give off even the slightest bit of the feral feel you'd normally expect from a wolf.

『We still a bit ahead of schedule. Feel like doing anything in particular, or?』

「Nn. Master, over here.」

『Huh? What's up?』

「Nn.」

Fran grabbed a cloth and began polishing me off.

『We haven't actually fought yet, so make sure you don't tire yourself out doing that, alright?』

「Not problem.」

『But-』

「Because not just me.」

『What's that supposed to mean?』

「Master also being put on display. Will have to make Master look cool.」

She continued polishing me as I brooded over whether I should thank her or tell her to stop. As far as I was concerned, Fran was going to be the star of the show, and I was just going to be an extra. I would've loved to keep contemplating so I could actually arrive at an answer, but ultimately stopped giving a shit not too long after she started because of how good it felt.

My loss of control led her to continue polishing me for a good 30 minutes, after which my blade became nice and sparkly.

『Are you sure that didn't tire you out?』

「Still okay.」

『Alright, let's head out then.』

「Nn!」

All contestants were to report to and gather in the Adventurer's Guild. Block A was scheduled to be the first to fight, so its members had to get there extra early.

Upon arrival, we were immediately led upstairs by one of the guild's clerks. It seemed that the rooms on the second and third floors were being used as temporary waiting rooms. The fact that the rooms were private rooms as opposed to larger rooms with participants aggregated within them was one that I could only possibly conclude as beneficial. Hot blooded adventurers, like Fran, would probably start fights if left with all the other participants.

「Please wait here until we call for you. Your match will be the 6th, and each is timeboxed to 30 minutes, so I believe you won't have to wait more than 2 hours. It depends on how long each match lasts, the shorter they are, the sooner you'll be up.」

「Nn. Got it.」

「You're free to observe the rest of the day's matches once you're done with your own, but you're not allowed to leave the room until we call for you.」

The fact that matches were timeboxed meant you couldn't really stall forever and just bore the crowd. It'd also prevent the tourney from getting thrown off schedule. However, it also meant that it was possible to run the timer. To that end, all combatants had to put on a magic item known as a Bracelet of Judgement prior to engaging in combat. The bracelet would allow one to determine a victor should the combatants eat up the whole 30 minutes they were allotted. The bracelet was capable of determining the contestants' HP and MP values, as well as their relative consumption

thereof. It would use the numbers it read to discern which of the two combatants would have emerged victorious had the match continued indefinitely.

「There'll be a staff member just outside the door at all times, so please don't be shy. Let us know if you need anything. 」

The tournament's participants were treated like VIPs and could order the staff to do all sorts of stuff. A few examples of the services provided were preparing light meals and acting as a proxy in order to do one's shopping. It seemed convenient and all, but didn't quite pertain to us. The stuff we had in our dimensional storages served to more or less satisfy all our needs.

As a result, Fran basically ended up just sitting down and taking it easy for a while.

We weren't bothered at all until about an hour passed, after which someone gave our door a knock.

「Excuse me.」

「Nn.」

「The fourth match has just begun. Your match will begin after the next one ends, so we would like to show you to a waiting room closer to the arena.」

It seemed like the tourney was a good bit ahead of schedule, so we decided to ask the staff what was up. Apparently, what'd happened was that Goldalfa had lived up to his reputation and ended his opponent in what was literally an instant.

Both the other matches, however, ended right around the 30 minute mark, and apparently not because they ran out of time. Most combatants naturally disliked having things decided by their bracelets, and so, they'd often pull off their biggest moves and decide things right before the match was forced to end.

We moved to the venue by taking an underground passageway with one of its entrances in the guild's basement. It seemed like a pretty good measure to take, as having more popular participants waltz right through the streets would probably lead to the populace kicking up a fuss.

The room we were moved to was, not surprisingly, yet another private room, one several orders of magnitude more luxurious than the one we'd been staying in at the guild. The sofa they had in the room was gorgeous, and the bed was seemingly filled to the brim with down.

「The fifth match has now begun, so we may end up calling for you at any moment now. Please make sure you're ready for us when your turn comes around.」

「Nn. Got it.」

Fran dove straight into the super soft looking sofa and began enjoying it to its fullest.

After a moment's consideration, I realized that the match that was going on right now was the one between Kurusu and Radyer — which meant the explosions I'd been hearing from time to time were Radyer's spells. They were so loud that they even eclipsed the crowd's deafening cheers, which I actually had to strain my ears in order to catch.

Unlike me, who'd spent my time thinking about the match and whatnot, Fran had instead focused on relaxing. She'd leapt off the sofa, jumped onto the bed, and played on it with Urushi until an incredibly loud series of cheers resounded through the room.

『Sounds like the match's been decided.』

Given that realization, I strained my ears even further so I could hear the caster.

「And it's over! Despite popular speculation, Kurusu has taken the win!」

Wait, seriously? Kurusu won?

「Master, something wrong?」

I must've seemed really shocked, as Fran had immediately turned her head towards me in confusion.

『It's just that Kurusu's the one that ended up winning is all.』

「Kurusu?」

『Did you really forg- oh, whatever. Let's get ready to go. We'll be up soon.』

「Nn. Got it.」

It didn't take long for a guide to show up at our door after Kurusu's and Radyr's matches came to an end. Said guide not only led us over to the arena, but also handed us a Bracelet of Judgement along the way. Surprisingly, the bracelet didn't actually take up an accessory slot, so we didn't have to swap any of our stuff out.

The venue used for the main tournament was both gigantic and incredibly well lit. I called out to Fran on our way to the actual arena part because I was a bit worried as to whether or not she'd be nervous. Again, it turned out that my worries were completely needless, as Fran was in such a good mood that she'd actually been skipping along as we moved.

『Are you really not even the slightest bit nervous?』

「Nn!」

『Nice. Let's do this then.』

「Can't wait.」

『Make sure you stay in the shadows till after Fran gives the signal, alright Urushi?』

(Woof.)

The moment we entered the arena, we discovered that there were over ten times as many audience members present as there were during the secondary preliminary round.

They were so numerous that I found it incredibly difficult to discern individual comments anymore. There were so many different people cheering that the whole thing just kind of came off like a wave of sound.

「Mmph.」

The crowd's cheers roared at such high volume that Fran ended up grimacing and lowering her ears.

『You alright?』

「Nn... Alright used to it.」

Whew.

The sheer volume of the sound waves blasted at us made me understand that having sensitive hearing wasn't actually always a good thing. I didn't get how rabbitkin like Royce and basically anyone else with super sensitive hearing could actually manage to cope.

「And our contestants have arrived! In one corner we have a fair maiden whose strength betrays her looks, the youngest C ranked adventurer to date. Ladies and gentlemen, please, extend your welcomes to Block A's 11th contestant, Fran, the Magic Sword Girl!」

Fran slowly stepped up onto the stage with the caster's announcement as her cue. On top of it stood her opponent; he'd already been awaiting her arrival.

「Mmph.」

Her expression immediately stiffened the moment she saw him.

「And in the other corner, we have an incredible man with a mercenary band at his back. Put your hands together for one of the younger

generation's most respected Blue Catkin: Blue Pride's Leader and Block A's 12th contestant, Zefmate, the Blue Strike!」

Fran's opponent was not only none other than one of the Blue Catkin she detested, but also Blue Pride's leader. Knowing that, she glared him, reached for me, and silently drew me from my sheath.

192. Zefmate

Chapter 192. Zefmate

Zefmate

Fran stared Zefmate down as the two stood across from each other at the arena's center.

「Hey there, heard you totally wrecked one of our guys.」

「...」

「Could you maybe do without the glare?」

「Fmph...」

Though it was in part because we were about to have to fight him anyways, Fran didn't bother concealing her naked hostility. She narrowed her eyes and stared in his direction without bothering to say a word. He, however, responded not with bloodlust, but instead with a perplexed, bitter smile.

「I had Seiz punished.」

「Nn?」

「I'm talking about the guy you beat during the second round of prelims.」

「Because lost to Black Catkin?」

「Nah. It was because he was far too rude. He shouldn't have said what he did even if it was just for provocation's sake. In fact, let me apologize for him. Sorry.」

「...!」

Zefmate caused Fran's eyes to widen his shock as he gave her a prim and proper bow alongside an apology. She wasn't the only one to feel the way she did, I also ended up surprised as all hell.

The reason for my surprise was a bit different from Fran's. I'd popped the Principle of Falsehood because I thought he was trying to bullshit her to butter her up, but it turned out that his words hadn't been laced with lies; he speaking from his heart.

「Seiz won't be one of our execs for much longer. I'm planning to demote him because I feel that we really shouldn't be thinking of or treating Black Catkin the way we do.」

「Saying that even though Blue Catkin? Maybe not actually Blue Catkin? Something else?」

「Ahaha... I really am a Blue Catkin you know? Though, I guess I can see where you're coming from. I understand that you don't trust me, but I'd like to say that I don't approve of the slave trade, nor do I plan on looking down on you just because you're a Black Catkin.」

『Wow. He actually isn't lying. Everything he's said so far is true.』

(Huh? Telling joke?)

『I'm being serious. He really means what he says. His apology was genuine.』

My words prompted Fran to once again glare at Zefmate, this time, as if probing him. He, however, didn't mind. He simply stood there exactly as he had been despite her looking at him the way she was — which made sense. There was no reason for him to react any differently given that he'd been speaking the truth.

「Can't be trusted!」

It was a result that led Fran to flare up in agitation, an emotion I couldn't really blame her for feeling. To her, Zefmate was basically the equivalent of a mafia boss, and good natured mafia bosses were a concept limited to the realm of fiction. There was simply no way for one to exist in the real world given the nature of their work. Hence, the result of the Blue Catkin communicating his intentions to Fran had caused her to be stricken with

bewilderment, which wasn't exactly what you'd call the best emotion to be feeling going into a duel.

『Calm down. You don't really need to think too hard about what he's said. It doesn't change the fact that we're going to need to beat him in battle.』

「Nn. Will attack first, think later.」

—

General Information

Name: Zefmate

Age: 36

Race: Beastkin (Blue Cat Tribe/Blue Leopard)

Class: Blink Strike Swordsman

State: Normal

Status Level: 53/99

HP: 441

MP: 236

STR: 217

VIT: 200

AGI: 322

INT: 102

MGC: 129

DEX: 178

Skills

Espionage: Lv 3

Evasion: Lv 5

Crisis Detection: Lv 6

Bow Techniques: Lv 3

Bow Arts: Lv 4

Vigilance: Lv 4

Sword Techniques: Lv 8

Sword Arts: MAX

Divine Sword Arts: Lv 2

Command: Lv 6

Boost Morale: Lv 3

Kicking Techniques: Lv 4

Kicking Arts: Lv 5

Blink: MAX

Blink Step: Lv 3

Interrogation: Lv 4

Spear Techniques: Lv 2

Spear Arts: Lv 3

Twin Sword Arts: Lv 5

Elemental Blade: Lv 2

Climbing: Lv 7

Poison Resistance: Lv 3

Water Magic: Lv 3

Magic Resist: Lv 2

Vigour Manipulation

Lesser Agility Boost

Sense of Direction

Night Vision

Innate Skills

Awakening

Blink Strike Blade

Leopard's Paw

Titles

One Who Brings Victory

Equipment

Blue Dragon Fang Shortsword

Adamantite Alloy Longsword

Multi Headed Dragon's Body Armour

Leaping Dragon's Wing Mantle

Bracelet of Status Abnormality Resistance

Health Restoring Ring

「Ready... Begin!」

Both Fran and Zefmate immediately began to act the moment the battle began.

「Haah!」

「Cheiyaaah!」

Fran gave into her frustration and launched an attack backed only by brute force. It was a bit crude and lacking in finesse, but more than powerful enough to end the match if it happened to land.

Zefmate defended against the strike by crossing his blades and blocking. He then began attempting to wrap his two swords around me in order to disarm her. The technique was stellar, but his attempt ended in failure for the sole reason that he wasn't capable of matching Fran in terms of pure power.

The fight turned into a series of back and forths after the initial clash; both combatants continued to swing their blades at one another in an attempt to get a hit in. Though Zefmate was armed with two swords, and Fran only one, she gradually gained an edge on him and began taking control of the battle's momentum. The reason she was able to suppress him wasn't just because of her strength stat, but also because she was simply more skilled in the way of the sword.

Realizing that he was at a disadvantage, Zefmate leapt a whole ten meters back and disengaged, an effect likely brought about by that Leopard's Paw skill of his. The sheer amount of momentum it gave him was so great that it rendered Fran unable to catch up and immediately assault him as he landed.

「You sure are strong.」

「Not too bad yourself?」

「Thanks. You being both a Black Catkin and as strong as you are really seems to prove my point. We Blue Catkin really have been wrong to look down on your kind.」

「First time... Meeting not scum Blue Catkin...」

Fran's emotions had finally settled, she managed to grasp the truth and accept it for what it was. The gaze she threw in his direction was no longer one filled with anger or hatred, but instead driven by curiosity. She had taken an interest in him.

「Ahahaha... Yeah... You're right... We Blue Catkin really do have to stop acting the way we do.」

Zefmate's laugh was dry, he seemed to be feeling both really depressed and somewhat awkward at the same time.

「Though I am still feeling apologetic, I won't be able to throw in the towel or let you have the match else risk harming my band's reputation. I'll still be winning this match of ours.」

「Right back at you.」

Fran took a stance. She kept her guard up despite smiling and seeming a bit curious as to what Zefmate would do.

The amount of magical energy dwelling within him began to skyrocket.

「Fuh... Awakening...!」

His muscles began to bulge and expand at an incredible rate the moment he muttered the skill's name. All visible parts of his skin were immediately covered by blue fur with black spots on it. His appearance warped into exactly what his race suggested — he became a blue leopard.

「We Blue Leopardkin are a species that specialize in enhancing our own bodies. You'd be best off not thinking of me as the same person you just exchanged blows with! Blink Strike Blade!」

「Gmph!」

Zefmate's attack almost seemed to be paired with an instant transmission, as he almost seemed to vanish, only to reappear right next to us as he delivered his blow. The strike was so fast that Fran was unable to counter, and forced into only blocking it.

「To think you'd block even the first strike...! Haaaah!」

The Awakening skill had boosted his strength stat by more than 30 and his agility by almost an entire 200. If one were to judge him based solely on his speed, he'd likely be classified as an A ranked adventurer. His assault was fearsome, and really ingrained into my mind just how much more powerful Beastkin became upon evolution.

Blink Strike Blade seemed to be the type of skill that boosted one's speed as one used it to attack. It, combined with Zefmate's innate high speed, made him so fast that we actually couldn't keep track of him with just our eyes. He seemed to be the most speed focused fighter we'd ever encountered to date.

He began using both Blink Step and Leopard's Paw to move around at super high speed in an attempt to throw us off while also attacking with Blink Strike Blade.

A ridiculous number of incredibly fast attacks came at us from every direction. If Zefmate were up against any weaker adventurer, he probably would've already completely torn his opponent to bits.

However, Fran wasn't what one could call a weaker adventurer. Thus, he hadn't even managed to get a single clean hit on her.

All that training we did had allowed Fran to grow much more accustomed to using her detection-based skills. Through their use, she was able to sense

every single one of his moves — and that was all she needed. The fact that Fran could detect his attacks allowed her more than enough leeway to react to and defend against them.

「Impossible...!」

Fran's sheer ability had led Zefmate to panic. Though he stated he didn't look down on the Black Catkin race, he, as an evolved Beastkin, probably never even considered the possibility of losing to one in combat given that they weren't capable of evolving.

He must've simply thought that he, as an experienced veteran, would be able to trump Fran, a little girl, in all of stats, experience, skill quality, and skill quantity.

The Blue Leopardkin's attacks grew more frequent as he as he lost his cool. He stopped doing as many feints, and moved around much less between repeated offensives. His impatient attacks would've ended anyone that couldn't keep up him. But again, Fran could. As a result, his assault only grew duller. His strikes became monotone, repetitive, and predictable.

「Stone Wall」

「Gabahh!」

A low rising stone wall spawned in Zefmate's path as he closed in on Fran from behind.

The result mirrored exactly what would expect to see if a bike smashed into a guardrail at full speed; the impact of ramming into the wall caused Zefmate to go flying through the air.

「I was read like a book and baited!?!」

「Inferno Burst」

Fran fired a spell towards what I presumed to be the now defenseless Blue Leopardkin — only to have me realize that I'd been underestimating the effects of his Leopard's Paw, as Zefmate kicked the air and changed his

trajectory to avoid the incoming flames. His actions had been so far out of the scope of my predictions that I even ended up unconsciously clicking my tongue.

『Tsk!』

I felt like the only reason I thought it was over was because I'd decided to leave everything to Fran. If I wasn't effectively functioning as a spectator with the best tickets in the house, I probably wouldn't have assumed that victory was assured even after Fran fired that supposedly final spell.

In other words, I wouldn't have let my guard down.

I would've instead acted as Fran did.

「Burnia」

「When did you!?!」

Fran had immediately started moving after firing off her attack. She used the flames she shot at Zefmate as cover, got around him, and approached him from the rear through the use of Fire Magic the moment he attempted to dodge the attack by using Leopard's Paw.

「Haaah!」

「Gaaaarrggh!」

Zefmate was fast, but so was Fran. She was capable of moving just as quickly as he was, even after he'd awakened.

To him, it must've felt like Fran had instantly teleported behind him, like someone had matched his speed. And that was something he didn't quite seem to be used to. He wasn't capable of properly defending himself from her assault.

All he managed was to throw the sword in his left and thrust the one in his right in order to retaliate.

Both attacks, done purely out of desperation, proved ineffective. The sword he thrust at Fran only barely managed to scratch her cheek, whereas the one he threw ended up getting tossed inside her dimensional storage.

Fran slashed her opponent's legs as she pushed him out of bounds. She could've just sent him flying, but chose to rob him of his mobility as well, just in case he somehow managed to recover. Without his speed, Zefmate was sure to lose.

As a result, Zefmate had lost one of his legs, and with it, his sense of balance. He was unable to steady himself, and ended up falling outside the arena's boundaries.

「Its over! It's over!! I can't even tell what happened! Ladies and gentlemen, that, what we just saw was merely one of the tournament first rounds! Can you believe it!? Both combatants were moving so quickly I wasn't able to tell what either was doing!」

The fact that both Fran and Zefmate had dashed around as quickly as A rankers had caused the caster to start screaming in excitement.

「And our winner today is Fran, the Magic Sword Girl! Her victory has set a new record! She, as a 12 year old, has become the youngest contestant to ever win one of the tournament's rounds!」

193. Seren

Chapter 193. Seren

Seren

We weren't left to our own devices until after we were led back through the underground passageway we used to get to the arena. The guide informed that our next match was scheduled to take place two days from now and that we'd have to arrive just as early in the morning as we had for this one. We were also told that we were pretty much allowed to do whatever we wanted in the meantime.

『So, what now?』

(Will spectate.)

『Hey, that's a pretty good idea. We might make it in time for Colbert's match if we rush over.』

(Nn. Want to see other matches too.)

Fran mentioning that she wanted to spectate the other combatant's matches made me realize that we'd never actually had the chance to actually just sit down and watch other people fight.

I figured doing so would actually work to Fran's benefit. It'd allow her to see things from a whole new perspective, which, in turn, could probably allow her to learn a new trick or two.

『Alright, let's go.』

(Nn.)

Fran turned to leave the guild and head towards the arena, but was stopped by the guide before actually setting off.

「Were you intending on watching any of the remaining matches?」

「Nn. Planned to.」

「In that case, I recommend you wear some sort of disguise. The other spectators might make a fuss if they see you, especially since your match just ended and is still fresh in everyone's minds.」

The clerk's advice was spot on. Most of the spectators present for Fran's fight were probably still at the arena, and there was fair chance they'd be able to recognize her on sight if she didn't keep her face hidden. Some of the spectators might've lost a fair bit of money because of her, and getting involved with them sounded like a pretty bad idea if you asked me. The same applied to people that were overly interested in her. Actively avoiding pedophiles interested in her sounded like something that we'd probably benefit from doing.

「Then will put on disguise.」

「Please do.」

That said, we probably weren't actually going to disguise ourselves too much. A quick change of attire seemed like it would probably be enough to do the job so long as we popped all our stealth based skills.

As such, all Fran did before heading towards the arena was throwing on a cloak. The tourney's contestants were allowed to enter through the back door, so she did. The guard responsible for watching it ended up not only letting Fran in, but also giving her a salute of the highest order immediately after seeing her guild card.

The place was packed. It didn't look like we were going to be able to find a place to sit.

『Looks like there's one spot free over there.』

But fortunately, I did happen to spot a single empty seat.

「Nn.」

The seat wasn't broken or anything, so we were pretty confused as to why it was empty, and remained so until just after Fran sat herself down.

「Oi, where the hell do you think you're sittin'?」

「Nn?」

「Move brat, that seat's taken.」

「That seat's for our bro!」

There were a bunch of tough looking dudes sitting right next to us. They seemed to have been chasing off everyone that tried to take the seat.

A quick appraisal allowed me to understand that they were basically a few of Ulmutt's local thugs. They tried to scare Fran away, but completely failed given that she was used to dealing with people much more intimidating than they were. The fact that they were annoying basically made it so we didn't mind depriving them of their seats.

「Stun Bolt」

「Gyah!」

「Higgiii!」

「Orpghh!」

Fran stunned all three thugs and threw them into the aisle.

「Urushi.」

「Woof.」

The people in our surroundings immediately stood up in surprise the moment they spotted Urushi, but Fran ignored them and loaded his back with two of the men while the wolf grabbed the third with his mouth.

「Dump somewhere.」

「Ruff.」

Fran saw Urushi off and then sat down, which, in turn, also caused the people around us to return to their seats. They didn't bother talking to her though, seeing as how they likely thought that doing so would bring trouble, which, to us, was pretty much the best possible outcome.

Nothing in particular happened thereafter. We watched the remaining matches in peace.

Unfortunately, we weren't able to gain too much from watching Colbert's or Amanda's matches, as both ended their opponents in an instant.

The match between Erza and Charlotte was actually quite worth mentioning. The crowd had really cheered for the latter as she danced, but she was unfortunately too weak to take down Erza.

She managed to start dancing in a rather bewitching manner, but her moves were cut short, as she ended up having to fight a desperate, one sided struggle in order to dodge Erza's mace. In the end, she ended up getting grabbed by the nape of her neck and chunked out of the ring.

Though we didn't learn much about Amanda or Colbert, we were still at least capable of learning a few neat ways to apply certain skills, ways we never would've thought up ourselves, even in our wildest dreams.

One of the more interesting combatants was a thief that buffed his opponent's sense of smell and then started throwing stink bombs and other foul smelling shit. The takeaway we got from that wasn't his technique itself, but rather the concept of buffing one's opponent and then turning that buffed stat into some sort of disadvantage.

We'd also learned just how one was actually supposed to use Lava Magic in combat. The mage we saw use it not only melted his opponent's weapons, but also superheated the ground for the sake of zone control. It was a magic that really allowed its user to take advantage of an opponent's weakness. Learning more about its applications really made me really consider leveling it up.

The sun had started to set by the time the day's matches had come to an end.

『Looks like it's about time for us to start heading home.』

「Nn...」

『Did you want to go somewhere instead, or?』

「Still have Zefmate's sword.」

Right. I'd almost forgot that we were still holding onto Zefmate's Blue Dragon Fang Shortsword. It was a pretty strong weapon, and honestly seemed to be on the more expensive side.

『We should probably give it back to him.』

「Nn.」

We didn't exactly think well of Blue Pride, but Zefmate himself didn't seem too bad. In fact, I'd honestly had to say I thought him to be a pretty good guy. Plus, giving it back to him probably wouldn't take that much time, so it wasn't like doing it would be detrimental.

『Hey Urushi, do you still remember Zefmate's scent?』

「Woof!」

The operation was a go, and so, we had Urushi lead us over.

All in all, we spent about 20 minutes walking, after which we arrived at the city's outskirts. There weren't many houses around. The place was practically a large open field.

『Is this it?』

「Woof.」

Set up on that large field were a whole bunch of tents. It seemed Blue Pride had chosen to camp out instead of staying at an inn, as renting out rooms for all their members would be a pretty sizeable expense. Plus, camping out wasn't really that tough on the mercenary band's members anyways, seeing as how they were all fighters and whatnot.

I soon realized, however, that there was a bit of an issue. We weren't really too sure how we were supposed to get to Zefmate. We couldn't just waltz right through the camp seeing as how his band's members would probably end up spotting us and kicking up a fuss.

Maybe I could create a doppelganger and deliver the sword that way?

My brooding was interrupted as one of Blue Pride's executives ended up exiting their tent and spotting us.

「Ah! It's you!」

The person that'd caught sight of us was one I recognized, the stuck up, 17-18 year old girl we met in front of Aurel's manor.

「Who?」

「I'm Seren, Blue Pride's second in command.」

「Nn. Fran.」

「Yeah, I know. You're the one that's completely played our band for fools. Why are you here?」

「Returning this.」

「That's... my brother's sword! You thief!」

Seren immediately began giving off an aura of hostility.

Wait, did she just call Zefmate her brother? I guess that'd be why she gets treated as the band's second in command.

「Just how did a little Black Catkin girl like you manage to beat him in the first place!?!」

「Nn? Strength.」

「Stop lying! Black Catkin are famous for how weak they are! There's no way you could ever be stronger than my brother! You must've done something underhanded or cheated!」

「Didn't.」

「There's no way you didn't! There's no other way he could've possibly lost to a Black Catkin!」

Seren stamped her feet on the ground and threw a tantrum in a childlike manner unbecoming her age. She didn't seem to share Zefmate's views despite being his little sister.

「Ugh! Fine, whatever! If you want me to forgive you for being a cheater, go to the Adventurer's Guild, tell them you cheated, and make them let my brother take your place!」

Fran's eyes narrowed a bit because of how ungrateful Seren was acting.

「Refuse...」

The black catgirl's mood was getting worse by the moment. She'd visited because she wanted to see Zefmate, not because she'd wanted to deal with this shit.

「Haaah!? What are you saying? I was offering to go out of my way to forgive you for cheating. You're supposed to thank me, not give me attitude!」

I was starting to doubt whether or not Seren was really Zefmate's younger sister. Their temperaments were... a little too different.

「...」

「Oh come on! This is why I can't stand you stupid black catkin! I'm telling you to know your place!」

「...」

「Why are you looking at me like that? I'll never forgive you if you refuse! Do you know what that'll mean?」

「Don't.」

Fran responded in an irritated tone; she was only barely managing to not to lash out because Seren was Zefmate's sister. Her efforts were praiseworthy, but and she did manage to hold on, but it definitely wasn't something that could last too much longer.

「Hmph. You Wimp Catkin only remain free because we Blue Catkin allow you to. If you refuse to forfeit, then we'll not only capture and enslave you, but every other Black Catkin out there!」

Ah, she said the word. RIP Fran's self control.

Seren had pushed Fran all the way to her boiling point; my wielder was as angry as she had been when Dias told her about Kiara. There was actually already no more helping Seren. Fran was going to kill her, and if worse came to worst, the entirety of Blue Pride would likely follow in her footsteps. I kinda felt bad for Zefmate, but it seemed to us that his followers were all your everyday average Blue Catkin. And if we were going to kill Seren, then wiping the rest of them out was probably for the better. They'd likely demand revenge if we didn't bother tying up all our loose ends.

「...」

Fran didn't say a thing. She simply drew me and attacked the girl in front of her eyes. The attack wasn't a well refined one. All Fran was doing was just lashing out in anger. Still, her strike contained more than enough power to reap the other girl's life.

But my blade never reached her.

Instead, it cleaved the flesh of another.

「Gafuuhhh....」

「Z-Zefmate!」

Zefmate had dashed between Fran and Seren so he could function as a meatshield and tank the hit; my blade smashed through his collarbone and dug all the way down into his lungs.

Fran had just tried killing his sister, but, despite that, Zefmate's glare fell not on her, but on person he'd been trying to protect.

「What... are you saying...Seren...?」

「Zefmate!? Are you okay!? What the hell did you just do to my brother!? I swear I'll never forgive you, or your kind! I'll wipe out every single last Bl-」

「Stop it...!」

「Kyah!」

The Blue Leopardkin slapped his little sister across the face shortly after she began cursing at Fran.

He didn't bother treating his wound, and instead just immediately prostrated himself before the person that had just mortally wounded him in an attempt to apologize.

「I'm... sorry... my sister... didn't mean it...」

「Don't... care...」

Despite that, Fran's response wasn't a favourable one. She'd been pushed way past the limit of what she could bear. Her anger could no longer be abated by a mere apology.

「I swear... I won't... ever let her... say something like that... ever again! I'll... re-educate all... my troops... and exile the ones that won't listen... no... I'll even force them... into slavery...!」

Zefmate knew that something like mere banishment wouldn't be enough to calm Fran down. It was too half-hearted. And so, he even offered to voluntarily sell his own blood related sister into slavery.

His battle with Fran had caused him to realize that she was way out of his league, and that she might end up slaughtering every single last one of Blue Pride's members if he didn't manage to influence her mood..

「Wait, what are you saying? She's just a-」

「Shut... Up...」

Zefmate clobbered Seren, knocked her unconscious and caused her to collapse on the spot.

「I'm... really sorry...」

His injuries were serious. He was on the verge of death, but he completely ignored his own safety and only continued to apologize.

I sensed the people that lay within their tents begin to move.

『Well, Fran, what do you say? More people'll start showing up if you don't make up your mind fast.』

「I'm... sorry...」

「...」

『I'll have your back regardless of what choice you make, so don't hold back. Do whatever you want.』

「...」

Fran hesitated.

「Greater Heal.」

She couldn't make up her mind immediately; it took her a few moments, but ended up deciding against completely obliterating every Blue Catkin present. She didn't trust them. In fact, she hated them, but her impression of Zefmate was a good one and she didn't think he deserved to die.

「Will be back another day. If no changes by then, will take action.」

「Thank you so much!」

Sensing the fury that lay within, Zefmate dropped to his knees and thanked Fran for her mercy.

194. Golden Flames

Chapter 194. Golden Flames

Golden Flames

『You sure you're okay with letting them off?』

「Didn't let off. Just gave time.」

『Well, alright, so long as that's really what you wanted.』

Fran began walking around town immediately after leaving Blue Pride's campsite. The mood she was in was nothing short of terrible.

Zefmate had been a pretty good guy. Fran had felt that she might've been able to get along with him despite their races, and by meeting him, she'd learned that not all Blue Catkin were scumbags. Coming to know that had caused her to really want to become his friend. However, the circumstances had made Fran's desire extremely difficult to achieve. Zefmate had been an exception. None of his underlings shared his mentality, which in turn meant that the two could potentially end up at each other's throats.

There was a chance Fran would have to kill Zefmate in the near future.

To Fran, Seren's words had been nothing but offensive. They were so sick and twisted that they'd even gotten to my head, so I could only imagine the extent of the rage that dwelled within her. Neither of us could stand the attitude that most Blue Catkin had, and we probably would've murdered every single one present if Zefmate had been even a second later.

The things that'd been said to her continued plaguing her mind even now. They caused her darker emotions to swell and whirl around within. I hoped that she wouldn't encounter anyone that'd piss her off, as she'd probably end up losing control if she was to be encouraged to attack them.

Fortunately, there wasn't anyone stupid enough to do so given that her aura reflected her thoughts; she was emanating an air of pure danger, one that

forced the people around us to look the other way.

She wandered around like that for about twenty minutes before suddenly turning heel right as she felt an incredible amount of magical energy burst out from behind her.

『I can sense the...』

「...Beast Lord?」

Its source was Blue Pride's campsite, but it was so potent that we could measure the extent of its power from all the way back in town.

Sensing it had caused Fran to immediately begin dashing, not away from, but towards it.

The only person capable of giving off that much pressure was the Beast Lord. There wasn't anyone else that possessed such a ridiculous amount of strength. Moreover, we didn't even need to be present to tell that he wasn't just training; his magic was laced with bloodlust.

Something had happened.

Fran had no idea what we'd be able to accomplish by rushing over to Blue Pride's campground, but continued to pump her legs as hard as she could regardless. It was something that couldn't be helped given the circumstances. All we knew was that something had happened, something that involved both Zefmate, who Fran had a good impression of, and the Beast Lord, who she feared.

『Hey Fran, are you sure this is a good idea? I'm pretty sure you're heading straight for the Beast Lord.』

「Nn...!」

Getting to Blue Pride's campground took less than 2 minutes at Fran's full speed.

「Hah...Hah...!」

『I knew it. The Beast Lord really was here.』

The first thing we saw upon arriving was the Beast Lord. He calmly stood smack in the middle of the camp, his body cloaked in golden flames. The second was Zefmate, collapsed on the ground, charred black, and clearly on the verge of death.

「This is what you get for defying me, idiot. Whatever, I've had enough of you. Just die already.」

The Beast Lord reached towards Zefmate with his flame covered right hand — an action that prompted Fran to react without the slightest bit of hesitation.

「Master, engaging!」

She went on the offense without so much as even waiting for me to reply; she drew me in her right, popped Deathgaze into her left, and shot towards the Beast Lord as would a bullet. The slashing attack that came out of the action was one as swift as the strike she'd used to assault Rynford; it was one that combined all her skills and knowledge, stealth-based skills included.

Rigdis, the Beast Lord, wasn't all that proficiency when it came to detection. Rather, he was, but his wasn't nearly as skilled at it as we'd expected the average S ranker to be. That, in turn, made it difficult for him to pick up on Fran's sneak attack.

Ambushing the Beast Lord was a much better choice than calling out to him. Rigdis could always just ignore her and end Zefmate anyways, so attacking was, in fact, the most reliable option to go with if we wanted to save Zefmate's life. Besides, yelling at him to stop would mean announcing to him Fran's presence, which in turn meant losing the opportunity to get an initial first strike in. All that, of course, was only valid under the assumption that we would end up having to fight the Beast Lord anyways.

It was a choice only made possible by the fact that Fran had already resolved herself to fight him. For that reason, her blade held not even the

slightest shred of hesitation.

She ended up going for his neck in hopes of ending him right off the bat; her goal was to disable him in a single strike. She didn't care about incurring the wrath of an entire country, nor did she give half a flying fuck about the international uproar that attacking the him would lead to. The only thing that she bothered considering was what she needed to do to save Zefmate's life.

We didn't have to worry about holding back, the Beast Lord's Sacrificial Bracelet would prevent us from murdering him regardless of what we did to him. Though we were willing to engage the Beast Lord in combat, actually flat out killing him was something I wanted to avoid, as it'd put us a bit more than just neck deep in serious ass international shit. Attacking him was still a problem in and of itself, but, it was still a significant bit better than actually lopping his head off. You could say that we were only capable of going all out in our assault precisely because the Beast Lord happened to have a Sacrificial Bracelet on hand and equipped.

I was convinced that not even someone like the Beast Lord would be able to act if he was in a state terrible enough for him to actually need to pop a Sacrificial Bracelet, so I figured we'd be able to grab Zefmate and fall back before he managed to retaliate.

What Fran was doing was dangerous. That much, I understood. I knew that teleporting away and leaving Zefmate to die would've been in the interest of her safety.

But that wasn't something the person in question herself would be able to accept. If I really had been totally concerned about nothing but Fran's safety, I would've long advised her to take up a job less dangerous than adventuring. But I hadn't. That was in part because I wanted to go out and see the world with her, but wanting to adventure wasn't really why I'd chosen not to bother convincing her to change her mind. The other, more important reason was because I wanted to abide by her will. Fran wanted to be an adventurer, and that was that.

As Fran's guardian, it was naturally important for me to try to keep her as safe as possible. That was simply what being someone's guardian entailed.

But I wasn't just her guardian, I was also her sword. Thus, I needed to do utmost to fulfill her wishes, even if those wishes involved something as dangerous as jumping straight off a cliff.

As her sword, I'd already decided to follow right in her footsteps if she was to ever make that type of decision. And as her guardian, I'd decided to protect her to the best of my abilities regardless the of what the consequences of her choices were.

In other words, my role was support Fran in her decisions every step of way so long as it remained possible for me to do so.

The Black Catkin girl swung both her blades to form a cross the moment she closed in on the Beast Lord. His defenses were ridiculously high, but we figured we'd be able to pierce them so long as we focused everything we had on a single point. The two swords that closed in on the Beast Lord's neck... failed to do anything to him at all.

Fran, both blades still drawn, stared at the uninjured Beast Lord with a look of bewilderment. She hadn't felt any resistance when slashing at him, so she didn't realize what'd happened until she looked down to my blade.

「Haah? Who the fuck are you?」

We'd successfully managed to stop the Beast Lord from slaying Zefmate, but Fran had fallen onto his radar as a result.

Fran lacked the composure to answer the Beast Lord's question. She instead stared at the two hilts in her hands.

Hilts.

Both her swords had lost their blades. In fact, Deathgaze was flat out done for, as all its magical energy had already drained out from within it. Even the Black Cat's Mantle, which happened to have gotten a bit singed, was

acting abnormally. That is, it was repairing itself at a much slower rate than usual. You almost couldn't actually tell that it actually worked based on visuals alone.

The catgirl didn't understand what was going on.

But I did.

The reason Deathgaze and I had lost our blades was because we touched the golden flames that cloaked the Beast Lord's body. We both basically evaporated the moment we did. The flames didn't radiate any heat, but holy shit they were potent. The lack of consistency between the two facts was one only made possible because the golden conflagration was born of a skill.

「Master!」

「Hah? Master? You're this damned Blue Catkin's disciple?」

『Calm down Fran, I'm fine. Don't shout or throw a fuss. Just talk to me through telepathy, same as usual.』

(Whew...)

Fortunately, my blade was the only thing that ended up getting burnt off, so I was still fine and not yet irreparable. Unfortunately, the magical flames had robbed me of so much mana that I no longer contained any more than Deathgaze normally did.

『Man, this is looking pretty bad...』

Attacking the Beast Lord had caused me to come to understand that his flames functioned as an automated self-defense mechanism. They were that powerful even when just left in full auto mode.

I couldn't really see myself successfully fending them off in the case that he used them to attack.

「Oh come on kid. Answer me already. Don't just sit there with your mouth shut.」

「Did... what to Zefmate?」

「Heh, responding to a question with another quest? You ain't got no manners, Black Catkin.」

Being taunted by the Beast Lord caused Fran to grind her teeth in anger, but she ultimately ended up suppressing it and asking him a question regardless.

「Tried to kill Zefmate. Why...?」

「The fuck? Is something wrong with your ears? Did you actually not hear me? Ah, well, whatever. Fine, I'll talk. All I was doing was punishing a subordinate real quick.」

The Beast Lord's word seemed to insinuate that Blue Pride worked under him, and that Zefmate had done something that'd gone against his orders. Was it because Zefmate was pro-black catkin? Did that mean that the Beast Lord was anti-black catkin?

「So I take it you're siding with him? Even though you're a Black Catkin?」

「...Nn.」

「Huh, alright. Hey, you've got a pretty interesting sword right there. Whole thing just instantly fixed itself.」

I managed to fix my blade by using Instant Regeneration, but that didn't mean I'd actually be of much use from an offensive standpoint given the Golden Flames' effects. It looked like we were going to have to end up falling back on magic.

The Beast Lord's element was fire, so we would probably need to counter him with either water or ice/snow. We couldn't afford to be stingy with our

skill points, I needed to invest them right away so we could make the most of our situation.

「Fran... Don't...」

「Will save now, Zefmate.」

「Hahahah! What is this? A Black Catkin and a Blue Catkin acting all buddy buddy? Man, that's so funny it actually makes me kinda pity you guys!」

「Shut... up...」

「Man, you're still giving me that attitude? What a shame, I had some pretty high hopes for you. Alright girly, I'll show you just how terrifying I, Rigdis Narasimha, the Beast Lord, can be. Lament the fact that you were stupid enough to oppose me!」

The golden flames that enveloped the Beast Lord's body began to quiver and sway with a ferocious energy.

They were dangerous. It'd all be over if they so much as grazed us.

I got myself ready to teleport us out at a moment's notice.

Fran and the Beast lord stared each other down, both ready to immediately attack the other.

But they were denied the chance to act.

「Your Majesty! What in God's name are you doing?」

「Ugh... You again, Roche...?」

「How did this even happen? I only took my eyes off you for a second!」

A man I immediately recognized as the carriage's coachman suddenly joined into the conversation and began chiding the Beast Lord in a reprimanding tone.

General Information

Name: Roche

Age: 37

Race: Beastkin (White Curse Weasel/White Weasel Tribe)

Class: Runeseeker

Status Level: 62/99

HP: 556

MP: 558

STR: 251

VIT: 302

AGI: 539

INT: 248

MGC: 306

DEX: 417

Skills

Sole Sense: Lv 4

Digging: Lv 6

Espionage: Lv 8

Wind Magic: Lv 4

Bow Techniques: Lv 9

Bow Arts: MAX

Divine Bow Arts: MAX

Coachman: Lv 7

Vigilance: Lv 8

Presence Detection: MAX

Presence Isolation: Lv 7

Flexibility: Lv 4

Blink: Lv 8

Muffle: Lv 5

Resistance to Abnormal Status Conditions: Lv 4

Life Magic: Lv 3

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 5

Shortsword Techniques: Lv 4

Shortsword Arts: Lv 5

Perfume Creation: Lv 8

Leap: Lv 6

Climbing: Lv 5

Knowledge of Poisons: Lv 8

Poison Magic: Lv 5

Earth Magic: Lv 7

Subterranean Stealth and Mobility: Lv 5

Fire Magic: Lv 5

Magic Resistance: Lv 3

Magic Detection: Lv 7

Shadow Slip: Lv 7

Trap Disarming: Lv 6

Trap Detection: Lv 8

Trap Creation: Lv 4

Vigour Manipulation

Enhanced Sense of Smell

Enhanced Senses

Magic Manipulation

Enhanced Hearing

Innate skills

Awakening

Cursed Strike

Titles

Chimera Slayer

Dungeon Conqueror

Equipment

Hell Tree Bow

Dimensional Quiver

Black Shadow Beast's Leather Armour

Black Shadow Beast's Stealth Shoes

Magic Shadow Steel Armguards

Black Stealth Spider's Mantle

Ring of Dexterity

Bracelet of Storage

Roche was a sort of hunter, specifically the jack of all trades type that could use magic in tandem with more traditional scout-like skills.

「I really can't believe you... Why are you fighting a Black Catkin of all things? Have you completely forgotten why we came here in the first place?」

「Blame it on her, not me. She's the one that decided to side with Blue Pride.」

「That doesn't mean you need to fight her, you muscle brain!」

「That's enough for now, Roche. Lord Rig, I've captured every member of Blue Pride that happened to have a hand in the slave trade and disposed of those that resisted.」

Royce calmed Roche down while simultaneously reporting in.

Wait, did he just say he dealt with the everyone that had a hand in the slave trade? Uh... what?

195. The Beast Lord and the Blue Cat Tribe

Chapter 195. The Beast Lord and the Blue Cat Tribe

The Beast Lord and the Blue Cat Tribe

Rigdis had already lost the will to fight. Likewise, Fran had done the same despite still being on guard. The reason for her sudden change in attitude was because Royce, one of the Beast Lord's guards, had started healing Zefmate.

「Explain situation?」

「Your Majesty, did you perhaps forget to inform her as to the current circumstances?」

Roche immediately began questioning the Beast Lord's actions, or rather, the likely lack thereof.

「Uhh....」

「Hah... Let me guess. You provoked her by acting in your usual cocky manner without actually telling her what had happened?」

「Hmph...」

「Do you have any injuries, young lady?」

「...None.」

「That's good. So, exactly what kind of relationship do you have with Blue Pride?」

「Zefmate... Friends. Hate rest.」

「Ah, I understand now. As for your, Your Majesty...」

「I know, I get it already. My bad, alright?」

「So? Why wanted to kill Zefmate?」

「'Cause he tried to protect his buddies.」

「Hah... Allow me to explain.」

Roche gave us a detailed explanation of exactly what had happened.

Much to our surprise, Rigdis was against the enslavement of Black Catkin. In fact, he'd been going around freeing as many Black Catkin slaves as he happened across.

That precise action had caused an ideological rift to form between him and his father. The rift was so vast that he'd almost gotten disowned, so he ended up organising a coup d'état, murdering his father, and claiming the throne with his own two hands.

It was an act that he'd always suspected he might need to perform, and to that end, he'd joined the Adventurer's Guild, tempered his body, and secretly built up his connections. The only reason his coup had gone as smoothly as it did was because he'd managed to make every single last one of the Beast Kingdom's A or higher ranked adventurers into his subordinates.

Upon his ascension to the throne, Rigdis had promptly purged all of the spies and slave merchants formerly connected to the royal family. He'd then gone out on a mission in order to find all slave merchants outside the bounds of his country so he could free every single last Black Catkin that remained in captivity.

「But fought Zefmate? Why?」

If that really were the case, then him fighting Zefmate didn't really make sense. The two seemed like they'd get along from an ideological standpoint.

Or at least it did until one considered that Blue Pride was effectively Zefmate's family. He couldn't assent to allowing the Beast Lord to murder

any of its members, even if they happened to betray his ideals. The Blue Leopardkin had ended up begging Rigdis to let Blue Pride's members keep their lives so he could rehabilitate them and fix their ways.

As the Beast Lord was rather short tempered, he ended up flaring up in anger and engaging Zefmate in combat upon hearing what he could only interpret as an excuse. That was when Fran had thrown herself into the equation.

Hearing the Beast Lord's side of things made me realize something. His manner of speech was crude, but he'd never actually said anything to belittle the Black Cat Tribe as a whole.

He had said, "So I take it you're siding with him? Even though you're a Black Catkin?" not because he wanted to insult Fran, but because he thought it was odd for a Black Catkin to want to side with the type of people that sold their kind into slavery.

The same pretty applied to when he'd said, "Hahahah! What is this? A Black Catkin and a Blue Catkin acting all buddy buddy? Man, that's so funny it actually makes me kinda pity you guys!" It came off like a sort of cheap provocation, but was actually far from it. He hadn't actually meant to insult the Black Cat tribe in any which way..

The Beast Lord's intentions were further evidenced by how subordinates had ended up capturing Blue Pride's members while we were attempting to engage him in combat.

「Fuck...!」

Zefmate groaned remorsefully.

「Hate me all you want. Just know that this is your own fault. I told all you Blue Catkin to stop with the slavery shit already, but your underlings ignored my orders and kept their black market dealings going anyways. And you didn't even notice. Seriously man, that one's all on you.」

「I... know...」

A fair bit of Zefmate's regret stemmed precisely from the fact that he understood that he'd failed. He would've been able to avoid this whole mess had he just kept a tighter leash on his subordinates.

「How many... are still alive?」

「Approximately twenty, I believe.」

「Only twenty...」

「Lord Rig, I've found the pair behind the whole incident.」

Goldalfa entered the scene with a pair of Blue Catkin in tow. And when I said in tow, I meant they were literally in tow. He was dragging them along the ground with the very same piece of rope their hands were tied by.

「These two are both connected to the Slavery Syndicate your predecessor managed.」

「Sennek, Tord, were you two really responsible for manipulating everyone into doing all this?」

「Hmph! Why the hell should we care about Black Catkin? Why do we have to go through all this for just turning them into slaves? They can't even evolve!」

「Yeah, I know right! All we were doing was making use out of an otherwise useless bunch!」

The two old Blue Catkin spouted off bold claim after bold claim.

Both were members of the many mercenary groups that'd come together to create Blue Pride. They'd functioned as something along the lines of consultants ever since the new organisation's formation. They'd always been in positions of power within every band they'd ever been a part of, and thus, managed to use them in order to engage in the underground slave market.

The two had intentionally raised Zefmate to feel repulsed by the slave trade. They'd done so because it then made it easier for them to fool those that they wished to hide the true nature of their business from. His sister, on the other hand, had been brought up in the exact opposite manner. The two had effectively brainwashed her to have her current scumbag-like mindset.

The Blue Leopardkin likely would have been able to notice that something about his band of mercenaries was off had the two not constantly been one or two steps ahead of him — they'd trained him to not only be pure of heart, but also the type of person that wouldn't doubt his comrades.

「But I guess we went a bit too far. We trained you so well you became unable to shake that stupid sense of justice of yours.」

Sennek attempted to mock Zefmate, but was hit right in his sore spot by Rigdis in retaliation.

「Says a no-tail.」

「How dare you!」

『What's a no-tail?』

(Long-tailed beastkin without tail.)

Longer tailed beastkin species put great importance on keeping one's tail, as losing it typically implied cowardice. Thus, those that were supposed to have tails but didn't were mocked as no-tails.

It normally wasn't too much of an issue as one could recover a chopped off tail so long as it was immediately treated with either magic or potions, but, in cases where one's injuries were more severe, priority was instead given to the limbs and whatnot. As a result, those with a lesser degree of access to healing would end up permanently losing their tails.

The old man known as Sennek appeared to be precisely someone that'd ended up in that kind of scenario. I'd thought that he'd just hidden his tail

away in his pants, but apparently that simply wasn't something that long tailed Beastkin with tails would actually do for reasons I failed to intuit.

Getting called out by the Beast Lord had, for some odd reason, caused Sennek to glare in Fran's direction.

「I would still have my tail if not for you meddling Black Catkin...!」

「Nn?」

「Fuck! How dare you look down on me like that? And with a face that looks just like that annoying brat's to boot!?!」

「Brat?」

「Yeah, fuck her! Fuck Kiara for taking my god damned tail! And fuck you for looking just like her!」

「Know Kiara?」

「Of course I fucking do! Fuck her to hell!」

It seemed Sennek hated the Black Cat Tribe because Kiara had caused him to hold some sort of grudge. That, in turn, explained why he'd purposefully raised all the Blue Catkin around him to see Black Catkin the way they did.

「But you know what, it's fine. I don't care anymore, because that bitch got sent right off to the Beast Lord! Hah! Probably got turned into a slave and forced into a straight up living hell alright. Gyahahahah! Bitch got right what was coming to her!」

Fran immediately approached Sennek with me drawn and in hand.

『Wait, Fran! Hold on! Don't kill him!』

Ending his life here and now seemed like an act that could potentially anger the Beast Lord and his bros. To them, Sennek still had value, as he likely knew about others that worked in his trade.

Convinced, Fran sheathed me and instead started pummeling both men with her fists. I realized that she'd went too far by the time their already old, twisted faces had ended up even more deformed and bent out of shape than they were before. I figured it'd be best for me to stop her, but the Beast Lord actually beat me to the punch.

「Hold on kid. Hey, you assholes. When you said Kiara, did you mean the old lady? You know, Grandma Kiara?」

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Chapter 196. Kiara's After Story

Kiara's After Story

「Hold on kid. Hey, you assholes. When you said Kiara, did you mean the old lady? You know, Grandma Kiara?」

The Beast Lord's inquiry caused Sennec to respond in a bit of a suspicious tone.

「Grandma Kiara?」

「She's taciturn, blunt, and proud, but a ridiculously skilled Black Catkin swordsman nonetheless. I know she's an old lady, but I can't remember how old. You happen to know off the top of your head, Royce?」

「Lord Rig, asking for our master's age is no different from tying yourself a noose.」

「How 'bout you, Gold?」

「I'm pretty sure she's in her late 60's.」

Goldalfa's response seemed to match with what we knew about Kiara. She was 15 years old 53 years ago, so she should currently be around 68.

「Based on what we've heard, I'd say the Kiara you guys are talking about is our master.」

It seemed that, unless I was misunderstanding things, Kiara was actually the person that'd taught Beast Lord to fight. Fran had come to the same conclusion, so she ended up closing in on him in order to demand a clearer answer.

「Explain circumstances.」

「You do know I'm the Beast Lord, right? How about 'bout you reword that a bit so it's more polite.」

「Explain.」

「Oh god damn it. Fine!」

The Beast Lord began fondly speaking of his memories shortly after one last expression of indignance.

Apparently, the first time Rigdis met Kiara was in the earlier days of his youth. Back then, she'd been a slave that served the imperial court. Her duties mostly focused around garbage disposal. At the time, he'd still been like any other young, mischievous Beastkin. That is, he thought the Black Catkin to be inferior, as per his father's wishes.

But that all came to change. His opinion of the race took a complete 180 degree turn not too long after he turned seven.

An incident occurred.

A summoner from a hostile nation managed to summon a magic beast in the royal palace. Back then, the Beast Kingdom had been at war with a neighbouring country, hence, most of the palace's more competent fighters had been sent to the battlefield. As the guards and soldiers responsible for the palace were relatively weak, the place was basically instantly overrun. Both Goldalfa, who'd just enlisted, and Royce, who'd only just started learning magic, had been dealt serious wounds.

The situation looked grim. None of the troops left within the palace's confines were capable of dealing with the Tyrant Saber Tiger that'd invaded it. To Rigdis, it had seemed like he was left no choice but to abandon the palace.

Or at least that was how he felt until she took action.

A Black Catkin slave ended up doing what none of the soldiers could and took down the Magic Beast. The Tyrant Saber Tiger itself wasn't a

particularly strong one, it was still young, and yet to reach maturity, but it was still a C rank threat regardless.

Thus, he simply failed to process the fact that she'd easily slain it while armed with only a mop.

Bearing witness to the Black Catkin slave's technique had caused Rigdis to take interest in her. He snuck around and eventually managed to speak to her, only to find that she was named Kiara, and that she had a blunt, straightforward personality. At the time, Rigdis hadn't had any friends, so he immediately grew attached to her.

The mix of his attachment to and admiration for her caused him to ask her to take him as her disciple, and so, she soon began teaching him the art of combat.

Her instruction was ridiculously tough, but proved more than effective as it caused Rigdis to become much stronger in a fairly short period of time. Noticing his rapid progress, both Goldalfa and Royce followed his example and became Kiara's disciples.

Since Kiara couldn't be seen instructing the group in public, they were forced to train in a secluded area away from the public's eyes. Specifically, the location they made their own was the garbage disposal site, a place that smelled so awful it automatically warded off any and all unwelcome visitors.

Rigdis had offered Kiara freedom, but she firmly refused it. His father had threatened her and told her that he would murder her tribesman should she escape.

The only reason Rigdis' father had let her live was because he'd suspected that she would come of use in the future.

Learning of her circumstances caused Rigdis to begin wondering why the Black Catkin were treated as they were. He started to investigate the mysteries surrounding their inability to evolve while also functioning to protect them.

Upon reaching adulthood, Rigdis was informed of a secret known only to the royal family's members, a piece of information that revealed why his predecessors regarded Black Catkin the way they did. With said secret, he also learned the reason why the Black Cat Tribe's members had become incapable of evolution.

「My old man told me everything because he wanted to open my eyes to his cause. Wanted to tell me to stop doing something as stupid as protecting Black Catkin.」

But it didn't work. In fact, telling Rigdis the truth had the opposite effect his father had been hoping for, as, to him, the truth simply reinforced the idea that looking down upon the Black Cat Tribe was nothing short of a mistake.

Thus, Rigdis and his father ended up in conflict for many years, with the former eventually beating out the latter through a coup.

(Master?)

『Doesn't look like he's lying.』

Something this important obviously called for verification through the Principle of Falsehood. Using it allowed me to determine that the Beast Lord's words were almost entirely free of lies. The only times my lie detector ever went off was when he insulted Kiara or called her by a nickname that made it seem like he didn't respect her. Conversely, it didn't go off when he referred to her as his master. In other words, all the Principle of Falsehood had done was inform us that the Beast Lord was a veritable tsundere. [1]

「Kiara, doing what now?」

「Our master has gotten old, so she's effectively retired and just living within the castle. She spends most of her time sleeping, but will occasionally see to our soldiers if she feels up to the job.」

Royce followed up the Beast Lord as he paused to take a breath.

「The royal palace has moved on from looking down on Black Catkin. None of the people that work and live within it are willing to insult them any longer.」

「That's impossible! Black Catkin are an inferior race! Why else do you think we Blue Catkin have been pushing them around for all these years!?!」

Sennek responded to the rabbitkin's words with a violent shout.

「The palace functions off a meritocratic system. We don't evaluate people based on their race, only their competence. Though, I admit we've been giving the Black Catkin a bit more leeway to make up for all that they've suffered.」

The Beast Lord casually refuted Sennec's declaration.

「I assume you haven't heard about what's happened to the Blue Cat Tribe as of late.」

According to Royce, most beastkin had recently started ostracizing the Blue Cat Tribe. There were two reasons that functioned as the driving force behind the aforementioned movement. The first was that most other beastkin had a bit of a hard time trusting the Blue Cat Tribe knowing that they'd sold other Beastkin into slavery. While most other Beastkin did indeed look down on Black Catkin, they never went as far as treating them as slaves. The reason the Blue Catkin's treatment of the Black Catkin was so much harsher than all the other tribes' was because the Black Catkin used to have a higher social status than the Blue Catkin. This caused the Blue Catkin a lot of grief, and led to them going wild the moment their social positions were flipped.

The second reason was because the Blue Cat Tribe was regarded to be in decline. Their business dealings allowed the Blue Catkin to live luxurious lives, so few became true warriors, and even fewer trained themselves as hard as Zefmate had. As a result, the number of Blue Leopardkin had plummeted far beyond just a noticeable degree. This, in part, was the fault of the Beast Lord's ancestors. The Beast Lords of the past had ordered the

Blue Catkin to become slave traders and persecuted all that dared disobey. Hence, most of today's Blue Catkin were the descendants of slave traders as opposed to the descendents of warriors.

In other words, most other Beastkin looked down on the Blue Cat Tribe both because they were weak and because they were repulsive from a psychological standpoint.

Fran didn't really care for the details nor Sennek's reply, so she ended up asking more about Kiara instead.

「Happy as long as Kiara is alive. Okay to tell other people?」

「Other people? Whaddya mean other people?」

「Dias and Aurel, Kiara's acquaintances. Worried about her since didn't know what happened to her after she was taken away by Beast Lord.」

Hearing Fran's question caused the Beast Lord to nod as if he had come to a sudden understanding.

「Huh. I guess that's why they've been treating me with that hostile ass attitude. That explains that. Yeah, I don't mind at all, go right the hell ahead. In fact, how 'bout I tell them myself right after we're done here. Was planning to pay the both of them a few visits anyway.」

「Nn. Do tell」

「I'm pretty sure you have lots to ask me, but I'm too busy for it right now. I'll answer all your questions after the tournament's over, so check in with me once it's done.」

「Got it.」

「Aight. I'll be looking forward to seeing how you do. Show me that you'll at least be capable of getting to the fourth round. There won't really be a point in me telling you anything unless you can.」

The Beast Lord grinned at Fran in an intimidating manner, but this time, she didn't freak out. In fact, she responded to him by speaking in a motivated sounding tone.

「Planned to win from start.」

「Hahahahahahah! You hear that, Gold? Royce?」

「It sure is nice seeing a young fighter all pumped up and motivated.」

「Indeed, but I won't show her even the slightest shred of mercy should we meet in the ring.」

「Bring it on.」

「Buhahahaha! I like the way you talk smack, even to Gold and Royce. Fine then Fran, come visit me after you've won the tournament. I'll look forward to seeing you then.」

The Beast Lord let loose a hearty laugh before entering the tent in which the remaining Blue Catkin were being kept.

This caused Fran's expression to change to one of worry, so Royce ended up ushering her off.

「What happens from this point onwards is the Beast Kingdom's business, so how about you head home for now?」

「What do to Zefmate?」

「Disobeying the Beast Lord is a crime, but I doubt Rig will do too much to harm Zefmate. He's taken a liking to him, after all.」

「...Got it.」

The Beast Lord was the kind of guy that tended to be a bit rough around the edges, but the fact that he liked Zefmate meant that he probably wouldn't execute him or shove him in some sort of prison.

Royce's words seemed to have offered Fran enough to allow her to relax, so she bowed to him before finally turning around and leaving the area.

『Welp. Looks like we're going to have at least win ourselves three rounds if we want his approval.』

「Nn! Master. Will try hardest from now on.」

『Sure thing.』

「Nn! Will win for sure!」

[1] I'm too lazy to translate Tsundere.

Tl;dr, this is tsundere: "I-It's not like I like you or anything okay! S-So don't get the wrong idea!"

197. Vs. Kurusu

Chapter 197. Vs. Kurusu

Vs. Kurusu

Fran, Urushi, and I idled about in the waiting room as the second round drew closer. Our match was the third, and the first had already begun, so we were guaranteed to take the stage in less than hour.

A lot had happened yesterday, but none of it had functioned to discourage Fran. In fact, I'd say that the events that'd transpired ended up motivating her more than anything else; she now was practically dead set on at least making it past the tourney's third round.

The fact that the Beast Lord was going around crushing Blue Cat slave traders made her feel a sense of satisfaction, so she'd recently started acting in a much less aggressive manner than she otherwise normally would have. That said, she would still do the usual and beat up any that attempted harassing her. Though she didn't seem to realize it herself, it seemed that hitting them wasn't enough to dispose of all the stress they brought, and as a result, she'd been on edge for the past day and a bit. To be honest, her much more frequent interactions with Blue Catkin weren't the only reason she was so much sharper than usual. Participating in the tourney, in and of itself, had also put her in a more belligerent mood.

Given that our match was coming up soon, Fran decided to warm herself up. Namely, she swung me a bit and practiced dodging by having Urushi jump at her.

『Our turn'll be coming up soon, so don't push yourselves too hard just yet, alright?』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

Both Fran and Urushi continued to accelerate despite voicing their agreements. The pair had already gotten so fast that their actions had become indiscernible to the average person. That, however, wasn't enough to make me stop them, as to Fran, her current actions were pretty much the equivalent of a walk in the park.

A clerk came knocking not too long after the two started warming up. I was honestly surprised with how quickly it came; we'd only been waiting for about 30 minutes.

「Excuse me, Miss Fran? The second round is over. It'll soon be your turn, so please get ready.」

Asking the clerk allowed us to confirm that Goldalfa had once again ended his opponent in an instant.

Yeah, beating him definitely looked like it wasn't going to be easy.

「Please follow me.」

『Oh yeah, Fran, don't forget to say something like “nice to see you again,” when we run into Kurusu. We have met him already after all.』

「Nn?」

『Make sure you do, alright? Don't pretend you forgot who he is, okay?』

「No problem.」

Hmm... I couldn't help but feel a bit worried. Fran seemed to have totally forgotten that Kurusu existed, but he was still technically a C ranker and therefore not exactly what you could call a small fry.

The impression I had of him was that he was the leader type as opposed to the type that was actually all that skilled in single combat. But that impression didn't really hold. He seemed a bit different this time around. The man we found upon climbing our way onto the stage had a sort of fierce air to him.

「You're not someone I ever expected to see here.」

「Nn.」

『Huh, is that really supposed to be Kurusu? He seems a lot more... wild than he did last time we saw him.』

—

General Information

Name: Kurusu Ryuuzel

Age: 28

Race: Human

Class: Mad Swordsman

State: Normal

Status Level: 37

HP: 256

MP: 175

STR: 183

VIT: 102

AGI: 219

INT: 83

MGC: 98

DEX: 125

Skills

Malice Detection: Lv 3

Espionage: Lv 4

Evasion: Lv 6

Court Etiquette: Lv 3

Madness: Lv 4

Presence Detection: Lv 6

Sword Techniques: Lv 6

Sword Arts: Lv 8

Art of Self Defense: Lv 4

Command: Lv 2

Blink: Lv 8

Cold Resistance: Lv 4

Poison Resistance: Lv 7

Trap Detection: Lv 2

Dulled Sense of Pain

Vigour Manipulation

Passive HP Regeneration

Last Stand

Titles

Giant Killer

Righteous

One That Has Overcome Death

Equipment

Raging Sabertiger's Longsword

Mithril Alloy Body Armour

Hundred Foot Spider's Mantle

Sacrificial Bracelet

Ring of Evasion

It looked like he'd switched from being a Blink Swordsman to being a Mad Swordsman. As a result, he'd lost a fair bit of vitality and dexterity in exchange for a boost in his strength and agility. In other words, his role seemed to have transitioned into that of an all out attacker.

Seeing his face had finally caused Fran to recognize him, but she ended up a bit confused because of the disparity between how he was now and how he was before.

「What happened?」

「Fufufu. That's a mean question to ask.」

「Different feel.」

「Seeing the way you and Amanda fought let me to contemplate a few things and alter my own style a bit. I just so happened to get a bit too immersed in retraining myself is all.」

In other words, seeing Fran and Amanda go at each other had caused him to go into shock and question his own abilities. Thus, he ended up trying a few things and adopting whatever he thought was best.

Personally, I think he probably changed a bit too much.

「This is perfect. I knew going into this that I'd never be able to catch up to you, but fighting you is still exactly what I needed to see just how far I've come!」

Kurusu drew his blade, a longsword carved from the fang of a Tyrant Sabertiger. It was something we had to be careful of, as it had the Vibration Fang skill.

「You've even ended up matching my rank. I guess that means I'll have to make sure I don't disgrace myself.」

「Also won't lose.」

Fran drew me and took a stance.

The caster seemed to take that as a signal of sorts, and immediately declared that the match had begun.

「Here I go! Madness, activate!」

Kurusu immediately threw his defenses out the window and cast a buff that caused him to focus purely on offense; he chose to try hitting her before she hit him. It wasn't a bad choice, as he knew that Fran's offenses would've overwhelmed his defenses either way.

「Down Break!」

The Mad Swordsman's training had evidently paid off. He'd raised his stats and discovered for himself a new way of engaging in combat.

But he wasn't the only one to have grown stronger.

Fran had done the same, and unfortunately for Kurusu, the changes in her stats had been much more dramatic than the changes in his.

The gap between him and her was even wider than it'd been back in Alessa.

「Haaah!」

「Slow.」

「Gah!」

Fran easily sidestepped Kurusu's downwards swing before countering by directing her blade towards his sword arm.

Realizing her intentions, Kurusu forced his left arm between him and me in order to trade it in and save his right.

「Forfeit?」

「Fufu. Not yet. My left may be done for, but I've still got my right!」

「Thought so.」

「Kuh!」

Fran took the initiative and went on the offensive. Her foe was able to avoid her first two attacks, but that was it. The loss of a hand had caused him to lose his ability to balance, which, in turn, caused her third strike to embed itself within his body. Naturally, it didn't just end there. She aimed me at his right hand and attempted to strike it once more in order to force him to surrender.

But he still didn't give up.

「Last Stand!」

Kurusu's body began glowing the moment he shouted the skill's name.

I sensed a sudden influx of mana, so I decided to appraise him. Doing so allowed me to figure out that he'd lost most of his HP, but gained a massive boost to all his stats. He'd even gotten the Nullified Sense of Pain skill to boot.

The skill he'd just used was one that could only be used when on the verge of death.

「Gaaaahhh!」

「Mmph!」

The Mad Swordsman didn't attempt to avoid Fran's strike despite the boost to his agility. In fact, he willingly facetanked it while roaring and throwing out a counter.

Only then did I finally come to understand his strategy. It was perfectly fine for him to take a fatal hit given that he had a Sacrificial Bracelet. His Nullified Sense of Pain allowed him to take advantage of the instant he tanked Fran's attack. Specifically, it allowed him to retaliate regardless of all other factors.

It was a strategy that didn't sound too bad given how the tournament worked. It didn't matter how injured he got. He'd end up getting healed by the tourney's staff so long as he didn't die. Pushing himself to the very edge of death would make it possible for him to defeat foes whose stats were higher than his own.

「Gah!」

「Still slow.」

But it didn't work.

Fran warded off the blade he thrust at her by smacking its side with her palm and throwing it off course, an action only made possible by the fact that she could track his sword with pinpoint accuracy.

And then she kicked him, right in the cut she'd given him earlier. It was an attack that he simply couldn't possibly have dodged. He was too far off balance, not that he could actually keep up with her to begin with.

All the air was sucked out of his lungs; he wasn't even so much as able to scream as he was sent rolling off the stage. He stayed on the floor even after getting sent out of the arena; it looked like he'd lost consciousness.

「And that's game! The winner is Fran, the Magic Sword Girl! She's managed to triumph through not only the first, but also the second round despite all the adverse rumours and speculation!」

Apparently the crowd had thought that Kurusu was more likely to win, which, to be honest, wasn't all that unexpected given that he'd been a C ranker for much longer than we had.

「Kurusu had attempted to apply the same suicidal strategy he'd used in the first round, but this time, his sword fell short! What a shame! It looked so close too!」

198. Vs. Colbert

Chapter 198. Vs. Colbert

Vs. Colbert

Two days passed in the blink of an eye. Fran and I found ourselves staring the third round in the face before we knew it.

We were up against Colbert, the exact person that we'd been expecting to have to fight. We'd known that our confrontation with him was coming for a long while already, but I ended up feeling a bit nervous regardless. It wasn't something I could really help.

Fran, on the other hand, was calm and serene, seemingly in part because she was currently engaging in meditation, specifically zen meditation. I'd been the one that taught her the concept, but honestly, I barely knew anything about it myself. My knowledge of Zazen pretty much did nothing but scratch the surface. I was only able to tell her the concept and the fact that it involved closing her eyes and concentrating. She really seemed to like the idea, so she'd more or less figured the rest out all on her own.

Her current session had spanned just over ten minutes. Urushi hadn't wanted to disturb her, so he ended up laying down beside her instead of attempting to warm up as he had while waiting for the tourney's second round.

It seemed that the opponent Goldalfa faced in the third round was much stronger than the ones he'd faced in the first two, as he hadn't actually done his usual thing and won the round in a matter of moments. We would've had to leave the room basically immediately after entering it if he had. We instead had to wait for about another five minutes before finally being called for.

「Good morning. It's time for your match. Please follow me, I'll lead you to the arena.」

Fran's eyes shot open the moment the clerk said her name.

「Go time.」

Her lips curved into a smile as she got back onto her feet.

She didn't seem to be even the slightest bit nervous, nor did it seem like she'd be off because she was way too hyped up.

Today, Fran was in perfect condition.

(Master, will go all out this time.)

『Want me to start helping right off the bat?』

(Nn. Will try to go for quick win.)

Like most battle maniacs, Fran normally tended to prefer a bit of a more wait-and-see type attitude, but today, she decided that it would be best to go full throttle right off the bat. Her decision to treat this battle differently from all the ones that preceded it was one I agreed with.

That tendency to allow one's opponent to go all out wasn't what I'd call wise. We couldn't really afford cutting our opponent any slack given that we had to live up to the Beast Lord's expectations if we wanted him to actually bother speaking to us, especially because said opponent happened to be Colbert.

Another factor that played into her shift in attitude was that she no longer had to worry about antagonizing the Beast Lord. The possibility of him attacking us had basically been shrunk all the way down to zero, so we wouldn't need to pull our punches nor keep a few trump cards in reserve just because he was watching.

Fran passed through the usual dark corridor and entered the ring, only to be greeted with cheers and shouts even louder and more passionate than the ones she'd heard just two days prior.

「And there she is! Our first contestant today is the girl that's overwhelmed both the opponents she's fought so far despite all expectations, a Black Catkin, Fran! I can't wait to see just how far her strength can take her!」

Colbert had yet to arrive, but the crowd had started to roar regardless.

The screams directed towards Fran could be split into three main groups. The first, were the angry folk that'd bet on her opponents in the first and or second round. The next type cheered in a much higher pitch, and seemed, in general, to have taken a liking to Fran because of how cute she was. The final group was a bit different from both of the first two and mainly consisted of adventurers.

At first, I was a bit surprised that there were so many of them rooting for us, but I soon realized that they were mostly members of Erza's faction. I kind of suspected that he'd probably ordered them to cheer for us, as the extent of their motivation almost seemed a bit unnatural. I apparently wasn't the only one to feel that way, as many of the other guests also seemed a bit shocked.

Seeing the crowd caused Fran to recoil a bit in embarrassment, but she still seemed kinda happy they were cheering for her regardless. The audience as a whole immediately reacted to her bashful attitude by getting even rowdier. It seemed she was really popular.

Even so, the noise was soon overwhelmed by a series of hollars that matched the one that'd first greeted her when she entered the ring.

「And there's her opponent! This round's second contestant is no less popular than the first. Ladies and gentlemen, I present you a man known for using nothing but his fists to defeat even the most powerful of foes, B ranked adventurer, Iron Claw Colbert!」

I appraised Colbert and confirmed that his stats were basically the same as what they'd been back when we met him in Barbra... which meant basically nothing given that the stats that showed weren't actually his real stats.

「Hello Fran. I can't say I was expecting to see anyone else.」

「Nn. Colbert too.」

「Hahahah. As a B ranker, I won't lose that easily, especially not to anyone weaker than me.」

「Including me?」

「Well, I don't think you're any weaker than I am... but I will have to win anyway if I want to keep face.」

「Can't lose.」

「I feel the same.」

Sparks almost seemed to fly as the two narrowed their eyes and looked at each other. The fighting spirit that emanating off their bodies expanded through the entire venue and shrouded it with an intense pressure powerful enough to silence the crowd. The spectators instead gulped as they observed the tense atmosphere that'd broke out between the two warriors.

「Let the third round's second match... begin!」

「Now come.」

Colbert was doing what we expected. He took on the typical wait-and-see type approach, not because he was going easy on us, but because he was confident he could handle anything we threw at him.

We, on the other hand, had already turned the dial to 11.

『Stone Wall』

『Fire Wall』

『Wind Wall』

The three spells I casted worked to form a sort of tunnel around Fran and Colbert.

He immediately tried smashing the its' ceiling in order to escape, but he was too late. The fact that he allowed us to take the initiative meant we

were already a full step in front of him.

「Inferno Burst」

『Inferno Burst』

Both Fran and I immediately cast a flame-based spell and flooded the tunnel with fire before Colbert could escape it. The attack's heat was so intense that it caused the stone we created to start melting, but it didn't collapse right away. The flame and wind walls supported it and managed to keep it standing for a few seconds by regulating its temperature.

In other words, the other two walls attempted to feed heat back into the interior as opposed to allowing it to leak outside, which in turn meant that it ended up not only trapping Colbert, but also providing a bit of a boost to our Inferno Bursts'.

We knew our attack was a fairly sound one, but we didn't let up. We trusted that Colbert was too strong to fall to just that, and so, we threw in a follow up.

「Wind Bullet!」

『Stun Bullet』

All the smoke and flames made it so we couldn't actually see him, but that didn't matter. We simply shot where we felt his presence in order to pin him down and keep him from moving.

Only then did we finally throw in an attack that was actually meant to inflict some more serious harm.

「Haaaaah!」

『Let's do this!』

The next attack was one I hadn't had a chance to use in quite a while, my ever so reliable Telekinetic Catapult. The arena was a bit too small for me to reach my full speed, but I still flew at him incredibly quickly nonetheless.

I was confident that not even Colbert would be able to avoid the strike without sustaining a significant injury.

「Nragh!」

『Woah!』

But I was wrong.

A mana-covered fist approached from my side right before I managed to pierce him, one that contained so much force that it seemed like it would send me flying into orbit.

His counter made me realize that he was much more dangerous than I'd been expecting. He was skilled enough to easily knock aside the attack I planned to finish him off with, and basically hadn't taken any damage from our prior bombardment. The only thing that'd even gotten the slightest bit burnt was his clothing.

We had to defeat him before he actually got serious.

I hit the brakes as hard as I could by using telekinesis and wind magic while also making myself as spiky as a porcupine and cloaking myself in lightning.

「What!?!」

Colbert's voice rose in shock. Never in his wildest dreams had he ever envisioned that the sword he readied himself to hit would stop in place and transform.

His defenses were ridiculous. My needles, which were capable of tearing metal armour to bits, failed to pierce his skin. However, he didn't remain unharmed. He was assaulted by the lightning I'd wrapped around myself nonetheless.

「Gugagagagargghh!」

「Stun Bolt!」

Fran followed up my attack by throwing another lightning-based spell at him.

The two potent electrical energies shot throughout his body and caused sparks to erupt all over it.

「Finishing blow! Gale Hazard!」

Fran's finisher, a blast of wind magic, evidenced that she wanted to end the match without having to engage in melee combat. She didn't want him pulling off what Kurusu tried, and turning everything around at the last second.

Colbert was sent flying over 20 meters. It looked like he'd ring out and crash into the audience.

Fran stayed vigilant, she carefully watched as he flew so she could prevent him from recovering with magic should he try it.

But it wasn't enough.

「Mmph.」

『Did he just use a Feather of Teleportation?』

Colbert suddenly disappeared. I immediately recognized that he'd teleported, but couldn't figure out where he went. I wasn't able to find him by scanning the stage.

「Above.」

『He took to the sky!?!』

Fran immediately caught onto the fact that Colbert had chosen to teleport way above the arena. His decision was a solid one that made good use of the item he'd employed. Gaining airtime allowed him to not only avoid losing but also respace himself. The only thing he had to really worry about was how he was going to land.

However, it wasn't without its demerits. Hanging around in the air basically made him a sitting duck given that Fran had an abundant amount of long ranged attacks.

「Nn!」

She took aim and bombarded him with a whole slew of spells. Specifically, she'd chosen wind-based ones that prioritized max range over power.

I matched her attacks by throwing out several flame-based spells. The wind-based ones functioned as visual clutter and prevented them from being seen, which worked quite well, as they were powerful enough to instantly end the match.

But again, I was hoping for too much.

Colbert tore every single last one of our spells apart with his fists the moment before they hit him.

He then changed his direction midair with a burst of Qi and oriented himself so he was facing Fran.

「Hraaaaaghhhh!」

An incredible amount of magical energy suddenly began emanating from his body. The martial artist swung his fists through the air. Each movement, each punch, was accompanied by a blast of Qi that headed straight for Fran.

The individual Qi based projectiles were rather weak, but they were threatening nonetheless due to their sheer quantity; Fran was forced to respond by blasting them out of the sky with a few techniques of her own.

Still, they'd accomplished their job. They bought Colbert enough time to land.

He took a guarded stance with an evident lack of openings the moment his feet touched the ground before turning towards Fran and narrowing his eyes.

Likewise, she raised me and matched his glare with her own.

「Fuh. You sure are impatient, trying to end the match right away like that.」

「Was just taking advantage of opening.」

199. Vs. Colbert 2

Chapter 199. Vs. Colbert 2

Vs. Colbert 2

「Fuh. You sure are impatient, trying to end the match right away like that.」

「Was just taking advantage of opening.」

「Haha. I never expected you to be this good a Magic Warrior. I'm impressed. Have you been holding back this whole time?」

「Back at you. Suddenly more magical energy?」

Fran wasn't kidding. The amount of magical energy enveloping Colbert's body had undergone a drastic increase.

—

General Information

Name: Colbert

Age: 38

Species: Human

Class: Iron Fist Fighter

State: Normal

Status Level: 41/99

HP: 381/508

MP: 330/452

STR: 299

VIT: 204

AGI: 253

INT: 141

MGC: 201

DEX: 239

Skills

Barehanded Combat Techniques: Lv 6

Barehanded Combat Arts: Lv 6

Crisis Detection: Lv 3

Divine Fist Arts: Lv 2

Fist Techniques: Lv 9

Fist Arts: MAX

Combat Qigong: Lv 4

Herculean Strength: Lv 8

Blink: Lv 9

Swimming: Lv 4

Greater Water Resistance: Lv 2

Throwing: Lv 4

Life Magic: Lv 3

Dimitris Style Martial Techniques: Lv 8

Dimitris Style Martial Arts: Lv 8

Physical Barrier: Lv 4

Magic Emission: Lv 5

Drowsiness Resistance: Lv 3

Paralysis Resistance: Lv 4

Cooking: Lv 2

Hawk's Eyes

Beast Killer

Thought Division

Lesser Strength Boost

Vigour Manipulation

Inherent Skills

Iron Fist

It looked like he'd undone his seal. He'd suddenly gained several skills, namely the Dimitris Style ones, Physical Barrier, Magic Emission, and Thought Division. Both Herculean Strength and Blink had also had their levels boosted a bit. That, of course, wasn't all; he gained a pretty massive boost to his stats. I recalled they used to be.

HP: 428

MP: 202

STR: 249

VIT: 154

AGI: 203

INT: 91

MGC: 101

DEX: 189

—

In other words, all his stats had risen by 50, save for magic, which had gained a whole 100 points. That, combined with his newly unsealed Dimitris Style skills, made it so we'd practically be fighting a whole different person from here on out.

『Be careful. He's undone his seal.』

「Undid seal?」

「...So you noticed?」

Colbert's expression seemed to waver in unease as he signed, an action that demonstrated that he hadn't actually been too willing to undo his seal. I decided to try probing him, given that his current state was clearly the result of self interest.

『Hey Fran, repeat after me for a bit, alright?』

「Nn.」

That is, I decided to try attacking him mentally instead of physically, as it seemed like we'd be able to profit from it.

「Won't be excommunicated for unsealing for self-interest?」

「That... does happen from time to time, yes.」

「Colbert, won't be excommunicated?」

「I might be.」

「Then why undo seal?」

Fran's words caused Colbert to look down and make a bit of a troubled face before returning his gaze to her and shaking his head.

「You're right. Undoing my seal like this might get me excommunicated, but, I don't care. That's not what matters most to me right now!」

Colbert raised his voice as he once again took a stance.

「Then what matters most?」

「The answer to that question is a simple one. What matters most to me right now is upholding the Dimitris Style's pride.」

His declaration came with a really cool sounding line.

「Getting serious and undoing seal against opponent with child's appearance for pride?」

「Ugh...」

Heh. Looked like we hit the sucker in a sore spot.

「Pride?」

「Sorry... I was just saying it that way because I was trying to make myself sound cool.」

「Expected.」

「Ugh... Yeah, you're right. I was trying to make it sound much better than it really was.」

Uhh... shit. I realized that we'd pushed him a bit too far, as our words had ultimately led to an effect opposite that of what I'd been hoping for.

「Sorry. You're right. I didn't undo my seal out of something as propossessing as pride. I did it because I wanted to, because I, as a practitioner of the Dimitris Style, wouldn't be able to forgive myself for losing this easily to a C ranker. That just isn't something I can allow to happen. I have always looked up to the Dimitris Style, and known it to be the world's most powerful.」

The magical energy Colbert emitted began wrapping its way around his body. It only took a matter of moments for it to grow so dense that it'd effectively become a suit of armour.

「That is why I cannot allow myself to lose. I will not let myself be the reason people look down on the Dimitris Style! I would much rather be excommunicated than put the style to shame!」

That was just how much the Dimitris Style meant to Colbert.

But despite his passionate shouts, Fran managed to retain her calm. Likewise, I'd done the same. This, him going all out, was within the realm of my expectations.

「Gale Hazard!」

Fran fired off an AOE projectile at him in order to keep him as pinned as possible as she rushed at him. His stats had risen, but his Divine Fist Arts had remained unchanged; he still possessed the exact same amount of skill with his hands. Hence, I suspected that Fran would retain the upper hand in terms of technique.

Or at least that's how things were if I didn't factor the Dimitris Style in. I was on guard for what would happen, but apparently not nearly as on guard as I should've been.

「Dimitris Style Martial Art — Asura!」

「Kuaahh!」

Colbert allowed Fran to slash at him, but immediately followed with a counter and sent her flying back. He then kicked off the ground in attempt to chase her down and follow up his attack with another before she could regain her balance.

「Oraaah!」

「Kuh!」

His strategy, taking a hit and then countering, was similar to Kurusu's, but he was much more skilled, and hence, his application of the tactic had been much more effective.

The first major point of deviation was the fact that we hadn't even been able to actually pierce his defenses; Colbert managed to remain unharmed despite the fact that Fran had attacked him with my element-cloaked blade. His martial art allowed him to condense magical energy and use it in the same manner as he would his arms. These four newly created energy-based appendages stayed close to his body and, in doing so, almost made it him truly resemble the six armed God the technique was named after.

It was precisely this technique that allowed him to avoid taking any of the damage we would've otherwise inflicted. It seemed to have both boosted his reaction speed and the range of his field of vision, as he'd used two of his magical arms to catch me mid swing. As the arms were constructed entirely of energy, the few scratches they did get from the act immediately regenerated and were made moot.

Naturally, all of his magic hands were also capable of attacking. Colbert being a martial artist meant that, the number of attacks he could execute

was purely limited by the number of limbs he had, which, in turn, led to the conclusion that he'd become way deadlier than he'd been before.

One of his many attacks eventually ended up breaking through Fran's defenses and digging straight into her lungs.

「Bughhh」

『Greater Heal』

I managed to get Fran healed up immediately, but I couldn't stop her from momentarily flinching because of the hit. The bit of a stagger that resulted allowed Colbert enough of an opening to follow up with a third flurry.

One of his hands even ended up grabbing onto me. It tried tightening its grip in order to hold me in place the moment it did, but I managed to escape by using Telekinesis. Though I did indeed manage to retreat, I wasn't able to stop him from momentarily restricting Fran's movements, which, once again, caused Colbert to gain yet another shot of momentum.

Fran was still avoiding his attacks and returning fire, but she was doing so with her face warped in pain. Erza had mentioned before that some of the Dimitris Style's practitioners were capable of performing attacks that would permeate into one's body and destroy it from the inside out.

Colbert's attacks were in fact all of that precise type.

Even the ones that struck me instead of Fran carried through my blade and assaulted her hands with shockwave upon shockwave upon shockwave. I attempted to block the effects of his attacks by deploying a series of barriers, but to pretty much no avail. They passed right through them; even the lightest touch would cause Colbert's Qi to flow into her body and damage her internals.

Having Fran continue holding her ground like this was a bad idea. Simply patiently waiting for a chance wasn't going to work.

『It doesn't look like his attacks are just physically based, but I think it might be best for us to point both Physical Damage Resistance and Physical Barrier regardless.』

(Nn! Got it!)

I executed one of the contingencies I'd discussed with Fran earlier and threw 18 points into each of the two skills.

Fran and I had come into the tourney with more than just a few cards in hand. We'd pushed ourselves as hard as we could in order to farm magic stones so I could rank up as quickly as possible — which I did. I'd then just held onto all 66 of the points that we had, just in case we ran into any situations like this one.

Hoarding points and using them in the middle of a battle was much more effective than using them up ahead of time, as having them available meant being able to adjust to our opponents.

〈A new skill has been unlocked as you have fulfilled all of its prerequisites. Your Physical Barrier and Magical Barrier skills have been merged into the Perfect Barrier skill.〉

Perfect Barrier seemed to be a pretty damned good skill. Its level 1 output was equivalent to the two other skills' max level outputs combined. The term "perfect" initially led me to believe that the barrier could prevent any and all damage, but I was wrong, as it clearly wasn't completely impregnable. The "perfect" part of its name instead seemed to describe that it could at least attempt to mitigate all types of attacks.

〈The Physical Damage Resistance skill has reached its maximum level and evolved into Physical Damage Nullification.〉

And... we also ended up unlocking a skill I'd been expecting, but not really all that keen on getting.

『Let's go, Fran!』

「Nn!」

「What!? How are you suddenly no longer taking damage!?!」

Colbert's eyes widened as Fran began stepping forward while completely ignoring all his attacks. He didn't stop, and continued to assault her, but she didn't mind his strikes at all. At first, it seemed like she was trying to take damage in order to dish it out, but that wasn't the case at all. Our two newly obtained skills made it so she didn't have to force herself into a trade.

It'd almost looked like she'd become flat out invincible.

But I was panicking nonetheless.

『Shit, Rumina was right! That nullification skill is eating my mana ridiculously quickly! 』

Only a few moments had passed since we'd gotten the skill, but it'd already eaten up a whole 1000 mana. That was just how much energy it took to completely negate Colbert's incoming attacks.

Again, the skill's ridiculous mana consumption was something that Rumina had warned us about. Specifically, something she'd warned us about just before the tournament began.

「Master. That ability of yours is quite the powerful one, but warn you I must.」

『Warn me? About what?』

「I ask that you beware of skills capable of nullification. Some magic beasts carry them, and thus, I believe it very likely for you to one day obtain them. You must take utmost caution in their application.」

「Why caution?」

「Skills carrying effects akin to nullification bear the tendency to consume a great deal of magical energy to actualize their effects. Moreover, the skill's function is automatic. You will not be able to stop them from activating, and thus, it is quite possible for you to quickly lose all your magical energy should you fight a foe capable of a vicious assault.」

In other words, Flame Invalidation would drain one's mana pool extremely quickly if one decided to sit in a sea of flames or something.

The one Rumina emphasized as the one we should be the most careful with was Physical Damage Nullification. It was a skill typically possessed by monsters whose bodies were made of energy, so she wasn't sure exactly what would happen if we were to acquire it. There was a chance it'd end up activating every single time we so much as took a step.

But that wasn't all. She'd also warned us that nullification-type skills didn't actually provide invulnerability. Certain skills would just go right through them.

According to Rumina, the Gods had made it so that nullification skills weren't in fact the highest order of skill one could have. They could be broken through by both skills built to pierce defenses as well as skills containing the Gods' powers.

Rumina herself had actually bore witness to one of these incidents; she'd seen Ignius use its Godflame skill to roast and kill someone that happened to have the Flame Nullification skill.

She'd warned that it was possible that the Beast Lord's Golden Flame of Extinction skill also counted as a higher order skill.

「Do not let your guard down. Do not rely on nullification skills should you obtain them.」

「Got it.」

Our case was actually a bit different. We were able to choose whether or not we actually wanted a certain skill to be active, so, it was possible for us to

avoid using any nullification skills we had unless we actually really needed them. They were quite perfect as far as trump cards went.

That said, I couldn't actually switch the skill out as of right this moment, as Colbert was still in the middle of attacking us.

『Hurry up Fran! You'll have to finish this real quick!』

「Nn!」

Fran raised me above her head and readied herself to a massive downwards swing — an opening Colbert failed to miss.

「Dimitris Style Secret Technique — Rupturing Strike!」 [1]

He poured his mana into his fist as he twisted it as he shoved it straight into Fran's gut. But it was rendered null. The strike hadn't even caused her to so much as flinch.

「Shit! It had no effect!?!」

Colbert's attack hadn't damaged Fran, but it'd contained so much force that it drained another 1000 mana straight from my pool, which, once again confirmed that Colbert was one helluva a foe. I couldn't even imagine how much damage his attack would've done had we not the means to completely negate it.

「Nn!」

Fran leapt into the air and delivered a downwards strike with every last bit of her power.

We activated two instances of Elemental Blade, popped Vibration Blade, Magic Poison Fang and Weight Boost as she drew me from a sheath of wind. Her skill with the katana, which had already been remarkable, had become even more refined because of the Sword Lord Arts skill.

Though we were basically in his face, our attack was one that was incredibly easy to read, and thus, Colbert had an easy time avoiding it.

Or at least he would have, had I not stopped him.

I bound him with both Wind Magic and Telekinesis and prevented him from moving either to the left or right. To him, that much was nothing. He easily shrugged it off, but in doing so, lost the instant he needed to avoid Fran's incoming strike. Realizing that escape had become impossible, he instead quickly opted to use all four of his magical arms to defend himself.

「Haaaaaaaaaahhhh!」

「Gaarrgghhh!」

But it wasn't enough.

We not only split all his magic-made limbs in two, but also left a giant gash running from his left shoulder to the opposite side of his hip. Both his arms were still fine, but the same couldn't be said for his internals. The majority of the damage had gone straight to his lungs, one of them had even been flat out turned to ash. The flames that cloaked my blade scorched his body and completely turned into a huge mess. The open wound was charred black; smoke wafted off of it alongside a foul, meaty smell.

It looked like he was done for, but we kept going. Colbert was strong. We knew that it was still possible for him to turn everything around despite how grim the situation looked, and so, we continued focusing on refining our magical energies.

『Keep it up! Don't slow down!』

「Nn!」

Fran brought me to her waist and followed up with a powerful horizontal slash.

I figured that Colbert could still fight, but I never expected him to do as he did. That is, he attempted to avoid the attack by leaping backwards and dodging despite his near fatal wound. He then focused his energies back into his magical arms and once again extended them towards us.

The situation was dire. We'd run out of mana if he hit us even just one more time. If we wanted to win this, we had to end it here and now.

Knowing that, I quickly responded by stretching my blade as far as I could.

「Come on!」

『Reach reach reach!』

「Guaagghhh!」

Colbert reached us right as we reached him. We managed to null his attack, but the same couldn't be said for him; my blade tore through his gut and caused his blood to splatter across Fran's face.

He took far too much damage to maintain his concentration, and so, his magic-made arms faded away.

「Sh...it...」

The martial artist fell onto his knees before groaning in pain and collapsing, after which he didn't even so much as twitch. He was bleeding heavily, crimson liquid leaked from his protruding internal organs began turning the stage into a sea of blood. To make matters worse, he was even badly poisoned.

Things were looking really bad.

Invalidating Colbert's last attack had used up the rest of my mana. I was flat dry. I couldn't do anything for him at all.

Fortunately, I didn't need to be the one to heal him. A member of the guild's staff immediately rushed over and did what was necessary in order to save him.

And with that staff member's actions came an enthusiastic announcement.

「It's over! The match has been decided! What a stunning upset, ladies and gentlemen! Today's winner is once again, Fran, the Magic Sword Girl! It

looks like she just might end up being the most terrifying dark horse in this tournament's history!」

—

[1] This technique, in the raw, is Body Destroying Internal Organ Breaker. But that sounds like shit in English, so I just kinda put some random substitute name that kinda sounds martial artsy and has a bit of the meaning in there for now. Let me know if you guys can think of something better.

[2] This type of punch is called called a Seikenzuki in Japanese. Its pretty well known, and even used in a fair bit of media. It's basically the standard Karate punch. You thrust at chest level, with your fist upside down. You then turn it at the moment of impact for that extra bit of oomph. Animoo example here.

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Chapter 200. Vs Colbert — After

Vs Colbert — After

We checked in on Colbert, who'd been carried over to the sickbay, not too long after the match ended. His wounds had been healed by magic, but he'd yet to regain most of his stamina, and so, he was still bedridden and unable to so much as sit up.

「Colbert, feeling okay?」

「Hey... It appears that I've narrowly managed to escape death.」

「Very close.」

「Hahah. You have me beat. I never expected to lose even after undoing my sea...ugh.」

Colbert placed a hand on his head and groaned.

「Okay?」

「Yeah... It seems that I've simply pushed myself a bit too hard. This happens every time I use Asura.」

Asura was the technique that caused him to suddenly sprout a bunch of magical arms. My assumption was that said technique boosted both his reaction speed and widened his field of vision, as I failed to see how else he would've been able to fight on par with Fran and her Sword Lord Arts.

「You were strong, stronger than any foe I've ever faced before.」

「Thanks.」

「Your next opponent will be a tough one, but I believe in you. Beat him, for my sake as well.」

「Definitely.」

We decided to leave the sick bay after exchanging a few more words with him. As he'd yet to recover, I figured that forcing him into an extended conversation probably wasn't exactly what anyone could call a good idea.

I expected that he'd end up getting some peace and quiet after we left, but apparently the exact opposite happened, as I happened to catch ear of a few panicked shouts just before we wound up out of earshot.

「God damn it! I went overboard and let the blood rush to my head! Damn it! I'm totally going to get excommunicated! There's no way my demon of a Master will let me get away with this!」

His tone made it incredibly easy for me to picture him cradling his head and shaking it in despair. It would've been something interesting to discuss with Fran, but I decided to practice tact and keep any mention of his circumstances to a minimum seeing as how he'd purposefully waited for her to leave before letting his emotions take control of him; he clearly hadn't wanted to show his more pitiful side.

『My condolences, Colbert. My condolences.』

「Nn?」

『Nah, it's nothing. Don't worry about. Let's just go.』

The next thing Fran and I did was head back to the arena. Specifically, we became spectators, as it was probably the best possible use of our time. There was a chance we would end up having to fight the people that emerged victorious today should we win the next round. It's not like we'd be wasting time even if we lost either, as observing these higher leveled fights served to broaden our horizons regardless.

There were only a total of eight matches scheduled today due to the nature of the single elimination tournament structure, and as we fought the second,

there were only six for us to observe.

Amanda was the one fighting the day's third match, and had just finished wrapping up right as we managed to get back. She had once again basically finished her foe off in an instant.

「Didn't get to see anything.」

『Eh, can't really be helped. This next match should be interesting enough to make up for it though. Erza's going to be fighting.』

His opponent was a C ranked adventurer, one known to be rather difficult to fight because of his incredible technical skill with the spear. The battle was honestly one I was really looking forward to and didn't want to miss.

However, we were at a bit of an impasse. There wasn't anywhere for us to sit. We contemplated what to do, and I actually almost ended up creating a chair using earth magic, but, fortunately, one of the men nearby called out to us and, in doing so, stopped me before I did.

「Hey, are you Fran? The Magic Sword Girl?」

「Nn?」

He, the middle aged man, was spectating the match with a bottle of wine in one hand, and a skewer in the other. Based on that, I assumed the guy was probably doing pretty well for himself.

「W-Woah, it really is you. I'm guessing you wanted to spectate?」

「Nn.」

「A-Alright, feel free to take my seat then.」

「Really okay?」

「Yeah, go for it. I've been betting on you since the prelims, and at this point, you've earned me so much cash I can kick back and skip work for the rest of the month.」

Wow, he really has made a lot off us.

The fact that he's been betting on us since the prelims meant he was probably half doing it to cheer Fran on, and half because he wanted to see if could earn himself a big ass return off her efforts. That said, I still felt thankful because he had still been rooting for us either way.

「I'll gladly fork the seat over if you just let me shake your hand so I can brag about it to all my buddies!」

「Got it.」

「Thanks! I'll be cheering for you tomorrow too, so do your best out there!」

「Nn.」

And so, the man shook Fran's hand, relinquished his seat to her, and walked away with a bit of a chuckle. My guess was that he'd probably headed somewhere he could comfortably stand around while watching the remaining matches.

Erza's match began shortly after we sat down. His opponent was as difficult to deal with as his reputation suggested, and managed to stay out of Erza's range while attacking him with his spear.

However, the spearman's attacks were a bit too light to actually inflict any damage; Erza ignored all his strikes and managed to brute force charge right at him without really minding the incoming onslaught.

The spearman's incredible agility allowed him to dodge the attack that came out of it, but seeing that it'd destroyed a part of the arena with just one hit had caused his blood to run cold.

His movements started to dull with time, not because he ran out of stamina, but because the disparity in their attacks' effectiveness caused him a great mental burden.

He was in a pretty shitty situation, one we'd experienced several times before. His attacks did practically nothing, but everything'd be over for him if he failed to dodge even just once. He wouldn't be able to rake in a win unless he went out on a limb and shifted to a style that would put a bit more emphasis on pure power, a choice he was hesitant to make given that his opponent's giant ass mace kept only barely missing him.

It took a him a good bit, but he eventually managed to do it. He made up his mind and drove his spear straight towards Erza after dodging an attack that left the bigger man off balance. It was the fastest, and most powerful strike he'd demonstrated to date.

The crowd gasped as his spear closed in on Erza's unarmoured upper body.

But it didn't work. The spearman's weapon wasn't able to pierce Erza's skin. It was instead stopped by the bigger man's ridiculously high defenses.

From there, it all went downhill. The man was promptly caught by Erza and dropped to the floor, where he was pinned by a full body technique that rendered him unable to breathe. He ultimately ended up having to surrender with an oxygen deprived wheeze.

『Must suck to be him.』

「Close combat means openings.」

『Well, I mean, you're right, but...』

No way I was ever going to let Erza pin Fran to the floor, especially while making full body contact. Just, hell no.

『Pinning techniques are just terrible.』

「Nn. Dangerous.」

『In more than one way at that.』

「Nn?」

Erza's match was the only one that'd really been interesting. All the others basically ended in an instant or were kind of boring.

Forrund's match, the fourth match, was so short that it caused the crowd to boo. It didn't even take him five seconds to finish off his opponent.

Phillip, the Krysten family's eldest son, fought the fifth match. It was a harsh battle full of backs and forths, but we'd already seen him fight back in Barbra, so it ended up being kinda dull.

Neither Royce, nor Fermus ended up having to go all out, but they both finished their matches in less than a minute. All I could tell from watching them was that they had even more power hiding beneath the surface.

『We'll have to win tomorrow's match if we even want a chance at fighting any of them.』

「Will definitely win.」

We headed to the dungeon after we finished spectating the day's matches so we could not only try out our new skills, but also run a few simulations in order to figure out how we'd go about fighting Goldalfa.

Fortunately, Physical Damage Invalidation didn't actually activate whenever we took a step, but it did consume an incredible amount of mana nonetheless. It'd react regardless of whether we were attacking or defending; half of my mana pool had actually vanished into thin air before I'd even realized any of it was missing.

But, as evidenced by its ability to even nullify the shock generated by our attacks, it was ridiculously potent. Fran was able to punch an ogre many times her size without even feeling the slightest bit of backlash. In a real battle, the skill made it so we were able to ignore any and all of the attacks our opponents used to zone us. It didn't matter whether they slashed at us with swords or whacked us with hammers. None of it had any effect whatsoever.

Likewise, Perfect Barrier also turned out to be pretty useful.

It only consumed as much magical energy as either one of the two barriers that'd merged to create it, but had the full effects of both. The potency of its defenses did still fall short of our newly found nullification skill, but that was to be expected.

In other words, we were pretty much going to end up spamming Perfect Barrier whenever we could, and saving Physical Damage Nullification for when we really needed it.

『Alright, that's enough testing. Let's try figuring out what we should do against Goldalfa.』

The fact that Goldalfa was an axe user made me suspect that we would probably end up having to rely on Physical Damage Nullification if we wanted to beat him. I had no idea exactly how strong he'd get if he used Awakening, but I somehow doubted our defenses would be solid enough to hold off his attacks.

His offenses were but one of my two main concerns. The other was the extent to which he was capable of soaking up damage. The dude had High Speed Regeneration, Strengthened Skin, and over 1k HP to boot. We probably wouldn't be able to beat him by slowly wearing him down; I didn't think we'd be able to beat him in a more drawn out battle.

In other words, if we wanted to beat him without using Physical Damage Nullification, we'd have to not only dodge all his attacks, but also deliver attacks with enough power to break through his defenses and quickly end the match. My conclusion? Things weren't exactly looking up.

We spent a bit of time thinking up hypothetical situations and the skills we'd level to deal with each of them before finally calling it a day.

「Will go visit Rumina.」

Fran had already stopped addressing Rumina in the respectful manner that she'd done when they first met — not that the older Black Catkin minded it

at all. In fact, she even seemed to enjoy being referred to more casually. The two's relationship almost seemed to have developed into one that was kind of like that of a grandmother and grandchild, a status quo with which both were satisfied.

『Good idea. We might as well go pop in and say hi before we leave.』

「Nn.」

We teleported into the room Rumina had made us a few days earlier.

She seemed to immediately pick up on our arrival, as she even ended up greeting us by the door as we entered her quarters.

「Welcome.」

「Nn.」

『'Sup.』

「It appears that you have triumphed once again. I believe your next match will be a quarter final round against an A ranked adventurer?」

『Yeap. We'll be fighting one of the Beast Lord's subordinates.』

「And will you be attempting victory? I believe you have already satisfied the conditions he has laid before you by winning this morning's match.」

「Will win. Will force Black Cat Tribe's strength to be acknowledged.」

『We're intending on playing every single card we have if that's what it takes.』

「I see... Very well, I shall say no more regarding the matter. Instead, I will offer you my encouragement. Forward, Fran, to victory!」

「Nn!」

And so, we headed back to the inn after having Rumina tell us a bit more about skills and magic.

Tomorrow, our match would be the first. We had to get up even earlier than usual.

201. Vs Goldalfa Part 1

Chapter 201. Vs Goldalfa Part 1

Vs Goldalfa Part 1

『Looks like it's finally go time.』

「Nn.」

『We're going to be up against an A ranker, someone as strong as Amanda. We'll really have to push ourselves if we want to pull a win out of this one.』

「Already know. But-」

『Yeah. Let's win this shit.』

「Nn! Will definitely win!」

We'd actually already leveled a few skills up in preparation for the fight, skills we decided would help us based on what we learned from consulting with Rumina.

「Good morning. It's time for your match to begin. Are you ready?」

One of the tourney's staff members called out to us and informed us that we needed to go.

「Nn. Ready.」

「Then please follow me.」

Fran walked down the usual corridor in her usual manner. She was pumped and looking forward to the match, but not even the slightest bit nervous.

It had finally come time to put one of the schemes we'd come up with into action — not that it was actually anything grand enough to be denoted as such.

The first thing I did was buffing Fran a whole bunch. Specifically, I'd use support magic in order raise her stats. She then poured her magical energy into me in order to make use of that magical conductivity stat of mine. Specifically, she emptied herself out, drank a few High Grade Mana Potions to refill her bar, drained her entire tank yet again, and then once again downed a few more pots to top herself off in preparation for the battle. Doing that allowed her to raise my attack a ton without having to put any strain on my blade. Numerically speaking, it ended up getting boosted almost all the way up to 3.7k.

There was a pretty major problem with the strategy we were currently employing, as I was only able to hold the magical energy she charged me with for about 20 minutes. We would have to end the match before my timer ticked all the way down to zero.

『Hey you sure you're alright? You kinda just downed 8 entire mana potions.』

「Fine.」

Luckily, it seemed like there wasn't any issue. I honestly felt like this strategy of ours wouldn't actually be possible if it wasn't for Fran's habit of eating as much as she did. Any normal person would probably feel bloated from suddenly drinking 8 glasses worth of stuff.

「Let's go.」

『Sure thing.』

Entering the stage caused Fran to be showered with the usual cheers. Evidently, she'd already grown used to them, as hearing them didn't cause any change in her expression.

「And entering from the eastern gate is the girl that's taken this year's tournament by storm, the cute face that's gained an explosive amount of popularity, Fran, the Magic Sword Girl! She's stomped competitor after competitor, and caused upset after upset, a trend she'll need to maintain if

she wishes to beat the A ranked adventurer she'll have to face today! Can she do it ladies and gentlemen? We'll have to wait and see!」

The commentator's words almost made it seem like he was rooting for us, which, I kinda did understand. Seeing a kid like Fran give it her all just kinda made you feel like giving her a bit of encouragement. The only people that I could imagine not feeling that way were probably the Blue Cat Tribe's members.

「Do your best Fran!」

「Make sure you win, for our wallets' sakes!」

「We believe in your Fran! You have to win! The better you do, the more we'll get to eat tonight!」

All three Scarlet Maidens were present and cheering for us. I kinda felt like they were being a bit too open with their greed, but what mattered wasn't the reason that they were rooting for us, but rather, the fact that they were.

「And from the western gate we have one the most likely contenders for the championship title, a man that's crushed every single one of his opponents with an overwhelming display of strength, Goldalfa, the Impenetrable Fortress! His feats have been truly worthy of his A rank status. He's managed to remain entirely unscathed throughout all the battles he's won to date! What do you think, ladies, gentlemen? Will he be able to pull off yet another flawless victory? 」 [1]

Godlafa, like Fran, was also greeted by a ridiculously loud series of cheers. However, he seemed less popular than her, as there were also a couple boos thrown into the mix.

It was almost as if the crowd had already come to the conclusion that Goldalfa would come out on top. To me, it seemed that the people cheering for Fran were cheering in hopes that she'd put up a good fight as opposed to getting defeated in an instant, not because they believed that she'd be able to win. Honestly, it was something to be expected. Fran had been on a winning spree, but she was still just a C ranker. Goldalfa was an A ranker,

so there wasn't really any reason for anyone to suspect that he wasn't way out of her league.

『I'm looking forward to seeing the looks on everyone's faces when we prove them wrong.』

「Nn!」

We faced off against Goldalfa at the arena's center.

The equipment he was wearing today was completely different from the first set we'd seen him in. His armour was much tougher looking; its massive scarlet frame was decorated with a series of flame-like streaks. Likewise, his axe also gave off a much more intimidating air. It was jet black, and had a design that made it incredibly obvious that its main purpose was to serve as a weapon in times of war.

The armour also seemed to have the ability to block us from properly appraising him. My Eye of Empyrea skill allowed me to at least discern his stats and skills, but I couldn't actually check any details regarding his equips.

「I see you've won your way here.」

「Will win today too.」

「You're really spirited, and I commend you for it. But you'll need much more than just drive and willpower to defeat me. Come! Come at me with all the strength you have!」

「Planned on it.」

Goldalfa didn't seem to be underestimating Fran, not even in the slightest, as he was glaring at her as he would a powerful rival.

The caster quickly went over an interesting detail as the two stared each other down.

「We'll be making use of the Cradle of Time from this match onward, thanks to the Beast Lord and his generosity.」

The Cradle of Time was a magic item that allowed one to turn back the clock within a prespecified area, and was set to activate in the case that one of the contestants happened to die. Best part of it was that apparently, the cradle didn't actually affect one's memory, so dying wouldn't meant losing the experience you gained. As one could imagine, it was really a expensive item, and hence, typically saved for the semis and beyond, but this time around, the Beast Lord had decided to sponsor the tourney with a huge chunk of cash. Thus, they were able to start using the item a full round earlier than usual.

In other words, we were able to go all the hell out without really having to worry about dying or killing our opponent. That wasn't the only factor that allowed us to go all out. There were now also a bunch of barriers set up around the arena in order to protect the audience members from any stray attacks.

Battles that included the use of the the Cradle of Time were different from other battles in the sense that there was no ring out option. One could only win by killing their opponent, disabling them, or forcing them to surrender.

「I don't really think this needs to be said, but I'll say it regardless. I will not underestimate you simply because you are a Black Catkin as it was a Black Catkin that made me as capable as I am today.」

「Exactly as desired.」

Fran unsheathed me and gave me a light swing as if to demonstrate her resolve.

「And I take it that's your Magic Sword? Interesting, it truly appears to be much more than just your average blade.」

「You too. Cool armour.」

「This armour is what I wear to battle. Me wearing it serves to prove that I'm taking you seriously. It has Appraisal Blocking, both types of passive recovery, and even Magic Resistance. It was none other than a product crafted by a God-tier Blacksmith, a Magic Armour powerful enough to perform its function, even against a Godblade.」

Wait, wait, you serious!? That's some shit dude! I mean, it was possible that I was actually be the work of some God-tiered blacksmith too and all that, but that, again, is just a possibility. His armour, on the other hand, was totally the real deal!

I mean, I was pretty confident and all that, but I couldn't really help but get a bad feeling about that armour of his. Specifically, I was concerned about the possibility that it'd have some sort of secret ability that'd totally wreck us.

「I'll bring everything right off the bat in order to crush you! Awakening!」

The few visible parts of Goldalfa's skin were dyed grey as he shouted the skill's name.

「Woah! It appears that Goldalfa has already awakened! He's activated what most Beastkin consider their trump card! Can you believe it, ladies and gentlemen!? He's already gone full throttle even though the match has yet to start! Things are getting heated up! I guess I'd better say, let the match... begin!」

Wait, seriously!? He awakened already!?

Goldalfa's awakening differed greatly from Zefmate's. That is, his stats didn't end up changing. However, the same couldn't be said for his skills. He'd gained a bunch of abilities that looked hard to deal with, namely, Muscles of Steel, Super Fast Reflexes, and Hardened Skin. His High Speed Regeneration had also gained several levels, and shot all the way up to 8. But that wasn't all. Highly dense magical energy had also began circulating throughout his body.

General Information

Name: Goldalfa

Age: 44

Race: Beastkin (White Rhino Tribe / Black Steel Rhino)

Job: Sharpaxer

Status Level: 72/99

HP: 1256

MP: 422

STR: 654

VIT: 582

AGI: 267

INT: 173

MGC: 247

DEX: 299

Skills

Intimidation: Lv 8

Super Herculean Strength: Lv 8

Fist Techniques: Lv 5

Fist Arts: Lv 5

Presence Detection: Lv 3

High Speed Regeneration: Lv 8

Herculean Strength: MAX

Club Techniques: Lv 6

Club Arts: Lv 6

Mining: Lv 8

Regeneration: MAX

Resistance to Abnormal Status Conditions: Lv 7

Blink: Lv 3

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 7

Elemental Blade: Lv 8

Greater Earth Resistance: Lv 4

Charge: Lv 7

Axe Techniques: MAX

Axe Arts: MAX

Divine Axe Techniques: Lv 6

Divine Axe Arts: Lv 7

Magic Perception: Lv 3

Vigour Mastery

Muscles of Steel

Goblin Killer

Super Fast Reflexes

Dampened Sense of Pain

Dragon Killer

Strengthened Skin

Hardened Skin

Innate Skills

Awakening

Shockwave

「Nrrrrrghhhhhhhhh!」

Goldalfa swung his axe downwards without moving from where he stood the moment the match began. The action caused three massive shockwaves to erupt from his axe and assault us.

They were powerful; they were backed by so much brute strength that I was pretty sure that launching those three attacks alone would've already been enough for him to instantly defeat most C ranked magic beasts.

It seemed to be an assault he'd launched in order to scout out our strength.

『Let's go, Fran!』

「Nn.」

『Explosion!』

I fired off a spell to intercept Goldalfa's attack.

The fireball bursted into a massive conflagration as collided with the shockwave and dyed the stage in red.

I took advantage of the resulting smokescreen and teleported us behind Goldalfa.

Fran immediately took advantage of the opening presented and attacked Goldalfa's neck by drawing me from a sheath of wind while activating all the usual skills.

It was both a deadly strike and a perfect sneak attack —

「Ggaaaaahhh!」

— one to which he couldn't react.

My blade sank straight into his neck. I felt it tear through his flesh and bones as his blood sprayed from his newfound injury.

Yet, it left me unsatisfied. I felt myself smashing through a wall of magical energy and a bunch of really tough skin and muscle before even hitting his armour. We'd lost a lot of the power that the strike had initially come with.

The attack that was meant to completely behead him stopped halfway through his neck. We were unable go any deeper because of how insane his defenses were.

That said, our attack had yet to end. We hadn't managed to do what I was hoping, but we'd opened up an opportunity, an opportunity I promptly attempted to take by turning my blade into a series of needles and stabbing them into his innars.

Unfortunately, I was too slow. Goldalfa reacted before I did.

「Shockwave!」

「Gaaahhhh!」

He released a burst of magical energy and sent us flying.

Shit, he has balls!

The dude completely disregarded the fact that we half beheaded him and managed to make a calm, composed decision.

His shockwave did much more than just give him some breathing room. It ate through a huge chunk of both my durability and Fran's HP. All in all, it seemed even more powerful than the thing he'd started the match with.

The Rhinokin immediately chased after us, so Fran had no choice but to dodge his attacks as she choked up blood.

「Gaffff...」

『Greater Heal!』

「Fuu... fuu...」

『You still doing okay?』

「Still okay.」

We'd already known long ahead of time, but I felt the urge to reiterate that tanking Goldalfa's attacks was a terrible idea.

『I'm surprised he awakened right off the bat like that. We also failed to actually take him in one go... Oh well, can't be helped. Let's start by stripping away his defenses.』

「Got it.」

I did as per the contingency we'd thought up ahead of time and shoved all my remaining points into a certain skill.

『Be careful of his armour. It's completely outside our predictions, and we have no idea what it can do. Either way, we'll have to go in for a melee. Make sure you don't get hit, not even once!』

「Nn!」

「Doraaaaah!」

「Tsk!」

『Shit, he's already healed up!?!』

Goldalfa leapt at us the moment we finished figuring out what to do. I honestly surprised that his wound had closed that quickly. His sheer vitality was terrifying.

The two fighters began exchanging blows, with Fran dishing out lighter attacks in rapid succession, and Goldalfa attempting to land hard hitting, decisive blows.

The Rhinokin seemed to be pretty much spamming axe techniques, as every single one of his swings was accompanied by a shockwave. I was pretty sure he would've killed at least 100 spectators had there not been a barrier protecting them. The shockwaves weren't too-too strong, but taking them head on wasn't what I could call good for my durability, so Fran ended up dodging or warding off all the hits as opposed to blocking them.

All of Fran's attacks were aimed at the cracks and seams in Goldalfa's armour, but we weren't really able to damage him nearly as much as we expected to. The cuts we gave him immediately closed because he'd just regenerate off the damage; we weren't able to inflict any lasting wounds.

I tried destroying the armour itself, but even it ended up healing back up immediately after sustaining damage, a trait that honestly wasn't too unexpected in and of itself given that Fran's Black Cat Set was capable of doing the exact same.

Another thing I tried was throwing a few spells at him from time to time, but to little effect. Attacking him with magic failed to do anything beyond verifying that he'd been telling the truth when he said that his armour gave him magic resistance. Goldalfa himself had already had ridiculously high

physical defense to begin with, so slapping that flashy armour of his onto him basically turned him into a walking fortress.

「Haaaaaaa! Shooockwaaaaaaaaaveeeeeeee!」

Goldalfa once again used his innate skill at close range and sent out a blast of magical energy in every direction. The skill itself was a simple one, but it was incredibly difficult to deal with nonetheless.

At close range, the skill inflicted damage while also messing up our posture. It also appeared to be able to function as a sort of barrier if instead cast at medium range.

More importantly was the fact that it inflicted both physical and magical damage simultaneously; it didn't seem like we would be able to fully negate its effects through the use of Physical Damage Nullification.

We'd managed to mitigate most of the damage this time around by deploying a barrier, but we still did sustain some. Goldalfa had us right where he wanted us. We were currently deadlocked into a stalemate, one he knew Fran would eventually lose because he was able to outsustain her.

Fuck that!

『Urushi!』

「Ruff!」

「Huh. You can even use summoning magic!? Interesting, but doesn't matter. You won't be able to break through my defenses with any sort of attack that lacks in terms of power.」

That was something we already knew. Urushi was pretty strong, but he was indeed the type that relied more on chaining attacks than delivering single, more powerful blows — not that it actually mattered. We didn't call for Urushi because we'd wanted him to deliver a decisive blow. We had other, better plans in mind.

『Keep it up Fran! The plan's working. I managed to absorb some of his mana.』

(Nn!)

The skill I'd leveled up just a bit earlier was in fact Mana Absorption. I didn't have enough points to get it past level 9, but, it was still managing to exactly what I needed it to do regardless.

Fighting Colbert had taught that Physical Damage Nullification wasn't something that made us invincible. We could still take damage from magic, or anything else in its vein. Plus, the skill consumed a tonne of magical energy.

To that end, we devised a plan that would address both those points at once: absorbing our opponents' magical energy. It allowed us to not only drain mana directly from our opponents, but also from their attacks, which, in turn, would naturally weaken them.

I've had the skill at level 3 for a while. I could've boosted it up back when we were fighting Colbert as well, but I'd decided against it at the time because I didn't know how effective it'd become. I didn't want to make a bet we weren't sure to win, especially given the value of my self-evolution points.

Plus, we still had a few other cards left to play, so I'd kinda been on the fence and ultimately ended up just leaving it.

The reason I was willing to level it now was because we'd asked Rumina and Dias about its effectiveness, and both had told us that it'd get pretty annoying to deal with if leveled.

In fact, it was such a good skill that even Rumina thought it to be dangerous, and so, I'd actually really been looking forward to seeing just how effective it was capable of becoming.

And it really had lived up to its reputation, as I'd managed to drain away Goldalfa's mana bit by bit. The reason we'd called Urushi was because we

wanted him to be able to help us land a few more hits, and therefore force Goldalfa to use Regeneration and drain his mana even more quickly.

Fran casted a dark-type elemental blade, and continued attacking her opponent as often as she could. She still wasn't able to inflict any significant damage on him, again, that didn't matter, as we were stealing more mana from him than his armour could passively recover.

Long story short, the name of the game was to make him run out of mana before finishing him off with a single blow.

「Huh? That's... strange...」

The A ranked adventurer realized his mana was draining more quickly than usual, but he didn't seem to have caught onto the fact it was because I was absorbing it. That said, he didn't panic. He kept his cool and switched to what he believed to be the best possible strategy.

「Nuooooooooooooooooo!」

He suddenly cast all manner of defense aside and raised his axe above his head in order to deliver a powerful, almost desperate seeming downwards swing. It was an attack that would totally mince Fran to pieces should it land, but it was far too obvious for her not to dodge.

But it seemed that he hadn't been aiming for her to begin with.

「Groundshaker!」

Instead, he'd been directed his aim towards the stage itself. A series of cracks expanded from where his axe landed and shot all the way through the arena.

The force of the impact caused the battlefield to shake. His technique appeared to be one that caused a local earthquake, and in doing so, prevented one's opponents from moving around. It looked to be about a magnitude 7 on the Japanese scale, or a 10-12 on the Mercalli scale, as it heavily restricted both Fran's and Urushi's actions.

「Mmph!」

「Woooff?」

『He was aiming for the stage itself!?!』

The axe that'd been embedded inside of the arena came flying into Fran's torso immediately after the ground began shaking. Goldalfa had suddenly started moving much more quickly than he had throughout the rest of the battle's duration, likely an effect caused by him combining his Super Fast Reflexes skill with a technique that emphasized speed over all else. He moved at such a speed that even I, who'd been speeding up my thoughts with space/time magic, had a hard time processing, so there was simply no way for Fran would be able to react to his assault while also dealing with the earthquake.

『Short Jump!』

I immediately teleported us away from him and casted a few spells on Fran.

「Gebuu....」

『Greater Heal! Greater Heal! Greater Heal!』

The attack was basically the opposite of the one we'd finished Colbert off with. That is, it completely gouged out Fran's stomach. Her innards had come flowing out from the wound together with her blood as she vomited both her vital fluid and her stomach acid simultaneously. I was honestly surprised she didn't just instantly die from the shock.

『Fran!』

「Still... okay...! Bfuh...」

Her legs seemed a bit unsteady, but she managed to stand up, spit out the blood she had in her mouth, and recover before the Cradle of Time activated.

「Oraaaahhh!」

『Shit, he's not letting up!』

Goldalfa didn't pull back because Fran had healed. In fact, it'd actually caused him to immediately begin chasing after her yet again.

(Now! My turn!)

Fran had just had a giant gaping hole torn in her stomach, but she wasn't feeling even the slightest bit discouraged. In fact, she was as far from backing down as could be. Taking the hit had only fueled her battlelust further.

—
[1] Literal is Varja Wall, but I localized it because I feel like Varja is much less understood here than it is over there.

202. The Phoenix's Armour

Chapter 202. The Phoenix's Armour

The Phoenix's Armour

Goldalfa once again smashed his axe into the ground after rushing up to us.

「Groundshaker!」

He attacked us the exact same way he had earlier. The slash that followed after his Groundshaker was undoubtedly fast, but the same couldn't be said for Groundshaker itself. Hence, I was able to react and equip Physical Damage Nullification before he came at us with the follow up.

「Nuuun!」

「Useless.」

「Impossible!」

Goldalfa wasn't the only one react with surprise. The audience had done the exact same, for his attack had seemed to stop immediately as it was about to land on Fran. Rather, it seemed to have been made to stop by some sort of invisible wall.

That, combined with the fact that Fran hadn't moved or even recoiled from Goldalfa's attack despite the disparity in strength, caused the scene to almost seem surreal.

Both the girl and wolf took advantage of the opening created and began assaulting him so we could once again drain his magical energy. The two large scale attacks he'd just performed had already eaten away at his supply. He no longer had enough to even last a minute.

「Cheyaaa!」

「Nuuuun!」

He tried retaliating with a few quick strikes of his own, but he wasn't capable of matching her speed, and so, he ended up running flat out of mana.

「Ugh! My mana's dry...!」

Running out of mana caused the effects of his Awakening skill to fade away alongside several skills and the incredible magical energy that bolstered his defenses. It had finally come time for us to finish him; we had to win before his armour managed to restore his mana.

『Short Jump!』

We teleported behind Goldalfa in an attempt to once again execute the attack we'd hit him with right when the battle began.

「Nuun!」

「Kuh!」

However, we weren't greeted by the exposed, unprotected back we'd been hoping for. Instead, our sights were focused on the battleaxe that came flying straight towards us the moment we moved.

The actual movement part of teleportation was instant, but there was a brief delay between when one disappeared and when one reappeared.

Though he'd lost his Super Fast Reflexes skill, he still managed to predict our actions and cope with them. I couldn't tell exactly why that was, but suspected it was either driven by his experience as a warrior, or more simply, his intuition as a Beastkin.

Either way, we ended up getting sent flying the moment we arrived at our destination. Fran managed to use me to block the strike, but we felt a powerful shock from it nonetheless.

Worst of all was that it confused me. I didn't know where we were supposed to aim next. I considered attempting his front, his left, and his right, but wasn't able to come to a decision. From there, I moved on to

considering leaving Physical Damage Nullification on and just going for whatever, but again, I wasn't able to immediately make my decision. Fortunately for us, Fran wasn't nearly as wishy washy as me, and immediately figured out what she wanted to do.

(Master, up! Will use attack that can't be stopped even if noticed.)

『Got it.』

(Urushi. Stay, distract.)

(Woof!)

『Long Jump!』

I teleported us way up above the arena. Goldalfa immediately looked around in an attempt to find where Fran went, but didn't think to check the right up above him. The same went for both the audience and the caster, neither tried looking up.

「Wow! Fran seems to have suddenly vanished into thin air! Just what is going on!? Did she turn invisible, did she teleport somewhere, or did maybe even dive into the shadows!?!」

Little did the caster know, the correct answer was none of the above.

I kept myself afloat with Telekinesis as Fran stood atop the side of my blade and concentrated while manipulating several skills simultaneously.

「Ready.」

It took a few moments to get everything prepared.

『Aight.』

Fran leapt off me, grabbed me, and then began running straight down towards the arena.

She used Air Compression and Magic Thread Weaving to launch herself. She then transitioned into casting Sky Leap and Charge alongside a few wind-based spells in order to accelerate herself even further as she plunged straight towards the ground. She also readied herself to activate weight boost the moment before she landed to double her power while also cloaking my blade with both lightning and flame.

It was exactly the technique she'd used back when we fought Rynford — save for the fact that it was more potent.

This time, she'd started from higher up, and also boosted her speed even more through the application of Space/Time Magic. She'd also become much more skilled in the art of drawing her sword and attacking in a single motion thanks to Sword Lord Arts, and obtained a boost to what was basically every single one of her skills because of Vigour Mastery. As a result, the resulting slash was many times more powerful than it'd been back then.

「Brilliant Lightning Rush!」 [1]

She took things even further by activating the Innate Skill she'd only just learned a few days back, and in doing so, cloaked her body in lightning and accelerated herself even further.

Fran practically became a spear constructed solely of light as she descended upon Goldalfa like a meteorite.

「Haaaaaaaaah!」

「Where in the-」

A bright flash of light filled the arena as Fran hit Goldalfa so hard she caused a massive shockwave to run through the entire venue. With the attack came a thundering roar so loud it rocked my very core.

「Gggaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!!」

Goldalfa let out a roar halfway between a scream and a battlecry as he was assaulted by the attack.

『Short Jump!』

I teleported us over to the edge of the arena immediately before Fran actually hit the ground.

The place where Goldalfa had been standing had become a giant crater with clouds of dust swirling around it. Looking at the aftermath really deepened my impression of the attack. It was absurdly powerful; it alone had managed to cut my durability in half. The dust clouds didn't remain for too long. They were soon blown away as a bunch of magical energy swelled up from inside the area.

What we saw left us just as shocked as Goldalfa and the audience had been when Fran had totally stopped the Rhinokin's attack.

『That's impossible! How the hell is he regenerating without any mana!?!』

We'd taken Goldalfa down to a knee. his right arm was flat out gone, and the parts of his right half that did remain had been totally crushed alongside his crimson armour. His body's fluids were spouting out from the gaps within the crushed metal protector. Likewise, his left arm had also been totally crushed, and his left foot obviously fractured. I was pretty sure we'd done a hell of a lot of damage to his internals as well.

But he didn't die. In fact, he'd begun healing at an incredible rate.

What he was going through could no longer be described as just High Speed Regeneration. It was much more akin to Instantaneous Regeneration. The exact same thing was happening to his armour. It too was regenerating and repairing itself at a similar pace. It only took him a few seconds to return to his prior state. It almost looked as if we'd never actually attacked him in the first place.

「Haa... Ha... I never expected you to be able to force my armour to save my life this early on in the battle...」

He stood himself back up as the words left his mouth.

「The armour I'm wearing is called the Phoenix's Armour. It allows its wearer to recover incredibly quickly.」

Yeah, I could kinda tell just by looking.

He literally healed himself up in an instant. His armour already made him hella tanky as is. Him getting the ability to instantly regenerate any injuries on top of all that practically made him a walking nightmare.

How many times could he use that shit anyways? I highly doubted it was something he could do in perpetuity, but I also highly doubted it was a one off thing either. It was something made by a God-tier Blacksmith. I couldn't even begin to imagine just how powerful it really was.

(Master! Again!)

『I don't think we'll be able to play the same card twice. I'm pretty sure he'd just counter.』

(...Got it.)

The reason we'd been avoiding just teleporting around all the time was because we were worried our opponents would figure out how they were supposed to deal with it after seeing it put to use.

Teleporting still seemed risky even if our opponents didn't know about it. Fran was able to react and deal with the Demon we fought back then despite his ability to lurk in the shadows, and he'd been much stronger than she was. It was possible for teleporting to end up just being a trap against more powerful foes because they'd end up figuring it out at first glance.

Besides, that whole falling thing we did really left an impression, so it definitely wasn't something that could catch someone off guard multiple times in quick succession.

That was important and all, but glancing at Goldalfa had led me to immediately shelve any further thoughts on the subject.

「Awakened?」

『Yeah. His mana's all the way back up to full.』

Everything we'd done to drain his magical energy had gone down the toilet. We basically ended up being put back in the exact same situation we'd started off at, but in worse condition.

I couldn't help but feel the urge to call his armour out on being a bullshit OP equip, not that I really had the right to.

(No choice. Will have to use that)

『Yeah... I guess so.』

Draining his mana again would be pointless, as his armour was sure to restore it. And so, we decided to change up our strategy.

There was a big of lag time between him getting injured and his Instantaneous Regeneration actually popping. In other words, we'd be able to take him down so long as we killed him before the skill actually activated. It was honestly a rather simple plan, but it was also really the only thing we could actually try.

『The only problem is that you're not really adjusted to it yet. Your body won't hold if you keep it up for too long, so try ending it asap.』

(Know already.)

『Keep in mind that I won't have Physical Damage Nullification up. You'll be moving way too quickly for me to be able to turn it on and off.』

(Planned that from start.)

Fran had totally resolved herself for what was to come, so I decided to do the same. The tournament was effectively a safe space. The Cradle of Time made it so we wouldn't die no matter what happened, and so, I figured there was no harm in playing a riskier card that we'd normally shy away from.

「Urushi. Support from shadows.」

「Woof!」

「Going now.」

This tournament was one we'd done everything we could to prepare for. Me, I'd ranked myself up by farming up Magic Stone Points.

But what about Fran then? What exactly did she do?

The answer to that question was a simple one.

「Awakening.」

She evolved.

[1] Someone help me come up with a better name for this. It's literal is [Flash Blossom Lightning Rush.] The Blossom can be petal or flower. It can also be Brilliant if you repeat it twice and turn it into an adjective as opposed to a verb.

203. Black Lightning

Chapter 203. Black Lightning

Black Lightning

「Awakening」

An incredible amount of magical energy swelled up within Fran's body the moment she muttered the word, after which her small frame began emitting jet black streaks of lighting.

Her magical energies ran rampant and kicked up a windstorm in her wake. Goldalfa stood within it, completely dumbfounded.

「Awak...ening...?」

「Nn.」

「A Black Catkin just... awakened...?」

Our opponent had forced our hand and made us pull out our trump card, one we'd only managed to obtain with Rumina's help.

In other words, Fran had accomplished her goal. She had finally evolved.

Fran's appearance hadn't really changed much. She didn't suddenly grow a coat of fur or have her skin change colours. She didn't magically turn into an adult or anything like that either. The few changes that did occur were a lot more minute.

The first change lay in the colour of her eyes, which ended up dying themselves gold. The second and more significant change came with her tail, which she had currently straightened out and pointed towards the sky like a lightning rod. If one were to pay extra close attention, they'd be able to notice that her tail was no longer a pure shade of black. It instead now had alternating black and ash-grey stripes throughout.

That was it. Honestly, the outward changes caused by her awakening could be said to appear rather plain in comparison to the others we'd seen thus far.

Most of her changes had instead been directed within, and boy, were those changes massive.

Her Agility and Magic stats had both risen by an entire 300. The wounds she'd suffered had healed, and she'd instantly recovered all her magical energy.

But that wasn't all.

The most terrifying change was the one that'd occurred to the skill she'd gained upon evolving.

「Brilliant Lightning Rush.」

Fran's Brilliant Lightning Rush was an even more powerful version of the Lightning Rush skill Rumina had showed us upon our first encounter.

It was already a powerful skill under normal circumstances, as it provided or bolstered the levels of the Strength Boost, Agility Boost, Super Fast Reflexes, Lightning Element Bestowal, Lightning Boost, Lightning Damage Nullification, and Lightning Magic skills.

To reiterate, using Awakening made this skill even more powerful, namely by doubling all its effects.

「Would look at that ladies and gentlemen!? Fran has awakened! It appears she's got the rarer type of awakening, the one that doesn't particularly change one's appearance, but you can really feel a sense of majesty from the black lightning radiating off her body!」

If Fran had just evolved, she would've been like Rumina. The lightning emanating off her body would've been blue and not black.

But it wasn't.

Fran hadn't evolved into a mere Black Tigerkin. She'd instead become a creature spoken of only in legends, a Black Heavenly Tigerkin.

「Apparently Black Catkin being unable to evolve is nothing but just a load of bogus!」

The caster's reaction was pretty much the same as most of the other humans present. He was surprised, but that was it. As far as he was concerned, there was much more interest to be in had in how much stronger Fran had gotten than the fact that she'd actually evolved.

It was a reaction that completely failed to capture the emotions of any and all of the Beastkin that happened to be present.

「...」

Goldalfa seemed to have totally forgotten that he was in the midst of a duel. His stance loosened, and he simply stood staring with his mouth gaping wide open. He was so shocked by what he'd just witnessed that he was unable to put any his thoughts into words.

Directing my gaze over to the VIP area allowed me to see the Beast Lord, who was supposed to be calmly sitting in his chair, leaning on the railings and staring a hole straight into the stadium. Roche, who'd been standing by beside him, was practically sharing Goldalfa's expression; he was staring at her completely dumbfounded.

「A Black Heavenly Tiger?」

Goldalfa's mind had finally started to move again, but he was still clearly shaken, as his voice was dry and raspy.

「To think that I would end up facing off against none other than one of the legendary tribe's members...」

His words were but mutters under his breath.

「But... how did I not notice it till just now...?」

(Go?)

『Do it!』

Fran took advantage of the fact that he was wide open and initiated an assault.

「She vanishe-ugghhh!」

「Shmph!」

「Guhhhh! W-What...!?!」

To Goldalfa, it looked as if Fran had flat out vanished, but in truth, all she'd done was dash up to him. The Black Lightning within and all around her pierced right through the God-tier blacksmith made armour he was wearing and began scorching his flesh.

Awakening had made Fran ridiculously powerful.

It had given her enough speed to circumvent Goldalfa's super fast reflexes and enough power to completely shatter his defenses.

「Gaaah! Gruhhhh!」

「Haaaaah!」

Fran dashed around him and continued delivering blow after blow.

From this, one could observe that the Brilliant Lightning Rush skill's power came not only from its sheer speed, but also its ability to allow incredibly sharp turns.

The maneuvers we were pulling off were difficult even at much lower speeds. The laws of physics would get in the way and disallow us from actualizing our ideas.

But the skill made it so that they didn't apply; engraving the core attributes of the lightning element into her body had allowed her to temporarily

overcome them.

Our actions were much like those of Zefmate's. We assaulted our opponent while making use of our ability to move around at exceedingly high speeds.

That said, the actual resulting attacks couldn't really be compared to one another, as Fran far exceeded Zefmate in all three of power, speed, and turn rate.

Thinking about Zefmate made me realize something, something that seemed to explain why Blue Catkin hated Black Catkin as much as they did. It must've been because of this, because evolved Black Catkin could do everything evolved Blue Catkin could, but better.

「H-How incredible! I can't even tell what's going on! Fran's disappeared, and seemingly started attacking Goldalfa with a series of bands of black light! I can only tell he's getting hit because he keeps groaning in pain!」

It was as the caster commented. Each of Fran's movements was leaving a trail of black light in its wake. The sheer number of them almost made it seem like there was a giant dark dome around the rhinokin.

Loud metallic clangs rang throughout the arena as Fran smashed me into Goldalfa's Phoenix Armour over and over again. The damage we inflicted onto the armour was more or less completely nulled, as it regenerated at a rate far faster than we could damage it. However, that only applied to the armour, and not Goldalfa himself. His flesh wasn't able to recover quickly enough from our consecutive strikes; we were managing to stack up damage on him.

It was something that couldn't be helped, as the Black Lightning would course throughout his body each and every single time he tanked one of Fran's strikes.

「Ngaaaaahh!」

We managed to hurt him so badly in just the span of a few seconds that he ended up completely giving up on defense. Instead, he swung his axe at us

before desperately launching shockwave in all directions. It seemed to be an action he'd done in hopes of hitting us so he could attempt to make a comeback.

But it was too slow. Fran dodged it with ease by simply lowering her stance to avoid the incoming axe, an action that served to evidence that she'd totally seem him through.

Likewise, she dealt with the shockwave with ease as well; all she needed to do to neutralize it was deploy a Perfect Barrier with her full power. The sheer amount of magical energy she put into the act caused the barrier to be unable to last for more than just an instant, but that was all she needed. She didn't have any issues timing it well enough to completely negate Goldalfa's attack.

Her relentless assault continued despite his struggles.

「Guhh... nrhhhh...」

The short exchange of blows caused Goldalfa to realize that it was no longer possible for him to hit Fran, and so, he folded his arms and shrank the size of his frame as much as he could while making sure he protected his head. The stance almost seemed to resemble the kind one would take after accidentally ramming one's face into something on accident and recoiling in pain, but, it wasn't actually one that illustrated a will to surrender. In fact, it was something he'd done in order to win — he'd completely abandoned even the notion of attacking and instead focused all his resources on his defenses.

『Damn it, that's one of the Beast Lord's direct subordinates for you! He knows exactly what our weakness is!』

Brilliant Lightning Rush was an incredible skill, but as one could expect, it naturally came with a cost. It placed an abnormally large burden on Fran's body, and constantly ate away at both her health and mana. It didn't require as much compensation as something like Latent Potential Release, but again, it wasn't what I could call risk free.

Rumina had told us that all of the Ten Original Tribes in fact had their innate skills function in a similar manner. The power of the Divine Beast was far too great for a mere Beastkin to sustain and would lead to death if left unchecked, hence why the ability was instantiated in the form of a toggleable skill as opposed to simply granted permanently.

The Beast Lord had naturally awakened to one of the Ten Original Powers, and thus, there was no way Goldalfa, as one of his guards, would be able to go without knowing about its weaknesses. He knew that using the skill was effectively the same thing as slowly killing oneself, hence why he'd chosen to attempt to stall Fran out.

「Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!」

「Ngggh.....Ugghh!」

Goldalfa didn't have that much health left, but Fran had yet to show any sign of letting up.

Brilliant Lightning Rush was definitely a risky skill to use, and not something one could keep up for too long.

Or at least that's how things it would've been under normal circumstances.

Fran's case, our case, wasn't like any other. Fran's mana pool wasn't just limited by her own mana. She could draw from mine should she need it. I was also capable of healing her and topping her health off whenever.

As a result, we were able to sustain the skill for far longer than Goldalfa expected.

「How are you... still goingarrh!?!」

That said, it wasn't like we had any real extra breathing space. The rate at which Fran's HP was draining was steadily increasing. We'd never kept the skill going for any extended period of time, so we only now learned that its resource consumption would gradually increase with the duration for which we sustained it.

Goldalfa's HP dropped to less than 10% of its total value.

All we needed to finish him was just one last push, one that was rather difficult for us to pull off. Fran's HP had started dropping so quickly that I needed to heal her every couple seconds.

It was something that she herself had noticed as well.

(Master, will end now!)

It seemed that we could've actually just deactivated the skill and fought him normally from here on out. In fact, that was probably the better option to take if we just wanted to go for the win.

But Fran didn't.

She wanted to win as through the use of her power as a Black Heavenly Tigerkin in order to put her tribe's pride and sheer willpower on display.

That was simply a choice that she decided to make, a choice she'd long set in stone.

(Will hit with more powerful attack.)

『You sure? There really isn't enough room for that here.』

(No problem!)

『You really sure?』

(Nn!)

『Well, if you say so... I'll focus on defense.』

(Thanks.)

『Urushi, go hit him once real quick then run the hell away.』

(Woof!)

Urushi did exactly as we instructed and harassed Goldalfa a bit by suddenly jumping out of his shadows, hitting him once, and jumping back in before teleporting into the barrier that protected the tournament's spectators.

Fran immediately shouted the name of an incredibly powerful attack the moment she verified that he'd retreated to safety.

「Black Lightning Advent!」

A jet black thunderbolt as wide as a drum of liquid erupted from Fran's extended palm and swallowed Goldalfa whole before detonating into a massive electrical explosion.

Our eardrums nearly burst as the sound waves created by the attack assaulted them.

「Nn...!」

I protected Fran by activating Perfect barrier, but the blast was far too powerful for that alone to hold it back. The sheer resulting force sent Fran flying into the barrier that protected the audience. To it, her mass was about as insignificant as that of a single leaf. Dust assaulted our bodies as hundreds upon hundreds of pebbles flew at us faster than would bullets. A wave of heat then rammed its way into us, one so hot it would've turned Fran to ash had she been unprotected.

『Shit! We're eating this much recoil even though I put up a goddamn barrier!?!』

Countless bolts of lightning raged through the arena and writhed within it as would a swarm of dragons, an assault Fran herself only managed to survive due to her Lightning Damage Nullification skill. I'd protected myself with a barrier, so I managed to get away with just a minimal bit of damage.

(Went bit overboard.)

Whaddya mean a bit... Is what I would've liked to say had I been sure that our strike had managed to finish Goldalfa off.

The audience began to stir as the attack's after effects finally started to fade.

There was a massive crater where Goldalfa had been standing just moments ago. The stage itself had already gotten pretty messed up because of all the backs and forths the two fighters had experienced, but what Fran had just done was on a whole 'nother scale. She'd completely obliterated over 70% of the arena.

Goldalfa was at the crater's center, his body reduced to nothing but a mangled carcass. He was on both knees, his head hanging forward. His body didn't seem to twitch even in the slightest.

We couldn't see him all that well because the sheer amount of heat caused by Fran's attack had caused his surroundings to distort. The dirt around him had been raised to such a temperature that it'd even transformed into red-hot glass. The Rhinokin's prized Phoenix Armour was crumbling, with half of it already gone. It seemed to have been damaged so badly that it'd become unable to repair itself. All visible parts of his body had long been turned to charcoal. I was no longer able to see the thing that had formerly been Goldalfa as a entity that bore life.

「Got him?」

『Oh god damn it Fran! You're not supposed to say that, you're totally jinxing it right now!』

「Nn?」

Fortunately, my idiotic worries were needless. The pillars placed around the arena began to glow, and seemed to cause Goldalfa's remains to do the same.

The mangled corpse was returned to its former state after about ten seconds. His body was once again in perfect shape. It was like he'd never been wounded to begin with.

Wait, so... does that mean it's over...?

「And it looks like the Cradle of Time has activated, meaning Goldalfa has lost the round by meeting his demise! Ladies and gentlemen, our winner today is none other than Fran, The Magic Sword Girl!」

204. The Events that Took Place The Day Before the Tournament Began

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The Events that Took Place The Day Before the Tournament Began

The Martial Arts Tournament was set to begin tomorrow.

Fran, Urushi, and I were doing the usual thing and honing our skills within the Eastern Dungeon.

『Hey Fran, I think it's about time you take a break.』

「Little longer.」

『You sure? You seem to be losing focus.』

Fran had pushed herself to fight for such an extended duration that she'd started to show signs of mental exhaustion. She'd started to accumulate a good bit of damage from both mistakes in and out of combat. In other words, she'd started getting worse at both noticing and disarming the traps she came across.

「...Little bit longer.」

In spite of all that, she ended up refusing. She simply bit down on her lips and narrowed her eyes as she scoured the area for another enemy to engage.

『Haaaahh... Fine. Just a little longer then.』

I was a bit concerned that she wouldn't be in her best possible condition for the prelims tomorrow if she pushed herself any further, but ended up complying regardless.

In a sense, being in top form was also exactly why she was pushing herself as hard as she was in the first place. Fran wanted to evolve before ultimately having to face off against the Beast Lord, but she wasn't showing

any signs of doing so. Hence, she only ended up feeling the need to push herself even harder.

『Would you happen to have a moment?』

We suddenly heard Rumina's voice resound through our minds as we continued pushing ourselves onwards.

「Rumina?」

Hearing her voice just pop out of nowhere had left me a bit surprised, but I soon managed to calm down as she just seemed to be using something that resembled my telepathic abilities.

『I have a matter I wish to discuss with you, and would like you to pay me a visit if you do not mind it.』

「Got it.」

Though I was a bit curious as to why she went as far as to call for us, I ended up deciding to take her up on her offer immediately. Her timing was pretty good seeing as how Fran needed a break, and she was also kinda just a teleport away, so there wasn't really any inconvenience associated with us dropping by.

Rumina greeted us as we teleported into the room she'd made for us.

「I... welcome you...」

「Nn.」

『Well, you did tell us to drop by, so.』

「Indeed I did...」

Something about her seemed a bit off. She appeared to have less magical energy than usual, and kinda just gave off a bit of a frailer impression overall. It'd almost seemed like something bad had happened to her.

「Rumina, doing okay?」

「I apologize for worrying you. You need not mind me, I am simply feeling a tad exhausted.」

『You sure you're okay?』

「I am fine. More importantly, I would like to offer the two of you a trial. Have you any interest in it?」

『You said a trial?』

「A trial indeed. I cannot describe its details, but would like for you to partake in it. What say you?」

The fact that she couldn't tell us any details was kinda fishy, but I highly doubted that Rumina would try throwing us under a bus or luring us into a trap.

「Be warned, the trial will be an exceedingly dangerous one.」

「Got it.」

Fran didn't seem to doubt Rumina even in the slightest, as so she immediately nodded and acknowledged that she knew that she was going to be getting herself into something difficult should we accept.

I figured that there was practically no way Fran was going to choose to refuse Rumina's request given how close the two had become, but ended up deciding to quickly double check her intentions regardless.

『You want to take her up on this whole trial thing, Fran?』

「Of course.」

『You 100% sure? The fact that Rumina's going out of her way and saying its dangerous probably means it's really dangerous.』

「Don't care.」

It looked like Fran had already made up her mind and wasn't planning on changing it.

「I take it you wish to accept my trial then?」

「Nn!」

Rumina had us head over to the massive room in which she'd sparred with Fran.

Entering it caused us to catch sight of something that left us feeling completely overwhelmed.

『Is that supposed to be a magic circle?』

「Huge.」

The enormous magic circle filled basically what was the entire 100 meter wide room. It was created in such a way that its parts extended into a sort of radial pattern with its point of origin at the room's center. The independent pieces all came together at the edges to form a single massive design.

It wasn't like any of the other magic circles I'd seen to date. None of them were on this big a scale.

I couldn't even begin to fathom what this one was supposed to be used for.

「I shall now proceed to summon a Magic Beast. Demonstrate to me that you are capable of defeating it.」

Rumina's voice almost seemed to sound like it was coming over an intercom or PA System.

「Nn. Got it.」

So our trial was to defeat some sort of Magic Beast? Why that of all things? We'd been doing that for quite some time already. Was fighting the thing she was summoning going to benefit us in some particular manner...?

「Very well. Begin!」

The magic circle began shining as an incredible amount of magical energy suddenly started getting concentrated into the circle's centerpoint. Strong winds swirled around the room in response, winds powerful enough to make a complete mess of Fran's hair. She had no choice but to squint in order to observe the energy as it took on it lumped itself together.

A single magic beast revealed itself once the magical energy that formed it finally dimmed and vanished.

「Hah...hah...」

Controlling all that energy had caused Rumina to begin panting rather heavily.

「Rumina. Something wrong?」

「I... am fine... Mind me not...」

The fact that she didn't sound even the slightest bit fine served to evidence that the act of summoning whatever it was she wanted us to fight had taken one hell of a lot of magical energy.

What appeared before us was a humanoid creature with its entire body dyed jet black. The dark miasma enveloping its body made it difficult for me to make out its form, but I assumed it was something not too different from a Kobold given that its head and whatnot seemed to be covered in fur.

However, appraising it allowed me to determine that it was something so fiendish and powerful that a Kobold couldn't even begin to compare. It looked even more powerful than the pillbug we fought the other day. It didn't have too many skills, but, its stats were ridiculously high, as if to compensate.

Species: Evil Manbeast. (Evil Apparition-type Magic Beast)

Level: 50

HP: 822

MP: 927

STR: 335

VIT: 402

AGI: 1028

INT: 12

MGC: 809

DEX: 166

Skills

Evasion: Lv 9

Fang Techniques: Lv 8

Fang Arts: Lv 8

Presence Detection: Lv 9

Instantaneous Regeneration: Lv 8

Blink: Lv 8

Magic Resist: Lv 5

Reinforced Fur

Innate Skills

Awakening

Description: Unknown

Huh... It apparently had the Awakening skill...?

「Defeat it... and absorb its magic stone...」

I knew it! This was something she'd summoned so she could help Fran evolve!

Still, summoning it had totally exhausted her. It seemed that not even a Dungeon Master could pull off something like this without having to really push themselves.

Fran seemed to understand that, as her expression had transformed and become more determined than it had ever been before.

「Master, let's go!」

『Let's do it!』

Fran immediately drew me and engaged the magic beast in close quarters combat.

「Gaaaaurouooooououuu!」

「Mmph!」

「Gagauuu!」

「Kuh!」

Holy crap was that thing fast. It moved so quickly it was able to avoid Fran's attacks with ease and even throw in a few counters. Moreover, it also basically instantly healed all the wounds we inflicted upon it.

「Gaaoooooruuuuu!」

「Mmph.」

『And now it's gone and awakened!』

The entire magic beast's body seemed to swell up in size. Most notable were its fangs and claws, both of which doubled in length. It'd gotten stronger stat-wise as well. Its agility in particular had totally skyrocketed so much that I'd actually lost the ability to keep up with it. Its hands almost seemed to disappear each and every single time they moved.

We were able to fight it because we had access to Sword Lord Arts, but, its obscenely high agility stat made engaging it extremely difficult. Its Presence Detection skill made it so we couldn't even hit it if we tried getting the jump on it by teleporting.

I figured we'd have an easier time hitting it if we just used magic, but, it had access to the Magic Resistance skill, so we wouldn't be able to deal any real damage to unless we hit it really hard. Knowing that, I tried hitting it with an Inferno Burst immediately after it avoided one of Fran's attacks.

「Gugyaa!」

Tsk.

I clicked my tongue. The attack worked, but it didn't work well enough. The magic beast had both a high health pool and a decent magic stat. Those two factors, when combined with its Magic Resistance, meant we wouldn't be able to finish it off in a single strike, which in turn meant that it would just end up regenerating.

「Troublesome.」

『I know right? It looks we won't be able to finish it off unless we kill it in a single blow.』

「Nn.」

We quickly devised a plan to deal with the situation, albeit a rather simple one. Urushi and I were to slow down the magic beast with surprise attacks and Telekinesis respectively while Fran went in for the kill.

The plan's execution went pretty well. Fran initiated by attempting one of her sword drawing techniques, which caused the magic beast to attempt to dodge, but Urushi latched onto its foot while I restrained it, and so, she ended up landing her strike.

It was a full forced, reckless blow. I figured there was no point in conserving my durability, as we needed to end the battle immediately if we actually wanted to win it. Thus, I threw in as many skills as I possibly could in an attempt to use my entire mana pool. We also activated a whole bunch of different elemental blades despite the fact that doing so was sure to damage me so badly I'd end up temporarily unusable. Specifically, Fran activated lightning, while I pitched in with both wind and fire.

「Haaah!」

『Let's do this!!!!』

「Gyaggyaaooooohhhh!」

The magic beast panicked and attempted to do everything it could to escape us.

But it was already far too late.

Fran's strike had already landed and seperated the Magic Beast's left and right halves. I'd felt its magic stone, which had been located within its heart, split into two cleanly cut pieces.

Our attack had drained the hell out of my durability. I had less than 20% remaining. Cracks ran down my blade as it slowly began to crumble. Still, it was worth it, especially since selling what was left of the creature we'd just killed was sure to earn us a pretty penny.

Both the considerations I just mentioned were honestly nothing but mere afterthoughts. I was instead much more focused on my skill page. That is, I was hurriedly looking through my memory in hopes of finding the skill I'd just obtained.

『Where the hell... Found it!』

The skill I'd been looking for and the skill I just found was Awakening.

『We did it Fran!』

「Nn...!」

『Should I swap it in right away?』

「Please.」

I equipped the skill, thereby allowing Fran to make use of it. I felt like I was soaring above the clouds, but did my best to stay calm so I could immediately inform her that the deed had been done.

『Should be done now. You feel anything?』

「Nn... Can use it.」

Her affirmation doubled as confirmation that she was now finally capable of evolving. Given that, I settled down and silently waited for her to do the deed.

「Fu... Hah... Nn! Awakening!」

She took a couple deep breaths before activating the skill and causing the amount of magical energy within her to skyrocket.

『Looks like it's working!』

「Woof!」

Black lightning started erupting from within her and rampaging through her surroundings. The storm of both electricity and wind that engulfed the room forced both Urushi and I to retreat from where she was while pondering whether or not she was actually okay.

『Hey Fran! You alright!?』

「Ruff ruff!」

She didn't respond even though we called out to her, which in turn led me to worry that she'd lost control of her abilities.

Fortunately, that wasn't actually the case. The raging energies around her eventually settled down to reveal her with both her tail and ears completely straightened out. A second look made me realize that her tail was actually a bit different how it normally was. It'd become striped, with alternating shades of its usual black and a slightly lighter, ash-grey shade. The difference between the two colours was so minute that I could only barely make it out because of the magical illumination that filled our surroundings.

「Gmph...」

Large teardrops began flowing down Fran's cheeks.

Her dearest wish had just been fulfilled.

I didn't need to ask to know that countless memories and emotions were swirling about within her.

I remained silent as I approached her and gently, telekinetically stroked her back.

She grabbed onto my handle and used me to support herself as she began to cry.

She eventually ended up collapsing forward and pressing her forehead against the flat of my blade. Feeling both her warmth and pulse almost made me want to join her in crying despite the fact that I was a sword.

In fact, I wasn't the only one that'd started feeling that way, as Urushi, who'd snuggled up against her, had started to tear up as well.

「Whimper.」

「...」

It took about 10 minutes for Fran to finally stop crying.

She rubbed her eyes, stood up, and showed a bit of a shy smile before rubbing Urushi's head, as if to hide the fact that she felt embarrassed.

「Sorry.」

『Don't worry about it. We know how much this means to you.』

「Thanks.」

『Alright, how about we check everything over real quick?』

「Nn!」

Fran sniffled one last time before tightening up her expression. She looked down her hands as she opened and closed them in order to feel out exactly what about her had changed.

『Well? How do you feel?』

「Nn... Overflowing with power.」

『Hmmm, well you don't look too different, so I guess I'd better check your sta-WHAT THE FUCK!?!』

Seeing Fran's stat page force me me into a state of shock.

Her agility and magic stats had both been boosted by 300. Her HP and Mana had both been completely topped off, and she'd even gained an innate

skill by the name of Brilliant Lightning Rush, all seemingly because she'd used Awakening.

『Evolving sure does come with some pretty impressive looking effects. Wait a second...』

Glancing over Fran's stat page again had caused me to do a double take. I'd assumed that she'd turned into a Black Tigerkin because that was what Rumina was, but I was wrong.

『Hey Fran, you uh... kinda just became a Black Heavenly Tigerkin.』

The Black Heavenly Tigerkin were legendary Beastkin that were by no means weaker than the Golden Flame Lionkin that held the Beast Lord's throne.

『I wonder what all this is supposed to mean...』

「...」

『What do you think, Fran?』

「...」

『Fran...? Urushi...? Hello? Hellllllo...?』

「...」

「...」

Both my companions had suddenly gone dead silent.

Taking a second glance at them made me realize that they'd completely stopped moving too. They weren't even so much as twitching or anything like that at all. They were simply unmoving. It was almost like someone had stopped time, and that someone couldn't have possibly been me given that I hadn't used Space/Time magic at all.

「The hell's going on?」

Darkness came out of nowhere and swallowed my surroundings as I asked the question. I couldn't process what'd happened. It was almost like my sense of sight had been completely turned off.

T-The hell just happened? Are Fran and Urushi both still fine?

「Don't worry. Nothing's happened to them. I've just temporarily stopped time for everyone but you.」

『Huh? What?』

「You sure have gone and done it now... I never would've thought it was possible for you to allow her to evolve the way you did.」

『Huh?』

「You meeting her, that young Black Catkin girl, was nothing short of a miracle in and of itself already. I never expected the two of you to get this far.」

『Uhhh. So who exactly are you?』

「I'm one of the individuals governing over this world and its ways. I guess the most understandable way for me to explain my identity to you would be for me to name myself as Goddess of Chaos.」

205. The Goddess of Chaos

Chapter 205. The Goddess of Chaos

The Goddess of Chaos

I couldn't help but stare at the woman that'd called herself the Goddess of Chaos.

Her claim was one that was a little bit more than a little bit hard to believe. The Goddess of Chaos was supposed to be the goddess that gave rise to dungeons, and thus, I'd expected her to be someone that exuded an air of magnificence, dignity, and grandeur.

The woman in front of me, however, gave off what was more or less the exact opposite impression. To me, she looked like an absurdly beautiful woman with tanned skin and silvery hair. The only air she gave off was one of an adult woman's seductiveness; her outfit was composed of nothing more than just a few thin pieces of cloth.

However, she'd proven herself capable of stopping time for everyone but me, an act that should've been impossible for anything but a god. Realizing that caused my gut to promptly inform me that I'd gotten myself into something troublesome.

「Wow, troublesome? That's mean of you.」

『Huh?』

W-Wait, can she read my mind!?

「I can.」

『I-I'm so sorry!』

Aw fuck. I hope I didn't piss her off. Angering her seems like a really bad idea given how divine retribution is apparently actually a thing here.

I'm sorry! I swear I don't think of you as troublesome. In fact, I hold nothing but respect for you. I'm telling the truth here! Having the opportunity to meet someone as beautiful as yourself had totally moved me and thrown my thoughts into disarray!

「Kufufufufu. There's no point trying to flatter me. I can tell exactly what you're really feeling just by looking at your soul.」

『Awww shit. Uhh...』

「People like you are pretty rare. Most people have a bit more respect for the gods.」

『Oh come on. I do respect you! I swear I do!』

「I don't particularly mind how you feel about me. I'm not petty enough to be angered by anything that insignificant.」

『S-so does that mean you're not going give me divine retribution for being blasphemous or anything like that...?』

「Don't worry about it.」

Oh thank fucking god! I'd totally expected the gods to be unreasonable tyrants because of the punishment they'd given to the Black Cat Tribe.

「I do have a more dignified appearance. I purposefully only ever send a part of myself into the human realm and mold its form so that it appears like that of a human. It can't really be helped that I don't appear all that god-like as I am now. Likewise, I also attempt to speak the same language as those I descend upon. Speaking of which, I think this is probably the most casual conversation I've had with a mortal to date.」

The fact that she'd only sent a part of herself to see me reminded me of something I'd heard back when I still lived on the Earth. I think people used to say something along the lines of “seeing god's true form will make you lose both your sight and sanity.” That aside though, what was important was

the fact that she'd only taken human form because she'd wanted to talk to me in particular.

「We'd never actually expected any faith from you in the first place, given that you were summoned from another world.」

『Huh? Wait, you guys knew that I was from another world?』

「Of course we did, but let's leave that aside for now and maybe come back to it some other time. There's something much more important I want to talk to you about.」

『I'm guessing you want to talk about Fran and how she's evolved?』

「You got it.」

Hmm... Well, a goddess literally just went out of her way to talk to me, so, I guess that pretty much confirms that the Black Cat Tribe really is suffering from some sort of divine retribution.

「Exactly. The Black Cat Tribe has committed a mortal sin, and thus, we've made it more difficult for them to evolve.」

『So you're here to talk about the method I used to make Fran evolve...?』

「Looks like you've gotten straight to the point. That's right. The method you used was one we'd never accounted for. It's outside all our predictions, and honestly speaking, quite problematic.」

I mean, I knew we kinda cheated the system, but I never would've thought what we did was bad enough to merit divine intervention. Wait, shit, does that mean Fran's g-

「Don't worry. I won't do anything to harm her, nor will I revert her to her original state.」

W-whew. Well, I guess that means we've at least managed to dodge the bullet — not that we were actually totally scot-free just yet.

「So, have you figured out why I came to see you in particular?」

『Uhhhh... Because I cheated the system?』

「Nope. That isn't the only issue I came to discuss with you.」

『Huh? Really?』

「I wouldn't have bothered descending if that was all there was to it.」

Wait, what? What exactly was the issue then?

「Naturally, that isn't to say that you cheating the system poses us no issues altogether, as it means that you're defying the very principles the world runs on.」

『The world's principles?』

「Would it be easier for you to understand me if I called the world's principles the system on top of which it's based? Consider, for example, if the entire world was operating within the framework of something like a computer program.」

Oh, so there's like a big overarching system that everything else runs on? I guess that must be where the System Announcer comes from?

「Most beastkin typically learn the Awakening skill upon reaching their level cap. Using the skill allows them to awaken the power that lies within them and prompts them to evolve.」

I guess that means there's actually 5 stages involved in the evolution process? It looks kinda like: Hit level cap -> Unlock Awakening -> Use Awakening -> Draw out latent potential -> Evolve?

「The Black Cat Tribe has been cursed, and thus, as I'm sure you know, its members need to do more than just reach their maximum levels.」

『Yeah, I'm following you since that's kinda how things went with Fran.』

「She managed to bypass the principles set, obtain the Awakening skill, and evolve. It seemed that she was a rather talented individual as well, as she'd acquired the skill for herself with just a single use of it. What concerns me is that the exact same thing may continue to happen going forward.」

『Oh, I get it. So what you're trying to say is that anyone could evolve so long as they just equipped me.』

「Yeah, and that's exactly the problem. There would be no point in the divine retribution if equipping you allowed any and all to bypass it, and that's simply not something I can overlook.」

The goddess stared right at me as she spoke.

Wait, doesn't that kinda maybe mean that I might just be neck deep in shit?

206. Of Sin and Retribution

Chapter 206. Of Sin and Retribution

Of Sin and Retribution

I returned the goddess' gaze as I felt a fit of nervousness wash over me, to which she responded by raising a pair of fingers and speaking another line.
[1]

「The Black Catkin are shackled, no, cursed, precisely because they'd incurred divine retribution. There are two manners in which this curse of theirs can be undone, each with their own unique conditions.」

I-I guess that must mean I'm not totally screwed? Whew! God damn, she had me shivering in my boots for a second there.

「The first of the two possibilities requires a single individual to slay either a single Evil Being ranked in at A or higher, or a thousand weaker ones. Fulfilling one of these two conditions releases that individual in particular from the curse, and allows them to evolve.」

Wait, is it really okay for me to know that? I could've sworn Rumina wasn't allowed to say anything about it. Hadn't the gods like totally gone out of their way to obscure the fact that Black Catkin could even evolve? Like I could've sworn they flat out deleted it from everyone's memory.

「Your wielder has already evolved. Rumina isn't restricted from discussing the topic with any other evolved Black Catkin, so she's most likely going to tell you once time unfreezes regardless. Given that, I decided that I might as well tell you right now since that was what we were talking about anyway.」

『O-Oh, I see.』

But like, Urushi and I were kinda both there too, and neither of us were Black Catkin, let alone evolved ones, so wouldn't Rumina ultimately not actually have to chance to tell Fran about the Black Cat Tribe's

circumstances? It seemed that they wouldn't reach our ears even if the two ended up being able to discuss them amongst themselves too.

I mean, I'm not complaining or anything. I'm totally down for soaking up information because the goddess forgot she shouldn't tell me or decided to be loose lipped or something.

「It's fine. You're allowed to tell any familiars you summon whatever you want, so the dog doesn't count. And you're one of my kin, so you don't count either.」

Welp, she totally just read me like a book again. Wait. Did she just say what I thought she said? I kinda felt like I just happened to hear something that totally blew my mind.

『Did uh... you just say that I'm one of your kin?』

「Well, it would technically be more precise to say that I am one of the many individuals bound to you as kin.」

『C-Could you tell me a bit more about all that?』

「Nope, since we have to finish talking about evolution.」

Ugh... I mean I guess she's right, but god damn did she get me curious.

「The other possible scenario requires the Black Cat Tribe to defeat either a S ranked Evil Being, or one of the Evil God's kin without any assistance. Performing said feat would free not only the battle's participants, but the entire Black Cat Tribe from their curse. They would once again be regain their status as one of the Ten Original Tribes.」

Man, redeeming the whole race sounds kinda tough.

「It's only fair given the graveness of their sin.」

『So uh, what exactly did they do to deserve all this anyways?』

I'd only just realized that the goddess kept going on and on about grave and mortal sins, but had actually refrained from mentioning exactly what it was the Black Cat Tribe had done.

「One of the Black Cat Tribe's chiefs, or rather, one of the former Beast Lords, had undone the Evil God's seal and allowed his clan's members to absorb its power in order to bolster their combat prowess. It was a dangerous ploy, and one that had half succeeded.」

Wait, is absorbing the Evil God's power actually different from turning into an Evil Being?

「It's far worse than just that. A fair portion of the royal family's members evolved into what I can only call a half Evil God, half-beastkin being. Half of the Black Catkin had succeeded in absorbing the Evil God's power. However, many also became Evil Beings, lost control of themselves, and ended up being put down by their tribesman. We, the gods, couldn't stand the sight of the Evil God's powers being put the use in such a selfish manner. Thus, we eliminated the royal family and any other individuals that had obtained the Evil God's power before administering the survivors with a punishment, one that hindered their ability to evolve.」

Well uh... apparently they did something much worse than what I'd been expecting them to do. Like, using the Evil God's power to evolve into creatures that were effectively demi-gods clearly made it seem like they were picking fights with the actual gods. Like, I'm not really sure what else they'd expected to happen.

『Alright, I get that what they did was pretty serious.』

「You existing in your current state allows the Black Cat Tribe's members to evolve without first atoning for their sins.」

The goddess didn't glare me, but I kinda felt like she wasn't exactly what you could call happy with me given the tone of her voice.

「I understand that the Black Cat Tribe's members may consider evolution to be one of their greatest desires. That, however, fails to justify exploiting a

loophole in the system and evolving without first making up for their mistakes. Continuing to circumvent their punishment is an act that can be regarded as yet another sin, one that would incur an even greater punishment.」

『An even greater punishment? Care to uh... elaborate?』

「Extinction.」

『T-That's kinda...』

「I was just talking in terms of what ifs. I want you to understand just how serious the topic at hand is.」

『A-Alright, I get it.』

My interactions with the goddess led me to the conclusion that the gods were both terrifying and a huge pain in the ass to deal with. Yeah uh, her going out of her way to talk to me like this definitely meant I'd gotten myself into some deep ass shit.

『So uh, what exactly should I do? I mean, I understand that I shouldn't use my powers to evolve anyone other than Fran, and I can swear I won't.』

「I know that you really do mean what you just said, but, that alone isn't enough. The fact stands that you're a magical item capable of granting your wielder the ability to use the the Awakening skill, an item I cannot possibly allow to exist.」

She can't allow me to exist? Does that mean she's going to...

「Calm down. I don't have any intention of doing anything as violent as eliminating you.」

『A-Alright!』

Whew! Holy shit, and I glad she's telling me that. She had me really worried there for a second. Man, that situation just there was probably the most dangerous one I'd ever been in.

「I'll fix everything right away.」

Snap

『Huh? What'd you just do...?』

The Goddess of Chaos snapped her fingers and caused my blade to momentarily begin shining. I could tell that she'd done something to me, but I wasn't too sure exactly what that something was.

「I've made it so you're bound to your wielder.」

『Bound?』

「Yup. I've made it so you can only have one wielder at once. No one else will be able to equip you until your current wielder dies. Anyone that forcibly does so anyway will receive retribution.」

『Whaddya mean by retribution?』

「Anyone that tries equipping you will be met with a form of punishment. Those that don't know of your circumstances will just be slightly shocked. Those that do know of your circumstances will likely lose their lives as compensation.」

That's hella terrifying, but it kinda didn't really matter anyways because I hadn't planned on letting anyone other than Fran equipping me to begin with. Hence, the end result was basically like me gaining a built in anti-theft device.

「I'll also be taking the Awakening skill away from you just in case, and making it impossible for you to obtain it going forward.」

I was a bit disappointed by the fact that I wouldn't get to use the skill myself at all, but, I didn't really mind because I didn't want to disobey the goddess, especially given how thorough she was being.

「Awakening only works on Beastkin to begin with, as it allows them to unleash the powers that lie dormant within them. There's no point in you

using it to begin with.」

『Oh. Right.』

Welp, I guess there really isn't any point in me having the skill at all then.

「I'll also make it so Rumina won't be able to ever summon another Magic Beast capable of Awakening — not that she'd be able to for several hundred years anyway, given how much it's exhausted her.」

『Oh, so does that mean Rumina was only all frail and stuff because she had to summon that magic beast?』

「That's right. Rumina, as one of my kin, has been restricted in her ability to aid Black Catkin. She's unable to speak about the subject, but that isn't nearly all. I've also banned her from creating items capable of conferring the Awakening skill, and made it so that she'll destroy herself if she helps any Black Catkin fulfill their evolution conditions.」

『Huh?』

Wait, you serious!? Doesn't that mean Rumina's going to—

「Calm down. She's not dead, or will she die from what she's done.」

『Even though Fran's managed to evolve?』

「Yes, and though she provided assistance, it wasn't direct assistance. She didn't directly give the girl what she needed. She'd instead helped you help her. She's lost a great deal of her power as a result, but she won't die.」

Whew. That's good. Fran would've felt really bad if she'd learned that her evolving had caused Rumina's death.

「That said, I cannot allow the same thing to occur in the future, which is why I've now restricted her even further.」

Rumina seemed to have pushed herself quite a bit to make everything come together the way it did. I guess this also means that she wasn't kidding

when she'd asked Fran if she'd be willing to kill her in order to evolve.

「It would be unfair of me to take a skill away from you without compensating you in any which way, so I'll switch your Awakening skill out for a different one.」

The goddess snapped her fingers once again.

I immediately looked at my stats because I was curious as to what had changed.

『Uhh... Evolution Concealment?』

「The skill does as its name suggests, and allows one to hide the fact that one has evolved, most notably from other beastkin.」

The Extra Skill I'd obtained seemed like a pretty damned good one. Having people find out about Fran's newfound evolution would probably kick up a huge fuss, so it looked like it'd be one we could put to use immediately.

There was, however, a bit of a problem.

『Err... I think I just lost 5 Self-Evolution Points.』

「Just saying, you caused a problem significant enough to necessitate my interference. It's only natural that I still do take something from you. Just be glad I did you a favour and decided to give you a new skill to replace the one I took away.」

『S-Sorry.』

Eh, you know what, the skill I got was worth it, so I guess I'll just call it even, especially since I doubted anything would come out of me bitching and complaining anyways.

The goddess nodded as if satisfied after verifying that I wasn't going to voice any more complaints. She then started floating into the air and growing transparent.

「My business here is done, so I'll be taking my leave.」

Realizing that the goddess was totally leaving caused me to immediately begin questioning her.

『Hey wait! There's still something I want to ask you! Just what the hell am I? You must know, right? Given how you said I'm one of your kin and all that?』

I couldn't help but ask her about myself seeing as how she was one of the first people to have a clear idea as to exactly what I was.

「Well... Telling you that isn't something I'm supposed to be responsible for, so I guess I'll just give you a hint. Go meet the god-tier blacksmith that resides in the Beastkin's Country.」

『You mean the one the Beast Lord rules?』

I recalled that Old Man Gallus had stated that all of the god-tier blacksmiths were MIA...

However, the goddess' words seemed to imply that his words hadn't necessarily been correct. Did that mean that the Beast Lord secretly had one serving him or something? Heading to the Beast Lord's country didn't exactly sound easy. It was on a different continent, and led by one of our enemies. There was no way I could go, especially not with Fran in tow seeing as how it'd put her in danger.

「The Blacksmith in question may be able to provide you with additional information, though, I cannot say for sure this will really be the case.」

『So not even you know?』

「I don't. Not even we, the gods, can predict the future.」

『Even though you're gods? Being able to see into the future totally seems like a god-like thing to do...』

「The fact remains that we can't. You, and many others seem to have made the mistake of assuming that gods are capable of determining one's fate and reading into what'll happen later down the road, but that isn't the case. Despite that, many believe in destiny. They think that the gods govern the precise ups and downs of their lives.」

You know, that is kinda true. Even I kinda ended up thinking that me meeting Fran was an act of fate.

「They think that the gods have all under their control, that the world follows a precise, predetermined blueprint.」

『Yeah, I get what you mean. I mean, a lot of people don't actually believe in something that exaggerated, but there are a good deal of people who believe in something kinda along those lines.』

「But you see, there wouldn't be a need for me to appear to you as I had if that were the case.」

『You've got a pretty good point, now that you mention it.』

「Destiny doesn't exist. Fate is nothing but a series of coincidences. What I mean is, you are responsible for what happens to you, regardless of whether that thing happens to be good or bad.」

I guess that means that me meeting Fran was just a coincidence?

「Exactly. You meeting her was just a coincidence. You two being capable of working together as well as you do is also a coincidence. Likewise, you meeting all the right people along the way was also a coincidence, one I would even call a miracle.」

For some odd reason, hearing the goddess' declaration kinda made me feel a bit embarrassed.

「I've already said quite a bit, but I'll throw in one last statement. I, as the goddess of Chaos, am expecting something great from the two of you.」

Her words made me kinda happy, an emotion I actually wasn't really sure whether or not it was okay for me to be feeling given the current circumstances.

「Fufufufu. That's a question I don't know the answer to.」

『Hey, wait up!』

「Farewell. I bid you a nice, healthy dose of chaos.」

The goddess disappeared after voicing one final, sinister-sounding line. I couldn't help but feel as if she'd totally just cursed me.

[1] Localized. What she actually does is raise a finger as she talks. This normally involves placing it near one's face, and in general is an action that's supposed to have a bit of cuteness to it. I couldn't figure out how to make this work in such a way that its meaning could be intuited by an English reader, so I said fuck it.

207. The Black Cat Tribe and the Goddess

Chapter 207. The Black Cat Tribe and the Goddess

The Black Cat Tribe and the Goddess

We headed back over to Rumina shortly after I finished talking to the Goddess.

「I am glad that you have both managed to evolve and remain in good health.」

I'd yet to switch in the Evolution Concealment skill I'd just gotten, so Rumina was immediately able to figure out that Fran had evolved.

「Nn. Thanks.」

「And it appears that your evolution came with quite the pleasant surprise...」

Rumina trailed off and remained silent for a few seconds as she gazed at Fran. Her emotions were clear from the look on her face. She was both pleased and shocked.

「I... I had failed to even fathom the possibility that you would become a Black Heavenly Tigerkin.」

Honestly, I, as a non-beastkin, didn't really understand just how much it meant for one to evolve into a Black Heavenly Tigerkin, and thus, I didn't feel the sense of impact that should've accompanied Fran's ascension even after coming to realize that Rumina had started casting the younger Black Catkin a meek, respectful gaze.

Thinking about it a bit more deeply caused me to realize that she'd basically become the stuff of legends, especially seeing as how even Rumina herself was just a regular Black Tigerkin.

『So what exactly does one need to do in order to evolve into a Black Heavenly Tigerkin in the first place?』

「Hmm... It fortunately appears that I have become capable of explaining Fran's circumstances to you given her evolution.」

Right, I remember the Goddess making mention of that.

「Black Catkin must fulfill three requirements in order to evolve into Black Heavenly Tigerkin. The first two are numerical, and relate to the agility and magic stats in particular. The third is the ability to use Lightning Magic.」

Equipping me allowed Fran to fulfill all necessary conditions, especially seeing as how my Skill Sharing ability made it so that my skills were treated as if they were her own.

「I never did suspect that you would fulfill all necessary conditions despite my awareness of Master's abilities. Rather, I did not expect the conditions to take the bonuses provided by his abilities into account. I believe that you, Fran, are the first Black Heavenly Tigerkin not to be of the royal bloodline.」

『You serious?』

「Indeed I am. I dare say that the two of you encountering one another was nothing short of a miracle.」

『That's what the Goddess said too.』

「You have heard the Goddess speak!? Does that mean you have met with her!?!」

I once again was left feeling a bit bewildered because of how Rumina ended up suddenly drawing closer to Fran with her face painted full of shock. But again, I managed to make a bit of sense out of the situation after thinking it through. Rumina was a Dungeon Master, and therefore, one of the Goddess of Chaos' kin. In other words, there was basically no reason for her not to be a devout believer.

「Not me. Only Master.」

「M-Master, could you please elaborate!？」

Though I was aware of her circumstances, I didn't really get why hearing about my conversation with the goddess had totally gotten the Black Tigerkin all fired up and excited.

Like, seriously, what the hell? I'd been expecting Rumina to resent the Goddess of Chaos given that she seemed to be responsible for the curse that'd been afflicting the Black Cat Tribe for the past 500 odd years. She'd administered a collective punishment that involved pretty much all the tribe's members despite the fact that many of them hadn't deserved to be held responsible. In fact, the decision seemed to have been one made and mandated by the former royal family.

I decided to ask Rumina for a bit of an explanation, which in turn made her switch to an expression that was much more difficult to read.

「I do admit to have entertained the thought on at least one occasion... However, one must consider that the gods differ greatly from us mortals.」

Some gods, like the God of Nature, were so fundamentally different from the races that they held no tolerance for their actions. As a result, the punishments and retributions delivered by gods like the God of Nature were often considered harsh and unjust.

I remember hearing mention of stuff like that back on Earth, and so, I honestly wasn't all that surprised by it. I'd heard many tales of people regarded the gods as unreasonable because the two parties weren't able to come to any sort of mutual understanding. It was only natural that different gods would have different standards, and that many of these standards would vary from the ones mortals would find reasonable.

「The Goddess of Chaos is one of the more understanding gods, as she shares many a similarity with the mortal races.」

The hell's that supposed to mean?

「It was none other than she that deprived the Black Catkin of their ability to evolve and wiped all memories of their evolutions.」

『Wasn't that just her oppressing you guys?』

「I believe it to be the opposite.」

Apparently, the Goddess of Chaos had done a lot for the Black Cat Tribe as a whole. Many of the other gods had demanded that the entire race be purged, but she'd managed to talk them down and negotiate. That is, she managed to get the other gods to agree to a compromise in that allowed them to survive in exchange for a difficult trial and the erasure of any and all memories relating to the Black Cat Tribe's former glory.

「The gods miscommunicated and misunderstood each other. They had only robbed the non-beastkin races of their memories. The few Black Catkin that had avoided the gods' retribution still knew of their evolutionary methods. Likewise, the same applied to all the other Beastkin races. Thus, the Black Cat Tribe found itself capable of passing on its knowledge through works of literature.」

『So how'd all that knowledge and stuff end up getting lost between then and now?』

「That was in fact a result of the actions perpetrated by the new Beast Lord and his subordinates, the Blue Catkin. They stole and erased all the literature and records they could while selling the Black Cat Tribe's members into slavery. They forbade the act of disclosing any information relating to the Black Cat Tribe's evolutionary methods and in doing so, prevented our tribe's newborn members from learning them. The passage of time amplified the effects of their bans and ultimately eliminated the very notion that we Black Catkin were capable of evolution.」

『Alright, I get that. I can totally see why you hate both the Beast Lord and the Blue Catkin, and that all makes sense to me, but, like, there's still one thing I don't get. How do you not resent the Gods for what they've done? Like, seriously. The Divine Punishment they threw at you guys is the whole

reason you guys ended up turning into slaves for what was a whole 500 years.」

「Don't understand either.」

Fran agreed with me given that she'd just learned about everything that happened, but Rumina, who happened to know much more than us, didn't.

「Undoing the Evil God's seal and thereby endangering the entire world is an act that merits none other than our tribe's complete and utter destruction. If given the choice, I would prefer to describe the span of time that has elapsed as a mere 500 years as opposed to an entire 500 years.」

It wasn't until Rumina mentioned literally destroying the entire world that I realized the weight the Black Cat Tribe's sin, and a bit of further thought led me to realize that 500 years wasn't actually all that much here considering there were elves and whatnot.

「I would also venture to claim that we, as a tribe, deserved to lose access to the throne and descend into slavery. Our behaviour was once nothing short of tyrannical, as evidenced by our downfall. We would have been assisted by many a tribe had we been reasonable rulers and beloved by our people. I do pity our tribe's modern members, I lament the need for them to bear their ancestors' sins, but even so, I harbour only the slightest bit of resentment for the gods.」

She, unlike us, didn't really feel that the gods were in the wrong. In fact, she seemed to feel extremely grateful that the Goddess of Chaos had managed to prevent the other gods from driving the Black Cat Tribe to extinction.

「I believe that should function to answer your questions. Might you now be willing to elaborate on the Goddess' words?」

I figured that there wasn't really any point in being all secretive around Rumina, so I decided to just tell her everything I'd been told.

That said, half the stuff the Goddess told me was stuff she definitely already knew, so I kinda expected the conversation to end up revolving around evolution and the fact that the Goddess had jacked my Awakening skill.

『The weird part is that we'd kinda already defeated something that should've counted as an A ranked Evil Being in the past...』

There was no way Rynford wasn't at least an A ranked threat, and we were 100% sure we killed him. Fran not being able to evolve in spite of that didn't really make all that much sense.

「Was that act one you accomplished with the aid of any other individuals?」

「Yeah, we had a few other adventurers help us out.」

「I believe that is why. The condition allows only a single individual to evolve. Thus, the curse should only be undone in the case that one functions to defeat an A ranked Evil Being as an individual.」

In other words, anyone that wanted to evolve would have to clear the trial's conditions without any help.

Rumina suddenly bowed her head and apologized to Fran as I shifted topics and brought up the Black Cat Tribe's sins.

「I am sorry.」

「Nn?」

「I was once in a role akin to that of one of the royal family's advisors. Despite my position, I was unable to convince the royal family's members to cease their actions, but in doing so, incurred their displeasure. Thus, I was removed from my post. I was unable to regain my honor. I became an adventurer and then a Dungeon Master. Since then, I have simply lived, and nothing more.」

「Not your fault.」

「That is not true, not in the slightest! It should have been possible for me to convince them and change their minds!」

Rumina's failure was clearly bothering her, and had likely been on her mind for the entirety of the past 500 years. I could tell that she'd been blaming herself, that she thought it was her fault, and not the gods', that the Black Cat Tribe had been forced to suffer.

That would explain why she was so eager and willing to harm herself in order to help Fran evolve. She definitely had taken a liking to Fran, but that wasn't all. She'd also wanted to atone.

「I would... also like to apologize for putting you in danger's wake.」

Hearing me describe my conversation with the Goddess had caused her to issue yet another apology with her face paled. It seemed she was worried that we'd managed to incur the gods' wrath.

「Not your fault. No mistakes.」

「That is not true. My considerations were far too shallow.」

The look on her face was terrifyingly sincere.

「I mind not facing my own demise, but risking yours is a mistake that that my life alone would not suffice to correct.」

「Rumina, dying not allowed.」

Fran gazed at Rumina with a pained look on her face. Even just thinking about Rumina one day upping and vanishing had made her start feeling a sense of sorrow.

「There was nothing else I could have possibly done for you.」

「Don't need to do anything.」

「I...」

「Staying by my side, more than enough.」

Fran spoke in a soft but clear tone of voice as she latched onto Rumina, hugged her, and buried her face in her chest.

The older Black Catkin directed her gaze down at Fran with a bit of a troubled look on her face, but she ended up gently stroking her back regardless.

「I recall Kiara had once said those precise words.」

「Nn.」

「It is almost as if nothing has changed, despite the passage of over 50 years.」

Both parties ended up smiling awkwardly as soon as they'd calmed down. Neither seemed used to the roles they'd suddenly taken; Fran was unaccustomed to being doted on, whereas Rumina was unaccustomed to being fawned on.

Rumina was a bit tired, so she ended up taking a seat and leaning back into her chair after they separated.

『Oh yeah, Rumina, how are you feeling anyways?』

I recalled the Goddess saying something about how Rumina had exhausted herself or her energies or something. She'd probably been pushing herself real hard.

「It will not take long for I myself to recover. However, I will require a significant amount of time to recover the power that I had been storing up as this dungeon's master.」

The dungeon was going to end up being easier to deal with, but that wasn't actually really a problem at all given that Dias was doing a bunch on his end in order to make sure she didn't end up getting killed.

「I would be more concerned about yourselves than me. Fortunately, it appears that the skill the goddess bestowed to you should allow you to remain unhindered in your activities.」

『I'm pretty sure there's not really much for anyone to be worrying about on our end.』

「Master, am I correct in my understanding that the Goddess' restrictions were applied to you, but not Fran?」

『Yup, pretty much.』

「I believe that should in turn mean that Fran is allowed to share information that relates to the Black Cat Tribe's evolutionary methods.」

『Oh, you too?』

「Indeed.」

『You sure it's okay though? She kinda cheated the system a bit.』

Rumina's conclusion was one I'd come to as well, but I wasn't 100% sure whether or not she'd actually be allowed to talk about it.

「I highly doubt that the Goddess merely overlooked the possibility of Fran disclosing the information you were provided. Did she make any particular mention of actions you were disallowed from taking?」

『Not at all.』

「I cannot possibly claim that I am capable of understanding the gods' thoughts. However, I believe that you are permitted to speak of any fact they do not explicitly restrict you from conveying in situations akin to the one we have at hand. Your ability to discuss the topic with myself should serve as enough evidence to prove my hypothesis.」

I couldn't really tell whether or not we were able to discuss the topic because the system simply happened to work that way, or if it was instead because the Goddess of Chaos had decided to allow it out of goodwill, but

either way, it seemed like we were allowed to convey a fact that had a good chance of plunging the world into chaos if we weren't careful about how we relayed it.

「It would be to your benefit to direct your attention away from the gods and instead towards other beastkin. It is likely that the Beast Lord and the Blue Catkin that serve him will make note of you should you spread your knowledge.」

Her conjecture seemed fairly plausible. We had to be careful with who we told. The most ideal situation would be for us to spread the info through an information network inaccessible to all but Black Catkin.

『Are there like, any Black Catkin-exclusive communities we could try spreading the word to?』

「There should be several within the Beastkin's Country. However, I highly doubt you will find anything more than a slum or village comprised solely of slaves.」

I really did want to go check out the Beastkin's Country, but I felt it was honestly way too dangerous for it to be worth visiting.

「Are you planning to visit it? I believe you did make mention of there being a God-tier Blacksmith.」

『Nah. It's not worth the risk.』

「But might learn more about Master.」

『Doesn't matter. There's only a chance the blacksmith'll be able to tell me anything about me. I can't really see taking that chance to be even remotely worth the amount of danger going there'll put you in.』

「But!」

『It's okay. Don't worry about it. We'll get our hands on more clues about my identity eventually, and I'm pretty sure there are better ways for us to tell other Black Catkin about what they need to do in order to evolve.』

「Nn...」

Again, I really did want to pay the place a visit, but it just wasn't worth it.

Or at least that was what I'd thought at the time. My opinion changed when we learned that the Beast Lord was in fact working to the Black Cat Tribe's benefit. That is, he was eliminating Blue Catkin groups and releasing any enslaved Black Catkin he came across.

One could almost say that he might as well have been raised by a Black Catkin.

We later went on to tell Rumina about what'd happened to Kiara.

It seemed she'd really been lamenting what she'd thought to be Kiara's fate, as hearing the news caused her to immediately break down into tears. She clung to Fran, who'd been patting her on the shoulder, and silently sobbed into the younger girl's perfectly flat chest.

Several minutes passed before she finally stood back up, her face red as a tomato.

「I apologize, I was simply overcome with emotion.」

『Well, least it seemed to be a positive emotion.』

「The information you provided me was truly the most wonderful news I have ever heard, and for that, I thank you.」

Rumina obviously wasn't over the fact that she'd failed to stop the Beast Lord 500 years prior, but she'd at least managed to get that whole Kiara thing off her shoulders. Thanks to that, she managed draw out a happy smile.

「Does the Beast Lord's alignment perhaps denote that you are now capable of disseminating information regarding the Black Cat Tribe's evolutionary methods?」

「Nn.」

The truth of the matter was that we'd actually long told Aurel what we'd learned. I hadn't actually been all that willing to tell him because I feared the gods and their wrath. Fran, however, wasn't able to help herself and ended up spilling the beans.

As a result, I'd basically spent the entire conversation worrying whether or not the Goddess of Chaos would suddenly show up and throw a shitstorm.

I valued Fran's safety over all else, but she didn't feel the same. She valued her tribe much more than her life, and so, I didn't end up being able to stop her.

Fortunately, the gods hadn't deemed our actions as ones befitting any sort of retribution and hadn't shown up.

In fact, the meeting had turned out to be a beneficial one, as Aurel had promised to help us spread the word by making use of the beastkin's information network. It looked like all this continent's beastkin would end up learning the truth if all went well.

「And I presume your newfound knowledge has changed your opinion of whether you wish to visit the Beastkin's Country?」

『Pretty much. All we have to do now is try figuring out whether or not the Beast Lord knows anything about the God-tier Blacksmith we're looking for.』

I was expecting him to know exactly who we were talking about, but you could never really be too sure given that God-tier Blacksmiths were more or less living legends. It was possible that the person we happened to be looking for had holed themselves up somewhere far away from society.

「It appears that you have no choice but to win the first three rounds through any means possible.」

「Leave to me. Will win and ask lots about Kiara and Black Cat Tribe. Will also get permission to visit Beastkin's Country.」

「Would you be willing to deliver to Kiara a souvenir on my behalf?」

「Leave to me.」

『Consider it done.』

It seemed we'd pretty much become dead set on heading over to the Beastkin's Country, with our only blocker being that we needed to win the third round.

I was pretty confident that the goal we'd set was one we'd be able to accomplish. We'd experimented quite a bit with Awakening over the course of the past few days, and in doing so, learned just how powerful a tool it could be.

A huge chunk of the data we'd collected was data that related to Fran's Brilliant Lightning Rush.

It had risks that Rumina had made sure to make us aware of, but its payoffs made it a ridiculously good skill nonetheless. It gave us such a huge boost to speed that it allowed us to compete with A rankers.

The Black Lightning that enveloped Fran's body was ridiculously powerful as well. The sheer amount of destruction it wrought was nothing short of absurd, it could bring a High Ogre to the verge of death with just a single tap. Moreover, it also possessed the ability to pierce through armour and anything else that functioned to a similar effect. Lightning was already an element that centered around the negation of one's defenses, as it would remain perfectly effective in the face of metals and other conductive materials. The Black Lightning took that concept a step further and allowed us to almost completely ignore the tough skin that some magic beasts tended to have. Both these bonuses were passive and applied to all Fran's attacks unless we made the conscious decision to negate them.

Using the ability would slowly eat away at Fran's health and mana, but the costs were, in my opinion, effectively insignificant. The firepower it brought was so immense that it rendered me unable to even imagine a foe capable of tanking her attacks head on.

Conferring with Rumina also allowed us to figure out which skills we'd be best off leveling.

「Will at least try to win third round.」

『But it goes without saying that our goal is of course...』

「Victory!」

『Hell yeah! Let's win this shit and then visit Kiara with our heads held hella high!』

「Nn!」

208. Vs Goldalfa — After

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Vs Goldalfa — After

We were called over to the VIP area in which the Beast Lord was situated shortly after we defeated Goldalfa. We could've actually just refused him, but Fran ended up consenting to the offer because she was offered food.

「There you are.」

「Nn. Wanted to see me?」

「Well yeah, I mean you're one of them legendary Black Heavenly Tigerkin, ain't ya? No way I wouldn't want to check you out after figuring out all that.」

The Beast Lord carefully observed Fran as he spoke, an action that ultimately led him to furrow his brow in confusion.

「Yeah, I don't get it, I'm not really seeing it... At first I thought it was just 'cause you were a bit too far away for me to really tell...」

「I feel the same. She seems just like any other Black Catkin to me.」

The Evolution Concealment skill seemed to be capable of doing one hell of a fine job, as neither Roche nor the Beast Lord could actually tell that Fran had evolved. Both were left in a state of confusion due to the discrepancy between their current impression of her and what they'd witnessed earlier.

「Mind me asking how the hell you've managed to cover it up like that?」

「Your Majesty! Asking a question like that is not only rude, but also a breach of her privacy!」

「O-Oh come on...」

The Beast Lord seemed extremely curious because he couldn't figure out exactly what the hell was going on. That said, I wasn't really planning to let him in the loop. I figured that telling him would probably end up causing us more trouble than it was worth further down the line and that it'd be better for us to refrain from doing so.

Fran, however, disagreed.

「Willing to tell.」

『W-Wait, Fran, hold up!』

(Got an idea.)

『Care to share?』

(Just leave to me.)

『You uh... sure?』

(No issues.)

Fran seemed to be insisting that she knew what she was doing, so I ended up yielding and allowing her to do whatever it was she'd thought up.

「But only under certain condition.」

「Oh? What kinda condition?」

「Looking for God-tier Blacksmith. Will tell if told blacksmith's location.」

Her idea was a pretty good one. The God-tier Blacksmith's location was something extremely valuable, and thus, most likely confidential. In other words, it was unlikely that the Beast Lord would be willing to tell it to Fran under normal circumstances even if he was looking out for the Black Cat Tribe and its members.

His personality seemed to indicate that the opposite was quite possible as well, but one could never really know for sure. Plus, having a bargaining chip was pretty much always better than not.

(Master, activate Principle of Falsehood.)

『Roger that.』

The best part about the idea Fran came up with was that it allowed us to gain at least some information regardless of whether or not the Beast Lord lied. All he needed to do was assent and we had ourselves some profit.

「Agree?」

「...I will leave this decision entirely up to you, Your Majesty.」

「Oh hell no, you're not getting out of this! You think about it too unless you want Royce on our asses for making another dumb decision.」

The Beast Lord ended up deciding to tell us what he knew after discussing it a bit with Roche.

「...Close in a bit.」

「Nn.」

The Beast Lord used his fingers to gesture at Fran in order to tell her to approach him, an act that clearly indicated that he not only knew about the blacksmith in question, but also wanted as few people to hear what he was going to say as possible.

「I'mma just flat out say that the Beastkin's Country's got one.」

He whispered right into Fran's ear. His lips were so close to her that even I started to feel a bit uncomfortable. I felt the urge to chop the filthy things off if they so much as touched Fran.

「Really?」

Fran responded to him as I entertained a rather violent thought.

「Really, but the dude you're looking for is a moody little bastard. He's real hard to deal with, and I can't really say whether or not he'd even be willing to see you.」 [1]

「Still okay as long as told location.」

「He's the type of guy that doesn't really hold much respect for authority. He basically doesn't even care that I'm a king. I'll still write you a letter so he knows I sent you, but just be warned that it might not really make a difference.」

「Really? Big favour.」

「Yeah, it's whatever. Now tell me that thing I've been curious about.」

「Nn. Got it.」

Hearing about the Evolution Concealment skill caused the Beast Lord to start brooding.

He and Roche had even started debating whether or not it was something that Black Heavenly Tigerkin would learn upon evolution.

(Master?)

『He was telling you the truth. He not only knows where the guy is, but also plans on introducing you to him.』

(Then will need to go to Beastkin's Country.)

『Sure seems like it.』

Fran went silent because she'd started conversing with me telepathically. The two other beastkin, however, took this as a sign that they'd accidentally left her out of the conversation because they were too focused on their own devices. Thus, Roche ended up apologizing.

「Sorry about that. We will be leaving it at that for now. Thank you once again for providing us with a valuable piece of information.」

「Nn.」

It seemed like there was a good chance they'd want to ask us for more details after the tourney came to an end.

「I would like you to have these, though not necessarily as an expression of gratitude.」

「Purpose?」

Roche handed Fran a pair of tickets.

「These tickets will allow you access to reserved seating. I believe you wish to watch the remaining matches, correct?」

「S'cause you've already made a name for yourself. Everyone'll probably recognize you immediately if you go sit with everyone else, and that'd just be a huge pain in the ass.」

「And that is why we would like for you to have those tickets. The reserved seats are located a fair distance away from the regular seats, and the individuals that have the rights to them are far more polite. Sitting over there will assist you in keeping out of trouble.」

「Thanks. Why two?」

「The other one's for that familiar of yours, the one that had Gold all distracted and shit.」

「His Majesty immediately declared that he wished for your wolf to be seated after seeing it. Obtaining the second ticket was quite the task.」

「Sorry.」

「Please, do not worry about it. My troubles were entirely the result of His Majesty's high-handedness.」

「Oh come on man, what the hell? You're making it look like it's all my fault.」

「How is it not? Oh well, I do not particularly mind as your actions did not result in any harm. You will, however, have to deal with Sir Solbard later on.」

「Yeah, yeah, I know already.」

Urushi's ticket had apparently belonged to a noble from the Beastkin's Country. Said noble had been visiting on his own as opposed to as a member of the Beast Lord's party. However, the Beast Lord had basically forced the man to sell his ticket regardless.

He'd made up for it by inviting the man over to the VIP section, a result the person in question was actually quite happy with given that he was basically handed a chance to build a better relationship with the Beast Lord.

「We had originally secured a single ticket as we had suspected that you would likely not want to remain in the VIP area.」

「Nn.」

The atmosphere in here was a bit stiff, and more importantly, Fran herself wasn't really able to relax. She'd yet to be able to let her guard down around the Beast Lord and his companions.

Fran got ready to leave the VIP area with a huge platter of the food she'd taken from it in tow right about when the noble Roche had mentioned approached it.

She'd offered to pay for what she was going to eat, but the Beast Lord ended up dismissing the notion and calling the platter a reward she'd earned given that she'd beat Goldalfa. And so, we ended up leisurely getting ourselves ready to watch the matches to come.

The reserved seating area was full of nobles and other people with a tonne of spare cash. A bunch of them spotted us immediately, but they didn't end up saying anything, quite possibly because they were afraid of us. Or rather, of Urushi.

He still seemed to be still feeling the rush he'd gotten from the super intense battle we'd just fought, as his face had a bit of a wilder look on it than usual. Honestly speaking, it was a bit terrifying to look at. I didn't really bother asking him to fix it because it kept people away, and all in all, ended up functioning as a convenience.

『So the next match still hasn't started yet?』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

We'd kinda destroyed the arena. The staff had to repair it before the next match began.

I'd considered the possibility that they'd have like a reigning champion or something carry in a giant ass ring into the arena, but that wasn't what'd actually happened. They were instead fixing everything through the application of Earth Magic. To that end, the person responsible for the repairs was currently drawing some sort of magic circle.

It took about twenty minutes for them to create an entirely new arena and bring in the next pair of contestants.

Today's second match was between Amanda and Erza. I honestly wasn't sure which of the two we were supposed to be rooting for.

Their battle began before I was actually able to make up my mind.

Amanda began moving around the Arena and attacking with her whip while Erza stayed centered around the same area while waiting for a chance to throw a counterattack.

I couldn't help but enjoy spectating the two of them as they fought. One's whip was raging within the barrier's confines as would a dragon, while the other's mace was cleaving holes in the arena every single time it was swung. There was but only one issue...

「Ahhhhh...!」

「Iwwaaaaahhh!」

That one issue was the fact that the buff manwoman would moan each and every time he was struck with the whip. I couldn't help but begin debating whether or not Fran was actually old enough to be watching the two go at each other.

I felt like I most likely would've directed her attention elsewhere and disallowed her from watching if we weren't going to end up fighting the winner.

I expected the match to last quite a while given that Erza had both high defenses and the Pain Conversion skill, but I was wrong.

「Ahuuunnn!」

「It's over!」

「Ahhh... Haaaahhhnnnn!」

Amanda swung her whip in a downwards arc and sent Erza flying. He'd passed out by the time he landed, which made sense.

Not feeling pain was useful and all, but one would still eventually lose consciousness and control over one's body should one take way too much damage.

「I can't believe it! Erza, Ulmutt's Hero, was defeated with ease! Well, that's an A ranked adventurer for you! This round goes to Amanda of Hariti!」

I was surprised to hear the caster openly declare that as the city's hero. It seemed that Ulmutt's people were a lot more accepting than I'd been giving them credit for.

『Did you manage to catch that last attack of hers...?』

「Barely?」

『Yeah, same here.』

Amanda's whip moved so quickly that I hadn't even been able to fully keep track of it from afar. Fran and I were both starting to worry that we wouldn't be able to repel her attacks.

『Looks like our next match is going to be one hell of a tough one.』

「Nn!」

[1] Assuming male, but gender is not stated. Japanese can do that without it sounding out of place, awkward, or even really intentional.

209. Finally, Amanda

Chapter 209. Finally, Amanda

Finally, Amanda

Not much time had passed since Amanda and Erza finished up their duel.

The arena was still in the midst of being repaired, so the next match had yet to start. Fran didn't really have much to do, so she ended up munching on a bunch of skewers as she looked over the tournament's brackets.

「Next, Forrund versus Phillip.」

『I'm pretty sure Forrund'll end up winning.』

We'd seen both of them in combat before, and as a result, more or less ended up coming to the conclusion that Forrund was just as monstrously strong as Amanda.

『Let's hope Phillip manages to hold on and draw out a couple of Forrund's cards so we can figure out what he's got up his sleeve.』

「Nn. Wishing Phillip luck.」

Giving Phillip our blessings turned out to be completely pointless, as he'd ended up losing almost instantly.

Despite that, he was satisfied because he'd more or less fulfilled his goal by taking a few seconds to inform the audience of Barbra's plight and requesting their aid before the match began. Namely, his voice had reached all the nobles that'd finally decided to start spectating because it'd come time for the quarter finals.

The day's fourth and last match pit Royce, one of the Beast Lord's guards, against Fermus, the Dragon's Table's owner. Their battle ended up being far more intense than I'd initially been expecting.

Royce's strategy made heavy use of his ability to teleport both with and without his Dimensional Gate. He combined his ridiculous magic-based mobility with the natural agility that most Rabbitkin just happened to have in order to outmaneuver his foe while attacking with Earth-based spells. I couldn't help but feel a bit frustrated at the fact that he was clearly better at teleporting than I was. He would also make occasional use of Moonlight Magic in order to reflect his opponent's attacks. His ability to make it seem like he could do it without exerting much effort made him appear ridiculously difficult to deal with.

Royce's fighting style was incredibly impressive, but Fermus' completely trumped it in terms of how much it shocked me.

General Information

Name: Fermus

Age: 63

Species: Human

Class: Magic Threadmaster

State: Normal

Status Level: 68/99

HP: 436

MP: 669

STR: 231

VIT: 201

AGI: 412

INT: 327

MGC: 339

DEX: 681

Skills

Espionage: Lv 5

Dismantling: Lv 8

Flame Resistance: Lv 8

Wind Magic: Lv 3

Crisis Detection: Lv 8

Presence Detection: Lv 6

Steel Thread Techniques: MAX

Steel Thread Arts: MAX

Bind: Lv 7

Harvesting: Lv 6

Muffle: Lv 6

Resistance To Abnormal Status Conditions: Lv 6

Commerce: Lv 5

Vibration Perception: Lv 8

Vibration Strike: Lv 6

Twin Sword Arts: Lv 8

Thread Manipulation: MAX

Short Sword Arts: Lv 3

Throwing: Lv 9

Lasso: Lv 4

Magical Thread Creation: Lv 7

Knowledge of Magic Beasts: Lv 3

Magic Perception: Lv 5

Water Magic: Lv 6

Cooking: Lv 8

Trap Disarming: Lv 5

Trap Detection: Lv 5

Trap Creation: Lv 8

Reinforced Threads

Orc Killer

Vigour Manipulation

Nullled Sense of Pain

Thought Division

Magic Manipulation

Innate Skills

Threading

Unique skills

Dragon Genocider

Titles

Natural Enemy of Scaled Beings

User of Steel Threads

Orc Killer

Dungeon Conqueror

Dragon Genocider

Magic Thread User

Magic Beast Annihilator

Equipment

Monarch Whale's Beard War Threads

Dragon-Eating Spider's War Threads

Lighting Dragonfang Shortsword

Imperial Wrath Armour [1]

Dragon Wing Mantle

Ring of Poison Nullification

Deodorizing Earing

Looking at his status page told me he used threads and all that, but completely failed to inform me as to just how versatile he could be. I'd only been expecting him to be able to use about ten threads simultaneously, but I was way off the mark. His ability to manipulate magical energy freed him from the one per finger limit and made it so he could control over 100 at once.

Fermus' weapons would take on many forms as they chased Royce around the arena. They'd become swords, walls, and nets upon his command. He also had a bunch of his threads strewn around the arena. They were placed in such a way that they were capable of functioning kind of like alarm system, one that prevented him from losing track of Royce regardless of where the rabbitkin ended up teleporting.

It went without saying that Fermus was still taking a fair bit of damage. His threads were extremely powerful, but they weren't capable of stopping the massive rocks Royce would hurl his way. He'd also occasionally tank a few hits when Royce engaged him in close combat, as the rabbitkin was definitely the better of the two when it came to that particular aspect.

Despite that, Royce wasn't able to tilt the match in his favour. The arena was far too small. It prevented him from escaping Fermus' range, so he eventually ended up getting caught in and ripped apart by the older man's weapons.

「And the winner is Fermus, The Dragon Hunter! His strength has yet to fade despite retiring from adventuring! That's someone that's had their name in the records for three years in a row for you!」

Fermus bowed elegantly as he waved to the crowd, a set of actions that probably would've seemed conceited had he not looked nearly as accustomed to them.

『He sure seems strong.』

「Nn.」

『Hmmm... I'm not really all that sure how we're supposed to handle him given how little room there is inside the barrier.』

And with that, the quarter finals ended up coming to an end.

Tomorrow's two matches would be Fran vs Amanda and Forrund vs Fermus.

『Well, looks like we're going up against Amanda.』

My guess was that she probably wasn't going to be holding back given how she'd acted back when she sparred with Fran. If anything, she seemed more like the type of person to do the exact opposite and go all out in order to demonstrate her respect.

Man, I never would've thought that we'd have a chance to duel Amanda with both us and her going all out. She was the same rank as the foe we'd just defeated, but I honestly wasn't all that confident that we could actually beat her. To me, she was pretty much an avatar of strength, quite possibly because we'd been pretty weak back when we'd first met her.

「Will still win?」

『Yeah, I know. We can't let ourselves be stopped here if we actually want to win this whole damn tourney.』

「Nn!」

「Woof woof!」

The way Urushi barked almost made him seem like he wanted to make sure we hadn't forgotten about him.

「Urushi, do best too.」

All of the day's matches had ended, so many of the other spectators began leaving as we thought things through.

『We should probably leave too.』

「Nn. Will go visit Erza.」

『Right. Yeah, we should.』

He'd really helped us a whole bunch, so I figured we might as well pay him a visit and attempt to cheer him up seeing as how he'd ended up losing, and in a pretty showy way at that.

We headed over to his room in the sickbay after asking a nearby clerk about his whereabouts. There, we found him sleeping atop a bed, still unconscious.

I realized after we got a bit closer that his expression was actually a rather happy one.

「Ahhhhnnn... Mfhmmmmmm...」

He tossed and turned towards us and revealed that the expression on his face was in fact a lewd one.

「Ughhhnnnnnn... Kufufu...」

Bits of drool were dripping from the slovenly smile that decorated his face. I honestly couldn't tell whether or not he was actually feeling down.

『You doing okay there Fran? Not feeling disgusted or anything?』

「Why?」

『Uhhh, don't worry 'bout it. All that matters is that you're feeling fine.』

「What do? Wake up?」

『Well, he seems like he's fine from an emotional standpoint, so we could kinda just leave him be.』

「Got it.」

And so, we ended up doing exactly that. We left Erza as is and made our way home.

The night came and went; the semi-finals quickly came upon us.

「Get ready people, cause the semi-finals are about to begin! Today's first match is going to be one of the rarer ones, a duel between women!」

Fran was greeted by a series of cheers louder than the usual ones as she stepped onto the stage.

「This match's winner will have the chance to move onto the finals. The loser'll instead have to compete for third place!」

We were already all buffed up, and Fran was even in her awakened state. She could maintain the state for about an hour so long as she didn't cast Brilliant Lightning Rush, so there wasn't any issue with having her use the skill prior to the match's start.

「In one corner we have the C ranked adventurer that's taken the tournament by storm and even managed to take down an A ranker with her absurd skills! I present to you Fran, The Magic Sword Girl! Actually, scratch that. From here on out, let's call her Fran, the Black Lightning Princess!」

Oh shit, the Black Lightning Princess? Now that's one hell of an awesome nickname. Good job caster dude!

「Her opponent will be an A ranker that's done nothing but put on a show of overwhelming strength time and time again, a woman whose beauty has put her well ahead of Hundred Blade Forrund in terms of popularity. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome one of our country's mightiest and most famous, Amanda of Hariti!」

As one could expect, more people cheered for Amanda than they did for Fran. The only reason that we had ended with more cheers than

Goldalfa last round was because most people would prefer choosing cute girls over beast-like men.

The innate beauty that came with Amanda's half-elf blood was not something to be underestimated. It'd even caused a decent portion of the women in the crowd had even begun referring to her as their "elder sister" as they cheered her on. [2]

「Hey Fran. I never thought we would end up having to face off against each other like this.」

「Feeling same way.」

「I won't be holding back!」

「Nn!」

Both fighters flashed each other fearless smiles as they drew their weapons and readied themselves for battle. Though their smiles appeared rather sweet, they were in fact attempting to intimidate each other. Under the surface, the two had already long devolved into nothing but a pair of carnivorous beasts.

[1] Imperial wrath is a term associated with dragons because Dragons are often considered to be super high tier beings in asian mythology. Interestingly enough, this term is translated as "outrage" in Pokemon. Definitely one of their better translations.

[2] This is what lesbians do in Japanese media.

210. Side: Amanda

Chapter 210. Side: Amanda

Side: Amanda

Watching Fran fight Goldalfa left me in a state of shock. She had become far stronger than I had imagined.

Fran had always been both strong and cute. That, I knew from the moment we first met. I had also known that she would eventually grow if given enough time.

I knew that she would one day surpass me, but I had always thought that day was one that wouldn't come for another 10 years.

I had predicted that she would lose her quarter-final match, but she didn't. She defeated Goldalfa, a foe that I would have had to struggle against.

Her rate of growth was so high it could only be deemed abnormal. It was likely one brought about by her desire to evolve, and made possible by Master, her mysterious sword. I had no doubt that it was he that guided her along.

Speaking of which, it seemed that Master had also grown considerably more powerful. He had performed several surprising feats as Fran dueled Goldalfa, feats that simply could not possibly be attributed to Fran herself. Specifically, I believed it was likely that he was responsible for using the instances in which the Fran had seemingly used Space Time Magic and Lightning Magic chantlessly in rapid succession. Likewise, I also assumed that he was the catalyst that had allowed her to evolve, to do what was considered unthinkable for the Black Cat Tribe's members.

I was unable to tell exactly which abilities could be attributed to Fran, and which could be attributed to Master, but I did know that they would make for a difficult opponent with their powers combined.

They were not to be underestimated, even in the slightest.

The most surprising part of the battle was when they used Physical Damage Nullification. I was only able to recognize the skill because I had once experienced fighting against a foe that happened to have it. Their ability to stop Goldalfa's axe head on and block his powerful shockwave-based attacks with nothing but an outstretched arm served to evidence that they either had the skill or one in its vein.

Physical Damage Nullification was powerful and difficult to deal with, but it still did have its flaws. Its high mana consumption meant I could eventually break through her defenses so long as I continued to attack.

「That girl has quite the strength to her. Is she perhaps some sort of adventurer?」

「I highly doubt that conjecture of yours. She appears to be a Beastkin, and is therefore most likely associated with the Beastkin's Country.」

「I really would prefer if she was to affiliate herself with us given her strength.」

「Well, I shan't be allowing to steal a march on me.」

「She has quite the number of applications if you take her beauty into consideration.」

「Uhyohyo, I would like to take her under my own wing as well.」

The nobles in my vicinity did as they inevitably would have, and began to make note of her. Fran's tender age had led them to believe that she was prone to listen to their commands regardless of what they were.

「I would love for her to join the ranks of my imperial guests.」

「She would make a perfect guard for my daughter.」

I felt the urge to administer a tad bit of discipline, but stopped as I heard several more legitimate ideas arise. I was unable to determine which course of action would be better, and instead ended up once again pondering about her growth.

I had been acquainted with Fran for a long time. We met far before we encountered one another in Alessa. In fact, I was first introduced to her over ten years ago.

But in truth, our relationship was far more deeply rooted than even that.

I had long been acquainted with her parents. They were alumni from one of the orphanages I ran. Her parents' names were Kinan and Framia. I still remembered looking after the two of them in their youth.

They grew up, left the orphanage after getting into an argument with me, and took up adventuring.

We had said our goodbyes on the wrong foot, so I was glad they decided to visit.

It had all been my fault in the first place. Adventuring had not struck me as their forte. The only fate I could imagine befalling them was death, so I denied their dreams. I told them that they would be unable to evolve even if they tried. My criticisms had been too remorseless, and because of that, I failed in preventing the two from taking off.

I had failed in communicating to them. There was likely a better way for me to go about giving them advice. That was why I was really happy that they purposefully sought me out and had me meet their newborn daughter.

They told me that her name was Fran. Both her name, age, and species matched that of the young adventurer I met in Alessa.

But even so, I was unable to discern her identity when I first heard of her. The reason for that was because I had caught wind of both Kinan's and Framia's deaths. Though there was never any word of Fran's fate, I assumed she had followed in their footsteps.

Meeting her and seeing her face, however, changed everything. She looked just like Framia had in her childhood, and so, I put two and two together.

I wanted to immediately let her know that I was acquainted with her parents. I wanted to take her under my care, but that decision was one I hesitated to make. She had already proved herself to be an accomplished adventurer, and more importantly, I had already proven unable to protect her parents and prevent them from meeting their demises.

After a bit of consideration, I decided not to mention the bonds we shared, and instead thought of a different method by which I could offer her protection. That was why I forced my way into her quest and sparred with her, so I could do my utmost to ensure her safety. I was certain that Fran would one day become an adventurer important enough to leave her name in history.

What I was worried about was that she would one day overestimate herself and have the rug swept out from right under her feet.

I wanted to teach her that thinking of oneself as the pinnacle of strength was foolhardy, that there was always someone or something stronger than oneself. I wanted to show her what it was like to face off against a foe far mightier than herself.

To that end, I spent several months immersed in bettering myself. In doing so, I raised the level of my Whip Techniques skill for the first time in around 10 years. I was only 50 years old, so I was still young, but the combination of my elven blood and a more relaxed lifestyle had caused my skill levels to plateau. However, many of them once again began to grow as I trained with a goal in mind.

My actions once again allowed me to affirm that goals were important, and that they encouraged achieving results.

I finally obtained the Celestial Whipmaster class I had always wanted, all so I could defeat Fran.

Fran and I faced each other the next day.

She wore a wonderful smile as she readied herself for battle. She was neither afraid of me nor nervous. I could tell that she had directed her entire focus on victory and nothing more.

I knew that I was going to have to push myself if I wanted to win. Yesterday's observations had led me to understand that Fran had already not only surpassed me in terms of speed, but also had enough firepower to slay me in but a single blow.

That was simply how much strength her evolution had provided her.

And it was also the precise reason for which I had to win. I had to more than just win. I had to overwhelm her and prove to her that she should refrain from letting her guard down, and I had to be ready to make any and all sacrifices necessary to make that possible.

Fran and Master unleashed several spells the moment the match began.

The precise combination was one of wind and lightning. It seemed that the former was used to prevent me from using my whip, and the latter to paralyze me.

It was clear that they were using their heads, but the spells they had casted were far too weak to stop me in my tracks. I fought back by concentrating and releasing a mass of magical energy in order to execute my fastest and most powerful technique, one that completely blew their spells away.

「Call of the End — Vaisravana's Downfall!」

My whip raged through the stadium at a speed not even I could perceive.

It blew Fran's magic away and began assaulting her.

My assault proved that Fran had the Physical Damage Nullification skill. Each of the attacks assailing her were powerful enough to turn a High Ogre into mincemeat, but she was not taking any sort of visible damage whatsoever.

Still, I continued flaying my whip. I could tell my attacks were draining Fran's mana. I had to press on until she ran out.

My divine whip technique's high power was both its greatest strength and weakness. My whip would be destroyed if I kept up the barrage for far too long.

The whip I was currently using was one I had for many years, and one I had come to love, but I continued to press on regardless. There was no point in worrying about my weapon lasting me through to the final round. My true purpose was to win this match. Instilling a sense of humility in Fran was the one thing that really mattered.

「Here she comes.」

Fran vanished. I knew she had teleported through the use of Space/Time Magic, and because I knew, I was able to react to her attack.

I moved as quickly as I could and got away from my prior position. Fran appeared where I had been moments before, her face full of surprise.

Still, she didn't give up.

She combined her skills and spells in order to accelerate at a rate far outside my expectations, an act that in and of itself, was exactly what I expected from her.

「Haaaahhh!」

Fran put me in a bad spot. She not only activated my Spirit's Grace skill, but had also forced me in her preferred range. Her black lightning cloaked blade flew right at me once again. It was an attack I highly doubted I was capable of dodging.

211. Vs Amanda — Finale

Chapter 211. Vs Amanda — Finale

Vs Amanda — Finale

Both Fran and Amanda began giving off an aura of battlelust as they stared each other down.

I appraised Amanda and reaffirmed that she was a versatile fighter capable of adapting to any sort of situation. She totally trumped us in terms of how experienced she was, but our weapon-related skills were at a higher level than hers, so it wasn't like we were at a complete disadvantage. I was confident we'd be able to use our Sword Lord Arts to find an opening we could make use of.

General Information

Name: Amanda

Age: 58

Species: Half-Elf

Class: Celestial Whipmaster [0]

State: Normal

Status Level: 71

HP: 651

MP: 808

STR: 330

VIT: 298

AGI: 457

INT: 383

MGC: 406

DEX: 359

Skills

Intimidation: Lv 7

Chant Shortening: Lv 6

Espionage: Lv 8

Dismantling: Lv 8

Flame Resistance: Lv 6

Bare Handed Combat Techniques: Lv 4

Bare Handed Combat Arts: Lv 7

Wind Magic: MAX

Crisis Perception: Lv 9

Presence Detection: Lv 8

Herculean Strength: Lv 5

Mining: Lv 7

Harvesting: Lv 8

Blink: MAX

Blink Step: Lv 7

Drowsiness Resistance: Lv 6

Elemental Blade: Lv 7

Throwing: Lv 8

Poison Resistance: Lv 6

Ice/Snow Resistance: Lv 5

Whip Techniques: MAX

Divine Whip Techniques: Lv 4

Whip Arts: MAX

Divine Whip Arts: Lv 6

Storm Magic: Lv 5

Paralysis Resistance: Lv 8

Magic Perception: Lv 5

Lightning Resistance: Lv 7

Orc Killer

Vigour Manipulation

Giant Slayer

Bodily Reinforcement

Demon Slayer

Dragon Killer

Greater Agility Boost

Storm Element Reinforcement

Magic Manipulation

Whip Reinforcement

Innate Skills

Heavenly Whip Techniques

Unique Skills

Spirit's Grace

Titles

Orc Killer

One Who Protects Children

Giant Slayer

Dungeon Conqueror

Demon Slayer

Dragon Killer

One who is Like a Storm

User of Wind

Magic Beast Annihilator

A Ranked Adventurer

Equipment

Heavenly Dragon's Beard Whip

Ancient Multi Headed Snake's Leather Armour

Magic Poisonous Lizard's Mantle

Magic Eyed Monarch Cow's Boots

Heavenly Wheel of Substitution [1]

Lightning Bird's Decorative Feathers

Bulwark Bracelet

Magic Numbing Owl's Feather Shuriken x 24

—

Amanda had gone through a few changes. Her class had switched from Stormfighter to Celestial Whipmaster, and her whip-related skills were now a bit higher leveled than they were before. She had also gotten her hands on an interesting looking innate skill.

I couldn't help but feel like she'd gone out of her way to switch classes and better herself just so she could improve her chances at winning the tournament.

—

Heavenly Whip Techniques: Increases the speed of one's whip techniques in exchange for increased resource expenditure.

—

I couldn't really tell just how fast her new class and its accompanying skill made her. But either way, it seemed like an extremely powerful one given

the way its name was phrased. However, its increased resource consumption implied that it couldn't be used multiple times in rapid succession, which in turn meant it would leave her with openings we could use against her.

「Match start!」

The caster responded to the two combatants pulling out their weapons by signaling for them to continue.

We immediately fired off several different spells the moment the match began.

「Hexagonal Tornado!」

『Thunderbolt!』

『Thunder Chain!』

『Tornado Lance!』

We used two kinds of spells, with each playing its own unique function. Our lightning based spells were used to stun Amanda herself; we wanted to afflict her with paralysis so we could restrict her movements. The wind-based spells, on the other hand, were meant to restrict her whip and make it more difficult for her to react to our movements.

Rumina had explained to us that the Black Heavenly Tigerkin was in fact a specialized race, one that was best able to demonstrate its prowess in battle by casting Lightning Magic mid combat. Learning that caused me immediately choose to max the skill out, which in turn allowed me to get my hands on the Lightning enhancement skill as a bit of an added bonus.

One of the more spamable and easier to use skills we'd gotten our hands on was Thunderbolt. It was quick to cast, and would continue to zap any it hit even after its initial shock. You could actually say it was basically an upgraded version of Stun Bolt. The other skill we'd cast, Thunder Chain,

was a skill with relatively low firepower, but served to provide decent function by restraining its target it with chains of lightning.

Amanda's unique skill, Spirit's Grace, was effectively one of the best defensive mechanisms one could possibly have. It would automatically activate and completely negate a single attack should it land. Hence, I didn't expect or even hope for the attacks we'd launched at Amanda to win the match for us. I was more so hoping that the spells would be able to pop her passive. We needed to break past her absolute defenses if we wanted to get anywhere at all.

The only other reason we'd fired the spells at her was because we wanted to slow her down and buy us some time. Our goal was to stall long enough for us to activate Brilliant Lightning Flash. Stalling and burning through both time and our limited resources was just a dumb waste of time. There was no point to it. Attempting to end the match as soon as possible was the better choice to make. Fran was much more agile than Amanda, so I was 100% sure that we'd have the advantage in close quarters combat.

Whips were weapons that had the tendency to focus on repeated hits, but Amanda's style in particular was one that focused more on single, powerful strikes. We decided to take advantage of that and immediately return fire after soaking up one of her hits. To that end, I had Physical Damage Nullification slotted in and ready to go.

Fran began concentrating her magical energy immediately after unleashing her first spell.

『Alright Fran, let's go!』

「Nn! Brilliant...」

「Call of the End — Vaisravana's Downfall!」

Amanda chanted a slew of power filled words the moment the smaller girl activated her innate skill.

「Lightning Rush!」

The spells we fired were totally blown away immediately as Amanda activated her skill. We were suddenly exposed to attacks on all sides. The whip came at us nonstop, shredded our surroundings, and turned them to dust. It was like we'd suddenly been engulfed in powerful windstorm.

「Mmph!」

『Tsk!』

The vicious strikes came at us so quickly that I couldn't even keep track of them after using Space/Time Magic and speeding up my ability to perceive. Physical Damage Nullification kept popping non-stop. Every single attack that landed was rather high damage, so our mana ended up draining really quickly.

Dodging Amanda's attack was simply out of the question. There wasn't enough space for us to get out of its range; her skill filled the entire barrier. Moreover, each swing of her whip unleashed a number of powerful but invisible shockwaves, ones that assaulted us as would the fangs of a serpent. To be more exact, the shockwaves were in fact sonic booms created by the whip breaking the sound barrier. I couldn't even begin to imagine exactly how quickly the whip was actually moving. All I knew was that it was being propelled by magical energy.

Brilliant Lightning Rush had restored our mana, but a huge chunk of it had already once again been drained away.

(Master, teleport!)

『Short Jump!』

Fran commanded me to warp us the moment she concluded that teleporting would consume fewer resources than sitting around and soaking up Amanda's attacks.

We were supposed to have teleported right behind Amanda, but she had moved over to the stage's other side before we rematerialized.

Our ability to teleport had already long been exposed. We'd used it a whole bunch, so I wasn't surprised that Amanda knew about it. Given that, it was to no surprise that she was able to use the bit of lag time before when we vanished and when we reappeared to avoid us so long as she was able to read our movements.

「Burniaaaaa!」

The exchange had caused Fran to realize that her opponent was far too powerful for her to take down if she relied on teleportation alone, so she instead used a flame spell to accelerate herself in the older woman's direction. We had to get a hit in if we wanted to pop her passive. Shooting black lightning at her probably wouldn't cut it given how far apart we were, so we honestly had very little other choice but to charge at her

「Haaaah!」

Fran charged straight through the windstorm caused by Amanda's whip and attacked her. The half-elf didn't seem to have expected Fran to suddenly pick up so much speed, as she wasn't able to dodge the incoming slash.

We finally reached her. The strike was repelled, but we at least managed to pop her passive.

Fran took the chance presented to her, twisted my blade, and immediately followed up with a second strike.

Here we go!

Amanda's eyes opened wide in shock as I flew straight towards her.

『Haaaaaaaahhhh!』

But our slash never reached her.

Amanda's continued attacks had caused our mana to basically run dry.

『Gaaahh!』

We no longer had enough to activate Physical Damage Nullification. Likewise, we also lacked the mana to create barriers.

Half my blade turned to dust and crumbled as Fran and I were both sent flying into the barrier set up to protect the audience.

「Grfhhh!」

I almost instinctively began regenerating my blade, but immediately stopped as I realized that Fran needed my attention.

A warm liquid, Fran's blood, flowed down my blade. Its source was Fran, or more specifically, the wounds that covered her from head to toe.

『Heal!』

Shit!

I needed to tend to her right away. There was still a chance for us to pull something off so long as Fran managed to steer clear of instantly dying.

My hopes remained unanswered; Fran's body was enveloped in light as the Cradle of Time activated and restored her to her prior state.

「It's already over! The match only lasted a total of 10 seconds! What the hell just happened!? I could've sworn I saw something blow away the spells Fran had fired, but that was it! Everything that happened after was just way too quick for me to make out!」

I was confident that we would've won if we'd just managed to land that one hit, but unfortunately, we weren't. Amanda's whip had both far swifter and more powerful than I'd been expecting it to be.

「But you can still tell just how intense their duel was from the state the stadium's in! They only fought for 10 seconds, but the entire stage's been totally destroyed! You can't even tell what shape it started off with anymore!」

The caster's words were spot on. Over half the stage had been shredded to bits. Even the few parts that remained were barely recognizable given how busted up they were. Amanda's technique, the ability that'd caused all this destruction, was truly one to be feared.

「...Lost?」

『Unfortunately.』

Fran rose to her feet as she picked me up. The fact that she was unable to really fight back or accomplish much had made it so she was still in a bit of a state of confusion.

「Already?」

『Already.』

Amanda ran up to Fran as the smaller girl stared out into space.

「Are you okay Fran!?!」

The half-elf seemed to be completely out of breath. Using just that one move had totally exhausted her and eaten through half her mana pool. She eventually managed to recover her breath, but as one could expect, her mana showed no signs of rejuvenating.

Despite that, she remained completely unconcerned with her own state of well being. She didn't bother to check how she was doing, as she was instead patting Fran all over while asking her if she was hurt in any which way.

Amanda really loved children. Killing Fran once the way she did had really pained her, as evidenced by the look on her face.

She wasn't able to calm down until after Fran demonstrated that she was alright by working through a few morning exercise-like motions.

「You've grown quite strong, Fran! You really had me feeling the pressure even though you've yet to catch up to me.」

「Nn.」

「However, it seems that the same can't be said for my whip.」

The move Amanda used had been so powerful that it'd caused her whip to end up getting torn accross its midsection. We weren't just talking about any other whip either. Amanda's whip was one becoming of her rank and power.

Thinking about it, it was kinda a given. I'm pretty sure my durability would plummet if Fran ended up using Amanda's technique. Every single one of those strikes of hers had enough power to totally wreck the arena, after all.

To me, her whip looked like it was flat out beyond repair. She had thought so much of Fran's strength that she'd been willing destroy her weapon in order to pull out a win.

「I saw your semifinal match. You've already surpassed me in how well you handle your weapon. You're also really fast, and you can deal an incredible amount of damage with each hit. I didn't think that it would be a good idea for me to fight you using conventional means.」

It seemed like watching just that one battle had allowed Amanda to see right through us.

「I also noticed that you had either Physical Damage Nullification or something similar to it.」

「That's...」

「Don't worry, I'm not going to force you to tell me what it is. What I wanted to say is that my realization allowed me to understand why you had fought Colbert the way you had, and that I knew the ability weakness. Physical Damage Nullification is incredible, but it consumes a lot of magical energy. Using it non-stop will eventually run your mana dry.」

Amanda had literally figured out everything we had. She had us dancing in the palm of her hand from the very start; she'd long known that all she

needed to do was kite us while waiting for us to run out of mana.

Shit!

Well, I guess it couldn't really be helped. I shouldn't have expected anything else from an experienced A ranker like her.

「Total loss...」

「It's okay Fran... Chin up, alright?」

「Didn't train enough.」

「Fran...」

Amanda started to get a bit flustered as she watched Fran squeeze my handle with a downcast gaze. She seemed to have misunderstood Fran's actions as one's meant to express her disappointment.

But she was wrong.

Fran wasn't nearly that soft.

「Will definitely win next round and take third place!」

There was no denying that Fran was feeling a bit vexed that she'd lost, but she'd already moved. In fact, she'd already started reflecting on the mistakes she'd made so she could win the next battle.

Fran was positive, she always looked ahead as opposed to lamenting over the past. In that sense, one could say that her personality made her rather suited for combat.

That wasn't all there was to it either. Fran had also, in a way, derived a sort of pleasure from the duel she'd just experienced. Though she didn't think of Amanda as her master or teacher, she did at least think of her as a veritable, experienced adventurer. She was glad to know that Amanda was still stronger than her, and that she still had a cliff to surmount. And honestly, I kind of felt the same. It was nice to know that we hadn't made a mistake in

viewing Amanda as a sort of target, as an incredibly strong entity we someday wanted to overcome.

「Do your best!」

「Amanda too. Win.」

「Okay! It's a promise!」

Though we'd suffered quite a bit of mental exhaustion, we decided to do the usual and watch the day's second match regardless so we could learn a bit more about whoever we'd end up fighting for third place. Unlike usual, however, we ended up finding ourselves inside of a gaudy looking private room that overlooked the arena.

It was something the tournament's managers chose to provide for us the moment we asked if there were still any seats available. Amanda had wanted to join us, but she'd been dragged off to a meeting for the sake of the final round that she'd soon be participating in.

Both Fran and I waited excitedly for the match to begin, as it was going to be one between two strong championship contenders.

Forrund and Fermus both were rather popular, but it seemed that Forrund had a bit of an advantage in that regard because he was still in active duty.

Their match, unlike ours, actually ended up dragging on for a decent chunk of time.

Fermus evaded Forrund's strikes by dodging the blades that flew at him, whereas Forrund nulled Fermus' threads by shredding them to pieces.

It looked like Fermus had the advantage, and that he had control over the fight's momentum, but he wasn't able to bring the battle to a close.

The sword user ended up turning everything around at what seemed like the 11th hour by suddenly summoning 100 different magic swords

simultaneously. He independently controlled each and every single blade and had them chase Fermus down, an action that ultimately forced the retired adventurer to yield.

『Looks like we're going to be up against Fermus.』

A wave of relief washed through me, not because I felt that we would have a better chance against Fermus, but because I was worried about Forrund's ability to copy any magic sword he touched. Specifically, I was kinda terrified of finding out what would happen if he ended up duping me.

『Our next match is going to be another tough one.』

「Powerful threads.」

『Yeah. Alright, how about we make use of all the stuff we learned today so we can win tomorrow's match?』

「Nn!」

[0] Minor update to the way this class' name is phrased. The term "divine," was confusing given "Divine X Arts/Techniques," so I rephrased it to make sure it wasn't as confusing. The literal is Godly, so I used Celestial which can mean the same thing, but sounds better in a game-like fantasy setting.

[1] I don't actually know what the fuck this is. It's supposed to be a "Sky Ring," or "Heaven Ring," or something. Apparently Erza had an armour named after it, and they TL'd it as Heaven's Wheel in her case, so I'mma just use that. Googling it in Japanese didn't help either, cause it just gave me ferris wheels because the kanji is just 1 character off from how you write ferris wheel in traditional Chinese...

212. Vs Fermus — The Battle Begins

Chapter 212. Vs Fermus — The Battle Begins

Vs Fermus — The Battle Begins

「Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen, and welcome the Martial Arts Tournament's final set of events. The weather's looking great today folks, it's a perfect day to finally buckle up and watch this year's last two matches. The first we'll have today will be a showdown for third place!」

It seemed that today would be the last time we heard the caster and his commentary. Realizing that almost caused me to feel a sense of solitude, the same kind you'd feel as a festival you enjoyed came to a close.

(Master. Feeling off?)

『Nah, it's just that it hadn't really struck me that today's the tourney's last day.』

(Will play all cards.)

『Yeah, that we will.』

(Nn!)

Fran was unlike me in the sense that she didn't feel even the slightest bit of lament. She was too busy being totally pumped. The young black catgirl honestly appeared to be thinking of nothing but the duel she was about to engage in.

Seeing her like that made me feel that she was extremely reliable.

「Entering from the west, we have a C ranked adventurer that's used this tournament to make a name for herself! Fran, the Black Lightning Princess! Don't be fooled by her, folks, 'cause she packs one hell of a punch! Her fangs are so sharp that they've even allowed her to take down an A ranker!

Let's hope we once again get to see her unleash that daunting black lightning of hers onto the field!」 [1]

We heard our last welcoming roar as we entered the ring. I figured that most of the audience members present were here to see the finals, but they ended up cheering Fran on regardless.

「Mmph. Here.」

『Unfortunately, he looks like he's in great condition today.』

Fermus walked towards the stage with a relaxed smile decorating his face. He didn't seem even the slightest bit nervous. It was something I really should've seen coming given that he'd once won three of these things in a row.

(Not unfortunate.)

『Well, all's good if that's how you feel, I guess.』

Fran, unlike me, wished to see him in perfect form. Her nature as a battle maniac made it so she would've actually ended up being rather disappointed if he wasn't.

「And from the east, Fermus, the Dragon Hunter! They say he's retired, but, to me, it doesn't look like his strength's faded even in the slightest! He unfortunately lost the final round, but is definitely still going strong!」

Fermus' gear was just as light as usual. He didn't seem to be wearing anything more than just a white shirt and a pair of black slacks if you looked at him from afar. The dandy looking older man had a bit of a rough but professional air to him, like a butler that'd taken off his jacket and was ready to brawl. That said, his attire was actually made up of parts he'd gotten from dragons and whatnot. Looking at him more closely would allow one to tell that he was basically wearing scalemail.

「Hey, long time no see.」

「Nn.」

「Would you get mad if I told you that I never expected to have to compete with you for third place?」

「Same thought.」

「I guess the feeling is mutual then.」

I'd been expecting to fight Royce, but Fermus had proven himself the stronger of the two. I had to admit, Fermus' thread based techniques were a real threat. We didn't know how they worked, nor what he could even really do with them. Guessing at his tactics was way out of the scope of our abilities. Worst of all was that he was way more experienced than us.

Our stats were higher than his, so if we were to lose, it would definitely be due to our lack of knowledge or experience.

Fighting Amanda had proven that we weren't good enough at coming up with functional tactics, as she'd managed to completely dismantle our less than sane strategy of whipping out our trump card right off the bat.

「This match'll be one to look forward to! A young adventurer in the middle of growing stronger will be pitted against an experienced A ranker. Which of the two will come up on top!?!」

「Me.」

「No, it'll be me.」

Fran took a stance, which soon prompted Fermus to do the same. He looked empty handed, but I knew there was no way that was actually the case. His position was undoubtedly one from which he could deploy and manipulate his string-like weapons.

—

General Information

Name: Monarch Whale's Beard War Threads

Attack: 100~489

MP: 500

Durability: 500

Magical Conductivity: C~A

Skills

Space/Time Element [2]

Flash Element

Greater Water Element

Ice/Snow Element

General Information

Name: Dragon-Eating Spider's War Threads

Attack: 55~455

MP: 300

Durability: 700

Magical Conductivity: D~B+

Skills

Flame Element

Sand Element

Greater Earth Element

Storm Element

Lava Element

Lightning Element

His threads had a huge number of elemental affinities attached to them. I wasn't really sure how they functioned, but if I had to guess, I'd assume that each individual thread could have its own element. Likewise, each individual thread seemed to have a different value for its attack and magical conductivity.

「It looks like they're ready! Without further ado, let the battle for third place... begin!」

We created a barrier and fired off several offensive spells the moment the caster signaled for us to start.

「Thunderbolt.」

『Gale Hazard.』

『Blaze Wave.』

『Acid Venom.』

Immediately spamming spells wasn't something that had worked on Amanda, but I figured the tactic could still be effective against someone like Fermus.

All four of our spells were targeting Fremus' threads. We wanted the lightning-based spell to run through his threads and shock him, the fire-based spell to burn his threads down, the poison-based spell to melt them, and the wind-based spell to simply blow them away and prevent him from using them for offense.

And it worked. Our spells were able to null the first wave of attacks he'd thrown at us as the match began.

Despite that, we hadn't actually gotten any hits in, as his threads had suddenly pulsed with magical energy and dispersed our spells. The density of the mana that fluxed through his weapons was so high that I didn't even need to look to understand exactly what had happened.

It didn't seem like we'd be able to put too much pressure on him with magic alone.

『Looks like we'll have to engage him in close combat.』

「Nn.」

Under normal circumstances, we would've held the advantage at a range. We could have simply continued bombarding him with magic from a couple hundred meters away until we forced him to yield. The arena, however, was far too small to allow for the aforementioned tactic. The barrier made it so we were always in reach of his threads and the ever-changing attacks he could use them to launch from any which direction.

That was why we decided to fight him up close, where it'd be a bit harder for him to manipulate his threads to his will.

We made use of the lesson Amanda had taught us and avoided using Physical Damage Nullification because we understood that Fermus was the type to deliver quick hits in rapid succession.

(First, approach.)

『Yup.』

「Brilliant Lightning Rush!」

Fran accelerated towards Fermus. He reacted by creating a wall with his threads, but was ultimately unable to stop us.

(Master! Executing plan!)

『Got it! Dimension Shift!』

『Short Jump!』

I teleported us, and this time, made the explicit assumption that we would be completely seen through. The reason I was willing to make such a move was because I'd eliminated the risk associated with it through the use of Dimension Shift, a spell that took a few seconds to activate, but could prevent all sorts of different attacks. It was more than enough to shield us from getting hit the moment we reappeared.

And that was in fact exactly what happened — a series of threads assaulted us from four different directions the moment we finished teleporting.

The application of our contingency caused them to pass right through us without doing any sort of damage.

「Hmph! I knew it. You really can use Space/Time Magic after all.」

「Haaaaahhh!」

Fran tried raising me above her head and crashing my blade into Fermus' body, but wasn't able to. He had already figured out our goal, and so, he created a barrier with his threads and stopped me in my tracks

Each individual thread was rather weak, but he was able to strengthen them and turn them into a shield by channeling magical energy through them and using a couple dozen in conjunction.

We couldn't take advantage of our higher weapon skill level because we still had absolutely no idea what Fermus' threads could do. There was just no way we could see through his techniques or predict his actions without further knowledge of his style.

『But that's fine! 'Cause we're not done just yet!』

We didn't need to have me come into contact with Fermus' flesh for us to damage him. The black lightning that enveloped Fran's body would shock whatever she attacked.

In other words, attacking Fermus' threads would cause them to be struck by lightning. The electrical energy would conduct its way through his threads and ultimately damage him.

Or at least, that's what should've happened.

「That won't work.」

「Kuh!」

The black lightning did begin coursing through Fermus' threads, but it began petering out and losing its power as it moved, only to disappear completely before reaching him. He had managed to use his threads' sheer volume to disperse all the electrical energy before it reached him.

Fran continued attacking Fermus while parrying the threads he countered her with, but to no avail. None of her lightning reached him; it all dispersed and flowed into either the ground or the air instead.

He was easily handling our technique with a method we'd never imagined possible.

『Dimension Shift.』

『Short Jump.』

『Multiple Doppelganger Synthesis!』

I teleported us again, but this time, also threw in a few doppelgangers to distract him while we did. It was kinda obvious that Fermus would manage to defeat the doppelgangers in an instant, but I didn't care. What mattered was that the doppelgangers were more than just illusions. Their physical forms forced Fermus to invest time in actually dealing with them.

Watching my doppelgangers die was something that used to make me cringe, but I'd gradually gotten used to and grown completely desensitized to it over time because of all the practice we had in using them.

「Nn?」

『Huh?』

None of the three doppelgangers I spawned had taken on the form I'd been expecting them to have.

—

General Information

Name: Doppelganger

Attack: 100

MP: 50

Durability: 100

Magical Conductivity: C

—

They didn't have the form I had when I was still human, but instead, happened to possess my current form. Appearance wise, they were basically perfect replicas of me; it was impossible to tell us apart at a glance.

Fortunately, they still did their jobs; Fermus' eyes ended up getting pulled to the newly formed blades.

I was really curious as to why my doppelgangers had suddenly all turned into swords, but ended up shelving the thought for the time being. I needed to concentrate on the battle.

『Go!』

I telekinetically propelled my doppelgangers towards the dragon hunter. I hadn't planned on them actually damaging him, so I'd only put just enough

force in to cause them to move towards him at the same speed they would have been at had they been free falling.

None of the replicas really had much durability, so he destroyed them in an instant. But again, they served their purpose.

We were really quite fortunate that Fermus had just fought and lost to Forrund. The experience he gained from the battle was still fresh in his mind, so he ended up paying much more attention to the doppelgangers than was actually necessary. We'd basically slipped his mind as a result.

「Haaaaah!」

「What!?!」

We took advantage of the opening and attacked him. Though Fermus managed to avoid a direct hit, he still did end up bleeding. It was a pretty good outcome considering that I'd activated Magic Poison Fang and laced the attack with venom.

The old dragon hunter had a skill that made him resistant to abnormal status conditions, but I didn't care. My goal was once again not dealing him any direct damage, but instead detracting from his ability to focus. There was no way manipulating that many threads didn't require an incredible amount of concentration.

Fran continued rushing him down and attacking. Shallow wounds began appearing all over him as she did.

His threads were powerful and difficult to deal with, but we were still capable of defeating him so long as we stuck cl-

『Fran, watch out!』

「Mmph!」

A piece of thread rose from beneath Fran's feet and attempted to both trap and attack her.

Fermus had lured us to one of the traps he'd prepared upon figuring out that we wanted to engage him in close combat.

I'd only barely noticed it in time for Fran to avoid a direct hit from it because of my Trap Detection skill. It was extremely difficult to pick up because of how high leveled Fermus' Trap Creation skill was. It was the type that activated if we touched one of many specific threads.

We needed to watch out and be more careful of being baited going forward.

He took the opportunity caused by us recoiling from the trap to retreat and widen the gap between us.

Holy shit! Dealing with him and his god damn threads was a huge pain in the ass!

[1] Here, the author specifically denotes that Fran's title is, in Japanese, pronounced "Kokuraiki."

[2] I literally translated the second halves of these skills for now because I'm not sure what they're supposed to do. I'll update them accordingly once the author reveals their properties.

213. A Dragon Hunter's Essence

Chapter 213. A Dragon Hunter's Essence

A Dragon Hunter's Essence

Fermus was giving us a lot of trouble. He had managed to ward off both our physical and magical attacks, and even made us pull out the doppelganger card. It'd caught him off guard the first time, but I wasn't expecting it to work again.

To make matters worse, we'd just discovered that Fermus was capable of creating traps with his threads mid combat. It looked like we were going to have to somehow make his threads less difficult to deal with if we wanted to be able to come out on top.

「Inferno Burst.」

『Inferno Burst!』

『Inferno Burst!』

『Inferno Burst!』

We chose to cast several fire-based spells in an attempt to burn through Fermus' threads and disable them. The four massive pillars of flames merged into a single, larger blast as they closed in on and assaulted the dragon hunter. The act of concentrating several weaker spells into a single, more powerful attack was a technique I'd actually ripped from the System Announcer; I was emulating what she had done back when we fought the lich. My imitation was still far from perfect, but it was still effective enough to merit going out of my way to attempt it.

We accounted for the fact that Fermus would attempt to dampen the flames by whipping his threads against them. We didn't, however, account for him choosing to follow up the action by diving through the encroaching magical firestorm with his right arm extended.

I couldn't comprehend his actions. I knew that he'd managed to reduce the attack's power, but that didn't change the fact that we'd thrown a total of four flame spells at him. Much to my surprise, he wasn't swallowed up by the attacks. The flames had instead dispersed as they came into contact with his fist.

Looking more closely caused me to realize that he'd actually used his threads to create a layer of protection, one that kinda resembled a glove or gauntlet. The combination of his decently high leveled Flame Resistance skill and his flame-resistant threads more or less made him impervious to our attacks.

「You are aware that they call me a dragon hunter, right? I've got what you could call perfect countermeasures to dragonbreath and anything that resembles it.」

Fermus' words caused me to realize that flames we just attacked him with kinda did resemble the breath-based attacks that dragons seemed to like launching. Fermus was obviously used to fighting scaly bastards, so our spells hadn't actually ended up meaning jack shit to him.

Fire didn't seem like it would work, so we switched gears and decided to attack him with a couple wind-based spells instead.

「Wind Cutter.」

『Tornado Lance.』

『Gale Hazard.』

『Hexagonal Tornado.』

Fermus once again managed to remain unharmed, this time, by weaving his threads into a web-like net that ultimately caused the spells to change their trajectories.

It took seeing him remain unharmed for me to realize that I'd made a mistake and once again launched an attack that resembled the kind a dragon

would. Some dragons could create sudden gusts of wind by flapping their wings, and others could breathe out breaths based in wind as opposed to fire.

The dragon hunter's resistance to wind and fire effectively served to cripple our offenses. The only other two types of magic we had at a high enough level to damage someone as strong as him were lightning and space/time.

『Let's try hitting him with some space/time stuff first.』

Attacking with space/time magic would've sounded like a good idea if not for the fact that the element didn't actually have that many offensive spells. The only one that we could really make use of was the one called Dimensional Sword.

Given that, we decided to teleport several times in succession to close in on him before unleashing that exact spell.

Dimension Sword was a nifty little technique with its fair share of perks. It could pierce through any sort of defense and attack only its intended target. That said, it wasn't a particularly good offensive ability because its strengths came with counterbalancing weaknesses. It didn't do much damage, and was extremely difficult to use because of the way its targeting worked. That is, using it would allow one to identify a small preset zone in which it would actually function; the spell would completely fail to do anything at all if its target moved out of its area of effect by the time it activated.

Fermus was the type that seemed to sit still and intercept incoming attacks as opposed to straight up avoiding them, so I'd been fairly certain that we'd be able to hit him with it.

「I've seen that spell before. I know how it works.」

「Tsk!」

Unfortunately, that didn't end up being the case. Fermus' experience allowed him to identify our tactic and immediately react with a dodge.

『Digdug!』

「I've already accounted for something like that too.」

I tried digging a hole right under him in order to impede his ability to move, but he'd perfectly negated the action by spreading a net of threads underneath him and standing on top of it.

「And now, it's my turn.」

「Kuh! Threads in the way.」

The threads that Fermus had set up above the stage all started to warp. They twisted together and became thin spears that came flying at us from all sides.

It was an attack that was extremely problematic to deal with. There were so many sharp edges assaulting us that I didn't think we'd actually be able to keep track of them all. And that was bad, extremely bad. Fermus had laced the threads with his magical energy, so any that did actually end up hitting us would be powerful enough to sever a limb or two.

Fortunately, we managed to prevent the attacks from landing by deploying a barrier, but that didn't change the fact that we had to stay as on guard as we possibly could.

『This isn't working Fran. He hasn't been losing any threads. It looks like he can make as many as he wants so long as he has the mana for it. We need to shift gears. The longer we let this drag on, the bigger a disadvantage we'll have.』

(Nn! Got it!)

We'd already cut through, burned down, and flat out destroyed a large number of Fermus' threads, but the volume he had on hand didn't actually seem to be decreasing in any which way. I assumed that he was either using his Magic Thread Creation skill, or just abusing one of his weapons' properties. Either way, the result was the same in the sense that targeting his

threads wasn't working. If anything, it seemed that our actions had only caused them to proliferate, as he could still control the ones we severed. The total number of threads within the barrier's confines had actually increased, and as a result, his attacks had started becoming more varied in nature and form.

(Master, will use lightning magic.)

『Roger that!』

I knew that Fermus could disperse our lightning based spells if he manipulated his threads to do so, but that didn't necessarily mean that they were actually ineffective. There had to be a limit to the amount of electrical energy he could handle at once. There was a chance we'd be able to totally end him if we bombarded him with spells that contained way more power than a mere Thunderbolt or two.

Black Lightning Advent was most likely capable of completely shattering his defenses, but I didn't want to resort to it just yet. Using the skill would cause Fran to lose her awakened status, so I kinda wanted to hold onto it just in case. Moreover was the fact that it didn't actually cover that much of an area. Most of Black Lightning Advent's power was focused on its target, and its target alone.

The current circumstances seemed to indicate that we would be better off using attacks that covered a larger area.

『Thor's Hammer!』

I cast one of the spells we'd gotten the moment Lightning Magic had hit level 8. It, Thor's Hammer, was a technique that had both high power and a decent size to it. It wasn't big enough for it to be called a true AOE spell, but it at least served the purposes we needed it to given how small the arena was.

A massive magic circle spawned on top of the arena. From it descended a single, ultra thick thunderbolt. It was so powerful that it almost seemed to

contain all the destructive force that one associated with the god of lightning and his mallet.

Fran was resistant to lightning, and I could just use Dimension Shift whenever, so Fermus should've been the only one to have taken any sort of damage.

But again, as hard as it was for me to believe, he didn't.

The high leveled lightning based spell had dispersed upon touching the thin layer of thread he'd erected to counter it.

「My defenses can even block a thunder dragon's attacks. Don't expect to break it that easily.」

It seemed that Fermus was even capable of easily negating lightning based attacks. He'd compared our strike to a thunder dragon's, but honestly, to me, that pretty much meant nothing at all. I'd never seen any thunder dragons nor heard anything of how powerful they tended to be.

「Thousand Thread Tsunami!」

Fermus' threads almost seemed to form a massive tidal wave as they surged towards us.

There were many ways we could've gone about dealing with the attack. I immediately considered destroying it with either might or magic, but Fran had other ideas in mind.

(Go through!)

『Sure thing! Dimension Gate!』

Fermus was surprised to see us move right past his wall of thread without paying it any mind. He immediately reacted by attempting to put a bit of distance between us, but it was already too late.

「Haaah!」

Fran had already gotten right next to him and cut a gaping hole in his torso.

「Mmph?」

『He subbed his body out for a fake!』

Stuff spilled from the dragon hunter's open wound. I'd been expecting the stuff to be his blood and guts, but, it'd actually just been a series of strings.

The thing that we'd finally reached and cut down had been nothing but a puppet made of thread. He'd used the moment the tsunami had blocked our line of sight to create a puppet. He'd also used some sort of magic to disguise it and make it look almost exactly like him. I couldn't help but be impressed by much he'd done in so little time.

We immediately cut the threads that assaulted us and searched for Fermus' presence — only to find that he was right behind us.

We heard a whooshing sound as a few threads extended from Fermus' hands and began moving to wrap themselves around Fran's neck. There weren't that many of them, but they were sharp enough to do more than just lop her head clean off.

「Haah!」

Fran quickly ducked and avoided the vice before it decapitated her before switching to a reverse grip and thrusting me straight under her right armpit and stabbing at the man to her rear.

「Woah!」

We caught him off guard, but he somehow managed to dodge the attack regardless by twisting his body to the side. He then followed through with the rotational movement and thrust the underside of his fist as he completed a full spin and once again sent a series of threads in Fran's direction.

「Raaah!」

Fran cut them down and once again attacked Fermus, this time with a stab.

However, she still simply couldn't hit him. His threads surged up from beneath her feet and bound them in order to momentarily stop her in her tracks. She probably would've lost her feet to the attack had our barrier not been up. The catgirl forcefully thrust me forward regardless, he narrowly managed to avoid my blade by bending backwards and moving under it as would someone doing the limbo.

It was a perfect dodge, but also an act that exposed him to damage. Fran twisted me around and immediately cleaved at his now open backside.

The moment he got hit, his body had started doing things that I could only gauge as physically impossible. I was sure that he hadn't put any power into his limbs or anything like that, but he somehow just started moving off to the right. The acceleration was sudden, and almost seemed to come out of nowhere.

I had to take a second look to realize that he'd wrapped several threads around his own body and used them to drag it off to the side.

『It looks like we've finally got a confirmed hit in.』

「Nn!」

We hadn't managed to bisect him in a single strike, but we'd at least worked our way through to his internal organs. It was a bit unfortunate that his threads had managed to disperse the lightning-based Elemental Blade we had active, but we'd still manage to hurt him nonetheless.

「Gargh... Hundred Thread Tourniquet.」

『Holy shit, just how versatile are those god damn threads of his...?』

Fermus wrapped a series of threads along his bleeding midsection. Luckily, he didn't seem capable of pulling off what a certain individual from H*nter x Hunt*r could in the sense that couldn't repair his nerves by attaching them with threads, but, he was at least capable of closing his wound and stopping any bleeding.

Annoyingly enough, Fermus' skills prevented him from feeling pain, which in turn meant that his wound wouldn't really affect his ability to do battle given that it'd stopped bleeding. To make matters even worse, he was currently equipped with a Bracelet of HP Recovery as opposed to the Ring of Poison Nullification he was wearing yesterday, so he would eventually heal if we gave him enough time to do so.

Landing a hit had also increased Fermus' awareness of the dangers of engaging us in close combat. Because of that, he'd retreated further than he usually did, and had started concentrating his magical energy into his fingertips.

「You're really quite skilled. It seems I'll have to rely on a tactic that deals a lesser degree of damage from afar. Ten Thousand Thread Technique—Cardinal Spirit Assault!」

All of Fermus' threads simultaneously began moving to attack us. Each was imbued with one of the cardinal elements of water, fire, wind, and earth.

Not even the strongest of the threads could output more damage than a low tier spell, but, the sheer number of them combined with the limited space we had to move through made it so we couldn't actually avoid taking damage.

「Kuah!」

『Heal!』

『Heal!』

『Short Jump!』

We somehow managed to prevent ourselves from really getting caught in his attack by roasting and cutting at the incoming threads while also throwing the occasional heal and teleport into the mix. The issue, however, was that our mana was slowly starting to drain itself dry

However, the same could in fact be said for Fermus. The sheer scale of his attack both drained his stamina and mana.

In fact, it seemed like we would be able to outsustain him if we cancelled Brilliant Lightning Rush and stalled him out by constantly healing up.

Or so I thought. Something ended up happening before I could even bother pitching the plan to Fran.

「Argh!」

『Shit! Greater Heal!』

「Something... attacking!」

『G-Greater Heal!』

Deep gashes had suddenly appeared in Fran's legs. I healed them, but her arms ended up getting lopped off before she actually fully recovered.

I couldn't figure out what was going on. The barrier I had up didn't react to the attack. Fermus's attacks somehow seemed to be passing right through our defenses.

『Dimension Shift!』

I cast a spell that should've allowed us a moment to recuperate.

「Mmph!」

『Heal!』

But, for some odd reason, it failed to do its job. A cut appeared on Fran's cheek nonetheless. Fermus was clearly somehow circumventing both our barriers and Dimension Shift.

I turned up all my detection based skills in an attempt to figure out what was hitting us. Doing so allowed me to detect that some of his threads were actually passing through both our defenses and the others as they assaulted

us. Their properties seemed rather similar to those of my Dimensional Sword spell.

That was when it finally clicked. He was making use of the Space/Time element that came with the Monarch Whale's Beard War Threads he had equipped.

「No point in barrier.」

『Good point.』

It was literally impossible for us to constantly identify and actively avoid all the space/time element threads when we were being assaulted by so many other similar-looking threads. Likewise, there was no point in us trying to buy time through the use of Dimension Shift.

I'd noticed that he hadn't attacked us immediately after we'd teleported, and from that, recognized that it was possible that he couldn't create the threads at a moment's notice. However, I couldn't say I was 100% sure that was actually the case.

I really had no idea whether or not he could. As a result, I couldn't actually figure out if we'd ultimately be swallowed up by his threads the moment we teleported, I didn't the time to brood about it any longer.

It was time to act.

(Master, using trump card!)

『Alright, go for it! We'll have to gamble on it working if we want to win!』

214. White and Black Lightning

Chapter 214. White and Black Lightning

White and Black Lightning

Fermus' attacks had grown to be much more intense, but our Sword Lord Arts and detection-related skills allowed us to prevent ourselves from getting done in. They made it so we could somehow manage to dodge everything that came at us as we focused on concentrating our mana.

There was no point in continuing with the strategy we'd been employing thus far; maintaining the status quo wouldn't be to our benefit. The dragon hunter was more than capable of defending against any of our weaker attacks by simply deploying a barrier made of string.

Every single thread he had was worth mention, as most had good magical conductivity stats. He could bolster both their durability and power even further through the acts of twisting them together and forming larger, more compact masses of thread. It was a near universal tactic that allowed him to deal with every single one of the attacks we'd thrown at him and more with ease.

In other words, we had no choice but to attack him with something that would overcome his defenses with pure power, and pure power alone.

『Let's do this!』

(Master, fully prepared?)

『Don't worry about all the stuff on my end. You just do you.』

(Then, starting.)

『Go for it!』

I let loose all the magical energy I'd been compounding and poured it into a single spell.

『Haaaaaah! Kanna Kamui!』 [1]

The attack I unleashed was one so difficult to control it rendered me unable to do anything else for its duration. It took me using Parallel Processing and concentrating as hard as I could just to keep myself from losing control of it.

I couldn't help but think that the difficulty that came with using Kanna Kamui was in fact justified given that it was the strongest lightning spell, the one we'd learned when the Lightning Magic skill finally hit level 10.

It was a spell that the humans and individuals belonging to other, similar races could obtain should they train up their Lightning Magic skill. That said, I felt like it was something they would unlikely be able to put to practical use. Kanna Kamui simply ate too much mana and required too much processing power for that to be possible. Those that did manage to somehow gather enough magical energy to cast it would likely burn out their neurons the moment they tried.

A roar, a feral but majestic warcry, resounded through the battlefield as a dragon-shaped bolt of white lightning descended from the sky and crashed into the arena.

「Gaaah! Is that really...!?」

Fermus' voice was tinged with a bit of panic. His prided barrier of threads was unable to hold against our attack and had started to char and give off an electrostatic discharge.

I was a bit surprised that the dragon hunter's defenses were able to hold, even for just a moment.

「Black Lightning Advent!」

But in the end, it didn't matter. Kanna Kamui had done its job; it'd torn its way through Fermus' barrier and made him vulnerable. He no longer had any means to ward off it or the black lightning that Fran immediately assaulted him with afterwards.

「Ugraaaaahhhhhh!!!!」

The black and white lightning-based attacks melded together as they swallowed him whole. We were blown away by the resulting shockwave much in the same manner we had been back when we used the attack on Goldalfa. Fran ended up vomiting out blood because her back had smashed into the barrier set to protect the audience.

「Gaah!」

『Long Jump!』

I somehow managed to regain enough focus to teleport and relocate us up in the air above the arena.

「Ugh... Heal!」

『You alright?』

「Some...how...」

Black Lightning Advent wasn't exactly what you could normally use in an area as small as the tourney's arena, so we ended up damaging ourselves quite a bit.

We tried looking down as we let ourselves freefall, but we weren't able to gather any sort of meaningful intel. The barrier's insides were filled with flashes of white and black as the two types of lightning raged through it.

(Close call.)

『Yeah... We might've ended up killing ourselves before we killed Fermus if we ended up staying inside.』

We'd actually considered hitting Goldalfa with the combination we'd just subjected Fermus to, but ended up setting the idea aside after deducing that it was way too suicidal a tactic to consider. There simply wasn't enough space in the barrier for us to get away from our own attacks unscathed.

Seeing Urushi retreat all the way out of the barrier when we fought Goldalfa had actually inspired me to do the same, so I checked the rules, and confirmed that we wouldn't be disqualified for being out of bounds so long as our feet didn't touch the ground outside the arena.

Escaping from the barrier actually allowed us to use it as a shield.

Or so I thought.

「Master, look!」

『Holy shit! You have to be kidding me, is it gunna blow...!?』

The barrier had started to swell up. Bolts of electrical energy had started leaking out from its interior. It looked like things were about to start going south.

(Master, any ideas?)

『Uhh... actually yeah! I think I got something! Dimension Gate!』

I opened a distortion in space time with one end in the barrier, and the other end out. The electrical energies within the barrier immediately began flowing through the newfound exit with an incredible force.

But not even that was enough to stop the barrier from swelling up even further. It kinda seemed like the rate at which it was swelling had decreased, but I wasn't too sure because it was still growing larger, and at a similar pace to boot.

And then, it happened.

The sound of an explosion nearly ruptured our eardrums as the barrier burst.

A sudden windstorm assaulted the audience and pushed every single one of its members into their seats.

「Kyaaah!」

「Hiiii!」

「O-Oh god, someone help me!」

It was a veritable pandemonium of screams and cries.

Fortunately, the barrier's top was what had broken first, so all the lightning had ended up getting discharged towards the sky as opposed to crashing into the audience and wounding its members. Likewise, most of the swirling winds had also shot themselves directly upwards, so the audience had only been hit by the residual energy that followed. That said, it still contained enough force to send a child soaring through the skies.

I later learned that the lightning had ended up taking the form of a tree made out of light as it was ejected from the arena, one that reached all the way up to the heavens themselves.

The barrier repaired itself after a few seconds passed.

Fortunately, it didn't look like the rubble that'd been ejected together with the lightning had done any major damage.

『Whew, that coulda turned out pretty poorly.』

「Nn. Reflecting.」

She and I were both aware we kinda forgot the circumstances and went a bit overboard.

『How about we focus on how we're going to land for now?』

「Master, thoughts?」

『I'm almost out of mana. Though, I still do have enough to soften our landing with telekinesis.』

「Good enough.」

By almost out, I meant that I didn't have anything more than just a sliver remaining. I didn't have enough to allow us a slow landing. It simply wasn't an option. The same went for Fran as well. She'd already dispelled her awakened status because she didn't have the mana to maintain it any longer.

I scrounged up everything I had and managed to dampen the force of the impact just enough for Fran to land atop the newly reformed barrier that enshrouded the arena.

「Whew.」

『I wonder how Fermus is doing.』

He can't be alive after all that, can he?

The stage had been completely obliterated. Not a trace of it remained. Most of the dirt that filled the place had been outright deleted.

All we had beneath us was a single, massive crater with its deepest part 20 meters below what used to be ground level.

The arena looked much like the arena in Dr*gon Ball had after Tien blew it up with his Tri-Beam.

「Oh my god ladies and gentlemen, would you look at that! How the hell do I even begin to describe what just happened!? Folks, what we just saw was something that I'm not even sure could've possibly been done by human hands. I've been doing this for a long time, but, never before have I ever seen the barrier get destroyed by the combatants fighting inside of it!」 [2]

The audience was stunned, but the caster managed to calm its members down by doing her job and describing the situation.

「What a grueling sight to behold! Can you believe that its perpetrator is only a mere 12 years of age!?!」

We'd given the audience a bit of a shock. Some people were crying. Others were completely spaced out. There was even a group that'd started attempting to escape the colosseum. Regardless of exactly what it was they were doing, it was clear that most people were panicking.

Hearing the caster describe the situation in the same manner she always would caused them to regain their bearings.

「And if you look at the crater's center, you'll see Fermus being revived by the Cradle of Time! That lightning strike was so powerful that not even the dragon hunter could withstand it! The scramble for third place is now officially over, with the victor being the Black Lightning Princess!」

A huge cheer emerged from the crowd as the caster declared Fran's victory.

I couldn't help but question how the spectators were as calm and willing to cheer for us as they were considering that a fair number of them had seemed to have thought that Fran had just brought them to death's door — not that I was complaining. If anything, I was glad they didn't end up being terrified of us. It seemed most of them had even ended up enjoying what we'd done as they would have a thrilling roller coaster.

『Let's head back down, I guess.』

「Nn. Urushi.」

「Woof!」

Urushi responded to Fran's summon almost immediately. He hadn't really had any chances to help out or even join in during the match, so he was totally pumped and motivated to at least be of use as a means of transport. Fran got on top of him and had him carry her off the barrier.

Seeing Fran straddle and ride the giant flying wolf made the crowd's cheers grow even louder. The support bolstered Urushi's mood and caused him to decide to do a full circle around the arena, which in turn prompted the audience to cheer with even more vigour.

I had to admit, the scene of him parading around with everyone cheering did have a bit of a picturesque feel to it.

『You know, Fran, it might actually be a good idea for you to wave to the audience and whatnot.』

「Nn? Like this?」

Her actions caused the crowd to once again let loose an incredibly loud cheer. Her departure from the stage almost seemed to resemble an idol's.

「Woo! Fran!」

「Damn! That's the Black Lightning Princess for you!」

「Please be my little sister!」

The reception she got really was quite similar to the type idols would get. If I had to pinpoint a reason, I'd say it was probably because of how cute she was. That said, I wasn't about to let her become anyone's little sister.

Wait a second. How the hell are we supposed to get off the stage if there... isn't a stage? I mean, I knew we were kinda the people responsible for blowing it up in the first place, but like, still, what do?

[1] No, not the girl from Maidragon. It's a reference to Ainu mythology. Kanna Kamui is the God of Lightning, and I believe the #1 god. I'm not too well versed in Ainu mythology myself, so this is literally me reading Japanese wikipedia and giving you a tl;dr.

[2] Caster was revealed to (probably) be a girl based on how she talks at this point in time.

215. The Tournament Draws to a Close

Chapter 215. The Tournament Draws to a Close

The Tournament Draws to a Close

The day's second match wasn't able to start even after the first ended. It was originally scheduled to begin about an hour afterwards, but it couldn't. The massive, gaping hole we'd created ended up ruling that option out in its entirety. The necessary repairs simply couldn't be completed in time.

「Looks like the finals will be starting soon.」

「Mmph.」

「Are you still eating?」

「Mmmphrrnnph」

「Yeah, yeah, I get it. You can eat as much as you want.」

The Beast Lord had once again summoned us to the VIP room, which turned out to be real convenient seeing as how we'd planned on checking in with him anyways. He seemed to have caught onto the fact that Fran was a foodie, as the room was filled with all sorts of extravagant dishes laid out much in the same manner as they would be at a buffet.

She, being who she was, had naturally ended up falling victim to their appeal. That is, she did as the Beast Lord wished and decided on watching the finals together with him and his associates — which, in and of itself, wasn't really a bad thing. Their invitation was actually one that took Fran's convenience into account. She'd become extremely popular, especially amongst her fellow beastkin.

I was almost certain that there wasn't a beastkin present in the arena that wouldn't want to talk to her, especially seeing as how she'd finished all her matches and raked in the third place prize. They'd been rather patient and

calm up until now, but it didn't seem like they could hold themselves back much longer. Some had even began to seem to want to stalk her.

People, as a whole, had the tendency to be rather stupid regardless of where or when. From that understanding came the assumption that she would most likely be approached by one or more nobles that wished to use their positions in order to extort her.

In other words, staying in the Beast Lord's vicinity benefited us because it would likely prevent any less morally sound individuals from acting out of line.

The Beast Lord had taken a decent liking to Fran, but that didn't necessarily mean he was free of ulterior motives. She, as an evolved Black Catkin, was definitely someone that could be of use to him. Thus, his invitation had likely been extended because he didn't want any other noble stealing a march on him and doing something that would cause Fran to feel ill will towards the Beastkin's Country or its residents.

Of course, not all the benefits the Beast Lord could derive from having her around were longer termed ones. Seeing him with her would likely lead onlookers to view him in a more favourable light.

Being the world's one and only evolved Black Catkin was something that, by nature, granted Fran an incredible amount of attention.

I wasn't actually sure whether or not Fran knew just how much attention she would be getting, but she was at least roughly aware of the consequences of revealing her identity. The reason I could say that with certainty was because Fran had wanted to use the tournament as a means of becoming famous in hopes of bettering the world's treatment of the Black Catkin race.

That was why she'd purposefully awakened under public scrutiny. She was more than willing to draw attention to herself so long as she managed to bring benefit to her tribesmen.

We'd been a bit worried that nations and nobles would end up eyeing her, but acquainting ourselves with the Beast Lord had at least mitigated that concern to an extent.

「Here. Take this.」

「Nn. Thanks.」

「No problem.」

For some odd reason, Goldalfa was going out of his way to provide Fran with all the service she could possibly ask for.

He'd even headed down to the kitchen and asked for both more of Fran's favourite dish and raw meat for Urushi.

Asking him why he was acting so subserviently had caused him to respond with several interesting notes. The first was that he respected Fran, both as a warrior that'd defeated him in battle, and as member of one of the Ten Original Tribes. The other was that her personality was almost identical to his master's; he was more than just used to being ordered around by Kiara. The combination of the aforementioned factors made it so he was in fact unable to refuse any of Fran's orders or requests.

「Oi, look. They're about to start.」

「Nn.」

We watched closely as both Amanda and Forrund took to the stage.

Both contestants were extremely popular, and as a result, the cheers that resounded for them turned out to be so loud they caused the entire colosseum to shake in the same manner it would have had it been hit by an earthquake.

The roars were so loud that they pierced through the VIP room's soundproof walls and caused everyone inside to cover their ears. It was cute when Fran did it, but, the same couldn't be said for the Beast Lord and his

companions. Seeing them cover their cover their ears in a childish manner left a pretty bad taste in my mouth.

「Entering from the west, we have Amanda of Hariti! The rumours say that the semi-final round had made her weapon unusable! Just how will she handle today's match!?!」

Amanda didn't manage to get her whip repaired in time. The one she had with her today was a decently powerful magic item, but several grades poorer nonetheless.

「And against her will be Hundred Blade Forrund, a powerful adventurer said to be on the brink of becoming an S rank!」

The two A ranked adventurers exchanged a few words as they stared each other down.

Unfortunately, the crowd made it so we couldn't hear them despite the massive screen-like thing magnifying their voices.

Either way, the match ended up beginning.

Their duel was a fierce one.

Amanda immediately distanced herself from Forrund and began bombarding him with both storm-based spells and her whip.

The stage, which the staff had gone out of their way to painstakingly repair, ended up getting torn to pieces in the blink of an eye. Much to my surprise, Amanda ended up using the resulting rubble to boost her attack's power by sucking it into her storms.

Forrund, on the other hand, did his best to close in on Amanda while spawning and throwing magic swords. He was capable of being extremely effective in long ranged combat, but he wasn't able to outdo Amanda, who happened to specialize in it.

The first major event happened about ten minutes in. Amanda suddenly started to throw out more powerful attacks in an attempt to bring the match

to a close, seemingly because her whip had started to run out of durability.

She knew she would eventually lose if she didn't do something.

「Secret Art — Skanda's Demise!」

This time, however, she attacked not with the storm she'd sent at us, but instead with a single, godspeed blow.

I didn't even actually see her strike him. The only reason I knew she did was because his Forrund's arm had gone flying.

Her looking rather vexed in spite of that made it clear that she'd been aiming for his head, and that he'd somehow managed to dodge.

The whipmaster's weapon immediately began to crumble, a result likely in part brought about by the fact that it was a backup weapon and, relatively speaking, an inferior good.

Because she lost her weapon, Amanda also ultimately ended up losing the battle.

「And the winner, the one man that triumphed over all his peers, is Hundred Blade Forrund!」

Fran regarded Forrund with a serious look on her face as the caster named him the tournament's victor.

『He sure is strong.』

(Nn! But will surpass one day. Both Amanda and Forrund.)

『That we will.』

Likewise, the Beast Lord was also starring Forrund down. His eyes, however, expressed a much different emotion. It was almost like he was a predator observing its prey.

「So Forrund won? Man... I really would like to give sparring him a go.」

「Please ensure you stay calm and rational, Your Majesty.」

「Make sure you don't suddenly jump at and attack him, alright, Lord Rig?」

「Well yeah, no shit! Just what the hell do you guys take me for?」

「I guess the best way to describe it would be to call you a combat enthusiast.」

「I'd say a battle maniac.」

「Oh come on...」

It seemed not even the seemingly ever arrogant Beast Lord was a match for Royce and Roche combined. Getting called out by both had caused him to shut up.

「It'll soon be time for the awards ceremony. You should probably get ready, Fran.」

Royce reminded us of something that'd totally slipped my mind. Fran had managed to rank herself in at third place, so she wouldn't be able to skip the ceremony.

The tourney had actually contained three different types of contests. The first was the restrictionless one one that we participated in. The second only allowed those at or under level 20, and the third was open to parties between three and five people strong.

Both the other two types had already ended. The type we participated in was the one that tended to house the greatest number of, and the most skilled participants, so it ended up dragging on the longest. That said, all the awards ceremonies were set to take place at the same time.

That was nice and all, but I had a pretty major concern with the whole scenario. I didn't actually know how I was supposed to get Fran, who really hated boring ceremonies, to actually sit still and behave herself throughout the whole goddamn thing.

216. The Beast Lord's Predecessor

Chapter 216. The Beast Lord's Predecessor

The Beast Lord's Predecessor

Participating in the tourney had provided us with a large number of benefits and gains, the most significant of which being Fran's evolution. I was pretty sure that we would've probably still just been grasping at straws had we not come to Ulmutt.

Our stay in the city had also allowed us to learn what Black Catkin needed to do to evolve, both as individuals, and as a race. Those two pieces of knowledge were, in Fran's opinion, probably two of the most important bits of intel we'd learned to date.

Another important thing to note was that we'd been able to face off against a series of incredibly powerful opponents. Us losing to Amanda had caused us a bit of frustration, but we ultimately ended up accepting it and moving on. We both understood that it was important for us to learn from the loss, and thus, we'd used it, and our other battles, to come to a better understanding of our strengths and weakness. We'd even gone as far as deriving a few new strategies we could use in combat.

Honestly, the only reason we were able to learn so much was because we'd understood that there was a safety net, and that neither we nor our opponents would die regardless of how the battle ended.

The connections we built with the Beast Lord allowed us to hear of the Black Cat Tribe's current state. That too was a pretty significant gain considering it took a load off Fran's mind.

Last but not least was the fact Fran had gotten a really cool sounding nickname.

『Oh god damn it Fran! At least try to stay awake!』

「Mmph... Still... awake...」

『Just hold on a little bit longer alright? Especially cause it's finally your turn.』

「Nn...」

『How 'bout this? I'll give you some sort of reward if you make it all the way through the ceremony without falling asleep.』

「Nn. Type of curry I haven't tried.」

『Alright, sure. I'll make you something, so just think about it, hang tight, and don't fall asleep.』

「Uhhmm... Is there a Black Catkin named Fran present? If so, its your turn now, so please step up onto the stage.」

『Let's go, they're calling you up.』

「Nn.」

Ulmutt's feudal lord, a man we were seeing for the first time, awarded Fran with a medal of honour as she got up onto the stage.

Apparently the guy wasn't actually responsible for anything, and kinda just sat there and existed. His approach to governing Ulmutt was a rather hands off one; Dias was the person really running the city and managing its inner workings.

The medal we were given had both Ulmutt's crest and the number 3 carved into it. Apparently, that wasn't all we would be getting, a prize of 100k Golde would be delivered to us later on.

「You fought splendidly.」

「Nn.」

Fran replied in her usual manner, but ended up using her Court Etiquette skill to deliver a tasteful bow. Though the combination of the two didn't

actually end up seeming all that polite, it did lead to a series of loud cheers and huge round of applause.

The only reason she'd even bothered bowing in the first place was because I incessantly reminded her that she needed to make sure she was being polite. I didn't want people to suddenly start keeping tabs on us because we hadn't good manners.

And so, three hours flew right by.

We'd slated ourselves to visit the Beast Lord again after the ceremony came to an end. Hence we found ourselves in front of the city's most expensive inn alongside a large number of other beastkin.

Our destination was the room, or rather, the floor, that he'd rented out.

I listened to the other beastkin speak as we moved through the crowd.

Most of the crowd's members were nobles that served under the Beast Lord or their associates. They had apparently come because they'd realized that the Beast Lord was in a good mood. Despite that, he wasn't actually willing to see any of them. He'd shut them out because he hadn't wanted to deal with them, he thought it too much of a pain in the ass and ultimately not worth his time.

Surprisingly, the crowds members hadn't been infuriated by his actions. It seemed that most had actually expected him to act the way he did, as apparently, his current attitude wasn't one that deviated at all from what he considered the norm. A large portion of the crowd had still decided to visit in spite of their expectations because they figured that a chance was a chance, and that they didn't really have anything to lose by standing around and double checking his intentions. The rest seemed to think that it was improper for them ignore the king that ruled over their homeland regardless of what sort of attitude he planned to take.

The fact that all the individuals present were beastkin also meant that they all knew exactly who Fran was. As a result, she ended up garnering a whole ton of attention.

A few of the nobles seemed to have wanted to call out to Fran, but they were momentarily dissuaded the moment Urushi, who was currently at his regular size, turned his glare towards them. We used the impact to slip through the crowd and make our way over to the inn.

I had the sneaking suspicion that he wouldn't actually agree to see us, but it turned out I was way off the mark. He'd specifically instructed the inn's staff to let Fran see him, so she got past security without any issue.

「Well, I didn't expect to see you so soon.」

「Tell about Kiara.」

「Yeah, yeah, I get it. Sit yourself down and I'll talk.」

「Nn.」

Fran perked up her ears and got ready to listen to the Beast Lord as she enjoyed the tea Roche made for her.

「It would probably make more sense for me to tell you about my old man, the Beast Lord I overthrew, before telling you 'bout anything else.」

「Got it.」

The Beast Lord's predecessor was a man that went by the name Vairsas Narasimha. He was a weak man that harboured much more doubt than trust. He would always be paranoid that everyone was out to get him. His vassals were terrified, not of him, but rather, of the fact that he was king. He was extremely weak for a Golden Flame Lionkin, and only barely managed to obtain the evolution by leeching his predecessors. That, in and of itself, wasn't too much of a problem. He wasn't the only Beast Lord to have ever been in such a circumstance, but, unlike his predecessors, he had no talent for war; he wasn't suited to the act of commanding an army. The sheer

extent of his weakness caused him to develop a sort of inferiority complex. Said complex led Vairsas to be terrified of those that possessed greater power than him. And thus, he soon began to ostracize and purge any that caught his eye.

His ridiculous, idiotic antics had caused his country to fall into a weakened state, one that lasted until Rigdis overthrew him.

Vairsas' weakness led him to set his eyes on the Black Cat Tribe. He hadn't minded the tribe at all prior to his ascension to the throne, but, learning the secrets the royal family retained caused him to change his views.

He immediately ordered the Blue Cat Tribe to redouble their efforts in enslaving the Black Cat Tribe's members while also ordering them to keep an eye on any Black Catkin living outside his country's borders. Of course, the reason that he issued the order was because he was paranoid. He was afraid that a Black Catkin would one day evolve and dethrone him.

「My old man was so pathetic that he wasn't able to do anything beyond just ordering the enslavement the Black Cat Tribe.」

Vairsas could've easily issued a royal decree that demanded the Black Cat Tribe be driven to extinction. It's what would've made the most sense.

But he didn't.

He was too cowardly.

The former Beast Lord was afraid that eliminating the Black Cat Tribe would incur the Gods' wrath. He didn't know whether or not his actions would ultimately be forgiven. Moreover, he was worried that the any Black Catkin that slipped through his fingers would vow to take revenge. His many concerns plagued him and prevented him from so much as even thinking the option through.

「Not that I'm saying that's a bad thing. It's the only reason Grandma Kiara's still alive and kickin'.」

He'd told his subordinates to bring Kiara to him upon hearing of her through the Blue Cat Tribe.

Rigdis' father hesitated, he wasn't able to convince himself to execute her, and thus, he'd thought up a few reasons to keep her around.

The first was to make an example out of her. He wanted to demonstrate to the Black Cat Tribe's members that it was impossible for them to disobey him regardless of how strong they ended up getting.

The second was to demonstrate the extent of the royal family's noble dignity. He wanted to show off the fact that he could make a powerful Black Catkin obey him.

That was why Kiara had been working in the palace on the day it was attacked and nearly overrun.

「My old man used her tribesmen as hostages and forced her to become his slave.」

She was assigned to trash duty, and thus, she ultimately ended up meeting Rigdis, Royce, and Goldalfa.

Kiara's spirit had never broken despite the many years of slave labour she'd been forced to endure. In fact, she'd vouched that working as a slave was something that required way less effort than diving into dungeons, and as a result, she'd never actually suffered so long as one disregarded the horrible stench she had to endure on a daily basis.

The Black Cat Tribe as a whole had seemed to have grown accustomed to slavery, as they were more resistant to suffering than any of the other tribes.

「Meeting the old lady made us question our beliefs. We no longer understood why all the other tribes looked down on the Black Cat Tribe, nor why their members always got turned into slaves.」

The Beast Lord and his companions had been made to recognize Kiara's strength. She was so overwhelmingly powerful that she completely blew

their notions of the Black Cat Tribe's inferiority out of the water.

For that reason, the Beast Lord ended up doing research, research that led him to discover the sin the Black Catkin had committed in the past, and the reason that things were currently how they were.

He came to believe that the way they were being treated was unjust, that there was no point in persecuting them any further because they'd already been punished by the Gods. He even started believing that it was his duty as a member of the royal family to aid them in their quest for atonement.

Rigdis realized that his predecessor had only made everything worse. The fact that they'd gone as far as destroying documents pertaining to Black Catkin evolutions had left him baffled.

As a result, not even the royal family knew exactly what a Black Catkin had to do in order to evolve. That, in part, was why he promised Fran that he'd spread the methodology all around his country if she was willing to share it.

「I guess you could say I was just a bit disgusted by how my old man was handling things. That's why I trained myself up as per Grandma Kiara's instructions, made myself even stronger through adventuring, got supporters, beat his ass, and took his throne for myself.」

Rigdis would probably never admit it regardless of how we questioned him, but it seemed to me that the whole reason he'd gone as far as soiling his reputation by murdering his father was because he wanted to do something for Kiara and her tribesmen.

「Thanks.」

Fran understood his sentiments as well, and for that reason, she even ended up bowing in gratitude.

「Yeah, yeah, knock that off already. I only did what I did to satisfy my own ego. Having you thank me is just making me feel awkward and shit.」

「Nn. Got it.」

Fran acknowledged his words with her own, but never did end up budging. She instead simply continued to maintain a respectful bow.

217. A Discussion About the Future

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A Discussion About the Future

「Heya Fran. Congrats on winning third.」

「Mmph.」

「Kukuku. I'm guessing you realized I didn't quite mean that as just a compliment?」

Dias began congratulating Fran in a teasing tone the moment we entered his room. It was painfully obvious that he'd totally seen through her and knew exactly how she felt.

「...Because lost to Amanda.」

「You know, a normal C ranker would be more than just bragging if they managed to get themselves all the way up to third place.」

The Guildmaster's shit-eating grin failed to fade as he shrugged. He was only saying what he was because he knew Fran wasn't the type to suddenly start boasting about how well she did.

He did have a point though. Common sense dictated that a C ranker beating out an A ranker wasn't something that could normally be accomplished. It was such a miraculous feat that pulling through with it justified getting full of oneself.

「Also can't beat Beast Lord.」

「Well, his case is a bit special. Not even I would be able to so much as lift a finger against him.」

「Will win someday.」

「The fact that you're saying that like you seriously mean it is somewhat terrifying.」

The thing was that Fran really did seriously mean what she said. She wanted to grow strong enough to one day beat the Beast Lord down.

That said, she'd have to first get strong enough to beat down Amanda and Forrund before even considering putting up a fight against an S ranker.

「To be honest, I tried getting you promoted again, but my request didn't get approved.」

「Even though just became C ranker?」

『Aren't you pushing for things to happen a bit too quickly?』

「I mean, you guys did actually manage to take down an A ranker. You're way more capable than the average C ranker should be when it comes to your ability to fight.」

『Yeah, I guess you're right. But if that's the case, why didn't it end up working out?』

Dias' mention of our strength in battle clearly meant that we weren't meeting at least one requirement that didn't relate to it.

「There are actually quite a few problems according to the other guildmasters.」

「Other Guildmasters?」

「Yeah, I used a magic item to speak with a few of them.」

The biggest problem was apparently Fran's age.

「There were a good number of them going on and on about how there wasn't any precedent for what I was trying to do. I hate dealing with people like them. I'm actually planning on weeding them all out in due time.」

『Yeah uh, you have fun with that.』

Dias mentioned something that I figured it'd probably be best for us to stay out of.

「Some people also claimed that you couldn't really judge just how good someone was at adventuring based on their performance in a controlled environment like a tournament.」

「Understood.」

I had to admit, the second argument Dias presented to us was a solid one. The tourney had rules and restrictions in place. It didn't really serve to prove the full extent of one's skill, nor did it even come close to emulating the many types of situations you'd find yourself in while out adventuring.

One's caliber as an adventurer needed to be measured through more than just one's ability to fight. You also had to take into account one's knowledge of magic and magic beasts, one's ability to detect and disarm traps, one's ability to stay calm, and one's ability to think outside the box.

Of course, combat prowess was indeed still the most valuable of the aforementioned skills, so labeling someone that'd beaten an A ranker a B ranker honestly shouldn't have been a problem.

「Then there's also the speed at which you're rising through the ranks. They're worried people'll start complaining because it'd look like you were getting preferential treatment or something.」

The third point was yet another one I couldn't argue against. Fran had only managed to rank herself all the way up to C because Dias had basically pulled out the nepotism card.

「Another issue they brought up was your lack of experience as a leader.」

「Want explanation.」

「B ranked adventurers are expected to act as commander in times of crisis. They're supposed to lead other adventurers should they ever find

themselves in a situation involving magic beast stampedes, disaster-tier events, or onslaughts made by more powerful magic beasts, just to name a few.」

『Yeah, that doesn't exactly sound like something Fran could pull off.』

「Nn. Can't. Too bothersome.」

「That's what I thought, hence why it was one of the few points I acknowledged as reasonable.」

Fran's personality more or less made it flat out impossible for her to do anything along the lines of commanding an army.

「The last point made against your case was that you didn't quite seem to have the right sort of temperament considering that B rankers have to deal with the requests the guild gets from the nobility.」

「Really?」

「Kinda, yeah. Under normal circumstances, adventurers can pick and choose the requests they feel like taking. Some requests come from highly influential locals, others, from royalty. Requests like those are ones we can't refuse, and so, we assign them to adventurers we know are competent and likely to complete them.」

A rankers were powerful, but few in number, so they were typically kept on hold in case of an emergency. Hence, the requests were instead handed off to B rankers.

The B rankers in question would undoubtedly have to deal with the individuals that'd first made the request. There was a chance that the noble or whatever would end up getting pissed the hell off if the adventurer sent to them didn't have the right sort of temperament or attitude.

「Though, that didn't really seem to come off as an issue to me based on how you acted at the awards ceremony.」

In other words, it was something Fran's Court Etiquette could compensate for. I admitted that the way she talked could likely lead to people thinking she was rude, but that wasn't really much of an issue so long as she relied on the more taciturn side of her personality.

「I think that's everything that was said. Sorry, but you'll still stuck at C rank.」

「Nn. Don't mind.」

『It's not really something that could be helped.』

Becoming a B ranker at only 12 years old would essentially label her an exception amongst exceptions, so there being pushback only made sense. I personally didn't think there was anything wrong with slowly working our way through requests and building up a reputation before finally ranking up, as we could use the events that accompanied them in order to train ourselves up and make ourselves even stronger.

「To be honest, the only reason I tried having your rank raised in the first place was because I felt like I owed you a favour」

「Owed favour?」

「It's because you're the only reason I now know what ended up happening to Kiara.」

「Really?」

「Really. You're the reason the Beast Lord and I were able to talk the way we did, especially seeing as how I can't help but still bear a grudge against him and his line.」

Dias bowed deeply in order to demonstrate the extent of his gratitude.

「Thank you, Fran. I really appreciate what you've done for me, for us.」

Dias was so thankful he completely dropped his usual playful attitude and spoke in a serious tone.

「I'm glad to have finally fulfilled the pact I made with Rumina. It feels like there's been a huge load taken off my back.」

Hearing him mention Rumina reminded me of her circumstances. I was a bit concerned that she'd be subjugated now that she'd fulfilled her purpose.

『Speaking of which, what's going to end up happening to the dungeon?』

「Well, Rumina's lost a lot of her power. The number of monsters within her dungeon has decreased drastically, so we'll probably need to lower the dungeons' ranks by 1 letter grade each.」

『I see.』

「Sorry.」

Fran's evolution had a direct, negative effect on Ulmutt's economy, as the city essentially revolved around the dungeon it contained.

Dias probably shouldn't have been too happy with us, but surprisingly, he wasn't actually angry. He ended up lightly shaking his head as he smiled.

「The truth of the matter is that Rumina had always thought there was a chance that leading a Black Catkin to evolve would also cause her to lose her life. Having the two dungeons drop a rank each isn't really anything to note if you compare it to what could've ended up happening.」

『Yeah, but the fact stands that you guys won't be able to get as many materials or magic stones as you used to.』

「I can't say that won't happen, but, the dungeons are actually even more suited to training newer adventurers in their current state. They'll come en masse, so we'll be able to compensate for our loss of income through increased trade.」

The depth of Dias' thoughts served to prove that he really was deserving of his position despite his usual attitude. I was glad that we wouldn't really be damaging Ulmutt's economy.

「Oh, right. I've also got a request here with your name on it.」

『You're talking about the one you said you'd give us after we ranked up to C, right?』

「Right. I know you and the Beast Lord are no longer on terrible terms with each other, but I'd already informed several other branches that I was going to be issuing a designated request ahead of time, so I can't be taking it back now.」

『What'll we need to do?』

「I was thinking of giving you one that'd send you over to the Beastkin's Country. You should be able to bypass all those troublesome immigration processes if you're heading over at the guild's request. Likewise, the branches we have over there should also offer you their support once you arrive.」

「What to do after arrival?」

「I'd like you to locate a missing adventurer that one day just upped and vanished. None of the people looking for her have been able to come in direct contact with her, so they'd like for someone to confirm that she's still safe.」

So he wants us to look for Kiara? Man, talk about turning a personal problem into official business.

「Nnnn...」

『Sounds good to me. What say you, Fran?』

「Want to go to auction.」

『You mean the one that's going to take place in the capital? I mean, I'd like to go there too, but it's not like we absolutely have to. I'd say we should prioritize heading over to the Beastkin's Country for now.』

(Can maybe get good magic stones at auction.)

『Yeah, but that's a maybe, not anything guaranteed. The same could be said for the Beastkin's country anyways. Don't worry too much about me, and just go.』

「But...」

「Is something the matter?」

「Want to go to auction in June.」

「Oh, that? You've still got a whole month before that happens. You should be able to go to the Beastkin's Country and come back within 3 odd weeks.」

『Looks like we can make both.』

「Nn. Then will go.」

Fran nodded happily, a clear indication that she'd actually really wanted to go to the Beastkin's Country from the start.

218. A Gathering of Those That Wish to Gather Around Us

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A group of strange looking individuals approached Fran the moment she stepped outside the Adventurer's Guild.

All four of them wore grey robes that covered them from head to toe and obscured their faces from view. In their hands were staves made from the wood of a sort of old, knotted tree. They looked like mages, more specifically, the type you'd often see described in fairytales.

Their appearance fit the stereotype so well that I almost wanted to label them as cosplayers even though magic did exist and whatnot. The highly synchronized and nearly mechanical way they conducted themselves made them really seem out of place, and almost even suspicious.

Appraising them allowed me to confirm that they were indeed mages, but, none of them were actually all that powerful. The best among them was a water mage with associated magic leveled up to 7.

「What?」

Though they looked really suspicious, they didn't actually seem hostile, or wanting to harm us in any which way. As a result, I wasn't really able to figure out what they were after or how we were supposed to react to their presence.

The four of them split into two smaller groups, with one moving to the right, and the other to the left. They then raised their staves to the sky, as if to create a corridor.

A fifth individual walked through the newly created path. Unlike the other four, he was dressed up in a fancy looking, gold embroidered, purple robe. His staff was decorated with jewels, and clearly much more expensive.

Another difference between the man and the four other individuals that accompanied him was that his face was visible. His bright blue hair complimented his good looks, but, I still couldn't help but feel that he was kinda suspicious. A part of me almost wanted to say that it was precisely his handsome face that made him suspicious.

「I have been awaiting your advent, Milady.」

「Nn? Who?」

「My name is Grakma, chief of the Ulmuttian branch of the Aiwass Magician's Guild.」

Grakma's actions were so elegant that they almost seemed to have been pulled straight out of some sort of painting.

The Magician's Guild was something we'd heard of many times in the past, but we hadn't bothered involving ourselves with them or their members. Wait, Grakma said he was the Ulmutt branch's chief, right? Wouldn't that also make him one of the country's best mages? I highly doubted that to actually be the case. Grakma was basically the Magician's Guild's Guildmaster equivalent, but he really didn't match up.

He wasn't that weak, but he was in no way a match for Dias or Klimut.

Grakma was only level 20. He had the stats of your average D ranked adventurer, and wasn't even that skilled in magic. His best skills were Flame Magic, Storm Magic, and Lightning Magic with their levels at 3, 1, and 2 respectively. He basically didn't have any other skills to note. One could tell from looking at his stats that he'd fully specialized himself in the magical arts.

My biggest question, however, came not from his stats, but from his attitude. Why the hell was he referring to Fran as "Milady?"

「Your battles were nothing short of magnificent!」

「Okay.」

「The sight of you casting incredible spells, one after the other, has done naught but move me to tears!」

I guess that kinda made sense given that he was a mage. To him, it must've looked like Fran was constantly using high-tier spells nonstop. I'd been the one to cast Kanna Kamui, so he must've interpreted that as her using it without so much as even a chant.

「Milady, I cannot but label you as an Archmage!」

「Nn? Not mage.」

I figured that “Archmage,” was probably a title, but it made me think of classes anyways. I felt like Fran had probably unlocked a good few classes, and that it wouldn't be too bad an idea for us to go check.

Grakma missed the response Fran and muttered under her breath, and as a result, ended up continuing on as if nothing had happened. He pulled out a small box from his chest pocket, opened it, and showed its contents to Fran as he took a knee.

The four mages that accompanied him seemed to take his actions as a sort of cue, as they lowered their staves so that they were instead pointed forwards before moving as if to surround us.

It almost seemed like they were trying to initiate some sort of bizarre ritual. I knew that wasn't the case because they didn't actually end up giving off any sort of magical energy, but what seemed off still did seem off nonetheless, so I readied myself to use Telekinesis to send them flying the moment they tried anything.

「Please take this.」

「This?」

「It is a medal that serves to present the greatest prestige that the Aiwass Magician's Guild, has to offer. Please, Milady, I beseech you take it.」

「Prestige?」

The guild's chief continued pushing the box towards us despite the fact that we had no idea exactly what taking it entailed.

(Master?)

『Hmm... I'm not really sure what to do either.』

It didn't feel like any of the five mages present were casting or getting ready to cast any sort of spell, so I kinda felt that there wouldn't be any issue with us just taking the medal they were presenting to us.

「Please do accept it. It shall serve to evidence your ability as an Archmage.」

They weren't lying, and they didn't seem to be our enemies, but I couldn't bring myself to trust them regardless.

『They seem really suspicious, so let's not for now. This is kinda sudden, I'd like to look into the Magician's Guild a bit more before actually accepting.』

「Nn. Don't need.」

「W-Why not!?!」

「Seems suspicious.」

「Milady, that simply cannot b-」

「Okay, how about we cut this off here for now?」

「W-Who dares interfere!?!」

Someone placed themselves between Fran and Grakma right as I started considering whether or not we should use force to make him stop bothering us.

「You Aiwass people never do change, do you?」

「Fermus?」

「Hey Fran, haven't seen you since yesterday.」

The person that'd inserted themselves between Fran and the annoying mage was none other than the former A ranked thread user we'd just fought yesterday, Fermus.

「What are you doing!? Leave at once, adventurer! We are currently in the midst of an important ritual!」

「I know. The whole reason I interfered was to prevent you from completing said ridiculous ritual.」

「And what exactly do you mean by that?」

「Don't mind them. What they've done here today is in fact nothing out of the ordinary.」

It seemed my suspicions had been spot on. The reason the other four mages had seemed to be getting ready to perform some sort of ritual was because that was exactly what they'd been up to. Specifically, they'd been getting ready to perform a ritual that would indoctrinate Fran into their organisation.

Fran would've been become one of their members had she accepted the medal she was offered.

「They won't use magic to bind you in any which way, but I can say for certain that they would have continued to bother you going forward had you joined their ranks.」

In other words, it was basically a scam. They planned to claim that we'd become one of their members through the act of going through with the ritual so long as we accepted the medal regardless of whether or not we knew what accepting it entailed.

「Even though being tricked?」

Their actions didn't really seem to make sense. It seemed like there was a good chance of their actions pissing off the people they indoctrinated. Though that, in and of itself, wasn't really too much of a problem, it could turn into one should they attempt to scam a more powerful, reputable mage. It seemed like a series of actions that could very quickly and easily damage their reputation.

「Their awareness of their actions is precisely what makes them as repulsive as they are. The trick they just used on you is one they only ever attempt to use on talented children. They probably thought it would work on you because they assumed you were as naive as you are young..」

They were clearly aware and making use of the fact that the average child wouldn't attempt to deal with the situation by force.

In other words, they forced children into their organisation by flattering them and then using the fact that they'd completed a ritual as a sort of foot in the door in order to get them to do their bidding.

「There are many Magician's Guilds out there, but none are as terrible and infamous as the Aiwass. Their methods are almost as shady as their goal, world domination. They may as well be an underground organisation, and likely wanted to recruit you after seeing the extent of your strength.」

「Understood.」

「Please make sure you stay prudent, Fran. You'll be getting all sorts of attention from here on out.」

「Nn. Thanks.」

「We should probably deal with these idiots one way or another. How do you think we should go about it?」

「B-By “these idiots,” are you perhaps referring to us!? You dare despite being an adventurer, a simple minded brute willing to immediately resort to violence!?!」

Though I did admit that there were a good number of adventurers that acted like that, I felt like he was stereotyping us. It didn't take anything more than just looking at Fermus to recognize the fact that he was civilized. Saying that he was an idiot just because he was an adventurer was flat out unreasonable.

「What? So you think there's something wrong with me calling someone that attempts to force his ideals onto others without considering the consequences an idiot?」

「Haaah!? How dar-」

I apologized to Fermus in my heart. His efforts were appreciated, but ultimately in vain as Fran was kinda the type of adventurer that tended to immediately resort to violence. That applied all the more to people that tried to mess with her. She simply couldn't stand them.

The catgirl's straight kick knocked Grakma onto his back.

「Ugrahhhh...」

Fran hadn't put too much force into the attack. She'd purposefully held back because she'd only been intending on knocking him over.

However, it caused him to collapse and start rolling back and forth, disheveling his clothes in the process.

『Wow, he's weak.』

「Nn.」

Fran's eyes widened in shock, an act I hadn't actually seen in quite some time. She'd been planning on showing him hell, but he'd kinda already fallen over after just a single tap. Honestly, I almost wanted to say it was a bit of a letdown.

「W-What are you doing, Milady!?!」

「Whyever would you perform such a savage act!?!」

「Bit pissed off.」

「T-That fails to justify your actions, Milady!」

Fran liked being an adventurer. She also really like many of her peers, namely people like Amanda and Erza. She would've attacked the man regardless of Fermus' claims and his relation thereto.

「Shit! Let's bounc... wait, what!?!」

「I can't move!」

「Fuck!」

「You won't be able to get away. You're far too weak to escape my threads and their bindings.」

Fermus' strings sure did seem handy. He was able to use them to fully restrain all five of the magicians. They were all rendered incapable of movement.

「When?」

「Threads were a type of weapon initially developed for use in espionage. They're much more effective in ambushes than they are in head on conflict.」

「Understood.」

Thinking about it, Fermus was right. His weapon wasn't one suited to combat in an arena. He was much more powerful in something as tight in terms of space as a dungeon. He'd be able to easily kite with traps and whatnot. I could totally see us getting totally screwed over because we happened to stumble into a huge mass of threads in a tight corridor.

「Though, I doubt I would be able to defeat you even if the circumstances were tilted in my favour.」

「Why?」

「The incredibly powerful attack you finished me off with isn't one I'd be able to defend against.」

The issue with what he suggested was that the combination we'd used wasn't one we'd always be able to use. As a result, we were left unsatisfied. We wanted to get strong enough to be able to beat him by rushing him head on.

「Right, so back to what we were saying. What do you think we should do with them?」

「Not sure?」

「My suggestion would be for us to leave them to the Adventurer's Guild.」

「Good idea?」

「I think so. I don't see why the guild wouldn't move to defend an adventurer as powerful as yourself from another organisation.」

I mean, I guess we could, especially seeing as how Fermus was recommending it. I was kinda tempted to head over to the guild and start showing their members their places, but we didn't have the time for that.

「Then will leave to guild.」

「I guess we should take them inside then.」

「Wait bit first.」

「Are you going to do something to them?」

「Nn. Administering punishment.」

And so, Fran ended up slogging each of the men in the gut before dragging them inside the guild.

Much to my surprise, Dias was glad to hear what'd happened. I knew he was going to be able to deal with the situation without much issue, but I

hadn't expected him to be literally jumping for joy.

「This is just perfect! They've picked a fight with us, and in doing so, given us more than just an excuse to completely wipe them out!」

Dias glanced at his subordinates, a signal that caused them to approach before taking the mages we'd caught away.

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Chapter 219. Another Group Approaches

Another Group Approaches

「Fermus. Thanks.」

「It's no problem. I only decided to help because I just so happened to have something similar happen to me in the past.」

「Similar? Also almost tricked by Magician's Guild?」

「Not exactly, but I did have my fair share of unpleasant experiences because I garnered too much attention.」

Apparently Fermus, like us, had stood out ever since he was young. Namely, he'd managed to win one of Ulmutt's tournaments in his youth.

As a result, he was approached by magicians, mercenaries, nobles, merchants, and underground organisations. The individuals and groups that tried to solicit him would often refuse to back off even if he denied them, and sometimes even attempt to resort to force.

「I'm sure the same will happen to you.」

「How to deal with?」

「My approach was just to flee. I wandered from place to place in order to keep them from somehow making me go along with their demands.」

The dragon hunter's coping method was honestly a pretty good one. There was no way the people that wanted to solicit him would be able to keep up, especially if he was careful about covering his tracks.

「Though, I ultimately ended up having Dias solve my problems for me.」

「Dias?」

「Yeah. The two of us had always gotten along, in part because we're in the same age range. He'd already become guildmaster back then, so I just had him agree to call me his aide so I could use his name and reputation to deny the people that approached me.」

Dias' position as Guildmaster made it so the very mention of his name was enough to cause most lesser nobles to back off. Having Dias' support made Fermus' life much easier.

「It seems to me that you've drawn even more attention than I had, so you may end up having to deal with some really difficult people. I'm confident you'll be able to crush all the greedy criminal syndicates that come after you, but, the same can't be said for the nobility. Dealing with them the wrong way could potentially lead to something that ultimately devolves into an international dispute.」

The last little bit Fermus tagged on came off as personal, and as a result, was highly convincing.

「First hand experience?」

「Hahaha. Yeah, I happened to get into a little bit of a fight with a noble from another country and ultimately ended up leaving my name in their records.」

「Just because refusal?」

「Well... he was acting in a bit too demanding a manner for my taste, so I ended up “interacting” with him and about 50 of his subordinates...」

「Killed?」

「No, no, I just made it so they needed to see a doctor immediately. The issue came from the fact that the person in question happened to be related to royalty.」

Yeah, I could see why that'd end up pissing off an entire country. There was no way they could just let something like that happen and not react

unless they wanted to lose face.

「Dealt with how?」

「Oh, you know, nothing special. All I did was subdue and capture everyone that went after me before finally having a face to face meeting with the country's king, albeit one scheduled in the middle of the night.」

So I'm guessing that means he threatened him? I mean, I get he's strong, but like, that doesn't exactly sound like something he, or anyone for that matter, could get away with.

「Honestly, it was something only made possible because the country was a weak and uninfluential one. Even their most powerful citizens were weaker than me. There's no way I could possibly pull off a stunt like that if faced with a country like the Kingdom of Kranzel.」

「I see.」

「So the thing I was actually trying to say is that the best thing you could possibly do is fall back on the Adventurer's Guild and people like Amanda, who you know you can trust, if you happen to run into any trouble.」

「Nn. Why Amanda?」

「Oh, I'm guessing you must not know then. Many of the children that grow up in Amanda's orphanages end up becoming outstanding adventurers. They say she would be able to amass an army powerful enough to wipe a small country off the map so long as made use of her connections.」

What the hell!?

Amanda's connections were way more impressive than we'd been expecting them to be.

「Amanda, amazing.」

「She's got an incredible backing, and is a force to be reckoned with even if she doesn't bother venturing onto the battlefield herself. She's the whole reason the Reidosians haven't picked a fight with Kranzel.」

I had no way of knowing how Amanda ran the orphanages she had set up all over the place, or what she taught those that attended them. However, I was still able to see why it would be reasonable for the children that she raised to look up to her and her choice of career. My assumption was that she probably offered at least a bit of training, because that being true would in turn make everything click. Her instruction likely led the children she supported to develop solid foundations, which in turn ultimately allowed them to grow into outstanding adventurers.

「Though, I think you'll be fine regardless, especially seeing as how the Beastkin's Country has your back.」

「Beastkin's country has back?」

「Wait, you weren't working for them?」

「No.」

「I noticed that you'd watched the finals together with the Beast Lord, so I'd assumed that you were in his employ... If that's not the case, then I guess he's probably just taken a sort of liking to you.」

「Really?」

「Really. I think the reason he was willing to appear in public with you is because he wanted to keep other countries from investing you in their interests.」

Fermus continued after a light nod.

「My beastkin acquaintances have told me that most of the other beastkin have a rather favourable impression of you. They also seem to think that they could potentially deepen their bond with the Beast Lord if they

demonstrate that they can get along with you. The way I see it, you've more or less already become one of the Beastkin country's associates.」

He was right. With the way things were going, I wouldn't actually be too surprised if we ultimately ended up siding with the Beastkin's Country. We'd basically committed ourselves to visiting because the Beast Lord had made it so he owed Fran a favour. He'd also made himself seem like someone we could interact with going forward.

It was almost like the Beast Lord had orchestrated everything so that Fran would be more inclined to pay his country a visit. That said, I felt like he himself wasn't actually capable of constructing such a meticulous plan. It was instead likely derived from advice given to him by Royce or Roche.

That said, the relationship we currently shared with the Beast Lord was more so like one that focused around the act of give and take, in which we exchanged mutual benefits.

「Whoops. I got a bit too caught up in conversing with you. I need to go.」

「Thanks.」

「Do stop by my store some time if you ever decide to check in on Barbra. I've started doing research on a recipe that involves the use of curry.」

「High expectations.」

「Great. I'll make sure I fulfill them.」

Fermus gave one last bow before making an exit.

『You know, I'd really rather not keep running into people like the mages we just met.』

「Nn.」

I almost felt like I jinxed it, as someone once again called out us right about where we reached the place we met Grakma and his goons.

「Hey, you, girl. Hold on.」

「Nn?」

「Yes, I'm talking to you.」

A party of four approached us, with a man dressed like a swordsman taking up the lead. His appearance immediately caused all the adventurers around us to react and start muttering to each other.

「Dude, check that out. It's Celldio.」

「Why's he here?」

「Tsk. Even just seeing his face pisses me the hell off.」

「Here I was thinking today was going to be a good day. Well, there goes that.」

The mood almost seemed to instantly plummet as he showed his face. It seemed he was the type of guy most other adventurers disliked.

His appearance itself wasn't what seemed to have repulsed them, as he'd dressed himself up neatly and looked exactly as you'd expect a knight.

General Information

Name: Celldio Lesspus.

Age: 30

Species: Human

Class: Magic Sword Knight

State: Normal

Status Level: 40/99

HP: 409

MP: 398

STR: 207

VIT: 199

AGI: 167

INT: 201

MGC: 190

DEX: 167

Skills

Intimidation: Lv 3

Chant Shortening: Lv 3

Riding: Lv 7

Fear Resistance: Lv 4

Sword Techniques: Lv 7

Sword Arts: MAX

Divine Sword Arts: Lv 2

Extortion: Lv 6

Command: Lv 4

Purification Magic: Lv 2

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 5

Mental Harm Resistance: Lv 5

Elemental Blade: Lv 6

Magic Detection: Lv 3

Connoisseur: Lv 8

Leaves Good Impressions on the Opposite Sex

Opposite Sex Attraction

Orc Killer

Vigour Manipulation

Curse Nullification

Unique Skills

Weapon Control

Titles

Orc Killer

Ladykiller

Viscount

Extortionist

Elixir Addict

A Ranked Adventurer

Equipment

Pegasus Sword

Basilisk Sword

Holy Silver Armour of Light

Hexagonal Deer King's Mantle

Dimensional Ring

Pendant of Life

He was decently strong, but not anything too outstanding. His party members were the same. They were all at least level 30, and had fairly decent stats. They had a pretty good balance going too, with a swordsman, a shield-bearer, a mage, and a rogue. That said, Celldio, the guy that seemed like the party's leader, really didn't seem worthy of his A ranked title. He was weaker than both Jean and Colbert, who were still both B rankers, so there wasn't even really any point in comparing him to someone like Amanda. I mean, had a pretty versatile build, but still...

Celldio spoke in a pompous sounding voice as I looked and thought over his stats.

「You.」

His voice was completely devoid of amicability. It really didn't take him saying more than just a single word for me to understand why none of the other adventurers liked him. Dude was definitely a total douchebag, and the type that looked down on other people to boot.

Both his skills and titles seemed to reference the fact that he was the type you wouldn't want your daughter to hang around. That, combined with his good looking face, and the fact that he was a viscount, immediately made me not want him associating with Fran in any which way.

『This dude looks like he's both a noble and a scumbag. It'd probably be best for you to just ignore him and move on.』

(Got it.)

We planned to slip right past him and casually wander off, but we failed.

「Hey! Wait!」

The skirt chaser moved himself in Fran's way before continuing to call out to her in an arrogant manner. Looking at him up close made me realize he wasn't just a good looking guy, but rather, an incredibly good looking guy. As a result, I started to hate on him even more.

「You're Fran, right? The Black Lightning Princess?」

He clearly only called out to her because he knew exactly who she was.

「C ranker. Fran.」

「Good, then I have the right person. I don't really think I need to bother introducing myself, but I will anyway. I'm Celldio Lesspas, A ranked adventurer.」

「Nn? Never heard of.」

「What? You can't possibly be serious, can you?」

「Nn.」

「Huh. You really don't do your research, do you?」

Wow, what a cunt. The dude immediately assumed that we didn't do enough research just because we didn't know who he was. His clear overconfidence only made me hate him all the more.

I began wondering what he wanted. There was no way he would go out of his way to call out to Fran and name himself if he didn't have something in mind.

Chances were, he probably either wanted to invite them to his party or ask her to do something. Either way, I didn't really feel like what came out of his mouth would end up being anything decent.

「Need what?」

「Give me your magic sword.」

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Chapter 220. Celldio

Celldio

「Need What?」

「Give me your magic sword.」

Uh, what? Like, actually, what? Is this son of a bitch seriously trying to extort Fran in the middle of town with everyone around us watching?

「Nn? No. Why?」

「Because I'm an A ranked adventurer.」

「Meaning?」

「Look, you know just how amazing that sword is, right? You should know that giving it to someone like me is basically the same thing as doing the whole world a favour.」

「Don't understand.」

「Yeah, yeah, now stop being so selfish and fork it over.」

「Nn?」

The fact that he was ragging on about the world while attempting to blatantly extort us caused Fran to freeze and stare straight at him. Fran probably would've already cut the dude in half if he was trying to bullshit us, but we could tell that he actually thought what he said. The dude was so full of himself that he actually thought he was doing a good deed.

「So she's going to be his next victim? Man, must suck to be her.」

「Then go stop him!」

「Hell no dude, are you insane!? Celldio's fucked up in the head, but his skills are the real deal. Wait, why's he in Ulmutt anyway?」

「I'm pretty sure it was because Forrund left him out in the streets half dead when the two met in Barbra.」

「Right, makes sense. But man, I really didn't expect to have to look at that ugly mug of his after making the journey all the way over.」

「Oh yeah, and don't forget, the girl he's trying to mess with right now is the Black Lightning Princess. I'm pretty sure things aren't gunna go the way they usually do.」

It seemed that what Celldio was doing right now was nothing out of the norm for him. As a result, many of the adventurers in our vicinity began giving Fran looks of pity.

「I'll pay you as much as you want. I'll give you so much cash you'll be able to retire. I'm sure adventuring isn't the type of business a little girl like you wants to be a part of. And as for me? I'll be making good use of that sword of yours.」

The swordsman thumped himself on the chest as he spoke, almost as if to say that she could leave all her adventuring to him.

「I'm sure that's what your sword wants too.」

「Not possible.」

「You say that, but me? I know. I know how swords feel. I can understand them. That sword doesn't think it's something a little girl should be wielding. Come on, why are you hesitating? I'm giving you a chance to stop adventuring, a chance to turn yourself back into just another girl.」

「Already satisfied. Mind own business.」

「Oh man, you sure are ignorant. Let me guess, you just don't want to give the sword to someone else because you're feeling sentimental? I mean, I'll acknowledge that it's got quite some value to it, but, you're not thinking.

What a sad life you must've led not to be able to consider all the benefit that giving your sword to me will bring you. I guess that must mean I'll need to punish you a bit to make you understand. I know you see a whip right now, but don't you fret. I'm only going to whip you out of love.」

What bugged me the most about all this was that Celldio had yet to speak a single lie. The Principle of Falsehood had judged everything single last thing he'd said to be what he believed to be the truth.

The lunatic thought that I wanted him to use me, that giving me to him would benefit the world as a whole, and that whipping a young girl for the sake of discipline was an act of love.

I couldn't help but feel disgusted to the point that I wanted to vomit despite not even having a stomach to begin with. He was a fucking creep. He didn't really come off as either mad or eccentric. You couldn't really discern him from any other, less fucked up person from a glance. But still, something about him was just... off. I'd much rather a goblin use me than him. He disgusted me so much that I felt like physiologically repulsed.

『God, he's grossing me out so much I think I'm getting goosebumps.』

Bloodlust was starting to well up from within Fran each and every single time Celldio opened his mouth. It seemed she'd finally gotten over the initial shock and realized that he wanted to take me from her.

(How to kill?)

『Uhhh, let's try not to jump the gun just yet.』

Murdering the retard and his group was honestly a simple task. They were far weaker than we were. The only thing that really caused me to stop Fran was the fact that he was a viscount. I really wasn't feeling like dealing with the aftermath that'd result from making that choice.

I considered retreating, but wrote it off because I felt like it wouldn't actually bring the incident to an end. Celldio would probably continue to pursue and bother us. As a result, I couldn't really figure out what to do.

「Now how about handing it over? I can hand you even more money if this isn't enough, but it should be. It's an amount that'll let a commoner like you get by for a few years.」

The amount he'd prepared was 500k Golde.

A mere 500k Golde.

My mind almost blanked. I actually couldn't understand what he was thinking.

Did he really not understand how much I was worth? The amount he was paying wouldn't be enough to fetch him any half decent magic sword, let alone me.

「...」

His offer was so ridiculous it caused Fran to go silent out of a mix of surprise and anger. Celldio seemed to have interpreted said silence as the fact that she didn't think his offer was high enough, which in turn prompted him to reply in a sour manner.

「So you don't think that's enough...? You do know that obsessing over money turns your life into nothing more than a boring mess, right?」

He was saying something that you'd expect one reasonable adult to tell another, but, was taking advantage of the saying and warping it in a way that made it serve his purposes.

「Okay, how about this then? I'll make you one of my concubines.」

『What? W-What the fuck did this son of a bitch just say!?!』

「I mean, your face could do with a few improvements, but oh well. The honour that comes with such a position should make it worth it, right? I come from a line of marquis, so you'll be guaranteed a good life, even as just a concubine. That kind of reward makes this whole trade more than just worth it for a beastkin like you, am I right?」

『.....』

「So, how about it? You'll get be my concubine, and you'll basically be given infinite money. Sounds good, right?」

Celldio had no doubt that he was doing Fran a favour. He was, without a doubt, expecting her to thank him because he thought that he'd just given her basically the “best conditions ever.”

Ahahahahahahahahaha.

So this skirt chasing pedophile wants to not only take me away from Fran, but also turn her into one of his concubines?

Thankfully, Fran herself didn't understand what the man was proposing, and ultimately ended up staring at him with a blank gaze. She probably would've more than just exploded in anger had she actually known what he was talking about.

(Master?)

『.....』

(Master? Something wrong?)

『I think I just might've come up with a pretty good idea.』

「Nn?」

『Alright, repeat after me.』

(Got it.)

Fran began relaying my words to Celldio.

「Nn. This sword chooses wielder. Can't be used by unqualified. If unqualified tries to use, will die.」

「Hahaha! No worries there. I'm special, one of the chosen.」

「Will burn scammers, poison thieves, kill villains.」

We'd told him quite a bit, so I was hoping he'd back off. I was willing to call it a day after castrating and almost killing him if he was willing to stop.

「Fmph. Just hand it over already.」

「Yeah, hurry it up.」

「You're being rude. Our lord is busy, and doesn't have the time for this.」

The rogue-like guy grinned after Celldio's two other companions encouraged Fran to hand me over.

「Milord, I think it might be better to just take the sword from her even if you have to do it through force. It seems like she's unable to see reason.」

The fact that the viscount listened to the rogue's words and stepped up while acting all stuck up and shit made me feel like he was manipulating the the stupid skirt chasing pedophile.

「That's true. She'll soon come to thank me even if she doesn't right away.」

He drew his weapon and begin to emit an aura of bloodlust, as if to demonstrate to Fran what fate would have in store for her should she not hand me over.

I was sure Celldio's group had watched Fran's matches, so I didn't quite understand why they thought they'd be able to pry me from her through the use of force. It seemed that they were either full of themselves or assumed she wouldn't hurt Celldio because he was a noble.

「Hurry up and hand it over.」

「Really sure?」

「Of course I'm sure I want it! Now hand me the sword, girl!」

It seemed he wanted to take me from Fran regardless of the fact that we'd warned him he might die.

Well, I guess that means his life is forfeit. I couldn't really make Fran out to be a liar, and was kinda pissed off to begin with anyways. This was basically the perfect opportunity for me to address both of those two problems at once.

The adventurers standing nearby could act as witnesses to testify that Fran had indeed warned Celldio, and that it was his own fault he died.

『Feel free to hand me to him whenever.』

「Got it. Won't be responsible for result.」

「That's fine. You giving me the sword is all that matters.」

And so, Fran handed me to Celldio. Him touching me caused me to feel a wave of disgust wash through my body, but I forced myself to bear with it for the time being.

It seemed that him holding me wasn't causing the Goddess' penalty to activate. It probably only would once he actually equipped me. That was good to know, as it meant we could at least allow other people to hold me so long as they didn't actually try to use me as their weapon, which in turn meant we could have blacksmiths handle me and whatnot.

He would've automatically equipped me if he holstered me or tried to use me, but, as of right now, he was just holding me, so the Goddess' divine retribution wouldn't actually activate unless he consciously tried equipping me. That was how it worked back when I first met Fran, she wasn't able to actually become my wielder until she went out of her way to think about it.

I sensed a bit of magical energy flow from Celldio to me. He was attempting to use his Weapon Control skill before actually equipping me.

However, he wasn't able to get past my Control Nullification skill and ultimately failed. I was planning to steal the skill if I started to feel him

taking control of me, but luckily, I didn't actually have to.

All the magical energy he poured into me ended up dispersing.

「Huh? Why isn't it...」

Celldio understood that he hadn't managed to take control of me, but he didn't manage to arrive at the conclusion that his skill had flat out failed, and so, he tried a bit harder to get the skill to work. I was perfectly fine with him not actually ending up equipping me. I kinda wanted to see him get smited, but I'd also kinda been wanting to be the one to do it anyways.

The first thing I did was cast Elemental Blade, specifically with the flame element. Naturally, I'd made use of the Sorcery skill in order to pump as much magical energy in as I possibly could.

「Woah! This thing's starting to burn up.」

Heh, serves you right you son of a bitch! Guess who shouldn't have assumed his Weapon Control skill would actually work?

Celldio's face twisted into a frown as a result of the sudden influx of heat.

「W-What!? Why won't this sword obey me? I'm supposed to be one of the chosen!?!」

MUDA MUDA MUDA MUDA MUDA! [1]

The fact that he thought he was special was making me laugh. His mental age was something to be scoffed at.

「W-What the fuck!? I can't let go!」

I held Celldio's hands down with Telekinesis in order to prevent him from escaping my wrath. I concentrated all the force I would've used to catapult myself on his arms in order to hold them in position, so there was no way he was going to escape even after considering that he was an A ranked adventurer.

「Gaah!」

He couldn't let go of me even though his skin was starting to burn off. I started to harass him all the more as he began panicking. Namely, I changed the shape of my guard and hilt and stabbed both into his hand while also using the Magic Poison Fang skill.

「Gaarhhh!」

His face turned a deep shade of blue as the poison began circulating through his veins. Appraising him allowed me to confirm that his state has changed to "badly poisoned." Poison hadn't actually worked on any of the people we'd been fighting lately, so I was glad it finally found a chance to shine.

「M-My Connosieur skill didn't tell me about any of this!」

Connisuer was like appraisal, but it only worked on items.

That explained why he was willing to take the bet. He'd seen my the fake stat page I had, and come to the conclusion that I didn't actually have the features Fran had described.

「Milord!」

The mage cast both Heal and Antidote on Celldio.

「Guaaaahh!? Anna, hurry up and fix me!」

「My magic isn't working...! Karam, potions!」

「A-Alright!」

Karam, the rogue, tried using several healing potions to restore Celldio, but his actions were futile. I was still giving off heat and continuing to poison him. All the damage he healed off would immediately be reapplied.

The mix of flame and poison forced Celldio to recall the words Fran had spoke to him earlier.

「Get away! Arggg! why can't I let go of this sword!? Why!?!」

Namely, Celldio remembered the word death. A wave of panic washed over him and dyed his screams in fear.

But it didn't matter. This was what he got for trying to make Fran his concubine.

The viscount had thought his own actions to be just, but, truth be told, he'd been doing nothing but extorting people and robbing them. He was a criminal that committed the acts time and time again. There was a good chance he'd also made use of his family's influence in order to abduct otherwise unwilling women.

I knew that he might also be a victim, one deceived by his companions. He was an elixir addict, meaning someone might've made him lose his mind from overdosing on drugs, but I didn't care. I didn't care what reasons he had, nor whether or not he himself had suffered.

I had no intentions of forgiving him regardless.

「Gaaaaahhhh!」

[1] Each instance of “muda” means “what you're doing is futile.” Jojo Reference. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_KwV-MAMQ8

221. The Goddess' Retribution

Chapter 221. The Goddess' Retribution

The Goddess' Retribution

「Gaaaaaahh!」

Celldio's face twisted in agony. His fingers had been burnt to point where they'd blackened, and his hand was filled with holes because I'd covered my handle in poison tipped spikes.

Despite that, my rage had yet to abate. He hadn't suffered nearly enough to make up for the fact that he tried to make Fran one of his concubines.

They might've even taken her away by force if she was still as weak as when we'd only just met.

Imagining him forcing himself on her made me more than mad enough to tear him to bits.

I once again changed my form so I could better damage him.

「Hggiiiiiihghh!」

I made the thorns coming out of my grip grow and squirm around like a living creature as they snaked up his arm. I made sure to half retract the thorns as they moved before jabbing them into him over and over again.

「Aarrghghghghgh!」

The pain caused him to lose control of his body as it began to spasm. His party members tried to heal him, but they weren't actually able to help.

Much to my surprise, Celldio's servants were actually serious about trying to save him. It went without saying that they tried to avoid touching me, but they weren't particularly adamant about it.

Either way, I felt a sense of gratification as I watched him drip with tears, snot, and other body fluids.

I'd really wanted to figure out the exact sort of punishment the Goddess would administer, but the viscount wasn't really showing any signs of actually wanting to equip me. I was getting a bit sick of letting him hold me, so I started contemplating whether or not I should just use my Telekinetic Catapult to finish him off.

「Shit... Shit...!」

『How about trying to equip it?』

I decided to give it one last shot and started coercing him with telepathy. I was expecting him to either go along with what I said or write the thoughts I conveyed to him off as a figment of his imagination.

Naturally, I was going to promptly cut him down if he chose to do the latter.

「Haa...Haahh... That's right! I haven't actually tried equipping this damned thing!」

Perfect.

「Arrrrghhhhhhhhhhh!」

Celldio let loose a howl of pure pain that sent shivers down the spines of the people around us the moment he tried to equip me. It was the kind that echoed through to the very depths of one's soul.

The sight of him turning his eyes towards the heavens as he continued to scream was so odd that it caused both his servants and the adventurers around us to freeze in place.

The scene persisted for several seconds before the person that caused it finally broke the silence.

「P-Please no! Please forgive me! Argghghgahghgahh!」

Streams of blood erupted from Celldio's eyes, ears, and mouth the moment after he let loose one last scream.

And then he fell. His knees buckled as they gave way and caused his body to collapse.

「...」

The thud of him falling flat on his face was the last sound to precede a silence so heavy it could only be described as painful.

「Nn. Unqualified.」

The only individual that remained capable of movement was Fran. She walked over to Celldio's corpse, wiped off my handle, and picked me up.

Only then did the crowd finally come back to life. The people around us began to scream in panic. I couldn't blame them. Celldio was someone no one liked, and he also wasn't actually all that strong, but he'd been an A ranked adventurer nonetheless. In other words, the people around us had processed the sight as that of an A ranker meeting an instant death.

I had to say, the Goddess' retribution differed quite a bit from what I'd been expecting. My guess had been that she'd strike him with a lightning bolt that came out of the blue seeing as how the punishment that befell people who didn't know I was bound was supposedly something along the lines of an electric shock. The sight of Celldio's death seemed to illustrate that the death-related punishment did something to the insides of the target's head.

「H-H-H-How dare you!? How dare you murder Milord!?!」

「Ignored advice given. Killed self.」

「W-What kind of excuse is that!? If you knew that would happen, then why didn't you insist that he stop!?!」

The man that approached Fran was the one that'd been carrying the shield. He looked like a knight, and honestly, probably was. If I had to guess, I'd say that he likely served Celldio's parents.

「Burnt, poisoned, died. Clearly scammer, thief, villain.」

「Y-You dare!? Your words equate to you insulting his household's, a marquis', honour!」

「Only speaking truth.」

「You little shit!」

The shield-bearing knight lowered a hand to his sword as if to indicate that he wanted to fight us. However, he was stopped before he could draw it.

「That's enough. Everyone here has clearly seen that it was the viscount's fault and not the girl's. I will have to step in and take you on if you wish to fault her any further.」

「A-Are you blind, Colbert!? Master Celldio was both an A ranked adventurer and a viscount!

Her actions clearly functioned as treason against both the state and the adventurer's guild.」

「Well, I don't quite know what you saw, but I only witnessed a swindler get what he deserved after attempting to extort her out of her weapon.」

「W-Whatever are yo-」

「Are you really still going to keep that facade up even after running all the way to Ulmutt with your tail between your legs? I'd even go as far as to say that it was likely you lot that egged the viscount on in the first place.」

「Enough of your preaching! You can't deny that girl murdered Milord!」

「That simply is not true. He died because he was afflicted by the sword's curse. She warned him of it, and he ignored it, so all the fault lies with him, and he only got what he deserved. Are you incapable of comprehending the incredible number of people that served to witness the events that just unfolded?」

All the adventurers around us immediately began glaring at Celldio's party members. They didn't seem to be willing to back off, so they returned it and caused the situation to devolve into a staring contest.

A heavy mood began to propagate throughout the area.

「You lot sure are kicking up a fuss. Did something happen?」

Dias spoke as he exited the guild. It seemed that the all the commotion had caused enough noise for it to reach his ears.

The first to respond to Dias' question was the shield-bearing knight.

「G-Guildmaster! Milord was killed by their hands. Adminster capital punishment immediately!」

「Huh, quite a mouth you've got for a B ranker. Tell me, are you trying to give me orders?」

「W-What...!? Are you kidding me!? You want to refuse!? This is a murder case, one that involves the death of one of Marquis Ashtonah's potential successors! Obeying my orders should be nothing short of your duty, adventurer!」

Nobles were normally considered to be of a higher class than the guild's staff members, so it seemed the knight had expected Dias to comply.

But he didn't. The old guildmaster instead responded with a scornful laugh.

「While I didn't bear witness to the event, I was filled in on exactly what had happened. Let me ask you something. Who's fault do you think all this is? I'd really like you to mull that statement over, digest it, and shut up. Did your parents not tell you that all thieves start out as liars?」

「Y-You... you're calling me a liar?」

「Yup. Though, I guess a bit of investigation is indeed in order seeing as how I didn't see the event first hand.」

Celldio's followers seemed to interpret Dias' words as a chance, as they immediately began appealing to him and attempting to convince him that Fran tricked Celldio in order to murder him.

I did trust Dias, but, I didn't feel like I could say for sure that he wouldn't take the marquis' household's side. He was a guildmaster, a member of a larger organisation that ultimately did have to make that sort of decision from time to time. To that end, I steeled myself for combat while awaiting his response.

「I'll have to do a bit more investigating in order to figure out the truth. Colbert, Forrund, could the two of you take them down to the dungeon for the time being?」

「Sure.」

「Consider it done.」

Forrund suddenly appeared behind Celldio's party and caused all three remaining individuals to widen their eyes in fear. It seemed that whatever he did to them had left them with some pretty deep mental scars.

「Make sure you strip them of their equipment, handcuff them, and gag them. Be as strict as you need to, keeping in mind that they're both witnesses and suspects for a viscount's murder.」

「W-What!? You have to be kidding me! Stop this, stop this immediately!」

「Why're you letting that brat free!? You should at least do the same to her!」

「Yeah, this isn't fair!」

「Don't worry, she's under arrest as well. However, I'll be taking her up to my office as opposed to the dungeon because I'll be seeing her first.」

Dias had linked arms with Fran. She didn't bother resisting, and instead, simply spoke a line in her usual tone of voice.

「Oh no. Getting caught.」

「See? I have her detained.」

Celldio's party members once again began kicking up a fuss the moment they saw that happen, but they weren't really able to influence Dias in any which way.

「T-This is unreasonable! How could you treat us like t-」

「Unreasonable? Didn't I just tell you you're being detained as both witnesses and suspects? Why would it be reasonable for me to let either of those two types of individuals out of my grasp?」

「Damned commoner! You dare act in this manner just because you've managed to get yourself a half-decent position!? You'll regret this! I'll make sure of it!」

「T-That's right! The marquis will get you for this!」

「You'll pay for this!」

Forrund took the three away as they continued to shout.

「He thinks he's going to make me pay? Hah, funny. I don't know why he even thinks he'll be getting out of that dungeon alive.」

Dias muttered something incredibly sinister under his breath before turning back to Fran and smiling in his usual manner while pulling on her arm.

「Okay, how about you give me a quick rundown of everything that just happened?」

「Got it.」

「Oh yeah, and you don't really have to worry much about anything seeing as how everyone here happened to witness what just happened, right?」

The adventurers around us immediately responded to Dias calling out to them.

「Hell yeah. We know what's up.」

「I dunno about you, but watching Celldio die just made my day.」

「Don't worry, I'll testify that it was them and not you!」

Their many responses almost seemed to resemble the cheers we'd been showered with back at the arena.

「Hahaha, it looks like you're just popular as your nickname suggests. Though, that should come as no surprise given how people always love a strong, young, good-looking female adventurer. You know, I would probably be overthrown if I had you locked up with Celldio's party members.」

222. Celldio's Backstory

Chapter 222. Celldio's Backstory

Celldio's Backstory

The guild's staff members retrieved Celldio's corpse as his servants were escorted to the guild's dungeon.

We, on the other hand, accompanied Dias so we could tell him exactly what had happened.

One of the female employees brought us a cup of tea as we arrived at the guildmaster's office.

「Oh man! Someone's finally gone and done it! You have no idea how badly I wanted this to happen.」

Dias let go of Fran's arm the moment he closed the door behind him and immediately both bowed and began singing her praise.

「Thank you very much!」

「Very happy?」

「Celldio's group was a tumour that Kranzel's Adventurer's Guild needed removed. I really can't thank you enough helping us get rid of them.」

The fact that Dias went as far as calling Celldio a tumour really served to evidence just how much the viscount was disliked.

「Did you appraise him?」

『I did.』

「Then I'm guessing you must've thought he was rather weak for an A ranker?」

Dias' speculation had hit the nail on the head. I was convinced that there was no way Celldio was anything more than a B ranker in terms of strength.

I'd thought that he'd made it all the way up for a reason opposite the one for which Fran was denied a promotion. In other words, I'd assumed that he'd been classified as an A ranker because of a series of outstanding accomplishments or something similar.

But apparently that wasn't the case.

「A ranked adventurers are effectively heroes. Strength is a requirement that can't be forgone or ignored, though you're right in assuming that one also needs a series of achievements in order to qualify.」

What Dias meant was that it wasn't possible for someone weak to become an A ranker regardless the deeds they had to their name, a fact that seemed to contradict the reality presented by Celldio's status.

「Despite our strict requirements, the lunatic you just dealt with still managed to get himself deemed an A ranker. Can you guess why?」

『What you've said so far seems to insinuate that A rankers have to undergo some sort of combat trial. I don't really see how he could've possibly managed to worm his way past it.』

「You see, there are actually four requirements one needs to fulfill in order to be recognized as an A ranked adventurer. The first is strength, the second is having significant accomplishments, the third is for the person to have done enough for the guild, and the fourth is to be acknowledged by at least 15 different guildmasters.」

The requirements were strict, with the last seeming almost borderline impossible.

「Or at least that is how it would work under normal circumstances. Unfortunately, skills happen to make him capable of circumventing our prerequisites.」

「Skills?」

「Let me rephrase. How many female guildmasters do you think this country happens to have?」

His question kicked my brain into gear and allowed me to figure out what he was getting at.

『I'm guessing you're talking about the skills he had that worked against the opposite sex? I'm assuming that ladykiller title he's got probably helped in some way too.』

「That's right. He sank his fangs into seven different female guildmasters.」

The “Leaves Good Impressions on the Opposite Sex” skill seemed to be one that brought about goodwill, whereas the “Opposite Sex Attraction” skill functioned as a sort of charm.

His ladykiller title made it so that any women that happened to have even the slightest bit of a good impression of him would instantly be smitten.

「He was able to win them over with even the slightest mention of love.」

『And that's how he got himself promoted all the way up?』

「It was more like they tried offering him. One of his supporters was a lady 40 years his senior, one with quite a bit of influence.」

Gross...

Wait, how'd he pull off the whole A rank thing with only seven backers?

「The rest he bribed, pressured using his parents' influence, and made promises to. He used all sorts of methods in order to achieve his goal.」

「Guild still holding up?」

『That sounds pretty concerning to me.』

「Sorry. Guildmasters are people too. We're imperfect, and some of us are just flat out scum.」

『Yeah, I know what you're trying to get at.』

The politicians and police officers back on Earth weren't exactly guilt free either. A guildmaster failing to fulfill its duty seemed to be something along the same lines as that.

「Fortunately, I can say that I've put in a lot of work and made it so that all but three of the guildmasters that approved Celldio have been deprived of their positions.」

『Wait, he's still an A rank despite the fact that most of his supporters have been replaced?』

「Unfortunately, not even us guildmasters are capable of doing too much to A rankers. Individuals recognized as A ranked adventurers are given increased liberties alongside a right to give voice to their own opinions. We have to keep in mind that rescinding a promotion we granted is an act that would put a stain on the guild's honour.」

That seemed quite troublesome given that a good number of guildmasters seemed to be obsessed with precedents.

「I've been keeping an eye on Celldio's group ever since he was first granted his rank in hopes of finding an incident that would allow me to derank him. Unfortunately, there never was one.」

『But doesn't he extort people on a regular basis?』

「His actions are technically classified as legal. He goes overboard, but he does still pay as opposed to just running away with his golde. To make matters worse, none of his targets ever end up trying to prosecute him.」

『Huh? Really? Why wouldn't they? Doesn't he jack their weapons?』

「You only think that way because you're the exact type he doesn't want to mess with. You're strong, you've got quite a bit of influence, and you've

got just the right attitude one needs to deal with him. Most C rankers would immediately yield if they found themselves confronting an A ranker that comes from a family headed by a marquis, especially if the A ranker in question happens to have a pretty bad reputation.」

That did kinda make sense. Losing one's weapon is far better than losing one's life, after all.

「Though, the most annoying and difficult to deal with part about that viscount was the fact that he had too many screws loose.」

「Loose screws?」

『How exactly does that make him difficult to deal with?』

「Some magic items have the ability to detect crime. The problem is that they function off the thoughts of the people they're used on, so they won't respond if their targets think they're in the legal right.」

In other words, items that could've normally detected crimes didn't work on Celldio because he didn't think he was doing anything wrong.

『Wait, but didn't one of his titles say he was an elixir addict?』

The way it was worded kinda made him seem like some sort of druggie.

「Elixirs are often used in medical treatments, so ingesting them on a regular basis is in fact not a sin in and of itself. Some dumber nobles also consider ingesting elixirs to be a regular pastime. They don't think of it as a crime or sin.」

That meant that catching Celldio for his addiction would also entail doing the same to every other noble that happened to be in the same boat. It seemed like something that wouldn't go smoothly, and could potentially worsen the guild's relationships with the country's nobles. Going through with the idea was, all in all, a huge pain in the ass.

「Elixir?」

「Elixirs are terrifying drugs that provide powerful feelings of exhilaration to those who drink them, with the only recompense being a bit of brain damage. It's often used by nobles and individuals that reside within royal palaces in order to turn people in power into easily manipulable puppets.」

「That's why messed up in head?」

「I think so. Celldio was still capable of speaking and thinking, but he seemed to have lost the ability to reason. His symptoms make it seem like he was made to drink a very specific amount of the drug on a regular basis.」

『Now that you mention it, it did kinda feel like his party members were manipulating him.』

「Masterminds, servants?」

「Hmm... that's hard to say. If it were up to me, I'd say the blame likely lies with the marquis himself.」

『You sure? Wouldn't the marquis actually end up losing face if Celldio causing trouble? The public would probably end up accusing the marquis of drugging him if they found out why he lost his mind, right?』

Plus, manipulating one's own son didn't quite seem like anything that would ultimately prove beneficial.

「I'd say that the marquis' choice was actually a good one for the sole reason that Celldio had once been genuine scum. I think he's guilty of about 10 different cases of assault, rape and robbery alone. He covered them all up, either through the use of his household's power, or the authority that belonged to the female guildmaster he had wrapped around his finger at the time. And as for any that accused to oppose him?」

Dias took his thumb and dragged it across his neck.

『Wait, are you saying he'd have them assassinated?』

「Exactly. His father is a marquis, so it's only natural for him to be familiar with darker dealings, hence why he's better off in his current state. The only drawback is that anyone that talks to him can tell that he's a lunatic.」

So I guess that means the marquis drugged his son to more or less make it seem like he had reformed?

「There's that, but you can't forget that having an A ranked adventurer as a puppet is something that comes with an incredible large number of benefits. Nobles normally aren't supposed to be able to issue orders to the adventurer's guild, but Celldio's father could do exactly that through him. As a result, the marquis had effectively bolstered his own forces to unfathomable heights.」

It seemed that many adventurers were willing to abide by an A ranker's will even if they happened to dislike the A ranker in question.

『Alright, I'm following so far, but why was drugging Celldio a necessary part of all this? Couldn't the marquis have just ordered him around instead?』

「He seemed to have come to the conclusion that Celldio, as he had been in the past, was far too stupid to actually become an A ranker. There's also the fact that Celldio probably wouldn't have obeyed his father after ranking up even if he had somehow managed to do it on his own. To the marquis, drugging his son was the quicker, simpler solution.」

Hearing Dias' explanation made me almost want to immediately exclaim that the marquis' heart was black as coal. Getting involved with the nobility appeared to be something we wanted to avoid by all means.

「Marquis Ashtonah had probably never viewed Celldio as anything more than a disposable pawn to begin with given that he was an illegitimate child. Keeping Celldio around was detrimental if anything, given how his very presence would be more than enough to start a power struggle.」

I was able to understand Dias' explanation, but I couldn't quite accept it as something I found reasonable. That, of course, wasn't to say that I didn't

have any questions.

『So why did his subordinates encourage him to extort people? Wouldn't it be a better idea to just have him kept in check given all the shit they had to go through to make him an A ranker?』

Celldio's reputation probably would've been much better had he not started stepping out of line. He probably would've had much more influence over the guild too.

「That's something I've been wondering as well. The rumour is that they've been looking for Godblades. The Weapon Control skill he had made him rather well suited for doing exactly that.」

『So you think they've been going around extorting people in hopes of potentially coming across a Godblade?』

「Again, I don't really know the answer to that myself. All I can say for certain is that they do have some sort of reason.」

One of the guild's employees knocked on the door right as Dias finished speaking. The employee's timing was pretty decent, so he immediately replied by telling them they could enter.

「Guildmaster, could I direct your attention to something?」

「What?」

「We've managed to retrieve several items from within Celldio's Dimensional Ring.」

The employee presented a small vial of liquid alongside what appeared to be some sort of document.

「The bottle contains elixir as evidenced by its contents not shaking about as the container moves around. This document, on the other hand.... seems to be a list of Godblades?」

The information pertaining to Godblades caught my interest, so I had Fran reposition herself so that I could peak at it. It contained a list of names as well as several drawings and descriptions that could potentially allow one to better recognize the blades in question.

The exact items listed differed slightly from the ones we saw on the document Rumina had showed us.

Was the one we were looking at now more up to date or something?

「I'm surprised you managed to open his item box. Something like this would normally come with a sort of security measure.」

「We were immediately told how to open the box after Erza began his interrogations.」

「So which one spilled the beans, exactly?」

「The rogue.」

「Makes sense. Bad boys are Erza's type, after all.」

Oh god. Oh my god. Erza, what the hell did you do to that poor man!? I kinda wanted to ask, but I also really didn't want to know. The way the staff member was acting clearly demonstrated that it was, at the very least, a method outside the norm.

「Heya Fran!」

Erza showed up the moment I swore never to piss him off. Seeing him caused me to immediately force myself to forget the fact that he seemed to be basking in some sort of afterglow.

「Good work, Erza. Have you learned anything?」

「Mhm. I've got quite the bit of intel for you. I managed to squeeze a whole lot of info out of him after thoroughly exhausting him. It seemed they didn't think that the sword's curse would work because they thought Celldio's Weapon Control skill would let him circumvent it.」

It seemed that was why they egged him on instead of stopping him.

「Oh, and they didn't really say this explicitly, but, it seems they're working under Marquis Ashtonah's orders.」

「Did you happen to find out why they wanted to deprive Fran of her weapon?」

「Mhm. Totally.」

「Want to know.」

「It's a weally stupid reason. They were really rotten on the inside, but A ranked adventurers nonetheless. They had a lot of information the guild normally kept secret from the public, so the marquis had ordered them to go looking for Godblades. But they ran into a pretty big problem, one they sowed for themselves. Funny enough, Celldio ended up a bit too broken and immediately got fixated on every magic sword he came across. They weren't actually able to control him.」

I couldn't help but agree with Erza. The fact that Celldio's lack of sanity had caused him to obsess over regular magic swords after being ordered to find Godblades was kinda funny in a pathetic sort of way.

223. A Godblade's Might

Chapter 223. A Godblade's Might

A Godblade's Might

Dias began to speak after seeing Erza off so he could continue interrogating Celldio's subordinates.

「It looks like we'll be able to use what we just learned to force Marquis Ashtonah into a bit of a hard spot.」

「Why?」

One of his illegitimate children had gotten themselves involved in some sort of scandal. I mean, that mattered and all, but it wasn't really anything that delivered a major blow to his reputation. I couldn't see how it the event could make a high-standing noble suffer any significant consequences.

As far as I was concerned, this whole incident was Celldio's own fault to begin with. He was a druggie, one that extorted the common folk and ultimately killed himself by attempting to wield a cursed sword. Again, his actions were scandalous, but lacked impact. They weren't significant enough to mean much of anything at all to anyone with a marquis' social standing. This was only emphasized all the more by the fact that the guild was apparently already aware of the illegitimate methods Celldio had used to make himself an A ranker in the first place.

「The reason stems from his interest in and pursuit of Godblades. Godblades are so overwhelmingly powerful that they're able to repel entire armies. He would be suspected of treason if word of his intents got out.」

「I see.」

『But weren't there already rumours about Celldio searching for Godblades to begin with?』

「There were, but his position differs greatly from his father's, as one is an adventurer, and the other an aristocrat. It's perfectly acceptable for adventurers to seek out Godblades. In fact, you may as well go ahead and call the act natural. Wielding a weapon that powerful can be considered a sort of universal desire those in our trade happen to share.」

I felt like we were starting to get into technicalities, but I did still understand what Dias was trying to get at. He was more or less saying that Celldio's actions weren't considered suspicious unless his father was also factored into the equation.

『Oh yeah, you mind showing me that list again?』

「Sure.」

The list contained many names, but failed to mention Alpha, Berserk, Ignis, Gaia or Diablo.

Apparently the reason they hadn't been noted was because their locations were known; there was no point in having Celldio look for them.

The only one whose location we knew was Diablo, the Demon Lord's Blade. It was somewhere in the kingdom of Fyrias, the place Prince Flut and Princess Satia, the twins we sailed with, hailed from. We didn't actually know what the sword was capable of, but we were at least aware that it was able to allow their small kingdom to fight off the major military power known as Reidos.

Dias told us where the other four were.

The most surprising two were Ignis, the Brilliant Flameblade, and Gaia, the Earth's Edge, as both were owned by S ranked adventurers. The guildmaster explained to us that their wielders were already extremely powerful on their own, and that the Godblades had only boosted their power levels further. The combination of their abilities and their weapons caused them to go far beyond anything anyone could possibly expect from a mere A ranker.

Ignis' wielder was known as a hero, and apparently was currently engaged in the act of fighting against the evil forces found on the Goldishian continent.

By contrast, Gaia's wielder kinda just did his own thing. He wandered from place to place, and would only show up once every few months in order to sell materials, namely ones he harvested from the high ranked magic beasts he happened to come across on his journeys. Apparently he was last spotted in Chrom, the continent in which the Beastkin's country was located, just earlier this year.

Alpha and Berserk were located in Brohdinn, a continent to the north. The two most powerful kingdoms in Brohdinn each owned one of the two blades. Unsurprisingly, the two aforementioned countries were at each other's necks, but the Godblades kept them in check and prevented them from engaging in any large scale conflict. It'd been several hundred years since they last descended into total war, reason being that they were clearly aware that any conflict that involved two opposing Godblades would cause enormous damage to both parties.

Their knowledge wasn't derived from common sense or logical thought, but instead, first hand experience. The Godblades' wielders had caused over 100,000 deaths when they engaged each other in combat about 300 years prior. The forest in which they fought had been reduced to a mere wasteland, and remained as such to this day.

『That honestly sounds pretty damn terrifying. Where sort of abilities do those two weapons happen to have?』

「Alpha's actually pretty famous, as it grants its wielder the Half-Deify skill.」

「Skill effect?」

「I guess the best way to put it would be to say that it causes its wielder to ascend.」

「Ascend?」

『Iunno about you, but that doesn't really sound particularly useful or intimidating to me.』

Dias' description was a bit lacking, it didn't allow me to form a decent mental representation of the ability.

「Well, the Half-Deify skill basically raises all the caster's stats and skill levels while also enhancing their body for better performance.」

『Ehhh... It still doesn't really sound all that impressive.』

「Doesn't seem strong.」

「I do agree that Alpha's skill sounds somewhat plain but it's actually said to be the most powerful Godblade. Half-Deify raises its Alpha's wielder's stats by a factor of 10. It also allows said wielder to see through every single form of stealth, gaze at things thousands of miles away, and hear every last conversation that happens within an entire country's confines. Moreover, it immediately maxes all of its wielder's skills. Does it sound a bit more impressive if I put it like that?」

Okay, yeah. The sword sounded like something that more or less hyper-boosted its wielder while also drawing out their latent potential. I don't know why I expected anything else from a Godblade.

「They say that a single slash from Alpha's wielder can tear through a hundred soldiers, a second can fell a rampart, and a third can tear down an entire mountain.」

『That kinda sounds like bullshit, but I'm a bit tempted to believe it given that Alpha's a Godblade.』

「The most terrifying part about Alpha is that it can keep its wielder in an enhanced state for over half a day. Those that face it are left helpless, all they can do is hope they wake up to find that they were only having a nightmare.」

Wait, it can let its wielder maintain that ridiculously powerful form for over half a day? Holy shit, that's enough time to raze several major cities, or perhaps maybe even an entire country.

Berserk, the Godblade pitted against Alpha, was just as terrifyingly powerful.

「Berserk's effects are quite similar to Alpha's. It enhances its user's body, raises its user's stats, and levels up its user's skills. Moreover, the enhancements it grants are actually even greater than the ones Alpha grants.」

『Wait, are you sure? Why would Alpha be the better Godblade if Berserk's got a better buff?』

「Berserk is technically stronger from a numerical standpoint, but it can't be considered the best Godblade because it comes with a dreadful side effect. Its user is deprived of their ability to discern friend from foe and is forced into a homicidal rampage. To make matters worse, it kills its wielder as its effect ends.」

『That sounds pretty nasty, but it seems like it could end up being pretty effective if you just threw its wielder into enemy lines.』

Using the blade sounded inhumane, but also quite efficient.

「Unfortunately, that doesn't really work. What do you think happens once Berserk's wielder annihilates all the enemies in its vicinity?」

『Iunno, nothing? I'm assuming you could just retrieve the Godblade and call it a day.』

「How exactly are you supposed to retrieve it? Its wielder will attack you if you approach it.」

『I mean, you could just wait for the sword's effect to fade. It shouldn't be too hard to retrieve once the wielder dies.』

「You're right, but who's to say that the blade's original owner will be the first to arrive on site?」

Dias had a pretty good point. It was possible for one's enemies to get to the blade first.

「And that's not all. Like Alpha, Berserk's effects also remain for the better half of a day. That's a long time. There's been a case in which its wielder ended up making his way back to his own country and razing a large city after demolishing the enemy's capital. It really isn't something you can use on the fly. It always causes heavy losses on both sides. That said, it's the perfect card to use if you find that yourself without any other option.」

In a way, you could say Berserk was like a nuke. You couldn't really use it without worrying the consequences potentially coming back and biting you in the ass.

「And I'm guessing that's why the country that has Alpha hasn't managed to slowly push the country they're up against into some sort of corner?」

Based on what Dias told us, there wasn't really any point in attempting to go after any of the Godblades whose locations were known, as they were all possessed by either S rankers or countries. It didn't seem like it would be possible to buy or steal them from either of the two types of entities mentioned.

『And I'm guessing that's why Celldio was supposed to be looking for Godblades without obvious location markers on them?』

「Exactly. So back on track, there isn't a country out there that doesn't want to be in possession of a Godblade, so there must be a whole slew of information available. That said, I'm surprised the marquis managed to gather as much as he did.」

Dias made yet another valid point. Cellio had been provided with a good bit of information regarding the Godblades' appearances and abilities.

The Warmount Blade — Chariot

Charriot's form resembles that of a conductor's baton. It is capable of creating golems of all shapes and sizes and manipulating them thereafter. The golems tend to be made of metal and are capable of both flight and emitting beams of light. It was demonstrated to be capable of simultaneously creating 1000 small golems about 15cm in height each. These golems were able to annihilate over a fleet of ships 100 strong in an instant as per the battle of Gallelia. It was last spotted somewhere on the continent of Kapul.

The Blade of Wisdom — Cherubim

This Godblade has already been destroyed, but its vestiges should be collected if deemed possible. There are no confirmed details regarding its abilities. Investigating the blade through the use of skills has led to the conclusion that it was a sword with an angel engraved onto it. It was likely to have been destroyed in the Kingdom of Kranzel.

The Seeker's Godblade — Explorer

Explorer is shaped like a monocle. One investigation has led to the conclusion that has the ability to perceive the happenings of an entire continent, but there are no confirmed details regarding its precise workings. It was last seen on the continent of Jirbard.

The Blade of Imprisonment — Hell

No confirmed details. The only mention of it is in a 500 year old document that described it being used in Chrom. The location in which it was said to be used is now a barren wasteland in which it is impossible for any sort of organism to thrive. Its abilities are said to relate to the manipulation of poison.

The Raging Dragonblade — Lindwurm

The only confirmed detail is that it is shaped like a sword.

The Moonbeam Blade — Moonlight

Apparently grants its user the ability to repel any and all attacks.

The only really detailed description was the one about Chariot, but even then, it failed to mention any sort of pinpointed location.

「How interesting. Not even I knew much of what was written here. I'm surprised they're actually even trying to retrieve Cherubim. I presume the marquis' goal must be to conduct some sort of research...」

『Do you think it's possible for them to actually learn anything?』

「I can't draw any conclusions, but I can say that I doubt they'd bother doing something that wouldn't provide them any benefit. Either way, the marquis keeping his activities a secret raises several major red flags.」

His actions weren't technically illegal, but there was no doubt that he would be suspected of treason if he started doing research on weapons and kept it a secret from the state.

「Would you mind letting me hang onto this? It'll serve as a good piece of evidence.」

「Nn. Don't mind.」

「Thanks.」

I'd already memorized everything that had been written on the sheet anyways.

224. How to Travel to the Beastkin's Country

Chapter 224. How to Travel to the Beastkin's Country

How to Travel to the Beastkin's Country

「I really have to say though, you sure do seem to attract trouble. You've already hooked in two different big shots in a single day. To be fair, it should be something you saw coming. You've garnered a lot of attention, and caught a lot of eyes. We as the guild are rather thankful that you're ultimately helping us out, but I'm guessing you don't feel the same.」

『Yeah, we kinda would've preferred not to get involved with any of those people at all.』

「Hahahaha, yeah, that's what I thought. Too bad for you, I can guarantee that it's going to keep happening.」

「How to make stop?」

「I'm glad you're willing to ask for my advice instead of beating around the bush or thinking you'll just somehow find your way out of every situation. You remember how I told you to go to the Beastkin's Country? My personal advice would be to hurry on your way. Our country's idiots won't be able to do anything to you if you're gone.」

『That sounds great and all, but I'm not really sure it'll be that easy for us to just hop over to another continent.』

We probably needed both a ship and a visa if we wanted to make our way over.

「Don't worry about the visa, the guild has you covered on that front. Anyone that has a designated request can use their card as both an entry and exit permit.」

Wow, guild cards are a lot more convenient than I thought.

「There'll be a office at the border. The inspector there will have a magic item, and should let you pass so long as you show him your guild card.」

「Thanks.」

『I guess that means that finding ourselves a ship is all we'll have to worry about.』

「That part will be a bit more difficult. Barbra will probably be your best bet, but I don't think they have any ocean liners in service.」

『Huh, that's weird. How do people normally get over to the Beastkin's country then?』

「Most adventurers tend to have merchants hire them as escorts.」

『Sounds about right.』

The problem with that was Fran's appearance. I highly doubted anyone would be all that willing to hire her as a guard given that she looked the way she did. If I had to hire an escort, and my options were a kid and a big burly man, I'd definitely choose the latter.

We'd managed to get ourselves an escort mission when going from Dharz to Barbra, but that was only because we'd known Prince Flut, Princess Satia, and Salrut. In other words, we had only managed to hitch ourselves a ride because we had the power of nepotism at hand. We no longer had the connections nec—oh wait.

『We could try asking the guys at the Luciel Conglomerate.』

「...Who?」

『Yeah, I'm not really surprised you've already forgotten them.』

I myself had almost forgotten about them as well. Fran was no good at remembering names, so her having forgotten them was honestly a given.

『You remember how we had to ride a ship in order to get from Dharz to Barbra? The conglomerate is the company that owned the ship, remember? We even got a coin from the captain, one with some sort sort of crest on it.』

「Nn...? Got coin?」

『Yeah, we totally did.』

The conglomerate was one of Barbra's biggest corporations, so there was a pretty good chance they'd have a ship or two heading for Chrom.

「I don't think you'll have any trouble finding yourself an escort job. Merchants are known for their vast information networks, their many connections let them spread and catch wind of information faster than anyone and everyone else. I'm sure Barbra's merchants have already caught wind of your accomplishments.」

「Then will have easy time finding ship to escort?」

「I think it'll even be safe to say that they'll be fighting for your attention. That said, it'd probably be best for you to take advantage of *that* connection, than go out of your way to find a ship to the Beastkin's Country that may or may not actually exist.」

「Nn?」

『Yeah, good point.』

Fran hadn't seemed to have realized it, but me, I'd already long thought about what Dias was currently suggesting. The connection he was referring to was the one we shared with the Beast Lord.

I hadn't immediately suggested asking him for help because I wasn't sure if it was the best idea.

There were several reasons I thought that to be the case, with the first being that it kind of felt like we were relying on him more than we should've been. I didn't want to be any more in his debt than we already were.

The second was that the Beast Lord probably wasn't planning on heading back to his country immediately. He was a king, one that would probably be met with a warm reception regardless of where he went. Dealing with the people that welcomed him was effectively a part of his job. His personality kinda made it so he wasn't really all that receptive, but Royce and his other companions always seemed to be working to prevent him from acting entirely on his selfish whims. In other words, he probably wouldn't be heading back to his own country for quite some time.

I felt we'd be able to reach our destination much more quickly if we found a ship that'd take us straight there.

Dias, however, was inclined to disagree.

「Your first reason may as well be moot. You're going to need to ask him a favour anyway, seeing as how you'll need to pay Kiara a visit.」

『True.』

「The same goes for your other point, I doubt he'd make many stops on his way back.」

『Why's that?』

「The Beast Lord's party barely made any stops on the way here. They always made a big show of having the Beast Lord move around in his carriage whenever they entered a town, but they spent the rest of their time as would a normal party of adventurers.」

Their actions made a fair bit of sense to me, as functioning the way they did definitely allowed them to move at a rapid pace. The only issue was that I wasn't really sure we would be able to keep up with an S ranked party.

That wasn't the only concern it raised either. There was a chance they'd find out about me if we travelled with them. Beastkin had good intuition, and high ranking adventurers were sharp. The combination of the two traits made me feel like they would definitely catch on if we stayed with them for an extended period of time.

「Well uh... good luck. I don't really know what else to say to you about that.」

『Yeah, I figured as much.』

That said, I wasn't really sure whether the Beast Lord would even be willing to let us travel with him in the first place. There was a chance he would just show us to a ship and have us head out without him if we were lucky.

「Will go ask Beast Lord.」

『Yeah, no harm in just asking, I guess.』

「Tell him and his buddies I said hi.」

「Nn.」

225. Route Secured

Chapter 225. Route Secured

Route Secured

We headed over to the inn the Beast Lord was staying at despite the fact that the sun had already started to set. We really wanted to get this over with and out of the way as soon as possible.

The reason I felt that way was because the Beast Lord struck me as an impatient person. There was a good chance he would just randomly up and leave because he no longer had any business in Ulmutt.

Our biggest blocker was that there was a chance we wouldn't actually be allowed to see him given how late it was. We could always just sneak in, but that wasn't really too great of an idea given he was currently staying at a super high class inn that typically housed royalty and whatnot.

Fortunately, my worries ended up being needless. The inn's staff let us in the moment they heard Fran's name because the Beast Lord had apparently told them to act upon her requests with the highest possible priority.

「Oh, hey Fran. What's up?」

The Beast Lord raised a hand to give us a friendly greeting as we entered his room. The impression he was currently giving off was drastically different from his usual one. He was acting in the same manner as would any other easy-going man in his 30's.

「Did you need me for something?」

「Nn. Looking for ship to visit Beastkin's Country.」

「You're planning to head over right away? That's perfect, you can just hitch a ride with us 'cause we're planning to head back soon anyway.」

Well uh, that happened.

I honestly wasn't expecting him to immediately give us the green light. Allowing a stranger to join a group that included an incognito king really didn't sound like that great of an idea. Royce seemed to share my opinion, as he immediately joined in on the conversation and voiced a complaint —

「Lord Rig, I believe you have may forgotten to complete one of the tasks on our agenda. You are a royal, and as such, it would be rude for you not to pay the King of Kranzel your respects after visiting his country.」

— Or so I thought. Turned out the reason he was interjecting wasn't because he didn't want Fran to accompany them, but rather, because they had more shit to do before actually leaving.

「Ugh, do I really have to?」

「Of course.」

Royce's point was valid, the Beast Lord clearly had yet to fulfill all his duties as a king. We'd been planning on heading over to Kranzel's royal capital as well, but only because we wanted to take part in the auction. I didn't think it'd be realistic for us to follow him all the way to the royal capital before actually leaving the country, though it did seem like they'd probably hire us as guards if we asked them to.

「Fine, but then how are we supposed to accompany her back?」

「There is no need for us to personally escort her. She's an adventurer, one strong enough to defeat Gold. She'll be able to handle herself.」

「Eh, yeah, I guess you're right.」

「Besides, all she asked for was for us to help her find a ship.」

「Huh, really?」

「Geez. I know that she's about the same age as the princess, and that you've got quite the interest in her, but do pay more attention.」

「Princess?」

「He's talking about my daughter. She's 15 this year, and I really can't help but see a bit of her in you.」

It seemed that the only reason the Beast Lord treated Fran as kindly as he did was because she reminded him of his own daughter.

「That said, I really would love for her to visit our country. I am sure our Master would be delighted to meet her.」

「Right?」

「We would also be able to put her to good use.」

Shit! He just said that right to Fran's face! I was shocked at first, but a bit of further consideration led me to believe that Royce had said what he had on purpose. He wanted Fran to know that he would be using her for politics' sake if she decided to visit.

Royce was one of the Beast Lord's aides, and clearly highly competent. He wasn't about to let Fran, a Black Catkin that'd actually managed to evolve, slip right through his fingers. He knew and wanted to take advantage of the fact that revealing her to his country's people would cause their attitudes to make unprecedented swings and changes.

「Will run away if gets too bad.」

「Hahahahaha! They'd probably need to send someone at least as strong as me after you if you actually got serious about wanting to escape our grasp.」

「That's fine. We are not requesting that you become one of Lord Rig's vassals, after all. Personally, I was considering that we could just... help each other out. All we need is for you to demonstrate that you and Lord Rig get along.」

Yeah, that doesn't really sound too bad at all.

「To that end, I will be giving you this.」

「This?」

The thing Royce handed Fran seemed to resemble a thin sheet of metal with some sort of crest engraved on it.

「The item I just gave you is an identification card bearing both Lord Rig's name and my own. Many of our country's merchants frequently travel between Barbra and our motherland. The card I just gave you should allow you to board any one of them with ease.」

「Really?」

「Really. Just look for a ship with our crest engraved on it, and you should be good to go.」

It seemed we somehow managed to get ourselves into what we considered the ideal situation. We were pretty much set.

Apparently, Barbra had a boat set sail for the Beastkin's country about once every three days. The ones we were looking for, the ones with the country's crest with a crown mounted on top, worked directly under government supervision. Showing them the crest we were given would cause them to not only let us on board, but also treat us as they would a guest of honour.

In other words, they'd given us something much more convenient than what we'd been expecting.

「To be frank, I doubt the crest we've given you is even necessary. Most of our country's merchants have already likely learned both of your name and your appearance. I can all but guarantee that they would allow you to board so long as you just asked.」

That was true and all, but having something that was actually 100% guaranteed was much better than something that was just highly likely.

I was completely satisfied with the whole boat ordeal now, so the only other thing we really wanted to know was the info they promised us about the god-tier blacksmith.

「Question. God-tier blacksmith, located where?」

「That's something that shouldn't be too hard to figure out after you get there.」

「We have already issued an order for you to be given a letter of introduction upon your arrival. Unfortunately, that is all we can do. There is no guarantee that the smith will be willing to see you even with the letter.」

「Oh yeah. Try telling that smith to actually handle our shit if she ends up taking a liking to you.」 [1]

It seemed the god-tier blacksmith had a rather free spirit seeing as how she was willing to turn down even the king's requests.

I couldn't really make any guarantees, but personally, I was willing to put in a good word or two for the Beast Lord and his buddies if the blacksmith really did end up liking us, so I didn't see any issue in accepting their request.

「Nn.」

「Alright, good luck with everything.」

「Our master is currently residing within the palace. You should be able to find her with ease so long as you make your way towards our capital.」

「Got it.」

—

[1] Tentatively gender = female because someone in the contents said so
iirc

226. Old Man Gallus' Whereabouts

Chapter 226. Old Man Gallus' Whereabouts

Old Man Gallus' Whereabouts

Royce had given us his ID, so we were pretty much set to leave for the Beastkin's Country whenever. Given that, I decided to mull over whether or not we had anything to do before actually setting out.

『Oh yeah, we should probably go check in with Old Man Gallus.』

I remember the other blacksmith telling us that he'd be back by the time the tourney started, so I figured he was probably already in town. The blacksmith in question had even promised to tell us when Gallus finally arrived, but he'd never actually contacted us at all.

There was a pretty good chance that he'd purposefully avoided doing so because he didn't want to bother us because we were busy with the tourney. Given that, I figured we may as well pay his smithy a visit.

「Blacksmith?」

『Yeah, I was thinking we could go check to see whether or not Gallus made it back.』

The sun had only just set, so it seemed to me that it was fine to assume that they'd yet to go to bed. That said, it seemed a bit wrong to visit at this late an hour, so I had us pick up a little something to make seeing us worth their time.

Specifically, we went into a bar that happened to be on the way and bought a bottle of the strongest drink they had. It seemed like the best possible thing we could get seeing as how dwarves and liquor went hand in hand. I was a bit worried that they'd refuse to sell it to us given Fran's age, but apparently that wasn't actually the case. In fact, it was the exact opposite. The bartender had even given Fran a discount in exchange for a handshake because he'd recognized her on sight.

And so, we paid Zadoh, one of Gallus' blacksmith buddies, a visit with booze in hand. [1]

「Hey there. Grats on third place.」

「Nn. Thanks.」

It turned out that Zadoh had actually watched the tourney.

Our gift seemed to delight him. Apparently, it was some pretty damn high quality stuff.

We asked him about Gallus, but unfortunately Zadoh could only say that the old craftsman had yet to show up in Ulmutt.

「I think Gallus is the only one that hasn't returned. As far as I know, all the other people that went to help are already back.」

「Only Gallus not back?」

「Yeah. He's probably stuck up in Barbra doing something only he's capable of.」

「Okay.」

「Though, it's a bit weird for him not to at least send word of the delay seeing how he said he'd return by the time the tourney started.」

We were on our way back over to Barbra anyways, so we could probably just look for him again after heading over. I definitely did want to at least greet him before we headed off to the Beastkin's Country, as there was no way for us to know when we'd next see him if we just upped and left without checking in first.

There wasn't really much else for us to ask. We turned around and decided to head home, but Zadoh stopped us before we made our way out the door.

「R-Right, so I wanted to ask you about that sword of yours...」

The blacksmith's gaze was set on me, and seemed to carry the same emotions it had when he first feasted his eyes on Fran's Black Cat Set.

Zadoh was a skilled craftsman, so it really didn't take him much to figure out that I was some sort of magic sword. He'd probably been curious about me to begin with. Him watching the tourney probably hadn't helped either given how the caster kept going on and on about the fact that I was Fran's namesake.

「C-Could I see it for a sec? I promise I won't take too long.」

(Master?)

『Sure, I don't mind if he promises to keep it short. Make sure you warn him not to equip me though, cause, y'know.』

「Got it. Here.」

「Thanks a bunch.」

「Don't equip. Will die from curse.」

「Huh?」

「Cursed. Only I can equip without dying.」

Zadoh had started moving his hands in my direction, but stopped the moment he heard Fran's warning. His face reflected a clear sense of terror.

I couldn't really blame him. You wouldn't normally want to touch a sword that could potentially kill you if you tried equipping it. It was kinda like how people didn't really like touching poison, even if it was the type that only took effect if you drank it.

Not to brag, but, there was no way Zadoh wasn't aware of the fact that I wasn't just your everyday magic sword. As a result, Fran's warning came off as all the more real.

「W-Would just touching it cause any problems?」

「None.」

「A-Alright, good to hear.」

The blacksmith had to have been rather curious seeing as how he was the one that asked to see me. Given that, he ended up actually did end up picking me up after seemingly steeling his resolve.

A switch almost seemed to flip within him the moment he did. He cast aside all his nervousness and immediately began to act as one would expect of a professional blacksmith. That is, he began carefully looking over both my guard and blade.

「Hmmm... I can feel an incredible amount of magical power coming from within your sword. Whoever made its blade did it with meticulous care. It seems to be made out of a pretty interesting metal too.」

Zadoh began muttering as he looked me over.

「Would it be okay for me to ask about this magic sword's source?」

「Source?」

「Yeah. Do you know who made it, or where you found it maybe?」

Zadoh's questions were more or less the exact ones you'd expect from a pro. That said, I couldn't actually answer them. I didn't know who made me, and I didn't really think it was a good idea to tell him I came from the Maookami Plains.

「Not really.」

I mulled over it a bit, but ended up asking Fran to play it safe.

「That's too bad... Either way, it looks to me like this thing might actually be made out of an orichalcum alloy.」

「Orichalcum? Blade made of it?」

「Honestly, I can't say. It's not made out of something I'm familiar with, which is why I was thinking that was why orichalcum sounded like it'd be a likely contender. Hold on a second.」

Zadoh walked over to one of his smithy's corners and retrieved a slightly worn book as he spoke.

「This here is something I just happened to get my hands on during the tourney. It contains notes on blacksmiths from the past.」

The tourney would cause merchants to swarm to Ulmutt, which in turn apparently made it fairly easy to find yourself a lucky bargain or two.

「The thing's apparently written by the apprentice of a god-tier blacksmith's apprentice. It talks about the different types of metals god-tier blacksmiths have used in the past, and makes particular mention of one called orichalcum. I don't actually know what exactly orichalcum is, but the book says it's the only kind of metal that can survive a god-tier blacksmith's forging process.」

Huh, so something like that actually existed? I was a bit intrigued by the concept of being made of orichalcum, but it didn't seem quite right.

Orichalcum was, based on what Zadoh said, apparently a sort of ridiculously durable legendary metal. The reason I didn't think I was made of it was exactly that, it was durable and I wasn't. My blade broke literally all the time. The only reason I looked to be in perfect condition right now was because I could regenerate.

「To be honest, that guess was just a shot in the dark. There's lots of metals I don't know much about, and there's no doubt that this sword of yours could be made out of any one or combination of them. I only thought that orichalcum was a possibility because the sword seems to give off a sort of dignity. In fact, it almost seems to bear a presence of its own. It's possible my feelings come from the fact that it's some sort of top-class magic item.」

Dignity? Damn man, you be saying some good shit right there. Am I just so majestic he can't help but notice me? Hell yeah! I mean, I guess that does make decent sense. I may not be a godblade, but there really was a fair chance that I was made by some god-tier blacksmith.

Zadoh finished checking me over, handed me back to Fran, and bid us farewell.

It didn't take long for us to arrive back at the inn thereafter.

The sun had already set, but there were a few things we had to do before going to bed. Namely, Fran had yet to bathe or eat.

And that wasn't it either. There was something I wanted to check, something I'd been putting off.

『Well, here goes.』

「Nn.」

The thing in question was checking the effects of my Doppelganger Synthesis skill.

I casted the skill expecting to create a couple cloth-covered humans, but was instead greeted by a series of blades.

『Yeah, looks like I spawned swords again.』

「Nn. Many Masters.」

Doppelganger Synthesis seemed to have started spawning swords instead of humans for some odd reason.

I tried casting the skill several times, only to learn that it was indeed possible for me to create human doppelgangers, but only if I focused on it. Likewise, it was possible for me to create both swords and humans simultaneously, a discovery that allowed us to usher in a whole new wave of strategies.

That said, the skill didn't seem to be working the exact way I expected. For some odd reason, the human-shaped doppelgangers I created didn't seem quite right. They looked like me, but they also kinda didn't. Something just seemed... off.

It wasn't anything too disorienting though, so I ended up just writing it off as a consequence of me becoming capable of creating sword-shaped doppelgangers.

The reason I was willing to write it off almost right away was because frankly, I don't really care about having a human form. I'd already long made up my mind and decided I would live out the rest of my life as a sword. All that mattered to me was that my human-shaped doppelgangers didn't suffer any sort of performance loss.

『Alright. We talked to everyone we needed to talk to, and we've got pretty much everything ready. You think it's about time?』

「Nn. Time to go to Beastkin's Country.」

[1] I s2g his name was Zerld before. I even double checked it... Maybe this is a different blacksmith buddy?

227. Goodbye Ulmutt

Chapter 227. Goodbye Ulmutt

Goodbye Ulmutt

Today was the day we planned to leave Ulmutt.

The first thing we did after getting out of bed and finishing up our morning routine was paying Rumina a visit so we could say our goodbyes.

「The time I spent with you was both eventful and enjoyable.」

「Later.」

「Farewell. Do enjoy yourselves in the Beastkin's Country.」

「Nn...」

「I believe it is quite sunny today. It appears to be the perfect time to depart, and to that end, I do hope that your expression will brighten to match the weather.」

The two weren't going to part for good or anything, but it seemed like Fran couldn't help but feel a bit sad regardless.

「Thank you for informing me of Kiara's whereabouts. I would have never located her if not for your efforts. I understand that this is not my first time making the statement, but I would like to reiterate it in order to express my gratitude.」

「Also grateful. For evolution.」

『What she said. Helping us out seemed to have ended up weakening you quite a bit. You sacrificed a lot for us, we really do owe you a ton.』

「It appears that our feelings are mutual. As that is the case, I see no harm in calling off our debts to one another.」

Rumina smiled cheerfully as she spoke, but Fran ended up frowning in response.

「Please don't make that face, Fran. I can assure you that our paths will cross again. It would ease my heart to see you depart this place with a smile.」

「Nn...」

「It appears that you really cannot go without being spoiled.」

Rumina got up out of her seat, approached the younger black catkin and gave her a full on hug. Fran responded to it burying her face in Rumina's chest and returning the embrace.

They stuck together for a while, but Rumina eventually dislodged Fran by tapping her on the back.

The younger girl's face had a pretty rare look on it in the sense that it was tinted with a slight shade of red. She'd clearly felt a bit embarrassed.

「Sorry.」

「Fuhaha. 'Twas rather adorable of you. Feel free to return to my side if you ever feel yourself tinged with loneliness. I will be willing to provide you as many hugs as you wish for.」

「Nn.」

All the uneasiness had left Fran's face. Rumina had fulfilled a duty I normally would've been responsible for in a way I could never have possibly managed. I felt kinda conflicted in the sense that I both admired her ability to do so, and was frustrated that I couldn't do anything at all for Fran.

「Time to go.」

「Indeed it is. Stay safe, and enjoy your journey.」

And so, Rumina saw us out the dungeon with a smile.

Fran ended up opening her mouth and speaking one last time right as we began to teleport.

「Bye bye.」

It almost seemed to be something she hadn't intentionally said, something that had just so happened to leak out.

『We'll definitely pay her a visit sometime in the future.』

「Nn.」

『And we'll definitely make sure we grow enough to give her a bit of a shock.』

「Nn!」

We arrived at Ulmutt's gate about an hour later, only to find ourselves surrounded by a decently sized group of people.

「Do come back Fran! I'll welcome you with open arms anytime!」

Erza was the first person to call out to us; he immediately leapt at and glomped Fran as he began to cry. She ended up letting out a “mmrph” sound as he pulled her into his thick, burly chest, but she didn't end up really minding his actions even though snot had begun dribbling from his nose. In fact, she'd even ended up patting him on the back in order to soothe him.

「Sniffles... Thanks Fran.」

「Nn.」

「I have a parting gift I'd like to give you.」

Erza handed Fran a basket with ten liquid filled bottles within.

「Potions?」

「I made you some beauty cream. It'll keep your skin soft and smooth so long as you apply a bit of it before going to bed. You're really strong Fran, and cool too, but make sure you never lose sight of being as cute a girl as you can be, mkay?」

「Nn?」

Erza's advice was pretty solid, and I really appreciate the sentiments that drove him. Fran was pretty damned adorable, even to start with. Unfortunately, she was stuck with me as her guardian, so she didn't normally end up making use of her beauty due to a lack of exposure to both makeup and fashion.

The 10 bottles we were given would last us a pretty good while, so I was going to have Fran start using them from today onwards.

「Smear on skin?」

「Mhm. All you have to is put a dot of it on your palm and then massage it into your skin.」

「Why?」

「Listen here girl. I know you might not see why you'd bother as of right now, but just do it. I promise you you'll understand once you grow up and fall in love.」

「Nn? Okay...?」

Fran nodded, but her expression belied the fact that she had absolutely no idea what was going on.

Huh, right, Fran will fall in love one day, won't sh- wait a second.

Dude, Erza, Fran's still only 12...

Isn't it like, a little bit kinda maybe too early for her to fall in love?

I could say for sure that Fran would end up being pretty damned popular with the guys if Erza's beauty cream worked to enhance her looks the way I was thinking it would. There was no doubt in my mind that all sorts of dudes would flock to her like bees to honey.

A part of me couldn't help but worry that some of the aforementioned men would end up being so good looking that they'd make Fran fall in love with them at first sight. I knew that I'd be able to cut those individuals down without hesitation if they ended up being scumbags on the inside, but I couldn't say the same for people that ended up being just as good inside as they were outside. I couldn't help but wonder what I would end up doing if I actually judged their personalities to be amicable enough to be worth Fran's affections. Would I be able to entrust her to them?

My immediate reaction was a big no. Fran needed someone strong enough to protect her, someone capable of besting her in combat even with me equipped. I absolutely refused to approve of them unless they were both at least that strong, fairly financially stable, fully willing to commit to a monogamous relationship, and capable of fulfilling every single last one of her wishes.

「H-Hey Fran, are okay? That amazing cursed sword of yours just started shaking all on its own.」

(Master?)

Shit, that was close. I seemed to have momentarily lost control of myself, as I'd started unconsciously casting telekinesis.

『I-It's nothing. You should probably thank Erza.』

I didn't really have to concern myself with the thought for the time being, as romantic love seemed to be something Fran wouldn't experience for quite some time. There was no point to not accepting Erza's gift, there was no real harm in Fran getting even cuter than she was already.

「Nn. No problem. Thanks.」

「I'll make you more when you run out, so stop by when you do!」

「Got it.」

The next two people to call out to us, Dias and Aurel, came as a pair.

「Heya. Looks like you picked a pretty good day to set off. The weather's looking great.」

「Take care of yourself out there.」

They bowed to Fran and thanked her for the whole Kiara fiasco. I was expecting them to hand us letters, but they didn't end up doing so.

「We still remember her as vividly as we would have had we seen each other just yesterday, but the opposite may not necessarily hold true.」

「To her, we were just another pair of unreliable adventurers. There's a good chance she's long forgotten about us.」

To me, their situation almost sounded a bit depressing, but they didn't seem to mind. The looks on their faces suggested that they thought of it as only natural, and hence, they weren't planning to send her any letters.

「We would like you to mention us, but that's it. All you really have to say is that some of the adventurers that she used to know miss her.」

「Nn. Got it.」

The next group Fran was approached by consisted of Amanda, Forrund, Fermus, and Colbert. The half-elf, who was at the group's front, greeted Fran with a hug.

「It looks like we're going to have to say our goodbyes again, Fran. I'm really going to miss you...」

Amanda cried much in the same manner as Erza, minus the snot. Her beauty and grace made her much girlier than- Okay no, I'd better just stop there and write Erza off as an exception of sorts.

「Farewell.」

Forrund was short and to the point, just as he'd been back in Barbra. In a sense, one could say that he bore a slight resemblance to Fran.

Honestly, I hadn't even expected him to come see us off.

「Is that not a bit too blunt of you, Forrund?」

Colbert's tone clearly conveyed that he was taken aback by Forrund's greeting.

「Sorry Fran, Forrund always acts like that, so please do not think ill of him.」

「No problem.」

「Hahaha, I do have to say, the two of you are quite similar with regards to your mannerisms. Forrund tends to like strong adventurers, he is here today because of the favourable impression you left on him.」

「Yeah.」

「Nn.」

「One day.」

「Got it.」

「I have the feeling that putting the two of you together might not be the best idea.」

Colbert shuddered, and for a good reason at that.

The two were conversing in a manner that no one but them could understand. Despite that, they seemed to be communicating losslessly.

「Was Barbra your next destination, Fran?」

「Nn.」

「In that case, I'd like for you to have this. It's a pass that'll get you a free meal at my restaurant. Please do stop by.」

Oh nice. That's a pretty damned good present. Fran really seemed to have enjoyed the stuff she ate at The Dragon's Table.

「Thanks.」

「I am going to be training myself from the ground up again, so I will not lose the next time we fight.」

Colbert declared that he wished to duel Fran again in the future, which prompted her to immediately respond as any other battle maniac would.

「Bring it on.」

Amanda finally released Fran after we did a good chunk of conversing.

「I'm going to be going to the Beastkin's Country too.」

Thinking back, Amanda had actually said something similar when we left Alessa. Unfortunately for her, that simply wasn't something she was permitted to do.

「Not happening.」

「I highly doubt that you will be allowed to do so.」

「It definitely won't happen.」

All three of the men accompanying her shot down Amanda's idea the moment she voiced it. She went on to state that she at least wanted to accompany us back to Barbra, but she had duties to attend to in Alessa, and as such, her three companions ended up dragging her away.

「See you later Fran!」

The last group to approach was the Beast Lord's.

「Make sure you get along with my daughter if you happen to run into her. She's a bit of a tomboy, but a good girl anyways.」

I was fine with the idea of having Fran make friends with the Beast Lord's daughter, but his phrasing had me worried. He of all people had called her a tomboy, so I couldn't help but suspect her to be on the wilder side.

We spoke to Royce, Goldalfa, and Roche in that order, before finally moving on to Zefmate, who immediately offered Fran a handshake.

「It seems I caused you a lot of trouble.」

「Nn.」

「I'm going to be one of the Beast Lord's attendants from now on. I'm planning to train by his side, and grow much stronger. I swear I'll at least force you to make use of the abilities you obtained from evolving the next time we duel.」

Zefmate seemed to have a lot of potential. Training by the Beast Lord's side would definitely serve to turn him into a powerful foe to face.

「Both my tribe and I plan to start over. We'll show you that we can change for the better.」

「High expectations.」

「That's good. I'll make sure I uphold them.」

Zefmate was one of the Blue Cat Tribe's most influential members. I was sure that, going forward, his work would reduce the number of Blue Catkin involved in the slave trade.

Fran firmly grasped the Blue Leopardkin's hand and shook it for quite the extended duration, a demonstration of her trust in his success.

「Leaving now.」

「See ya.」

「Nn.」

Fran leapt atop Urushi's back after letting go of Zefmate's hand.

「Urushi.」

「Woof!」

She got ready to go, but made sure to give the group that'd come to say their goodbyes one last wave before actually leaving.

「Later?」

「Baaiii!」

「See you soon!」

Urushi began to run, with Erza's and Amanda's particularly loud voices trailing in the wind behind him, as we once again set off on a journey.

228. Kanna Kamui

Chapter 228. Kanna Kamui

Kanna Kamui

『I know I say this literally every single time we go anywhere at all, but Ulmutt was a pretty decent place.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

To us, the city had become a fairly important landmark. It was there that we met Rumina, who in turn helped Fran evolve through a method that you couldn't really call anything but miraculous. Us meeting Rumina was already one hell of a coincidence in and of itself. There were many fine details that led up to the encounter. There was a pretty good chance that we never would've met had the circumstances been even the slightest bit different.

Rumina was one of the first Black Catkin Fran had met since she lost her parents, but that wasn't all. To Fran, she'd effectively become a mother figure, one that'd shown an incredible amount of warmth and affection. The bond the two shared drove Fran, it made her want to work even harder to improve her clan's social standing. Rumina was the only reason Fran had finally shown her less mature side. She would've probably never acted in a manner befitting her age if not for the older Black Catkin.

One of Ulmutt's key attractions, the yearly Martial Arts Tournament, had taught us a lot about matchups, tactics, and even how we could best make use of our strengths. We reaffirmed that victory wasn't entirely based on what was written on one's stat page, and that we should never get too full of ourselves because there was always someone stronger than us. We both knew that there was simply no way we could beat either Forrond or Amanda in a battle to the death. We were too lacking in more or less every single aspect.

But that was fine.

It was precisely our recognition of that weakness of ours that drove us to reach even greater heights.

「Nn. Will participate next year too.」

『Sounds good. And next time, we'll make sure we win first place.』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

The time we spent in Ulmutt had also allowed us to build a connection with the Beast Lord and several other Beastkin. In doing so, we learned of a possible resolution to the problem of Blue and Black Catkin relations, and that the Blue Cat Tribe had effectively lost its standing.

There was hope that the Blue Cat Tribe could change going forward. We weren't about to let the Beast Lord and Zefmate be the only two to handle the situation, we'd also put some thought into how we could potentially help them out. The best way we'd come up with so far seemed like it would be taking out any Blue Catkin slave traders we happened upon.

Last time, it took us about four days to move between Barbra and Ulmutt. We now knew the path, so I'd thought that heading back would've been a much faster process.

I'd been pretty much spot on at first, as we managed to cover about 70% of the distance in two days, but unfortunately, we ended up running into something we couldn't really just overlook.

「O-Oh god, please help me!」

「Hiiiiiiiiii!!」

「Rooooooooarr!」

That is, we saw a swarm of lesser wyverns chasing a group of three men that looked to be merchants. In our eyes, lesser wyverns were actually quite weak, as we could take them down with ease, but to the merchants, the beasts were monstrous foes they'd never be able to overcome.

Seeing the wyverns caused me to recall the time I fought one to the death back when I was just transported over to the Maoookami Plains. The memory was by no means a good one, but for some odd reason, remembering it filled me with a sense of nostalgia nonetheless. Unlike me, however, the merchants weren't pit up against just a single enemy. There were a whole 10 chasing after them.

「Urushi.」

「Woof.」

Urushi kicked off at top speed in response to Fran's command. It only took him a brief moment to reach the merchants.

「H-Hiiiiii!」

「Damn it! Why!? First flying lizards, and now even magic wolves!?!」

「Shit! We're so dead!」

Our sudden appearance had caused the merchants to end up slowing down. The energy drained from their legs as they gave up on their lives.

「Not enemy.」

「Huh? Wait, what? A kid?」

They didn't notice Fran, who'd been riding on Urushi's back, until after she called out to them.

「I-Is that wolf yours?」

「Wait! Aren't you the Black Lightning Princess!?!」

「Nn.」

The three merchants once again bumped up their speed. Learning Fran's identity had shown them a ray of hope. They seemed to be pretty lively, a trait I couldn't really say I disliked. After all, being lively was much better than breaking down and screaming nonstop.

「Need help?」

「Yes please!」

「Definitely!」

「T-Thanks!」

I doubted saving them would net us any rewards, but we decided to help regardless because ditching them would probably weigh on our consciences.

「Will take materials.」

「Sounds good!」

「We'll even throw in a bit of an extra reward!」

「Though it probably won't amount to anything much...!」

「Shut up, idiot!」

「If we die because she leaves, it'll be all your fault!」

「You say that, but she's a high ranked adventurer! What the hell are we supposed to do if we can't pay her fee after she helps us?」

「W-Well... I guess you're right. I can't deny that I don't have enough to pay a high ranking adventurer on hand...」

The merchants began to bicker as they ran for their lives, possibly because they felt relieved that they might yet be able to avoid their demise. A part of

me suspected that they were trying to make us feel sorry for them, but I didn't really mind either way.

We'd been willing to help them out for free, but I wasn't about to turn down any sort of reward. If anything, it would be better for us to demand one. There was a good chance that we'd be swarmed by the masses if word got out that we were willing to help the weak for free.

My only problem with this whole setup was that I didn't actually know what would've been considered fair payment, so I just told Fran to say something random that seemed to suit the situation.

「Will worry about reward later. Will ask for money equivalent to value of life.」

「Huh? Tha—」

「Move away, or will get hit.」

Fran and Urushi leapt at the lesser wyverns without really minding the merchants. They only managed to get out of the way in time because I buffed up their legs with a support spell.

「Hold o—」

「Wait u—!」

The merchants seemed to be panicking in response to Fran's offer.

Thinking about it a bit led me to realize the implications our words had carried.

A C rank adventurer had basically told them to pay whatever they thought their lives were worth. They probably felt like we would end up spreading rumours about how cheap they were if they didn't give us an amount that ended up satisfying us and that we'd basically put their reputations as merchants on the line. It would've been much better for us to just ask them to pay whatever the market price was.

Either way, I decided to shelve the thought and just focus on the lesser wyverns for the time being.

Though they were objectively on the weaker side, the wyverns were still wild magic beasts. They immediately realized that Fran and Urushi were threats, and as such, chose to surround the pair instead of chasing the merchants down.

They stopped moving after they arranged themselves in a circle, as if they'd realized that they would die regardless of whether they advanced or retreated.

「Master」

『What's up?』

「Want to test.」

『What do you have in mind?』

「Kanna Kamui.」

『Hmmm... Yeah, I think I see where you're coming from.』

We'd only ever applied the spell in confined spaces, namely Rumina's dungeon and the tourney's enclosed battleground. We'd never used it in a larger, more open environment.

There wasn't any real reason for us not to try it out.

『Alright. I'll get the spell ready. You make sure the merchants actually manage to evacuate.』

「Nn.」

Kanna Kamui was extremely difficult to control. I was actually able to make better use of the spell than Fran.

My Accelerated Thought, Parallel Processing, and Sorcerer skills rendered my Kanna Kamui able to cause twice as much destruction as her's.

Moreover, using it would give her a pretty bad headache. Her first cast of the spell had even caused blood to start dripping from her nose. It was obvious that it heavily burdened its user's brain. It was so bad, in fact, that I wanted to avoid letting Fran use it if possible. I couldn't help but suspect that every single cast would just flat out reduce one's lifespan.

I built up a bunch of magical energy as Fran and Urushi intimidated the Wyverns and prevented them from escaping.

『Everything's ready on my end.』

「Nn. Merchants moved.」

『Kanna Kamui!』

A thick, white lightning bolt began rained down upon the lesser wyverns the moment after I voiced the spell's name. The open area around us served to demonstrate the full extent of its destructive power.

Low, rumbling roars followed the brilliant white flashes as they tore through our surroundings. It was almost like an angry God had descended upon the area for the sole sake of going on a violent rampage.

Both Fran and Urushi had already expected to be assaulted by a series of incredibly loud sounds, so they'd covered their ears in anticipation. The merchants, however, had not, so they ended up screaming and pressing their hands against them.

Crap. We'd told them to retreat, but it looked like they were still relatively nearby. It looked like we were going to have to heal them up a bit later on in hopes that they'd forgive us.

「Nn?」

「Woof?」

『Uh... It looks like I might've gone a bit overboard.』

I'd been expecting our thunderbolts to just leave the lesser wyverns charred, but it seemed that they ended up doing so much damage they caused them to just flat out evaporate.

The spell had created a 15 meter wide crater, and heavily damaged the forested area around it.

Everything within a 50 meter radius of the crater had been totally messed up by Kanna Kamui's impact. There were no longer any trees our immediate vicinity. The ones that lay a bit closer to the 50 meter mark were still present, but they'd fallen over, and some were even still on fire.

『Yeah uhh... we should probably avoid using Kanna Kamui unless we have to.』

The spell would probably end up annihilating any companions we happened to have. In fact, I was pretty sure the merchants only still existed as of right now because we'd told them to retreat ahead of time.

They'd been sent rolling because of the shockwave, but, at least they were still alive, right?

『Well, so much for gathering materials and magic stones.』

「Wasted.」

「Woof.」

Urushi seemed rather disappointed that the attack had destroyed all the wyvern meat.

『Oh well, I guess that's that.』

「Nn.」

229. The Rumoured Black Lightning Princess

Chapter 229. The Rumoured Black Lightning Princess

The Rumoured Black Lightning Princess

「Still okay?」

「...」

「...」

We turned over to the merchants after eliminating the lesser wyverns that'd been chasing them, but they weren't capable of providing us any sort of immediate response. Instead, they simply trembled on the spot as they stared off into the distance.

They didn't seem capable of averting their gazes from the destruction we'd just caused. Honestly, I couldn't really blame them. I'd gone a bit too far.

「Uh... so...」

「It looks like... we made it...」

「So about that reward...」

The merchants' faces paled. I couldn't really blame them. What they just bore witness to was something prone to leaving the average person in a state of shock, and the price we named clearly hadn't helped. There was a fair chance they'd interpreted our offer as a sort of threat instead.

「The three of us have about 50k Golde on us in total.」

At first, I thought that they had quite a decent bit of cash on hand, but then I realized that it was pretty much the norm given that they were merchants. Furthermore, their tones seemed to imply that they didn't think it was nearly enough to pay for Fran's services.

「Good enough.」

「Huh? Really? Are you sure?」

「Nn. Because caught in attack.」

We ended up using the fact that they'd ended up inside the surge of winds that followed Kanna Kamui as an excuse to lessen the cost despite the fact that we'd healed them afterwards.

「T-Thank you very much!」

「Y-You really saved us.」

「We would've died without your help.」

They were grateful even though we ended up taking all the cash they had on hand, which seemed to imply that the market price for our services was much higher than just that.

We parted with the merchants and headed on our way. We knew that they were heading in the same direction as us, so we ended up killing all the magic beasts we ran into along the way and clearing a path for them. That said, it was more so something we did just because we felt like it as opposed to something we chose to do in the spirit of service.

It didn't take too long for us to experience a second interruption after dealing with the first, as we came across a group of people large enough to be considered a roadblock. The group seemed to have come from Barbra's direction, and were heading in Ulmutt's. I had a bit of a hard time identifying them, as they were a bit too organised-looking for adventurers, and too lightly equipped for knights.

Most of the seemed to be on edge, and some even had their weapons drawn.

Though I called them a roadblock, they weren't actually in our way. We could easily just pass them by so long as that was what we wanted. I was fairly inclined to choose that exact option because I didn't really want to get us involved in anything too troublesome.

「Take detour?」

『Nah, let's not. They might end up misunderstanding our intentions if we do.』

The reason I said that was because they seemed to be able to see us. There was a chance they'd assume we chose to run away from them if we took a sudden turn. That said, I didn't really know the group's purpose, and there was a pretty good chance that they hadn't any good intentions.

『Make sure you're ready to fight at any given moment if need be.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

Urushi lifted off the gas and slowed down as he approached the group. Seeing him close in caused the group to immediately ready their weapons.

A few of the weapons that'd been drawn were bows, but fortunately, we didn't suffer any attacks regardless. As far as I could tell, their actions were driven by two separate reasons. The first was that they were able to sense that we weren't giving off any bloodlust. The second was that they'd managed to retain their composure being rather weak as individuals. Most of them were about as strong as the average E ranker. The man leading the group seemed a bit stronger than the rest of its members. He seemed like he was a D ranker, but only just barely made the cut.

Most of the group's members were focused on Urushi, many hadn't even noticed Fran. But again, I couldn't really blame them. A massive, hulking magic beast had basically just ran straight at them, after all.

Neither Fran nor I thought of Urushi as anything more than just a cute pet, but that didn't really go for anyone that didn't know him.

『Hey Fran, it'd probably be better for you to get off Urushi and walk for a bit.』

「Nn. Got it.」

『As for you, Urushi, you should probably dive into her shadow.』

「Woof.」

The act of Urushi shrinking himself down and entering Fran's shadow caused a few of the group's members to let out a few shouts of surprise. Fran didn't really pay their reaction much mind, as she kept moving towards them regardless.

I got myself ready to teleport us out at a moment's notice. My plan was to move us up into the sky so we could wipe them out with magic if they turned out to be hostile.

Fran started from about the 50 meter mark and approached at a rather brisk pace. The group wasn't able to react until she reached the five meter mark. Only then did the man that stood at the group's front finally call out to her.

「W-Who the hell are you!?!」

「Nn?」

「What the hell was with that wolf just now? And why the hell didn't you greet us at all!?!」

「Hi. Bye.」

「Wait, wait! Hold on kid!」

I'd kinda been expecting to be able to just ignore the group and move on, but I wasn't really sure if that was the best course of action given that we had no idea as to who they were.

「How about fixing that attitude of yours? Don't you know that we're the Dimuyr Mercenaries?」

Oh god damn it. Are all mercenaries like this or something? Why did they think we'd know them?

The man immediately started throwing questions at Fran without pause. He asked who she was, where Urushi went, and if something had happened a bit further down the road.

He seemed to slowly grow more and more irritated over time because he didn't like Fran's attitude. His voice gradually got louder and louder as a result.

(Master, ideas?)

『Hmmm... It'd probably be best for us to just leave after ignoring him some more.』

Or so I thought. We couldn't actually put my plan into action because a second group, the rear guard, caught up with the first right as we began to move. They clearly belonged to the same organisation and much to our annoyance, ended up in our way.

I began building up my magical energy as I watched the situation unfold.

「What the hell are you doing?」

「Nothing special pops, er, Division Leader. I'm just interrogating someone that seems suspicious.」

「Interrogating? Why the hell would you do that? We're being paid to wipe out a group of lesser wyverns, not interrogate someone. Did you run into a scout for a band of thieves or something? 」

It seemed that the person leading the rear guard had a higher position than the guy that'd first addressed us. He also seemed to be the first guy's father seeing as how he'd called him pops.

「Well, no, but...」

「Then why the hell are you bothering!? Stop fooling around and wasting time!」

「O-Oh come on! Just give me a second! I was about to start intimidating her into spilling the beans, so I'll get it done real quick!」

Well, well, well, what do we have here? He wanted to intimidate Fran? Did I hear that right? I guess that means we should beat the crap out of the guy that called out to us before using the rest of his mercenary band for target practice.

The division leader seemed to immediately catch onto the fact that Fran and I were itching for a fight.

He pushed his son and subordinates aside so he could get a better look at her. His face paled the moment he did. He immediately reacted by turning towards his son and smacking him in the face.

「Gaahh! W-What the hell was that for, pops!?!」

「God damn it! You're an idiot! I can't believe you're so goddamn stupid!」

「Rghghh! Arghghh!」

The boss guy hit his son over and over until the younger mercenary lost consciousness. None of the other mercenaries seemed to understand the cause of their leader's sudden outburst, and as a result, ended up staring in surprise.

Likewise, we also ended up staring because we didn't really get what was going on. My only guess was that he'd somehow mistaken Fran for some sort of influential noble.

「I-I'm terribly sorry! My subordinate was acting without the band's permission, I swear that we had no intention of making an enemy out of you. Please forgive us.」

It seemed the division leader really had mistaken us for someone else, as he ended up kneeling and begging for us to spare him.

「What the hell are you lot doing!? Lower your heads and get on your knees right this instant! I'll have anyone that disobeys fired on the spot!」

The order was a bit of a ridiculous one, but it contained within it a sense of authority that forced the mercenaries to obey.

「Again, I'm terribly sorry for my subordinates' attitudes. Please, Black Lightning Princess, forgive their rudeness.」

It turned out that he hadn't actually mistaken us for anyone else. He knew who Fran was and that messing with her would spell his end.

「W-Wait, that's the rumoured Black Lightning Princess?」

「I heard she doesn't show any mercy to anyone that shows her any hostility...」

「Yeah, and she even erases all the people that disobey her...」

The mercenaries began to gossip as they as they caught wind of Fran's identity, but a single glare from their commander ended up silencing them.

「Nn. Can go now?」

「Of course!」

「Then leaving.」

「Have a safe trip!」

Surprisingly, the mercenary commander ended up giving us his blessings as he saw us off. They hadn't caused us any harm, so I didn't actually see any reason for us to retaliate. That said, I was really curious as to why they were that afraid of us. I really wanted to learn more about the rumours people were spreading about us.

The rest of our trip went rather smoothly, we reached Barbra without experiencing any further interruptions.

『Well, we're here. I guess we should go visit all our acquaintances and check in on Old Man Gallus.』

「Nn.」

230. Back to Barbra

Chapter 230. Back to Barbra

Back to Barbra

『Man, we're finally back in Barbra? It sure has been a while since we were last here.』

「Nn.」

Only a month had passed since we left the city, and it honestly hadn't changed all that much while we were away. The only real difference was that most of the stuff that'd been busted up by the Evil Beings had been fixed. The city's current state made the whole thing feel like it wasn't such a big deal after all. That said, I still couldn't help but feel that we'd been away from it for quite some time.

『Let's start off by visiting everyone we know.』

「Nn.」

The first place we visited was the Chef's Guild because it happened to be the closest. Unfortunately, the person we'd set out to visit, the old judge guy, was nowhere to be found.

We tried to leave the moment we learned that he wasn't there, but one of the receptionists stopped us before we did.

「Um, excuse me, but could I have a bit of your time?」

「Nn?」

「The truth is that both you and your master have qualified for a rank up, so I was just wondering if you wouldn't mind me giving you more up to date guild cards.」

I didn't recall the fact that we were a part of the Chef's Guild until the receptionist reminded us. I'd totally forgotten that we had to sign up in order to participate in the cooking contest.

And that was exactly why I didn't understand why we were getting our chef rank's raised. The only thing we did was participate in the contest, but they would've ranked us up before we left if that was why this was happening.

「Why?」

「The curry recipe that the two of you are responsible for has become incredibly popular. Curry's rate of growth is so explosive that it'll likely soon spread throughout the entire country.」

I was rather pleased to hear the receptionist's words. Fran would probably end up rejoicing if curry got so popular she could buy it regardless of where she was.

「Your contribution to the development of both our country's economy and culture have earned you both the right to silver guild cards.」

Fran pulled out both our cards and had them traded for a pair with silver borders that the guild had already prepared for us ahead of time.

The cards issued by the Chef's Guild were quite different from the ones the Adventurer's Guild issued in the sense that they weren't magically enchanted in any which way. Comparing the two was like comparing analog to digital.

「That card serves to demonstrate that you have our backing in all the business-related endeavors you pursue within the city.」

「Nn. Got it.」

We didn't really need their support, but hey, why not, right...?

「Please keep in mind that your rank can go down over time if you don't renew your card before it expires, or if you don't accomplish anything significant for an extended period of time.」

I wasn't really all that interested before, but got sucked in when the receptionist told us we had to actively do stuff to keep our rank. We'd already raised it, so just letting it dropped seemed kinda wasteful.

(Master, what now?)

『Hmmm... I guess we should probably give them some sort of recipe.』

Their interest in curry seemed to indicate that they would probably appreciate us giving them any sort of exotic recipe. Hmmm...

『Got any ideas, Fran?』

Handing over one of Fran's favourites seemed like it was probably the best choice. I came from another world, so I doubted my taste palate was the best to go by.

(Nn... Katsudon?)

『Yeah, I guess that does sound like a pretty decent idea.』

Fried foods and recipes that made use of eggs were both few and far inbetween. Likewise, soy sauce was also really considered to be a bit of an unusual spice. The combination of the aforementioned three factors made katsudon an incredibly rare dish. I'd never seen anything that bore even the slightest resemblance to it here in Barbra.

And so, we ended up handing the guild a copy of my katsudon recipe. We made sure to record how one made the katsu part of katsudon, as well as any of the recipe's optional seasonings and finer details in order to make it easier for the recipe to spread.

Fran filled in all necessary documents and handed them over to the receptionist.

「Wow. This... is amazing. It looks like a genuine innovation and even describes how the recipe can be expanded upon. Should I file this recipe under both your name and your master's?」

「Nn. Please.」

「Okay, feel free to consider this recipe accepted. We'll make it public soon. It looks really promising, so I expect it to spread the same way curry did.」

「Really?」

「Of course. Your curry recipe has made you quite well known. I'm sure many chefs will ask for the recipe the moment they hear that you two are its progenitors, I don't doubt that it'll spread through Barbra like wildfire.」

The katsudon recipe's prospects sounded pretty good. I hoped that one of Barbra's chefs would end up being creative enough to combine our two dishes and create katsu-curry.

With that done and out of the way, we left the Chef's Guild. The receptionist saw us out with a big smile on her face the whole way through.

『Hmm... what now? That took quite a bit more time than I was expecting.』

「Orphanage?」

『That's not a bad idea. We might as well stop by and check it out.』

We knew that Amanda had done something, but we never did end up personally visiting the place after her intervention.

Fran, Urushi, and I all ended up stiffening up the moment we finally laid eyes on the orphanage. The change it'd undergone was just that incredible.

The exterior used to be all messed up; one could tell the place was in tatters from a glance. It'd since been repaired, but that wasn't all. The wall surrounding the orphanage had been repainted, and the garden now featured a massive flowerbed.

「Look, it's Urushi!」

「The adventurer girl is here!」

Fortunately, the children themselves hadn't actually changed. They were wearing better clothes, and no longer looked even the slightest bit shabby, but that was pretty much it. Well, that's Amanda for you, I guess.

It seemed that the orphans all still remembered Fran and Urushi, as they immediately gathered around her with smiles on their faces.

「Oh, hey Fran!」

「Io.」

Io came out from the orphanage and greeted us upon noticing that the children were stirring up a fuss. I still remembered her both because she was kind to children and really good at cooking.

「Thank you so much for all you've done for us. The orphanage is finally in much better hands, and the children are smiling much more than they were before.」

The skilled chef bowed her head to us even though we didn't really think we'd done much of anything at all. Amanda was the one that saved the orphanage, not us.

「Amanda told us that you were the only reason she knew that the orphanage was in trouble, and that you had asked her to help it.」

「Only did that. Nothing more.」

「Don't be silly. There's also the matter of the curry recipe you published. The children just love it. They can't get enough of it even though I've started making it once a week.」

「The curry you make is really tasty, Ms. Io!」

「It's super yummy!」

Io was already capable of making an incredibly delicious soup without access to anything more than vegetables of the lowest grade. I was really curious as to what she was now capable of making given that Amanda had provided her access to higher quality ingredients.

Apparently tomorrow was this week's curry day. We ended up asking Io to make a bit extra for Fran and Urushi because I wanted to see her take on the dish.

「Bye. Will stop by tomorrow.」

「We'll be waiting!」

「See ya!」

「Bye Urushi!」

I took a moment to consider what to do next. Checking out the Luciel Conglomerate seemed to be one of the few remaining choices. All our other acquaintances were adventurers, which in turn meant they were likely still in Ulmutt.

That, however, didn't mean we were out of options.

『Alright, whaddya say we go looking for the old man?』

「Nn. Sounds good.」

231. Regus, The Information Broker

Chapter 231. Regus, The Information Broker

Regus, The Information Broker

We started walking around so we could look for Old Man Gallus.

I started thinking about who we needed to talk to in order to find him. The Adventurer's Guild was always an option given that adventurers were always on the lookout for skilled blacksmiths. There was a pretty good chance someone would know something about where he was.

Likewise, the Blacksmiths' Guild also seemed like a fairly decent choice. He probably would've stopped by at least fairly recently if he was still at work in Barbra.

『Let's head for the Adventurer's Guild first, I guess.』

「Got it.」

To Fran, the Adventurer's Guild was more or less her home base. She'd met with Gamud, the guildmaster, in person before, and had even become rather famous because of how far she got in Ulmutt's tournament. There was simply no way the Adventurer's Guild would end up turning request for information away for no reason. Speaking of which, the Adventurer's Guild's information network likely outshined the Blacksmiths' Guild's. There really wasn't any reason to choose the latter of our two options over the former. Given all that, we ended up turning our heels towards the Adventurer's Guild.

For some odd reason, both Fran and Urushi ended up fidgeting and restlessly casting their gazes all over as we moved along.

Their restlessness seemed to indicate that they were sensing something.

『Is something the matter?』

「Curry's scent.」

I totally forgot that Barbra was in the midst of a curry boom until after Fran and Urushi inadvertently reminded me of it. There were several street stalls in our vicinity. It only made sense for at least one of them to be serving the dish given its popularity.

Fran somehow managed to narrow down the exact stall in question and casually approached it. She did it so naturally it almost seemed instinctual.

A part of me couldn't help but suspect that she would probably fall for any traps that involved luring one's prey in with curry, even if we were in the midst of exploring a dungeon.

「'W'lcome!」

「This, what?」

「Aye, that'd be mah curry n'dles. We makes it based off curry.」

I was pleasantly surprised that someone had already come up with the idea of using curry to create a noddle-based dish. It looked to me like their recipe involved putting the noodles and curry together in one big pot and then cooking it all at once. The result seemed pretty good appearance wise, but I figured the noodles would end up being overcooked and soggy. Still, I couldn't really claim that I was disinterested. The same seemed to go for Fran, as she bought two portions of the stuff, one for herself, and one for Urushi.

「Urushi, here.」

「Woof!」

Both my companions immediately slurped down their entire bowls. They seemed perfectly content with the flavour.

『How was it?』

「Tasty.」

「Woof woof!」

『Were the noodles not too soggy?』

「Nn.」

It seemed that the chef had managed to come up with something to keep the noddles nice and firm. I asked Fran about it a bit later on, and we managed to conclude that the noodles were the kind that didn't really get soggy unless you left them for way too long. They probably contained something along the lines of konjac or cellophane.

The dish was interesting, and I was really impressed by the chef's ingenuity. He'd raised the bar; I was starting to expect a lot more out of other people's curry dishes.

Fran continued to visit stall after stall as she made her way over to the guild.

Barbra's Adventurer's Guild was lively; it contained an incredible number of adventurers.

A fair portion of them seemed to move their gazes in Fran's direction the moment she entered. They threw her glances, as if they weren't all that willing to stare. Their eyes seemed filled with doubt and suspicion, but she didn't mind them and instead just marched right over to the counter.

「Got question.」

「Please feel free to ask away.」

The receptionist's professionalism impressed me. She treated Fran courteously and politely despite not knowing her identity.

「Looking for someone.」

「So you want to issue a search request? I can introduce you to an adventurer that specializes in that sort of field if you'd like. Would you mind negotiating with the person in question directly?」

I liked the receptionist's suggestion. The person in question could probably do a pretty damned good job if the guild considered them a contact reputable enough to recommend.

「Works. Can meet person soon?」

「Of course. He's right there, after all.」

The receptionist directed her gaze towards a nearby adventurer, a middle-aged man with a scout-type class. His combat-based stats were rather low, but that was only because he specialized in the gathering of information. He had a bunch of detection-based skills, stealth-based skills, and negotiation-based skills.

「Hey, I heard you're looking for someone?」

「Nn.」

「I'm what a lot of people like calling a small fry because I pretty much only do jobs that don't need me to leave the city. That said, I can make up for it because I know pretty much everything that goes on here in Barbra, so I should be able to point you in the right direction. Anyway, I probably rambled off a bit too long, why don't we get down to business?」

Our newfound acquaintance introduced himself as Regus. He seemed to run his operations within the guild, as he had us sit down with him in one of its corners as he spoke. His attitude was an easygoing one, and he didn't really seem to be looking down on Fran either, which was nice.

「So, who exactly were you looking for again?」

「Gallus. Blacksmith.」

「Oh? You're looking for the ever so famous blacksmith, are you?」

「Know him? Want to know current whereabouts.」

Things were looking up. It seemed that we'd be able to find Old Man Gallus so long as we paid up.

「Will pay intel fee.」

「Don't bother. I won't be charging you.」

「Nn? Why?」

「Well, you see, the thing is I don't really know all that much about where he is right now. I do have a bit of info for you, but it's nothing substantial enough to warrant me charging you for it. Besides, networking with the Black Lightning Princess is worth way more to me than a bit of chump change.」

Regus' words demonstrated that he'd acted the way he did precisely because he knew who Fran was. I didn't really care either way, as we ended up getting the information we needed.

「The last I heard of him was about 10 days ago. He was still in Barbra, and I think he did some maintenance on the Guildmaster's weapon.」

There wasn't any more information on him. Regus himself was of the opinion that Gallus had likely left the city.

「But didn't see in Ulmutt.」

「Have you not been in touch at all?」

「Nn.」

「Hmmm... I can think up several possibilities if that's the case.」

The first possibility Regus brought up was that Gallus had gotten into some sort of trouble on his way over to Ulmutt. The old man could've been attacked by either magic beasts or thieves.

「But I doubt that to be it. The tourney's made it so the roads are more populated than usual. There's been more patrols checking the route too, so there probably would've been a few witness reports if that was what'd happened.」

Gallus was decently proficient with both Hammer Arts and Fire Magic, so I doubted he'd be delayed by any sort of minor conflict.

The second possibility was that he'd been involved in an incident that took place within Barbra, one that happened before he managed to leave. He was an incredibly skilled blacksmith; there was a chance he'd been kidnapped by a slave merchant or criminal organisation that wanted to make use of his skills.

Though both the first and second possibilities insinuated he was in some sort of trouble, that in and of itself was an assumption that may or may not have been correct. Gallus could've just accepted a job that required him to remain off the radar. The old man had the tendency to only do things he wanted to, but that didn't mean he was actually safe from royals or other highly influential nobles. He could've been dragged off by one because they wanted him to do some top-secret task.

Furthermore, there was always the off chance that he'd simply forgotten to keep in touch because he got a bit too engrossed in his work. He had a true craftsmen's temperament, so that was always a possibility we had to consider.

There was simply no way for us to figure out exactly what had happened.

「Would you mind giving me a day to do some investigating?」

「Thanks. Any task for me?」

「I don't really think anything too showy would work to our benefit...
Hmm... wait, you know Barbra's guildmaster, right?」

「Nn.」

「Alright. It'd probably be best for you to see if you can get any information out of both the guildmaster and the Blacksmiths' guild. Don't worry about investigating and figuring out if they're trying to hide anything. Just talk to them as you normally would.」

「Got it.」

Alright, I guess that means we're visiting Gamud.

232. The Rumours

232. The Rumours

Regus had told us quite a bit for free. That said, we were asking him to do a good bit of work, so we were naturally planning to reward him for any of the services he was going to provide going forward.

The price was set at 30k Golde regardless of what he managed to find. It was apparently a bit higher than the market price, but he promised to do his best to give us a decent bang for our buck. With that decided, we went our separate ways.

『Let's go talk to Gamud.』

「Nn.」

The receptionist immediately sprang into action when we showed her our guild card and asked to see the guildmaster.

Her actions apparently weren't driven by our rank, but rather, because she'd recognized Fran as the Black Lightning Princess. It seemed information about her had already been disseminated to the guild's associates.

She ended up getting a secretary-like person to guide us up to the guild's second floor and into the guildmaster's room.

「Hey, long time no see. I heard you got quite a bit done in Ulmutt.」

「Nn.」

There, we found Gamud, the Barbra branch's guildmaster, and a former A ranked adventurer known as the Dragonfeller.

He'd fought alongside Forrund, Amanda, Colbert, and everyone else during the Evil Being incident. The sight of him using a warhammer the size of his body to send Rynford flying had left a pretty deep impression on me, possibly in part because he'd totally saved our asses back then.

「I probably would've spectated myself if I wasn't stuck here cleaning up after the incident.」

「Can't be helped.」

「Riiiiight? Man, I would've loved to see you take Fermus on. Those threads of his are one huge pain in the ass to deal with.」

Fermus and Gamud were both A ranked adventurers that'd made Barbra their home base, so they were probably more than just acquainted with one another. There was a pretty decent chance they'd worked together on at least one occasion some time in the past. Their nicknames were rather similar, so I suspected that they'd probably been a part of the same party.

Asking him prompted him to explain that my suspicions were on point. They'd both been a part of an incredibly famous A ranked party known as The Dragonslayers. Their names were so well known that they'd practically become the stuff of legends. Normally, I would've just wrote off the last bit he mentioned as a casual brag, but he was an A ranker, so I was actually kinda tempted to just take what he said at face value.

「So whaddya need? I'm pretty sure you didn't stop by just 'cause you wanted to see me.」

Fortunately for us, Gamud wasn't too interested in pleasantries, he cut straight to the point and asked us about our business. We responded in kind and told him we were looking for Gallus.

「I see. So you're looking for Gallus...」

「Current location?」

「Sorry, but I dunno. All I know is that he ran a maint on one of my weapons 'bout 10 days ago, so he was still in Barbra at least till then.」

「I think he said something or another 'bout going to Ulmutt, but he never mentioned when he was leaving.」

「Okay.」

Gallus had apparently informed Gamud of his destination, but that was all the guildmaster knew. I immediately jumped to the conclusion that we weren't going to get any more info out of him, so I told Fran that it was probably time to leave.

「Oh yeah, didja happen to really not like mercs or somethin?」

But the guildmaster stopped us by asking Fran a question right as she started to get out of her chair.

「Nn?」

「Well... it's just that I've been hearing some odd rumours.」

「What kind?」

「Oh, y'know, just that the Black Lightning Princess hates mercenaries, that she kills all the mercs that antagonize her, that she'll crush any mercs she happens to hate, and that she'll start casting spells at any mercs she happens to see without warning.」

Huh? Why the hell would anyone think that?

「At least that's what I've been hearing from all the mercs that make this town their base. They're scared shitless of you.」

Did he just straight up ask all the mercs he knew whether or not they thought we hated them or something?

「No relation to mercenaries.」

「Oh, that so?」

「Just, will crush all enemies.」

「A-Ah... I getcha.」

「Nn.」

Thinking back, I realized that we'd gotten ourselves involved with and viciously attacked a pretty large number of mercenaries. In fact, the first group to fuck with us, the adventurers we met in Alessa, had been a group of ex-mercs.

There was also that run in we had with Blue Pride back in Ulmutt. It was technically the Beast Lord that took them out, but that probably wasn't how it seemed to the average onlooker. Most people probably would've suspected that Fran had done something.

That explained why the Dimuyr guys we met on our way to Barbra were so terrified of us.

To them, Fran was overwhelmingly powerful. She was more than capable of wiping them out in an instant. That alone would've been perfectly fine, but combining it with the supposed fact that she hated mercenaries made it so it was only natural for them to be terrified of her.

「You mind if I relay that bit of info to the mercs?」

「Do it.」

「Oh yeah, I've also got a request I'd like you to complete. 」

「Request?」

「You're the perfect person for it seeing as how you can go head to head 'gainst an A ranker.」

It sounded like he wanted to us to do something along the lines of taking out a powerful magic beast. I didn't see any problem with taking on a

request, but I really didn't want to do anything that'd take up too much of our time.

Luckily for us, that wasn't really what he'd had in mind in the first place.

「Y'see, there's these guys I just so happen to have my eyes on. I'd like you to spar them and show them that there's always someone stronger out there.」

「Can't do yourself?」

「Forrund and I have been looking after them since they were just kids, so they think it's only natural for them to lose if they've gotta fight me or 'im. We've beat them up so many times that it doesn't make 'em feel frustrated anymore.」

Gamud's argument made sense to me. People kinda expected to lose against their masters and whatnot.

「You mind handling it tomorrow morning? It shouldn't take too long.」

「Don't mind.」

「Hell yeah. I'll wrangle the brats in so you can do your thing. They're older than you, but i'm sure you can give 'em a good smack and make 'em learn some modesty. Gahahaha!」

「Nn.」

Fran worked out the details of when and where with Gamud before finally making her way back out the Adventurers' Guild's front door.

233. @ The Dragon's Table

Chapter 233. @ The Dragon's Table

@ The Dragon's Table

『I guess our next destination is probably going to be the Blacksmiths' Guild.』

「Nn.」

We made sure to ask for its location before actually leaving the Adventurer's Guild, so we knew exactly where we were going. Our destination was fairly close to the port. It seemed to be built there in order to facilitate easy access to the ore and coal that'd often get shipped in via the sea.

Though the Blacksmith's Guild was supposed to be our next destination, we still did plan to make a stop on our way.

『Okay, let's go find ourselves a place to buy some booze.』

「Nn. Liquor store?」

『Yeah, either that or a bar that lets you straight up buy whatever.』

Gamud told us that it'd probably be best for us to bring a gift or two after we told him of our next destination. Many of the Blacksmiths' Guild's members, its guildmaster included, were dwarves, which meant they would appreciate a good drink or two.

Hearing that tempted me to look for some really high quality booze, the kind that would knock their socks right off.

『Here's to hoping we come accross a decent bar on our way over.』

「Fermus' store?」

『Right. I do remember The Dragon's Table being somewhere in that direction now that you mention it.』

There seemed like there was a decent chance we'd be able to get some booze from The Dragon's Table. The place was a restaurant, so it was sure to have some. Moreover, the owner had personally given Fran a coupon. I figured that alone would almost guarantee the staff there at least hearing us out.

And so, we decided to stop by Fermus' store.

「Urushi, shadow.」

「Woooooof?」

『Sorry, but no. The place isn't really big enough for you, and I'm not even sure they allow pets to begin with.』

「Whimper...」

I really didn't think we would be able to bring Urushi in with us. To that end, I figured that it'd probably be best for us to feed him stuff he likes a bit later on in order to cheer him up.

「Welcome. Would you happen to be looking for a table for one?」

「Nn.」

「This way please.」

「Thanks.」

「Unfortunately, the owner is currently out, so we won't be able to provide our usual selections.」

The menu the waitress handed us only had five different items listed on it. It was a sharp cut down from the 30 or so I remember seeing last time we visited.

Fermus' apprentice was temporarily filling the former A ranker's shoes because he was currently out of town. It seemed that the Dragon Hunter had only permitted him to create the five dishes currently listed because he didn't believe the rest of his apprentice's stuff was of a high enough quality to serve to his customers.

The restaurant's renowned Dragon Bone Soup was still being sold, but apparently it was something that'd been prepared by Fermus ahead of time.

「Then want everything.」

「Huh? Did you just say everything?」

「Nn. Everything.」

「Are you really sure you'd like everything? Our servings are quite large.」

「Not problem. Already ate before.」

「O-Okay. In that case, I'll have everything coming right up.」

「Thanks.」

Fran handed the coupon we'd gotten from Fermus to the waitress. For some odd reason, she seemed extremely shocked; her eyes had snapped wide open.

「D-Did you maybe...」

「Got from Fermus.」

「So it really is a VIP coupon, a token indicating that we'll have to treat you with utmost care!? I knew it!」

The waitress' declaration caused her feelings of surprise to make their way over in my direction. I hadn't thought of the thing Fermus had given us as anything more than just another coupon for discounts or something.

「O-O-Oh geez! What do I do!? The owner's out. The only person here capable of making food is an idiot whose skills don't even come close to matching the owner's! Oh no, oh no, oh no! I can't let the customer down, else risk the owner scolding me later on!」

She went full blown panic mode, and even started to insult Fermus' apprentice. I kind of pitied her and as a result, didn't really want to take advantage of her given the current situation, but I couldn't help myself. She'd basically handed us an opportunity on a silver platter.

「Special treatment, no need.」

「There's no way I could just treat you as I would any other customer, especially when the food we have now isn't as good as it could be!」

「Then want alcohol. Best in store.」

「Alcohol? Consider it done! Please just give me one moment to get it!」

Though she ran off and grabbed us the booze we wanted, she seemed to have totally forgotten about the fact that we'd also ordered food. Normally, that would be something that'd totally piss a customer off, which in our case meant tattling to Fermus. That said, I decided to reserve our judgement until after she returned. There wasn't really any reason for us to get mad so long as she brought out something of a decently high quality.

It took about five minutes for the waitress to finally make her way back over to us. She didn't seem to be letting the fact that she was clearly out of breath bother her, as she immediately presented an expensive looking wooden box the moment she returned.

「This wine is the finest we have. It comes from a region known throughout Kranzel as one of its finest producers of alcoholic beverages. This bottle in particular has been magically preserved for about 120 years, so it's some of the best stuff you could possibly get!」

The receptionist ended up bringing us something way beyond my expectations.

「To be honest, it isn't something that we would normally be willing to serve our customers...」

「Source?」

「I borrowed one of the bottles that the owner keeps in his personal collection of rare wines.」

It sounded like taking the wine would probably anger Fermus. I was totally fine with him getting angry at the waitress, but I really didn't want him directing his rage in our direction. Given that, we convinced the waitress to return Fermus' prized collectable to its usual spot and have her give us the best stuff they actually had for sale.

We ended up getting five bottles of a type of booze that cost us 1k Golde a pop. The price seemed to about just right for something we were going to use as a gift for someone we'd never met before.

「Are you sure you're fine with just that? The owner's got a much better selection down in his wine cellar.」

「Good enough. More important, hungry.」

「Ohhhh nooo! I-I-I'm so sorry I forgot! I'll have your food prepared immediately!」

It seemed the waitress finally realized that she'd forgotten to take Fran's order this whole time. She ended up bending her waist forwards and bowing with all the force of a thousand prostrations before running off to the kitchen in order to report the order.

『Is it just me, or do you think we stressed her out a bit too much?』

「Nn.」

The waitress had seemed so be panicking so hard that she even worried Fran. Admittedly, I couldn't really think of it as a bad thing because we'd managed to get a good couple bottles of booze out of the ordeal, and for a decently cheap price at that.

Fran burned straight through everything she was given, and even ended up ordering a bit of tea so she could relax after having eaten. The chef took that as a sign and paid us a visit as Fran leisurely enjoyed her post-meal break.

「H-How was the meal?」

「Not good as Fermus.」

「I-I see... Could you point out the parts that bothered you?」

He took out a notepad and immediately started to write stuff in it. The waitress had labeled him as an idiot, but to me, he felt more like someone that was obsessed with cooking than anything else. [1]

I considered telling Fran to be a bit less direct, but ended up deciding otherwise because telling it to him straight was more likely to benefit him.

Fran ended up being the one giving out pointers because I myself hadn't eaten. That said, it wasn't like Fran's advice was lacking in any which way. She would happily eat basically anything because that was what the time she'd spent as a slave had trained her to do, but that didn't mean she wasn't capable of judging how good something tasted.

The only real difference was that her scale was a bit skewed. If a normal person were to rate something on a scale from one to five, the labels they'd use would probably be: bad, kinda bad, not bad, good, and very good. Fran's labels, on the other hand, would probably read something more along the lines of: inedible, not bad, good, very good, great.

Fran's cooking skill was flat out maxed out, and as a result, her tastebuds were incredibly sensitive. She used this sensitivity of hers to describe the chef's deficiencies in detail.

She spent a long time giving her critique; the sun had started to set by the time we finally left.

Good luck apprentice dude. Live strong, don't give up!

[1] Joke is lost in translation. In the raw, Master specifies that he views Fermus' apprentice as a "cooking idiot" as opposed to a normal idiot. Calling someone an X idiot normally implies that they're rather well versed in X, and that they're completely and utterly obsessed with it.

234. The Blacksmiths' Guild

Chapter 234. The Blacksmiths' Guild

The Blacksmiths' Guild

We arrived at the Blacksmiths' Guild about 20 minutes after leaving The Dragon's Table

Gamud had only told us its general location, but honestly, that was all we needed to locate it because it stood out from all the other buildings in its vicinity. It looked kinda of like a massive workshop. Smoke actively billowed out its chimney. The plot of land the building sat on was huge and all the people entering and leaving it were stern-looking men.

Though there was basically no way it wasn't the Blacksmiths' Guild, a part of me hoped I was wrong. I really wanted to know what else it possibly could've been.

I tried imagining all the different possibilities, but my train of thought was cut short as we approached. I happened to see a crest with a pair of crossed hammers on it mounted on the building's door plate, which clearly denoted that the place was indeed the Blacksmiths' Guild we'd been looking for.

A wave of pressure hit me the moment we entered the building. The foyer's ceiling was incredibly low. It was almost like the place had been constructed specifically to intimidate those that entered it. I felt like I'd entered a workplace meant solely for hardboiled men.

「Hmm? You have some business here?」

The Blacksmiths' Guild's receptionist was nothing like the type we'd typically had back at the Adventurers' Guild. The buff dwarf that worked at the desk didn't bother smiling. He instead spoke in a low voice and threw Fran a sharp glare, almost as if to threaten her.

「Looking for person.」

「Then you've come to the wrong place. Go talk to the Adventurers' Guild instead.」

His cold response almost made him seem like a bartender that'd just rejected someone asking for milk.

「Looking for blacksmith. Gallus.」

「I don't know who you're talking about. You satisfied yet, girly?」

「No. Need more informed person. Here, gift.」

「Oh?」

The receptionist's tone changed the moment he laid hands on the booze we'd brought. Welp, that's a dwarf for you.

「That's a mighty fi-tsk.」

He began reaching towards the bottle of wine Fran had placed atop the counter, but she took it away right before he reached it. The act caused the dwarf to glare at her in a begrudging manner, but she didn't mind him, and instead just chucked it back into her Dimensional Storage.

「Get person. Close to Gallus or know location.」

「...Wait here a bit.」

The dwarven receptionist left his desk and headed deeper inside the building. It took him about 10 minutes to finally return to his desk.

「Follow me.」

「Nn.」

It seemed that he'd found just the guy, as he finally began leading us through the guild. We ended up going underground and passing through a series of large doors only to end up finding ourselves inside a rather small room. Despite its size, it managed to come off as a luxurious office that

clearly belonged to someone important given how gaudy the furniture was. However, it was dark. No direct light managed to reach any of the room's four corners. The room's owner was only capable of operating within it because he was a dwarf.

「I've brought her over, boss.」

「Good work.」

Apparently, we'd been brought straight to the guild's top dog even though we hadn't told the receptionist who we were. I couldn't pinpoint the exact reason he ended up doing so, but I felt that it was likely either because we'd mentioned Gallus, shown him the booze we'd brought with us, or a combination of both.

Regardless, we ended up giving him a bottle of wine as he left.

「You sure?」

「Still have more.」

「Great. I'll be happy to take it off your hands then.」

Surprisingly, the receptionist ended up flashing us a big smile. I knew that he was a dwarf and all, but god damn!

「Is that wine I see?」

「Nn. Gift.」

「I guess that means I'll have to take this seriously, not that I wouldn't have to begin with. I'd rather not risk incurring the Black Lightning Princess' wrath, after all.」

It turned out that the Blacksmiths' Guild's boss had already heard of Fran. He'd never actually met Fran and only knew that the Black Lightning Princess was a female Black Catkin, but he still managed to pinpoint the fact that she was the person that everyone was talking about. I wasn't really surprised. It wasn't really that difficult to deduce Fran's identity.

There were two main reasons figuring out who Fran was had become such a simple task. The first and foremost was because she had become a hot topic as of late. Barbra's people were already aware that she was in town, so they'd started to actively talk about her. The second was that Fran was strong. There weren't many strong Black Catkin, and a single good look at her was more than enough for any skilled individual to figure out that she was a cut above the rest. Putting two and two together immediately allowed one to conclude that Fran was indeed the rumoured Black Lightning Princess.

We promptly asked the Blacksmiths' Guild's boss for Gallus' location, to which he responded by making a bit of a murky expression. His reaction didn't seem quite positive, but it at least served to evidence that he knew who Gallus was.

「Does your name happen to be Fran?」

「Didn't know?」

「Nope. The only thing we knew you by was your alias.」

「Nn. Named Fran.」

「Then, am I right in assuming you used to be called the Magic Sword Girl?」

「Nn.」

I was a bit confused as to why he bothered confirming Fran's old name and nickname.

「I see... To be honest, not even I know exactly where Gallus has gone.」

(Master?)

『He's telling the truth.』

Not even the Blacksmiths' Guild's boss knew where we could find Gallus.

「I do at least have a bit of information. I don't mind telling you, but only if you swear not to tell a soul. It's highly confidential.」

「Nn. Won't tell.」

「Good. Last I heard, Gallus had taken on a top secret request from a noble.」

「Top secret request?」

「Not even I know exactly what it entails. All I know was that it was something an influential noble personally asked him to do, and that he was against it. That's it.」

It looked like not even Gallus was capable of turning down important nobles. If he did, the noble in question would probably end up causing trouble both for him and the Blacksmiths' Guild as a whole.

「Basically means abducted?」

「He definitely was being forced to do something against his will, but it isn't really as bad as you're making it out to be. They at least put in an official request.」

「Oh.」

The Blacksmiths' Guild's boss wasn't lying, which meant the reason we hadn't been able to find Gallus was because he got forced into doing something he couldn't anyone about.

「Truth is, he actually left you a letter, told me to give it to Fran, the Magic Sword Girl. I'd actually made a few arrangements so you'd be brought straight to me if you ever showed up, but...」

Fran's new nickname, the Black Lightning Princess, had become much more widespread than her last. Gallus himself never suspected that she'd suddenly gain a new alias, and naturally, didn't know what that new alias could've been, so his letter was still addressed to the Magic Sword Girl.

The old name had just flat out poofed; it'd gone so quickly that I almost missed it; hearing it again filled me with a sense of nostalgia.

「Here it is. I haven't looked at it myself, so I've no idea what he's written.」

「Nn.」

It seemed that he was once again telling the truth.

「Oh yeah, do me a favour and don't read it here. I'd be put in a bad spot if it makes mention of the request he's gotten from the state. I'd rather not get any more involved in than I already am.」

Apparently, even just carrying the letter was already something the Blacksmiths' Guild's boss considered to rather risky.

「Okay.」

And so, we took the letter, handed over the booze we brought, and went on our way.

We had no way of knowing the letter's contents, so we ended up deciding that it'd be best for us to find a place without anyone around before actually opening it up.

『We're going to have spend the night in town, so we might as well just rent a room somewhere and read it there.』

「Nn. Got it.」

Fran and I ended up deciding on a place right by the Adventurer's Guild seeing as how we were going to have to head over to it the next day anyways.

「Nn. Nice room.」

『Goes to show you get what you pay for.』

The room was priced at 15k a night, mostly because we'd picked the best room with a bath we could find.

Though Fran herself had said that she'd be fine with a cheap room, I insisted otherwise, admittedly mostly for vanity's sake. Fran had gotten a really awesome nickname. I really wanted to let her act in a manner that befitted it.

235. Gallus' Whereabouts

Chapter 235. Gallus' Whereabouts

Gallus' Whereabouts

We got ready to open Gallus' letter after we settled down.

『Alrighty, let's give it a look.』

「Nn.」

『Wait, don't be so rough with it. Try opening it with a bit more care.』

Fran ripped the letter open and undid the seal to reveal the piece of paper within.

It clearly had Gallus' signature on it, but the writing seemed kinda messy. It was almost he'd rushed to finish writing the letter.

The letter started off by describing his predicament. It said that an important noble had ordered him to complete a request with utmost secrecy, hence why he wasn't able to contact us through any other means. It then continued on as follows.

I can't tell you exactly where I've gone. All I can really say is that I'll probably be somewhere in the capital by the time you read this letter. I won't be able to see you for the time being, but I'd like for us to meet up once the royal auction starts. They sell all sorts of equipment there. I'm sure they'll have something that catches your eye, so I encourage you to come. Oh, and I'm planning to make you a new sheath, one I hope will be to your liking. I'll be waiting for you in the capital.

Gallus.

So he's in the capital? That sure does sound pretty convenient seeing as how we were planning to head over eventually anyways.

『Welp, so much for finding him Barbra.』

「Nn. More reasons to go to capital now.」

『Yeah. True that.』

We headed to the Adventurers' Guild the next day. Our goal was of course to trade notes with Regus. We'd already gained a rough understanding of where Gallus currently was, but we were still hoping he could provide a bit more info.

「Kept waiting?」

「Nah, I also only just got here. I've got a good few bits of info for you.」

Alrighty. Here's to hoping it isn't redundant.

「I got us a room upstairs. We should probably head over before I tell you any more.」

「Got it.」

Regus' proposal was promising, as it more or less implied that the info he had for us couldn't be said within the public's earshot. To that end, we moved upstairs and sat ourselves accross from him.

「Silence.」

「You really live up to your reputation, Black Lightning Princess. Your wind magic seems to be top notch.」

Fran used silence to prevent any sound from leaking into our surroundings so we could speak without having to worry about being overheard.

「I'm going to be honest, I couldn't pinpoint Gallus' location.」

「Nn. Can't be helped.」

He then went on to describe what we already knew. That is, he told us Gallus had accepted a request from someone associated with the government, and that he'd left Barbra in secret.

「Based on your reaction, I'd say you probably knew all that already. I guess that means I'll have to move on to something you probably don't know.」

「Nn.」

「The person that contacted Gallus was apparently working under Marquis Ashtonah. I can't say for sure whether the Ashtonah's issued the request at the country's request or if they just decided to issue it themselves, but I'm more inclined to say its the former.」

「Ashtonah? Heard of somewhere.」

『That's the household Celldio was from.』

(Godblade wanting noble?)

『That's the one.』

The Ashtonah household's employee had attempted to act in absolute secrecy, but he wasn't able to slip through Regus' information network unnoticed. His identity was evidenced both by the small accessory he wore with the family's crest embedded in it and his use of one of the Ashtonah household's villas.

Of course, the person that'd gotten in touch with Gallus wasn't the only individual Regus had taken note of. Many of the marquis' retainers had entered the city immediately after the Rynford incident. They tried sneaking around, but ended up standing out as a result.

「Oh yeah, take this next bit with a grain of salt. The source I got it from isn't too reliable, but apparently, a carriage departed from the Ashtonah villa the very same day Gallus was rumoured to have left the city.」

「Rode carriage?」

「Most likely, yeah.」

I couldn't help but have a fairly bad impression of the Ashtonahs. First, they ordered their son to search for Godblades, and now, they've even taken Gallus.

「Gallus unharmed?」

「He should be fine from what I hear. They're after his skills, so they're more likely treating him well than not.」

Regus had a pretty solid point. They couldn't really hurt him or put him in too bad a mood unless they didn't mind lowering the efficiency of his work. Likewise, they couldn't brainwash him because there was a chance he'd forget a lot of the things that made him as skilled as he was.

They couldn't really threaten him either, because that wouldn't necessarily lead to him listening to them. The Ashtonahs needed to provide optimal conditions if they wanted him to do what they considered a perfect job.

「More importantly, Gallus is considered the Kingdom of Kranzel's Honourary Blacksmith. That's a title only the king can give, which means he's been recognized by the royal family. Anyone that forces him into anything will probably be tried for treason.」

「Silencing him, possible?」

「I doubt it. Gallus is important, so important in fact that the state would probably launch an all out investigation if he goes missing for too long. You can never know whether or not you can hide something you've done for good, even if you think you've perfectly covered up all your tracks. It's just not a risk worth the Marquis' time, especially seeing as how he'd lose everything the moment anyone figures out what he did.」

I saw Regus' point, but in my eyes, nobles had the tendency to be stupid enough to take risks like that.

「You don't need to worry. Gallus is said to be the the closest thing you'll ever find to a god-tier blacksmith. His services are worth a ridiculous amount. They won't do anything that'll cause them to risk losing him.」

Again, Regus had a point. It seemed that we'd gotten the wrong idea, and that there'd been no reason for us to think that he'd been forcibly dragged off. Thinking about it, while Gallus' letter had made it seem like he'd been forced into something he hadn't wanted, it didn't make it seem like he'd been subjected to any sort of violence.

Him telling us to meet him at the auction could've just been interpreted as him just not knowing where he'd actually be until it then. He basically was telling us that we'd be able to get him touch with him there. That was all it was.

「That's all I know about Gallus, but I do have a bit more information for you. Specifically, it's about Marquis Ashtonah and his household.」

「Explain?」

「Apparently one of his subordinates caused some sort of incident. As a result, his secondary residence, which lies here in Barbra, will soon be subject to a government inspection.」

It seemed that the whole Celldio incident really had caused the country to start suspecting the Marquis. Did that mean that the request they issued Gallus was in some way connected to the incident?

There was no way for us to discern whether or not that was actually the case because we lacked too much information to do so.

「He also dispatched a group of knights to the Maoookami Plains, but they weren't able to reach it. Only a few made it back, most were wiped out in the Forest of Exhaustion.」

「Maoookami plains? Forest of Exhaustion? Why?」

「Sorry, but I wasn't able to dig *that* deep. I do, however, know that he hired a group of adventurers to try investigating the exact same area after his knights failed him.」

It seemed that the Marquis was really fixated on the idea of having the Maookami Plains scoped out. The plains housed B ranked magic beasts, so I had a hard time believing that he actually found anyone capable of doing the job.

「The adventurers that accepted his request were rather low ranked, so they weren't able to bring about the results he wanted.」

Apparently the Marquis didn't want the whole thing to blow up, so they didn't make it out to be a big deal or ask for a designated request.

「And I think that's everything I managed to find. Sorry, I couldn't get you any big reveals.」

「Valuable intel.」

He'd not only verified that Gallus was safe, but also told us quite a bit about the Ashtonah family's affairs. We definitely got a good bit of value out of his services.

We paid Regus the 30k Golde we owed him and bid our farewells.

『Well, so much for locating Old Man Gallus.』

「Nn...」

『Though, he said he'd get in touch if we went to the auction, so I guess we might as well just wait till it happens.』

「Got it.」

Alright. Time to go fulfill Gamud's request, I guess.

236. The Spar Request

Chapter 236. The Spar Request

The Spar Request

『It looks like it's time to do the thing Gamud asked us to do. Why don't we head on over?』

「Nn.」

『So we're going to be fighting some young adventurers...?』

「Ready to do best.」

『I uh... am pretty sure that isn't what he wanted you to do.』

「Nn?」

If anything, we should be more focused on holding back just enough. There was a good chance Fran would destroy the adventurers' hopes and dreams if she beat them too badly. I knew that Gamud thought well of the group and all, but I highly doubted they'd were Fran's match. The Guildmaster seemed to be aware of that the nature of his request was to beat them down. Still, I doubted they would be that weak. There wouldn't be any reason for Gamud to ask Fran in particular to spar them if they wouldn't at least be able to put up a fight.

Then again, that might not be the case. Gamud had never proven himself not to be the type of educator that'd throw a chick off a cliff and tell it to fly, just to help it develop a sense of height. Either way, there wasn't much of a point in sitting around and brooding. We'd be able to figure it out when we saw them.

With that in mind, we left the room Regus had grabbed and headed back downstairs. I figured there probably wouldn't be any issue with us just skipping straight over to the guildmaster's room, but I felt like that violated

the Adventurers' Guild's pipeline. To that end, I had Fran report in by speaking with one of the guild's many receptionists.

「Gamud here?」

Though, she kinda ended up skipping the whole reporting part given that she just straight up asked for Gamud.

「Good morning Fran. We've been awaiting your arrival. Please follow me.」

The lady that'd responded to Fran's query led us not to Gamud's office, but instead to a different room in the back. The room in question seemed like an armoury, as it was crammed full with all sorts of equipment.

Awaiting us in said room was the guildmaster, all suited up and ready to go.

「I'm glad you made it!」

「Nn. Why armoured? Joining in spar?」

Fran's voice was clearly filled with anticipation. Unfortunately for her though, he ended up denying her query by shaking his head in rejection.

「Nah. I'm just going to act as the ref. The armour I'm wearing is supposed to be a contingency, y'know, just in case I happen to get hit. I won't be taking part at all myself.」

「Oh.」

At first, Fran reacted with disappointment, but she soon recalled that she'd be going up against a group of adventurers so she managed give a bit of a motivated nod.

「Mmph.」

『Don't smash them too hard, okay?』

「Nn. Will do best.」

Uhh... that's not what I meant...

Fran squeezed down on both her hands in order to express just how motivated she was. It became clear to me that I could no longer do anything for the adventurers she was about to fight but pray for them to have more fortune in their next lives.

「Are you ready?」

「Anytime.」

「Then let's go. I'm pretty sure the brats are currently using our facilities for training's sake.」

Gamud led us to an indoor training ground with a diameter of about 30 meters. Its walls looked pretty thick, you probably wouldn't be able to damage anything outside the room from within unless you really wanted to.

「Gather round, brats!」

「What's good?」

「Good morning!」

「'Sup.」

「Heya!」

I'd only been expecting two or three people, but there turned out to be nine. Their personalities varied greatly. The participants included everything from lazy-looking hoodlums to the super uptight kind that had their backs straight with enthusiasm.

Appraising them allowed me to find out that they were much stronger than I'd been initially expecting. The two strongest two were D rank worthy. One was a level 27 Phantom Swordsman, and the other, a level 26 Flame mage. The rest averaged in at about level 22. Even the weakest, a scout, had managed to make it all the way up to level 20.

「Today's training is going to be sparring.」

The adventurers immediately began to talk amongst themselves the moment Gamud filled them in on what was going on. It seemed the reason for this was more so because they just happened to be a group liked to chat as opposed to anything else.

「Again?」

「Can we fight Forrund instead? I'd like that more.」

「Yeah, I know right? Mr. Gamud's pretty bad at holding back.」

「Oh god dammit! Shut up!」

Gamud's shouted immediately brought silence back to the training ground.

「Alright. Why don't you introduce yourself?」

「Nn. Fran.」

Every single one of the adventurers' gazes shot to Fran as she introduced herself before shifting over to one of the group's shielders.

I didn't understand why they'd bothered until after I appraised him.

Only then did I learn that he, Red, had access to level 7 Appraisal. In other words, they'd looked at him because they themselves weren't capable of gauging Fran's strength. They were had to rely on him to fill them in because they were still too green to guestimate her skill level at a glance.

Unfortunately for them, it was in vain. Fran's real stats were covered up and hidden away. He wouldn't be able to pick up anything more than just the random bullshit we decided it her stat card out with.

Red ended up shrugging his shoulders and making an expression that almost made it seem like he was making fun of Fran. The gesture seemed to be an expression of the fact that the spar they would soon engage in wasn't anything worth noting.

His message led his peers to relax. If I were to guess, I'd say that they probably assumed that they had to fight Fran because she was going to join them.

「She's going to be taking all of you guys on today.」

「...Are you sure?」

One of the group's members responded to Gamud in a questioning tone.

「I am. No need to hold back. Be as rough as you'd like. Are you ready, Fran?」

「Nn.」

Gamud's words led everyone in the group save for the really serious-looking one to start grinning. They appeared to have assumed that Gamud's instructions had been directed at them and not Fran. Chances were, they were thinking that Gamud wanted them to beat Fran up a bit in order to show her that she still had a ways to go.

「Gawts it.」

I had to say, Gamud was a bit of a dick. He'd purposefully made his words easy to misunderstand so that it'd be easier for Fran to shatter their pride.

That said, I did have to admit that most of the adventurers Gamud had gathered were indeed fairly talented. They were only as stuck up as they deserved to be. Still, having Fran kick them down a notch was to their benefit.

「First up'll be Dewfo.」

「You seriously want me to go first?」

「What, did you not want to?」

「Well, I wouldn't say that...」

The first person Gamud had ordered to fight was the highest leveled one, the Phantom Swordsman.

Fran glanced at the guildmaster to double check his intentions, to which he replied with a smile and a wink. Seeing him bat an eyelash filled me with a sense of revulsion, but I still managed to get the message. He wanted us to immediately blow the group right off their feet.

『Don't go too hard on him, you hear?』

(Nn. Won't make unfixable with Greater Heal.)

『Oh god damn it! That's not what I meant!』

Personally, I'd been a bit more on the Middle Heal side of things myself. But unfortunately for Dewfo, Fran had already drawn me and happily started walking towards the battleground's center.

237. The Sparring Begins

Chapter 237. The Sparring Begins

The Sparring Begins

Dewfo, the young but decently leveled Phantom Swordsman, slowly dragged his feet towards the arena. His face relayed an obvious sense of discontent. One could easily tell that he felt that this whole thing was just a waste of time. He didn't understand why he, the strongest of the bunch, had to waste his time fighting a weak little girl.

The guildmaster disregarded his emotions and instead positioned himself between Fran and Dewfo as would any other referee.

「Oh and you're going to have to spar Fran at least twice.」

「Maybe if she lasts that long.」

「Well, how about we just say it depends on how well you guys can handle her?」

Dewfo's only response was to lightly shrug his shoulders.

「I've already got someone to heal anyone that gets hurt, so hurry up and start.」

「Fine, fine. I get it.」

The person Gamud had called in was honestly one I could only possibly describe as someone's aunt. She basically looked like the average middle aged villager. Like, seriously. She was even wearing the overly plain clothes you'd normally expect a villager to have. She pretty much embodied the concept of "Villager A."

Despite that, she was still a capable healer. Appraising her allowed me to realize that there was a stark difference between her appearance and her

capabilities. She was quite strong. In fact, she was stronger than all the adventurers Gamud had asked us to fight.

My eyes were immediately drawn to her level 3 Recovery Magic skill, a clear indication that she was even capable of using Greater Heal.

「Hi, I'm Beth. I used to be a B ranked adventurer, but then retired and got married, so I'm just a housewife now.」

「You say that, but you do still take on the odd request every once in a while.」

「Only 'cause their rewards catch your eye, no doubt.」

「Well, I do have to work hard for those rewards, you know? They really help with our household finances, since my husband's income isn't what you'd call the highest. Ahahaha」

A part of me almost wanted to say that the woman's appearance served as the perfect disguise with which she could camouflage her abilities.

Fran caught onto the fact that she would be able to inflict a good bit of damage without having to worry too much. Her eyes had almost begun gleaming as a result.

「Take your places and bow as per the routine.」 [1]

「Dewfo.」

「Fran.」

「And begin!」

Both fighters took their stances and raised their weapons as Gamud began the match.

Neither budged as they stared each other down. It was as if both fighters wanted to let the other take make the first move. Their actions were the same, but their reasons completely different. Fran had started off by

observing her opponent and deducing the extent of his strength. The conclusion she derived was that Dewfo was much weaker than her and that the battle would end the moment she engaged. Hence, she was allowing him to make the first move.

Dewfo, on the other hand, had placed his trust in the result of Red's appraisal. He was allowing Fran the first move because he thought she was much weaker than him. His state page made him look experienced enough to be able to gauge the strength of an opponent that lay right before his eyes, but he wasn't able to judge Fran regardless. It seemed that his judgement was being clouded because he never so much as even considered the possibility that the young black catkin girl he was facing off against was stronger than him.

Seeing him made me once again affirm that getting and maintaining the wrong impression of one's opponent was a fatal flaw.

「What? Something wrong? Are you not going to attack?」 「Okay to?」

Fran's question was directed towards Gamud, but Dewfo answered because he'd interpreted otherwise.

「It's normally good manners to let the weaker person seize the initiative at times like these.」

His words almost made me break out into laughter.

「Nn?」

『Nah, it's nothing.』

「Okay.」

「The hell are you mumbling around for? Hurry up and come at me so we can get this over with. I need to get back to work, and I don't have all day.」

「But letting weaker attack?」

「Huh?」

「Weaker first. You first.」

Fran's words ended up provoking Dewfo even though she did nothing but state the truth. They pierced right through him and delivered a blow to his pride.

「The hell, brat? You trying to put on airs or something?」

「Put on airs? Is what?」

「It means getting all full of yourself, you damned brat! It's clear that you're doing exactly that, seeing as how you're claiming you're stronger than me!」

「But obvious truth.」

「Why you little...」

It seemed to me that Dewfo was a bit immature. He started acting like a brat the moment he saw Red dismiss Fran's abilities. Thinking about it though, it did make sense. Dewfo was older than Fran, but he was still only 22 years old. He was still technically on the much younger side.

Gamud and Forrund had trained up his abilities, so he was a lot stronger than most of the other adventurers his age, but he probably hadn't really seen the world or faced any sort of real crisis. He was still lacking the experiences he needed to really grow up.

That was likely one of the reasons for which Gamud had asked Fran to knock him down a notch in the first place.

「Oi, hurry it up and just attack her already.」

「Right? Arguing with a her isn't any less disgraceful than not letting her make the first move, so hurry it up!」

「Just show the girl her place already, damn it!」

All the other adventurers began urging Dewfo on. None of them seemed to think that the strongest amongst them would end up losing in personal combat, at least not to Fran.

「Shut the hell up! Why wouldn't I rescind the first move to someone weaker than me!?!」

Despite that, he refused to budge. He simply wouldn't initiate.

『Well, it doesn't look like he'll move until we do, so we might as well just attack.』

(Nn. Got it.)

Fran brandished me and made a declaration before finally initiating.

「Will attack now. Defend.」

「Haah? Let me guess, the one thing you're good at is bluffing.」

「Now.」

「Argh!?!」

As his guard was down, Dewfo wasn't able to respond to Fran's attack at all. One moment, she was standing across from him, the next, she was in his face. A sharp pain shot through his right leg as he fell over.

「Graaaagghhhh!」

『Hmmm... Do you think that might've been a bit too much for a first strike?』

Fran's charge had been a rather slow one. She had purposefully held back in order to make Dewfo take her seriously, but things didn't seem work out the way she intended.

(Hope others take seriously now.)

『Yeah, true. They probably will.』

We'd basically made an example out of Dewfo and used him to inform the other adventurers that they'd end up getting totally smashed unless they took Fran seriously.

(Also rematch.)

『Right. He'll probably take you more seriously next time he has to fight you.』

「Rashid, you're next.」

「Huh? Huuuuh!?!」

「Hurry it up!」

「Y-Yessir!」

Gamud shouted and egged the next sacrifice up onto the stage. The person in question was one of the guys that'd been insulting Dewfo just a few moments prior.

「Named Fran.」

「I-I'm Rashid. W-Wait! Hold on a second!」

Rashid had yet to fully process exactly what'd just happened, but Gamud clearly didn't care, as he immediately signaled for the next match to start.

「Begin!」

「Nn.」

「Gyaaaahh!」

Rashid was forced to retire nearly as quickly as Leopaldon. His right arm was blown off the moment he raised his spear and pointed it in Fran's direction.

Only then did the adventurers truly register that Fran wasn't just some random girl. And so, they once again began to tense up as their companion's screams filled the arena.

—

[1] This is how they do martial arts spars. The two fighters will face each other and more often than not introduce themselves before beginning. In some MA stuff, you say your school(style), etc, during this part of the match.

238. A Scolding From Gamud

Chapter 238. A Scolding From Gamud

A Scolding From Gamud

「Next, Naria.」

「Huah!？」

The third person Gamud picked was the female archer that had joined Rashid in making fun of Dewfo. We used the time she spent approaching to glance over at the man we'd defeated in a matter of moments.

「Oh my, what a beautiful looking cut.」

「God damn, that hurts.」

「Come on, stop struggling. Get a grip already. Aren't you supposed to be a man?」

「Gyaaaah! Stop hitting me damn it...!」

「And now you're just exaggerating. Geez.」

The impression I got from the villager auntie made me feel like she was the type to tell the adventurers that their wounds would heal so long as they just spat on them or something, but that wasn't actually the case. She was doing her job properly and fixing them up with Greater Heal.

Rashid's arm was honestly a pretty terrible sight. Blood was flowing out of it nonstop. The villager auntie, however, remained unphased. She simply did her job and treated the wound with a smile. Her actions truly served to evidence that, despite her appearance, she really did have the heart of a former B ranked adventurer.

Naria turned her head towards Red, as if to ask him to verify the results of his appraisal, to which he responded by shaking his head from left to right.

His expression demonstrated clear surprise. He simply didn't understand why Fran's abilities differ so greatly from what was written on her stat page.

「Named Fran.」

「Uhm...」

「Her name's Naria. Begin!」

「Wait! Shit!」

Despite being confused, Naria managed to leap backwards the moment the match began. It seemed that witnessing Fran demolish both Dewfo and Rashid had been enough to at least push her to action. She raised her bow and attempted to aim it in the Black Lightning Princess' direction, but her attack was flat out rejected before it could even be unleashed.

The distance between the two fighters had already been completely erased.

「Dammit! She's so fast! Gyaah!」

Naria, like Rashid, lost in an instant. She too lost her right arm in a single, momentary engagement.

Next up was a larger man that went by the name Miguel. Unlike his colleagues, he was wearing a rather earnest expression. He was probably the first of the bunch to really take fighting Fran seriously.

He too gazed at Red for verification, but, the appraiser was no longer capable of providing anything more than just a pale-faced nod.

「The name's Miguel.」

「Nn. Fran.」

「And begin!」

「Haaah!」

Though Miguel came at Fran more seriously than the rest of his buddies, his attack still seemed to be lacking in sincerity. He had clearly recognized that Fran had something that prevented Red from seeing her real stats, but he must've still held back because he judged Fran based on the way she looked. To that end, his attack almost seemed to be lacking in power.

It seemed to me that giving both Red and Miguel a good shock was probably what we needed to do to get rid of the adventurers' hesitation.

「Nn!」

「Impossible!」

To that end, Fran raised me and challenged the blow Miguel had delivered with his greatsword head on. She locked blades with her opponent and held me in place without budging regardless of how hard he pushed.

She began pushing back after a brief pause, sending both him flying through the air. He wasn't able to resist her. All he could do was get knocked on his ass.

Neither Miguel nor Red could believe their eyes. They hadn't thought that it'd be possible for her to block the attack head on, let alone overpower Miguel and push him back given the stats that showed up on her page.

Of course, that wasn't all. There was still much more to come.

「Stun bolt.」

「Guaah!」

「That's impossible!」

Seeing Fran cast Lightning Magic caused Red to let loose a surprised shout. The skill didn't show up on Fran's stat page, so, as far as he knew, there was no way it was possible for her to cast it.

「Hah!」

「Garrgghh....」

Fran kicked Miguel; she smashed her leg into his face and sent his paralyzed body tumbling several meters back.

And that was that. Miguel stopped moving altogether. He didn't even twitch. Red, however, rose to his feet. He was stunned, but still managed to squeeze out a question out of his now-dry throat.

「How...?」

「What's the matter, Red?」

Gamud's response came in much clearer a tone than Red's. The situation seemed to have developed the exact way he'd wanted it to.

「T-Tell me, Mr. Gamud. Just who the hell is this brat!?!」

「I'm not sure how you want me to answer.」

「M-My Appraisal skill looks like it's acting up. It's telling me that her level's low, that she can't use magic, and that she's got no strength at all. How the hell is she that strong!?!」

Seeing Red express his confusion caused Gamud to break out into a grin.

「So you don't know who she is?」

「Why would I!?!」

「She's a Black Catkin girl that can cast lightning magic, and one that's strong enough to instantly beat down Dewfo, Rashid, Naria, and Miguel. Do you really have no idea who she is? What about the rest of you? You got any clues at all?」

「...」

Silence.

The only response Gamud got was silence. He'd given them a pretty big hint, so I'd been expecting at least one of them to guess that Fran was the Black Lightning Princess, but it never happened. None of them were capable of answering his question at all.

Realizing that led Gamud to heave a heavy sigh.

「Haah... This is why you guys are still stuck where you are.」

「...」

「You guys started getting cocky the moment you amassed even the slightest bit of strength. You never gather intelligence anymore, and just leave your success up to fate or chance. You rely too much on Appraisal, you don't have the ability to judge just how strong someone is without it. And worst of all, you can't even get yourselves ready for battle even when there's a clear starting signal.」

Gamud immediately began pointing out the flaws shared by the adventurers he'd taken under his wing. The whole reason that he'd bothered with having us join him today was so he could leave a dent in the group's pride, so one could say that it was this precise moment that served as the whole session's climax.

He reintroduced Fran to the adventurers, who's silent expressions betrayed nothing but a sort of awkward displeasure.

「Fran is better known by the nickname, The Black Lightning Princess. She's a C ranker that participated in this year's tourney and won herself a spot on the podium by taking down several A rankers.」

Though Fran's nicknamed failed to ring any bells, the group appeared rather surprised nonetheless. The reason for this seemed to be that they knew just how difficult getting onto the podium was.

「And yes, I'm talking about the exact tournament that you all got kicked from a few years ago. I know for a fact that not a single one of you even made it past the preliminaries.」

「Ehhh!？」

「You have to be kidding me!」

「Right, I do remember hearing a few rumours about something like that happening.」

「Yeah, but isn't she a Black Catkin?」

「I can't believe the lot of you. You would've been able to recognize her immediately if you just gathered intel by talking to a few local merchants.」

The exasperated tone in which Gamud complained led the adventurers to hang their heads in shame. They knew that he was right. They'd gotten themselves totally wrecked because they hadn't bothered keeping up to date on recent events.

「And again, don't rely on Appraisal. Some skills will allow people to either disguise their stats or totally the Appraisal skill its functionality altogether.」

「Fine...」

「Never forget, the world is vast. There's always someone stronger than you somewhere out there. If you're not on...」

Gamud continued to ramble on and on. He didn't stop until the healer lady started to yawn out of sheer boredom.

Personally, I'd found his lecture fairly useful. Most of the stuff he said was obvious, but even the most obvious facts were often overlooked unless they were put into words and clearly expressed. Their current wasn't one that we were unlikely to ever find ourselves in, after all.

The battles we fought in Ulmutt's arena had taught us caution. The lecture covered similar topics, but more so seemed to be centered around the basics of adventuring.

「Whew. Sorry for making you wait.」

「Nn. Fine.」

「I've covered most of what I wanted to cover, but could you keep sparring with them? They could use the experience, especially against someone as strong as you.」

「No problem.」

Fran fearlessly grinned.

The adventurers she was pit against had lost the ability to laugh and jeer the way they had when they were first introduced to her. Their expressions had instead been warped in fear. To them, it must've seemed like they'd been thrown right into the jaws of a beast.

239. Three Versus One

Chapter 239. Three Versus One

Three Versus One

We decided to continue sparring with the adventurers Gamud took under his wing after he finished lecturing them.

However, that didn't go too well. Their moods had hit rock bottom not only because they'd just been scolded, but also because they'd realized that they were no match for Fran.

They weren't able to draw out the full extent of their abilities as a result, so she ended up totally crushing them with one hit each even though she was holding back. It took less than five minutes for her to go through a full cycle.

「You guys are pathetic... Is that really all you've got?」

「Kuh...」

「We're... terribly... sorry!」

Gamud spoke a line to provoke the adventurers into taking action, but they didn't take the bait. Instead, they simply responded with a series of despondent frowns and grimaces.

They knew that they were far too lacking in both strength and experience to beat Fran. That, combined with the fact that she was just a kid, had caused their confidence levels to hit rock bottom.

We'd been hired because Gamud had wanted us to knock the group down a few pegs. Unfortunately, he seemed to have overestimated them, as they'd ended up totally breaking down instead.

Fran threw a quick glance in the guildmaster's direction, as if to ask whether or not there was any point in continuing. We obviously didn't want

to overstress Gamud's disciples. There was a chance that pushing them harder would lead to them either retiring or completely losing all motivation to improve whatsoever.

「Stop?」

She quietly whispered the question to him, as if to prevent anyone else from hearing it.

「Nah, keep going. The only ones that'll break from what you're doing now are the lost causes that never would've made it too far to begin with. They would've either ended up retiring after some sort of slip up or losing their lives in the field.」

Techniques can be honed, and skills can be learned. Dispositions, however, are innate. To be frank, Adventuring isn't the type of career that anyone could pick up and just do. Some people will be better suited to it than others, and that's that.

It was much better to realize that during a training session than out in the field where one's life was at stake. And it was for that reason that I couldn't help but think of Gamud's methods as kind. The adventurers he'd taken under his wing were fairly talented. It was only a matter of time before they'd set out for a dungeon or haunt. It'd be far too late for an adventurer to find out that they'd made the wrong career choice in the midst of an expedition.

「Let's get on with the second round. Dewfo, Naria, Miguel, you're up.」

「...Fine.」

「Oh no...」

「Sure...」

Dewfo and Miguel assented reluctantly as Naria squealed in terror.

「This next battle will be a 3v1. I take it you have no complaints?」

「Nn.」

Though her opponents seemed full of complaints, Fran herself seemed all for it as evidenced by the clear way she'd nodded in response.

「Oh, and how about this? We'll ban Fran from retaliating for a good bit. All you guys need to do for it to count as your win is hit her once.」

I wasn't too happy about Gamud deciding the rules without consulting us, but I ended up dismissing the thought because it'd only ended up serving to pump Fran up all the more. The restrictions seemed to appeal to Fran's more childish side, as they made the spar almost seem more like a sort of game.

Likewise, the adventurers had finally started to show a bit of drive. The three seemed to think that they would be able to land a solid, damaging hit on Fran under the current circumstances, and thus, the three of them engaged in a quick meeting to discuss their plan of attack.

「It looks like you're ready. Good. Begin!」

「Oryaaah!」

The first to attack was Miguel. He charged Fran and attacked with a swing of his greatsword. We immediately realized that the strike was a decoy given its unrefined nature.

Surely enough, Dewfo ended up closing in on us from behind as Miguel closed the gap. Honestly, he wasn't too bad at sneaking around, but it wasn't enough to deceive us. Naria launched an arrow at us right before Dewfo attacked, almost as if to cover for the holes in Miguel's assault.

Her shot was precise, and really served to prove that she was actually quite skilled with the bow. It flew under Miguel's armpit and by his face as he unleashed his strike. Honestly, it was an impressive sneak attack that would've caught any less skilled opponent off guard.

Dewfo's attack was timed in such a way that it arrived at about the exact same time as Naria's arrow. They were working together quite seamlessly, as one would expect from a group whose members partied up on a regular basis.

The Phantom Swordsman's blade seemed to have a sort of skill applied to it, as it seemed to distort in the same way distant objects would on a hot summer day. It seemed that the skill's purpose was to make it more difficult to figure out the precise manner in which his sword was being manipulated, which in turn meant that it gave him a bit of an edge in close quarters combat.

Though Fran's three opponents had coordinated quite well, their attacks had failed to land or even surprise her. The Black Lightning Princess was both capable of detecting presences and detecting movement in the air around her. Thus, she caught the arrow with her bare hands and perfectly dodged both incoming blades. She then leapt out of their newly formed encirclement with ease, an act that caused all three of her foes' faces to twist in frustration.

To be fair, I couldn't really blame them. Fran had dodged their perfectly planned and seemingly unavoidable attack with a brilliant display of agility. The surprise they felt was only natural.

Still, they continued to attack. They kept trying to hit Fran with combos until Gamud finally gave her permission to retaliate, at which point in time she knocked all three out with a series of kicks. Her victory was accompanied by a wave of silence. None of the adventurers that we'd yet to face managed to respond. They all seemed to feel that they wouldn't be able to so much as scratch her regardless of what they did. That, however, didn't mean that they gave up. The spars still happened. Our second 3v1 went pretty much the same way as the first, but the third ended up being a bit more interesting.

Our opponents ended up being Wanda, the flame mage whose level just barely fell short of Dewfo's, Red, the shielder with appraisal, and Liddick, a spear user. Their demeanors were quite different from one another's. Red looked like he'd totally started panicking, Wanda seemed surprisingly

confident, whereas Liddick seemed to be going into this whole thing with a serious, professional attitude. To me, he seemed like the most earnest of the nine fledgelings Gamud had taken under his wing.

One of the things that struck me as the most curious was the source of Wanda's confidence. She hadn't been all that motivated as far as the 1v1 went, so I figured it was probably because she assumed that she, as a mage, would be able to shine much more brightly in a group. Thinking about it, I could kinda see where she was coming from. Though Fran had demonstrated her ability to avoid physical strikes with ease, she hadn't really shown off any of the countermeasures she had for spells.

Her two party members were clearly of the same opinion, as they focused their strategies around leading Fran around in such a way that she'd be easier for Wanda to aim at. Fran noticed, but she took the bait anyways. She moved right into Wanda's line of fire.

「Flare Blast!」

She went all out. The spell she casted was one with enough power to critically injure a C ranker. It could even produce injuries too severe for Greater Heal to fully restore. The nasty grin that decorated her face demonstrated that it was an intentional choice. The attack wasn't as powerful as it was because she had accidentally forgotten to hold back out of desperation, but rather, one she'd launched in order to pay Fran back for all the frustration she'd caused her. It looked like she still needed a bit of discipline and refinement as far as her personality went, but that wasn't something we bothered concerning ourselves with. Educating her was Gamud's job, not ours. All we'd been hired to do was smash what was left of her pride to bits.

「Flare Blast.」

Fran shot off the exact same spell. Her flames collided with Wanda's and resulted in an explosion that perfectly neutralized both attacks.

「That's impossible! Flare Blast!」

「Flare Blast.」

「How...!? Fire Javelin!」

「Fire Javelin.」

「How!? Why!? What!? That's impossible!」

Two magical attacks perfectly cancelling each other out wasn't something that could be considered normal under any circumstance, even if the two in question happened to be instances of the exact same spell. You needed to angle the attacks so they hit each other just the right way while also having a short enough chant speed and enough precise control over one's mana to match the original attack's power before it actually hit. In other words, it was an advanced trick that would typically be considered impractical.

Of course, Fran was hella strong and all that, but any other decently skilled mage would've been able to pull off the exact same feat. The problem lay with Wanda herself. Her chants were long, and she completely failed to hide any traces of her magical energies. The only skill she really had was flame magic. In other words, she was suffering because she relied too much on being a backliner. She was far too used to fighting in an environment crafted for her by her allies.

Wanda ended up falling onto her knees the moment she realized just how far ahead of her Fran really was. She'd completely lost the will to fight.

And so, before long, Fran ended up kicking the third group through the air. We'd assumed that our 12th match would also serve as our last, but Gamud had other ideas in store. He wanted us to take on all nine of his disciples at once. He clearly wanted to make sure we thoroughly broke their spirits.

Fran didn't have any reason to refuse, so she ended up going along with it. The rules were the same as they'd been for the 3v1. Fran wasn't allowed to attack right off the bat, and it would be considered her loss so long as she was hit even just once.

They didn't end up managing to match her. She led them around for about 10 minutes before finally showing them a glimpse of what she could really do by wiping them all out in one go.

Specifically, she'd ended them with a fire spell with a large area of effect. Gamud had ended up getting hit too, but he almost seemed to enjoy it as he would a cool breeze. We'd purposefully held back, so it didn't really do that much damage. In fact, I was pretty sure that even the nine we were up against could've withstood it so long as they just grit their teeth and endured instead of screaming and letting themselves get blown away.

240. The Sparring Ends

Chapter 240. The Sparring Ends

The Sparring Ends

「Those were some pretty decent matches. Thanks.」

「Nn.」

「That should fix their attitude problems. Now all I have to do is hope they can pull themselves together.」

Gamud heaved a heavy sigh as he looked over the nine adventurers we'd just knocked out. Honestly, their skills weren't all that bad. They'd probably be able to grow much stronger so long as they gained a bit more mental fortitude.

「And these idiots thought they'd be good enough to make their way all the way to a haunt's deepest depths. Can you believe it?」

「Haunt? Crystal Cage?」

「That's the one. You been there before?」

「Nn. Went to midsection.」

「So even you only went that far?」

The place Fran was referring to as the Crystal Cage was the one place we'd gone in search of meat for the cooking contest's sake. It was also the place in which we first saw Forrund. I still remember it quite well because we witnessed him totally wreck a thunderbird, a B ranked magic beast. Admittedly, the only reason I still remembered seeing him do that was because it'd freaked me out a bit.

「Want to go to depths? Not midsection?」

「Yeah. Anyone can visit the midsection whenever, but you aren't supposed to go there or into any of the even deeper areas without getting permission first. There isn't anyone keeping watch, so the rule isn't enforced, but it's still important. I mean, it was only made in the first place 'cause it was supposed to protect people and keep 'em away. Most of the people who break the rule end up dead.」

The Crystal Cage was a bit of a weird place in the sense that there was a pretty big disparity in the ranks of the magic beasts you could find there. It only made sense for the guild to tell adventurers to stay the hell out of places they weren't strong enough to be in.

「The risk isn't the only thing that goes up as you head deeper into the haunt. The rewards you reap do too. That's why people tend to break the rule and go deeper than they should.」

Successfully defeating the magic beasts within the haunt's deeper parts would net good rewards. Likewise, going deeper would also increase your chances of finding rare materials and herbs.

「Apparently, these brats have successfully hunted magic beasts in the midsection a couple times already.」

That sounded right to me. They did seem just about strong enough to pull it off.

「They were lucky enough not run into anything particularly nasty, so they managed to get out safe and sound. It's why they started going on and on about wanting permission to visit the depths. The depths are a bit difference 'cause they're blocked off by a magic barrier. You can't enter or leave unless you're given permission ahead of time.」

「Oh.」

「The reason they want to go to the depths is 'cause there's a place you can mine some pretty decent ores around there. They want to make use them so they can get themselves some new equipment.」

「Don't want to fight?」

「Yeah. They seem to be confident they'll be fine so long as they run away from everything that attacks them.」

Gamud's disciples were cocky, but they understood that there was no way they'd be able to defeat a B ranked magic beast. That said, I wasn't all that sure they'd be able to get away from one either. The thunderbird we saw was really fast. I felt that there was a chance even we would have trouble getting away from one unless we teleported around. There was also a good chance they'd be intercepted by other magic beasts as they ran. Letting them go was effectively the same thing as letting them march to their deaths.

That was probably precisely why Gamud had asked us to shatter their pride. He wanted to stop them before they did something really stupid.

「Thunderbird. Can't run.」

「They probably wouldn't be able to get away from a flock of storm eagles either.」

「Also darkness wolves. Like Urushi.」

「Oh yeah, that reminds me. You had a darkness wolf for a familiar, didn't you? Whatever happened to it?」

「Sleeping in shadow.」

Urushi didn't show any interest in the spars because he knew he wouldn't be able to participate. As a result, he ended up sleeping in Fran's shadow all morning.

「Right... Actually, that gives me a bit of an idea...」

Gamud had his nine disciplines line up side by side after they regained consciousness.

「Well? You finally understand how weak you all are now?」

They turned their gazes downwards in response to the guildmaster's question. It didn't seem like they'd been too willing to accept their own deficiencies. Rather, they'd instead painted Fran as some sort of incredibly talented genius and came to the conclusion that it was only natural for her to be better than them. In other words, Gamud had failed to achieve his goal, an issue that he himself had also come to realize.

「...Alright, we're going to be doing just one more spar.」

「Ugh...」

「Again...?」

「Oh come on! Give me a break already!」

「Shut yer traps and listen goddamit! This last battle'll be different from all the others. Fran, if you could.」

「Nn. Urushi, out.」

「Woof!」

Urushi rose out of Fran's shadow before going from his dog-like form to his usual larger one. It was quite the intimidating act to watch.

「This is Urushi, Fran's familiar. He's a C ranked darkness wolf, the kind you're prone to running into around the Crystal Cage's midsection.」

Gamud's words amounted to nothing but total dog shit. The only part of it that was true was that darkness wolves were C ranked threats. Urushi, however, was different. He not only had a unique skill, but had also gotten a lot stronger because he'd trained with us. It honestly wouldn't be a stretch to say he was pretty much on the verge of being a B ranked threat instead. He was much stronger than any of the magic beasts one would find in the Crystal Cage's midsection.

Red, however, didn't know that. Hence, he ended up informing his comrades that Gamud was indeed telling the truth because his Appraisal skill had told him that Urushi was indeed a darkness wolf.

「I'll let you guys enter the Crystal Cage's depths if you can prove to me that you can escape from Urushi.」

「Really!?!」

「You have my word, and as a man, I'm rather inclined to keep it.」

The current circumstance was the conclusion Gamud had come to after discussing his idea with us. The rules were as follows: the adventurers were to gather in the training ground's center while Urushi stood by near one the wall opposite the entrance. If at least five adventurers managed to escape him, then they would be considered the victors. However, they would lose in the case that Urushi managed to take down that same number.

Not everyone needed to escape because Gamud had determined that they only needed five members to be able to make it back to the haunt's entrance in one piece.

Hearing the conditions laid out for them caused the adventurers' expressions to brighten. They seemed to think that the conditions were in their favour, and that they'd finally have permission to explore the Crystal Cage's depths.

They quickly agreed, and so, they they joined Urushi in a game of tag.

「Run!」

「Uryaaah!」

「It's all up to you!」

The faster adventurers immediately darted towards the gate while Miguel, the greatsword user, and three others attempted to engage Urushi in combat in order to pin him down.

In other words, their plan had been to abandon four of their members right off the bat. Most notable of the bunch that'd been left behind was Wanda, who'd let loose a Fire Arrow in Urushi's direction.

For a moment, it almost seemed like they'd won. The escapees had made almost made it to the gate, and Urushi hadn't budged. But that all changed when he finally decided to move. He disregarded almost all the attacks that came at him; they bounced right off his fur without inflicting even the slightest bit of harm. The only one he bothered responding to was the Fire Arrow, which he swatted out of the air with a paw before breaking into a howl.

「Awoooooo!」

Fear appeared all over the adventurers' faces. Their limbs froze in place, as if they'd been petrified. Urushi's howl was an application of the Howl, Fear, and Darkness Magic skills. The combination of the three abilities gave his cry the effect of terrifying any lower leveled foes.

「Woof.」

The next thing the wolf did was use Shadow Slip to teleport while the party of nine was still frozen in a mix of fear and awe. His destination was obviously the door; he sealed off their escape.

He hit the five closest adventurers with his paws and dark spells as lightly as he could in order to send them flying back towards the room's center.

His foes failed to realize that he'd been holding back, and as a result, interpreted his weakened attacks as a sign that he didn't have much offensive ability. Hence, they decided to work together and attack him all at once. They chose defeating him over yielding.

「Shit!」

「One more time!」

They continued pressing on in an attempt to beat him down, but to no avail. All their physical attacks bounced off their fur. Likewise, their spells didn't end up having any effect either. He tore right through them with his fangs. They were able to put a little bit of damage on him from time to time, but he would heal it all off with Regeneration before he took any more.

But again, they didn't let up. They knew they had to get him away from the door, so they ended up coming up with a strategy. That is, they once again split into the same two groups as before, with Miguel's once again functioning as a decoy. Their intentions were obvious, and Urushi knew that he would eventually win so long as he just sat still by the doorway. Still, he decided to take the bait. He understood that the group wouldn't get much out of training with him unless he played along.

Dewfo's group took the opportunity to move towards the exit while avoiding Miguel's. They'd even stuffed their ears with cloth this time around so Urushi wouldn't be able to catch them twice with the same trick. Their faces were decorated with triumphant smiles. They thought they'd finally won.

All they needed to do was step out the door while Urushi beat down Miguel.

But they failed.

They failed to grasp the extent of Urushi's abilities.

「Growl!」

The wolf's Darkness Magic allowed him to knock all four decoys out in an instant; they hadn't even been able to buy the escaping party a full second. Though Dewfo's group was very clearly intimidated by the ease with which Urushi had defeated their allies, they didn't falter. Victory was right before their eyes.

Too bad for them, it simply wasn't meant to be.

Urushi spun around and immediately chased down the party on the verge of escape. He zoomed right past them and once again blocked off the room's exit.

「T-That's ridiculous...!」

「Why is it so fast!?!」

All five remaining adventurers realized that there was no way they could actually outrun Urushi, so they tried to take him down with one last desperate struggle — to no avail.

The first and second were hit by Urushi's front paws. One ended up crashed into a wall after flying a full 10 meters. The other was knocked onto the ground. He tackled the third, swatted the fourth with his tail, and used Darkness Magic to half-kill Dewfo, the fifth and final adventurer.

Less than 30 seconds had passed since he overtook them, but they'd already all been rendered incapable of combat. There was no doubt that they would've died had this not been just a spar.

「And the winner is Urushi!」

「Awwooooooooo!」

Urushi let loose a spirited howl. It'd been a while since he'd been allowed to get a bit rowdy, so he was quite content with what'd just happened.

「And that's it for today. 'Course this time, I actually mean it.」

The adventurers managed to regain their consciousnesses, but they seemed quite exhausted. Urushi was a magic beast, so losing to him had felt much more impactful, as it made them feel like they actually could've lost their lives.

We did all we could. The only other thing we could possibly do was hope that Gamud's disciples actually ended up learning the lesson their instructor had wanted to teach them.

241. In Search of A Ship

Chapter 241. In Search of A Ship

In Search of A Ship

Gamud led Fran back up to his office in order to give his disciples a bit of time to cool down.

「Thanks for today, you were a great help. Sorry it ended up taking so long.」

「Not problem. Also learned.」

「Did you really?」

「Nn. Thank you very much.」

Fran bowed to Gamud in an expression of gratitude.

At a glance, it seemed that Gamud had only made the request because he wanted us to beat down his disciples in order to curb the extent of their arrogance, but it was actually more than just that. He wanted Fran to learn a similar lesson. It was as if he was indirectly telling her that he didn't want to see her get conceited. He wanted to make sure she was aware that there were stronger fighters out there, and that she would die if she didn't remain aware of her own limits.

She picked up on his intentions even though I hadn't mentioned them to her, hence why she chose to respectfully thank him.

「I dunno why you're thanking me. You were the one that helped me out, after all.」

The guildmaster turned his face away from her out of embarrassment, an act that essentially verified his intentions.

「Nn. Still wanted to thank.」

「...You're still young. You've got plenty of time to grow, so don't push yourself too hard, you hear?」

「Got it.」

Fran thanked Gamud one last time and accepted the request's payout before finally turning heel and leaving the Adventurers' Guild.

『Alright. It's finally time for us to find ourselves a ship.』

「Nn. Search immediately.」

「Woof!」

『You two sure seem pumped. Something happen?』

「Tonight, curry. Io.」

「Woof.」

「Can't be late. No matter what.」

「Ruff.」

Fran and Urushi looked at each other and nodded in perfect sync. It was almost as if their appetites had somehow allowed them to communicate while forgoing the need for words altogether.

They were motivated for all the wrong reasons, but I didn't really mind so long as their attitudes would help us find a ship sooner rather than later. That said, I didn't want us boarding anything too sketchy. We could always come back tomorrow if we didn't manage to find anything decent by dinnertime.

「To harbour.」

『I hope we'll actually be able to find something with the Beastkin Country's crest on it.』

Finding one would make things more convenient because the Beast Lord had given us that one thing, but honestly, it didn't matter too much. It seemed that Fran, or rather, the Black Lightning Princess, had become famous enough even in Barbra for us to get ourselves an escort job with ease.

I was more so concerned as to whether or not there would be any ships headed towards our destinations in the first place, and how big they were if they did actually exist.

Personally, I was hoping to board a larger ship, preferably something on the scale of an ocean liner. I wasn't really all that confident in a smaller ship's ability to make it all the way over to another continent.

While size was important, it wasn't the only thing we had to take into consideration. We also had to consider the crew's attitude. The Black Cat Tribe was apparently no longer being looked down upon by the country itself, but that didn't necessarily mean that all its citizens felt the same way. There wasn't really much of a point in boarding a ship whose crew consisted mainly of people that discriminated against Fran and her people. The captain's attitude was of particular importance, as it would dictate the manner in which his crew operated.

「Nom nom. That ship?」

「Nom. Woof. Nom.」

Fran and Urushi were both fully aware that they were going to have curry for dinner tonight, but they still ended up choosing to chow down on a couple curry flavoured skewers as they looked around for a ship.

「Look.」

『Did you happen to see a really nice looking ship or something?』

「That. Looks tasty.」

『Oh. That's what you meant.』

The catgirl slowly drifted towards a nearby stall, seemingly attracted by its scent. The dish being sold had quite the interesting appearance to it. They folded up a bunch of dough in a conical shape before slapping something that kinda looked like Qeema Curry with all its liquid drained on top. It was kinda like an ice cream cone, but made with curry instead.

Both my companions happily shoved the stuff down their throats instead of actively looking around. It kinda seemed like I would have to take care of all the actual searching.

We spent a bit more time in the port's general vicinity as the two gluttons I was accompanying went around buying and eating whatever they pleased. During that time, I managed to spot two different ships with the Beastkin's Country's crest, but I didn't particularly want to board either of them.

My reasons were as follows: the first ship seemed worn down and belonged to a really small company hoping to profit from international trade. All the crew members were relatively low level, and the same went for their sailing-related skills. I didn't feel like it was safe to board, in fact, I was more or less convinced that it was going to sink. The second ship was in much better shape, it looked prim and proper. The same, however, couldn't be said for its crew. They couldn't be called decent regardless of how you looked at them. They weren't really pirates just yet, but they were definitely getting there. We couldn't trust them. Boarding their ship was clearly a terrible idea.

As we hadn't found anything, we ended up wandering around the port for a bit longer, at which point in time we were greeted by a male merchant.

「Hey there!」

「Nn?」

「Are you maybe looking to escort a ship?」

「How can tell?」

Though we were on guard at first, we soon came to understand that our goal was fairly obvious to the average bystander. Most immediately recognized Fran as the Black Lightning Princess because she happened to be a young Black Catkin girl with a wolf at her side. In other words, they recognized her as an adventurer instead of just your everyday average girl.

She'd very obviously been looking at the ships that happened to be around, so the merchant had put two and two together and came to the conclusion that Fran needed to cross the sea. It was fairly typical for adventurers to take on escort missions in order to hitch rides, after all.

「That's why I approached you. What do you think about escorting my ship?」

Hiring an adventurer as strong as the Black Lightning Princess would not only secure the man's cargo, but also allow him to promote himself as a prestigious merchant. He sweetened up the deal by not only offering us a ride, but also a pretty decent reward along with it.

Though the offer was quite promising, we couldn't take it without first sorting out a few facts.

「Destination?」

「We were planning to set sail for the continent of Reddina.」

「Can't.」

The merchant looked quite disappointed, but ended up backing off shortly after Fran shook her head. I'd expected him to be a bit more persistent, but it seemed he was the type that knew that getting on Fran's bad side wasn't that great of an idea.

He wasn't the only merchant to speak to us. A few more tried asking us the same thing, but unfortunately, none of them were headed to Chrom, the continent in which the Beastkin's Country was located. Still, we kept looking around and didn't give up. In the end, it took us about three hours looking to finally find a ship whose destination was in line with our own.

I didn't know too much about ships myself, but, the bit of knowledge I'd managed to pick up from a certain pirate-themed manga told me that the ship in question was probably a galleon. It had five masts, and was definitely one of the biggest ships moored at the harbour. It even had a Beastkin's Country's crest on it, namely one decorated with a crown, meaning it was a ship that worked directly under the royal family. The sailors on board seemed disciplined, but lively nonetheless, as laughter often boomed from atop the ship's deck — a sign that the environment they worked in was at least decent. In other words, both the ship and its crew seemed like the kind we could put our faith in. Moreover, they would probably accomodate us if they could because we had Royce's ID card on hand, so I decided to try asking to see if they could let us on board.

『Hey Fran, how about checking that ship out?』

「Nn. Got it.」

242. Boarding Decision Made

Chapter 242. Boarding Decision Made

Boarding Decision Made

We began moving towards the ship we had our eyes on, the massive galleon with the Beastkin's Country's crest on it. Its size made it seem like the type that wouldn't have too much trouble crossing the ocean.

『Hmmm... We're probably going to need to talk to the captain. What do you think we'll need to do to get ourselves a meeting with him?』

「Call out to crew?」

『That's definitely an option, but I'm not really sure if the crew'll know anything about you...』

The crew's members weren't merchants or adventurers, but sailors. They spent most of their time at sea, so I highly doubted they'd know much about Fran at all. That in turn meant they probably wouldn't be willing to call for the captain just because she, some random little girl, told them she wanted to meet him.

There was no guarantee they'd actually know the ID Fran had was the real thing either. They could easily call it a fake and dismiss us. The captain, on the other hand, probably had the ability to actually discern that it was genuine.

『What do you think of sitting around until we see someone that looks like they might be a bit higher on the corporate ladder and then just calling out to them?』

「Nn... Will call now.」

『Whatever works for you works for me.』

Fran's method was straight forward, but it still did work, especially seeing as how there wasn't really a need for us to go into this thing with a plan in the first place. More importantly, Fran wanted to get this done and over with as soon as possible. She really didn't want to be late for dinner.

「Going.」

「Woof!」

The sailors seemed to be in a meeting of sorts, but both Fran and Urushi ran up to them and attempted to get their attention regardless.

「Hey.」

「H-Hi there. Did you n—」

「What's u—」

The sailors had responded to Fran in a light-hearted fashion, but ended up immediately stopping and freezing up when they caught sight of Urushi. They then immediately began looking back and forth between the two without continuing what they were saying earlier.

Both their faces were clearly decorated with expression of shock. Fran didn't really pay them any mind, and instead, moved onto asking for their boss.

「Adventurer, named Fran. Want to talk to captain.」

I felt like she could've been a bit more careful with how she introduced herself. I honestly wouldn't be surprised if they turned her away because of her poor mannerisms.

But much to my surprise, they ended up doing the exact opposite.

「A-Alright! Give us just a second!」

「I-I'll go grab the captain!」

A part of me felt like they probably recognized Fran.

「Y-You said your name was Fran?」

「Nn.」

「A-Are you perhaps the Black Lightning Princess? The one everyone's been talking about lately?」

My suspicions were on point. They really did know exactly who Fran was.

「Yup.」

「S-s-s-seriously!? Wait, I could've sworn the rumours said the Black Lightning Princess had evolved...」

The sailor's words reminded me that Beastkin were able to discern whether or not another Beastkin had evolved. It was a function that clearly worked even amongst different tribes given that Fran was able to discern that both Aurel and the Beast Lord had evolved.

Fran, however, had the Evolution Concealment skill, meaning other Beastkin wouldn't be able to tell whether she was just a Black Catkin or actually something more. Hence, the sailor must've felt confused by the discrepancy between what he saw and what the rumours had told him.

There wasn't really much of a point in Fran explaining her circumstances, so she decided ask her a question of her own in order to move the conversation forward.

「Evolved Black Catkin. Never seen before?」

「I-I'm from the Beastkin's Country and I meet a lot of beastkin because of my line of work, but I can't say I have.」

It seemed that Fran really was the only evolved Black Catkin out there, which did make sense in its own right. One would need to kill either 1000 Evil Beings or a single A ranked Evil Being in order to undo the curse. It

was very unlikely that anyone would end up accidentally fulfilling either of the two conditions.

And honestly, the second way of undoing the curse was basically just there for decoration. The only way for an unevolved Black Catkin to solo an A ranked Evil Being was to have a miraculous stroke of luck.

The other condition, hunting down 1000 Evil Beings a piece, was the much more likely of the two to achieve. There was a chance that the other Black Catkin could eventually evolve if we spread the former of the two conditions far and wide. The stronger ones could even find themselves evolving into Black Heavenly Tigerkin.

It'd be possible to defeat an S ranked Evil Being and undo the curse that affected the entire species so long as enough Black Heavenly Tigerkin came to be. There was definitely a chance for the Black Cat Tribe to remove its curse.

Having the entire race hunt down Evil Beings was something that benefited the gods. The whole point of the curse was to make the Black Cat Tribe repent through their many battles to begin with, but the Beast Lords of old had disallowed it.

Fortunately, the current Beast Lord was nothing like his predecessors. The situation would probably change for the better once he started disseminating information regarding the Black Cat Tribe's current evolutionary conditions. Of course, we couldn't leave it all up to him. We too had to make sure we spread the word once we reached the Beastkin's Country.

The sailor that'd left brought over a important looking man as I continued to contemplate the Black Cat Tribe's situation. His massive frame, which spanned a large area both horizontally and vertically, was decked to hell and back with huge burly muscles.

He was wearing a captain's hat atop his head, specifically the kind you'd typically expect a pirate ship's captain to have. The only difference between

his hat and a real pirate's was that the skull had been swapped out for a crown bearing version of the Beastkin's Country's crest.

「Oh? Are you perhaps the Black Lightning Princess?」

「Nn.」

「I see, I see. I've heard quite a bit about you from all the merchants passing through the city.」

He started off with a rather grim expression, but he quickly replaced it with a friendly smile after seeing Fran nod in response to his words.

「So what'd you need me for?」

「Nn. Looking for ship. Going to Beastkin's Country.」

「Were you wanting to board our ship as a guard for the trip's duration?」

「Nn.」

「Hahaha! Great, looks like we've got ourselves one hell of a reliable escort then.」

「Okay to board?」

「'Course it is. I can tell just by looking at you that you're one damned strong fighter.」

The captain seemed to be quite decent in combat himself seeing as how he was able to discern that Fran was strong with just a glance.

With all the pleasantries out of the way, we decided to show him the emblem we'd gotten from Royce.

「Huh. You've even got one of His Majesty's IDs...?」

「Genuine.」

「I'd assume so, seeing as how you're the Black Lightning Princess, but I'll have to run it by to check if it's actually real a bit later on.」

「Nn.」

「The Adventurers' Guild will get mad at us if we don't make sure the request goes through them, so we're probably going to have to get that handled. You mind tagging along?」

It seemed the captain couldn't actually employ us on the spot, but he was more or less willing to do the equivalent. Having the guild handle the request was also beneficial to him in the sense that it'd allow him to verify Fran's identity.

「Don't mind.」

It also seemed like he was planning to hire a few other adventurers as well just so he could have more hands in the case of an emergency. We didn't really see any problems with it, so we accompanied the captain to the guild and accepted the request the moment it was done being processed.

「Leaving when?」

「We should be setting sail in three days if all goes well.」

He wasn't too sure about the precise date because it could change based on magic beast sightings and the weather. Storms in particular tended to be a major source of delay.

「Got it. Will go to ship in 3 days.」

「Sounds good to me. It's good to be working with you.」

「Nn. Same.」

Fran and the captain exchanged a shake of hands before going their separate ways. We probably wouldn't see him again for another three days. That said, I was already looking forward to boarding that huge ass ship of his.

243. The Orphanage's Current State

Chapter 243. The Orphanage's Current State

The Orphanage's Current State

「Nom nom nom nom nom!」

「Om nom om nom nom!」

「You two sure are digging in.」

「Wow Fran! You're so awesome!」

「Yeah! Look at Urushi! He's super amazing too!」

We were currently at the orphanage, where Urushi and Fran were both rapidly tucking Io's curry away. They were eating so vigorously that I was starting to worry whether they'd give themselves stomachaches.

I was also concerned as to whether or not it was okay for them to eat as much as they were given that they were at an orphanage. Fortunately, Io didn't really seem to mind. In fact, seeing them eat the way they were had caused her to break into a smile.

「I've made a whole lot, so eat all you'd like.」

「Nn! More.」

「Woof woof!」

「How large a serving would you like?」

「Huge.」

「Roof」

In the end, the pair ended up eating five super large servings apiece, to which the children reacted with both admiration and a bit of resentment. It

seemed like they'd probably be able to have curry the next morning so long as Fran and Urushi didn't eat it all.

Some of the kids had actually cared much less about that, and much more about how much Fran could actually eat. Though they seemed a bit less attached to the curry itself, a fair portion of them still ended up gazing at her a bit reproachfully because their incorrect predictions had caused them to gamble away a part of their breakfast.

I figured it'd probably be a good idea for us to pay Io back later for all the food we ate. The orphanage was definitely much better off than it'd been before, but it was still an orphanage nonetheless.

「Thanks.」

「Ruff.」

「No, thank you. I'm glad you enjoyed it as much as you did.」

「Nn. Tasty.」

Fran patted her now swollen stomach a few times to express just how content she felt. The curry Io made was clearly ridiculously delicious, so much that she almost seemed a bit envious of the fact that she couldn't have it on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, it wasn't something I was capable of imitating. Io was running an orphanage, so she obviously hadn't used any super expensive spices. She was only really using the standard kinda stuff, meaning the curry she made was only as delicious as it was because of her abilities as a chef. I would've been able to mimic her variation of the dish had I watched her throughout the entire preparatory process, but I hadn't.

The children had already finished their meals, and didn't have much of a reason to stick around, so they went off to play. The only people left in the cafeteria were Fran, Urushi and Io.

「Leaving now.」

Fran stood up and got ready to go as she stroked her stomach.

「Already? You should really take it easy and stay around for a while. I'll even make you some tea if you do.」

「Io-made tea?」

「Mhm. I can even get you some snacks with it if you'd like, though unfortunately, all we have is baked sweets.」

「Yes please.」

Fran had been presented a chance to have herself some Io-brand tea alongside some Io-brand tea time snacks, a chance her more glutinous side simply refused to miss.

Driven by her appetite, she sat herself back in the chair with a series of graceful, flowing movements. Likewise, Urushi, who shared her dietary interests, also positioned himself in a chair while clearing his expression of all but composure.

「Don't worry Urushi, I'll make sure you get your share too.」

「Woof!」

The baked sweets Io made were quite simple. They only contained sugar, flour, and eggs, but a simple glance at the way Fran and Urushi reacted to tasting them made it quite apparent that they were delicious regardless. The same went for the tea even though the leaves used to brew it were considered rather cheap. Both gluttons enjoyed the experience so much that they ended up wearing expressions of bliss throughout the culinary experience.

Io watched over the two with a smile basically the whole way through. More specifically, she waited for Fran to finish draining her tea before addressing her in a much more serious tone than usual.

「Thank you very much.」

Her expression turned serious as she bowed as she spoke a few words of appreciation.

「Nn?」

「I admit I splurged a bit for today's sake since I knew you were coming, but it was well worth it. Your actions have brought genuine smiles to the children's' faces. They've just been overflowing with joy ever since you reached out and offered us your help.」

Fran stayed silent and listened as Io continued to speak.

「We, the children and I, used to spend our days with the constant fear that we wouldn't have enough to eat. The children still used to smile, but not the pure, carefree way they do now.」

They never knew when the orphanage would end up having to shut down, so it only made sense for them never to really have peace of mind. Children had the tendency to be naive, but that didn't mean they were stupid. The building they lived in was more or less decrepit, they only had very little to eat, and they'd even been bothered by a loan shark every once in a while. The signs were all there, and they were more than obvious enough to tell the children that the orphanage wasn't doing too well.

All the adults involved would always try their best to hide their financial troubles from the children. This would stress them and cause the children to notice their displeasure, which in turn stressed the children out, which of course only lead to the adults redoubling their efforts. It was a vicious cycle with no end in sight.

「Thank you very much for allowing the children to smile again.」

「Helped by Amanda. Not me.」

「You're right. Amanda was the one that helped us out of our conundrum, but that was something she'd only done because of you. She would've never had the opportunity to help us if not for you informing her of our plight. Thank you, thank you so much.」

Io pushed herself into an even deeper bow, as if to demonstrate that she couldn't thank Fran enough for what she'd done.

And so, an hour flew right by.

Things ended up getting a bit awkward after Io finished apologizing, seemingly because both parties were feeling a bit embarrassed. The two had been on pretty good terms to begin with, so they managed to drive the discomfort out of the air around them and get back to engaging in conversation.

「Leaving now.」

「I'm sorry I kept you for so long.」

「No problem.」

Io escorted us all the way over to the orphanage's entranceway. We tried to offer her some cash given all we'd eaten, but she ended up stubbornly refusing any form of payment. She insisted that she'd only fed us as a way of expressing her thanks, and that there was no way she could charge us for it.

(Master, what do?)

In the end, we ended up holding onto the money we'd planned on giving her. I figured it would be rude to force her to take it after all she'd said, and that she'd actually be much happier not accepting it.

Speaking of happiness, Fran seemed to be in a great mood. She'd even hummed a rare tune as we made our way back to the inn.

『Was the curry she made really that tasty?』

「Nn!」

Oh god damn it. I'm going to have to try really hard not to let her best me.

「Besides.」

『Besides what?』

「Seemed happy. Both Io and orphans.」

『That they did.』

「Nn. Glad.」

To Fran, the orphans under Io's care weren't just strangers. They were people whose situation paralleled her own. She too had lost her parents at a young age, so, she must've empathized with them. Seeing them happy had tugged at her emotions and filled her with a wholehearted sense of joy.

『Yeah, I guess you're right. I'm also glad everything ended up working out in their favour.』

「Nn.」

244. Aboard a Ship

Chapter 244. Aboard a Ship

Aboard a Ship

Fran, Urushi and I spent the three days leading up to our ship ride walking around the city, eating, and just lazing around. The rare bit of downtime served to function as a decent break from all the action we normally threw ourselves right into.

We actually ended up visiting the orphanage a second time. Our timing had been a bit off, so Fran and Urushi didn't end up catching themselves a meal, but they did manage to get themselves a cup of tea and couple baked sweets, which, for our purposes, was more than enough. The whole reason we'd visited was so we could give them a bunch of stuff, and use their hospitality as just cause for doing so. Of course, we made sure to give them more than enough stuff to also make up for all the curry Fran and Urushi had consumed. I figured they probably wouldn't be all that comfortable with us giving them money, so we ended up giving them ingredients instead. More specifically, we handed off a bunch of flour, some sugar, and several different kinds of spices.

Though lazing around was nice and all, we were still rather keen on actually going places. To that end, we set out early in the morning on the day we were scheduled to leave and immediately headed in the ship's direction.

『Looks like we're finally taking our first step towards the Beastkin's Country.』

「Nn. Can't wait.」

『I'm pretty sure we can do a much better job at guarding the ship this time around than we did the last. That said, don't forget to enjoy the ride.』

「Can't wait. Tough foes.」

We'd gotten a lot stronger since our last boat trip. I was pretty sure we'd be able to handle anything that came at us with ease, save for maybe the Mydgard Wurm.

When we arrived at the ship, we saw the captain talking to a group of people that seemed to belong to some sort of government office. I wasn't really sure exactly what he was talking about, but he wrapped things up and began calling out to Fran when he noticed her.

「Hey Black Lightning Princess. I think I forgot to introduce myself last time. The name's Jerome, captain of the HSS Algieba.」

「Nn. C ranked adventurer. Fran.」

The pair exchanged a handshake. They almost seemed to be on the same wavelength or something, as the act caused both to smile. It was a rare moment for Fran, who typically really didn't care for appearances.

「Hey, you! Get over here. Show Fran to my first mate and have him introduce himself.」

「Yessir.」

「I'm stuck doing a bunch of stuff so I can get us ready to sail, so my second in command'll fill you in on all you need to know.」

It turned out that the people Jerome had been speaking to belonged to the Ministry of the Port. He needed to work through a few details with them before the ship could actually depart from the harbour. The government officials more or less functioned as sea traffic control. They were making sure people worked on a schedule and only departed when it was their turn to leave. Likewise, they also made sure each ship was assigned a priority so that any lower priority ships would yield in the case of a schedule conflict. Their function was near identical to the sea-traffic control stations you'd see back on Earth.

The world I was currently living in definitely was a totally different world, but its port-related rules were quite similar. I honestly wasn't surprised,

rules were needed no matter where you were, and the ones that both worlds had chosen were not only functional but also rather easy to implement. Ships like the Algeiba only emphasized the need for regulation all the more. Allowing large ships to leave whenever they wanted would lead to a whole slew of issues.

「Should be over here.」

「Nn.」

One testament to the ship's sheer size was the 100 odd step staircase we needed to climb to get up to its deck from the harbour.

A large group of sailors were working the day away atop the ship's massive deck. The one that was supposed to be guiding us walked past most of them and approached a man that seemed to be supervising everyone else's work.

「Vice Captain!」

「What? Oh, I'm guessing that's the last escort?」

「Yessir. Her name's Fran.」

「C ranked adventurer. Fran. Accepted escort mission.」

「Me, I'm Buphett, the captain's first mate.」

Unlike the captain, the first mate didn't really seem like much of a fighter. He was tall, lanky, and to be frank, seemed a bit frail overall. Appraising him allowed me to confirm that he was the type that stayed out of battles. Both his combat related skills, Bow Arts and Spear Arts, were still at level one. To compensate, he had high levels in Commerce, Way of the Word, Arithmetic, and Observation. In other words, he was great at everything he needed to be proficient in to qualify him as the ship's second in command.

Though his skills did draw my attention, I found myself much more interested in his race than anything else. He was apparently a sort of goatkin, so I couldn't help but suspect that he would end up eating the documents he was supposed to fill out.

「I've heard plenty a rumour about you, but honestly, it's a bit hard for me to believe that the Black Lightning Princess everyone's been talking about is still just a little girl. I thought I might change my mind after seeing you, but...」

「The captain says she's legit though.」

「Nn. Genuine.」

「Sorry if I offended you. I was just trying to say that it's really hard for an everyday civilian like me to tell that you're really strong. To be frank, you look just like every other beginner to me.」

「Not offended. Used to already.」

「Hahaha, good to hear. I guess I should probably have you meet the other adventurers we hired. I hope you guys'll be able to get along.」

「Will be careful.」

「Please do. Give me just a second to have them all brought over.」

Buphett ordered several of his subordinates to go fetch the other adventurers. It seemed that they were all already here, and that we were in fact the last to arrive.

「Total, how many?」

「We hired a total of 12, you included. We've got a few decent fighters amongst the crew, but we still tend to hire adventurers for a good few reasons.」

It'd become something along the lines of a tradition for ships that worked directly under the crown to hire adventurers, an act that served to show that there were ties between the royal family and the guild. More importantly, adventurers proved quite useful in the case of an emergency. Most tended to have a ton of experience, so they could really aid in keeping everyone calm and battle-ready. To that end, most ships would make sure they grabbed a

few adventurers in addition to just having a few battle ready crew members on board.

「I believe you're also the only one that's running solo.」

「Strong?」

「I'm not qualified to gauge how strong they really are, but, there are a total of three parties, with their party-wide ranks being C, D, and E respectively. The C ranked party's leader is probably the strongest of the group. He himself is a B ranker.」

I was impressed that there was actually a B ranker aboard the ship, as I assumed the person in question would end up being decently strong. However, I couldn't help but feel as if having them around would end up being more of a pain in the ass than anything else, as we would have to listen to their orders in the case that something happened. I myself didn't really mind, but I somehow doubted Fran would obey the person's commands.

「It looks like they're here.」

「...Strong.」

『Seems like it.』

The crew members led the adventurers that'd been inside the ship onto its deck. The warrior-like man at the group's forefront immediately caught our attention. He, the B ranker Buphett had just told us about, looked much stronger than the rest. A sense of deja vu struck me as I looked at him. I felt like I'd seen that blue armour of his somewhere before, but I couldn't pinpoint exactly where. Chances were, we'd probably crossed paths at the Adventurers' Guild or something, but I wasn't really too sure.

「Right this way, Mordred.」

Hearing his name made me suspect that he was going to end up betraying us at some point, but the more rational part of my mind told me that it

would probably be fine. [1]

「This is the last adventurer that'll be joining us in escorting the ship.」

「Oi, what the hell? Why'd you go and call my bro Mordred all the way out here just to introduce him to a puny little girl? It would've been much more polite for you to have her head over to him instead goddammit.」

The short man next to Mordred angrily responded to the first mate's summons as soon as he laid eyes on Fran.

What pissed me off the most was that he wasn't wrong. Fran, a mere little girl, was technically lower on the the social ladder than a B ranked adventurer. Hence, many of Mordred's party members ended up nodding along to voice their agreement.

「Boss, these bastards are making light of y-」

「Shut up Slunin. You're embarrassing yourself.」

But he was soon cut off. Mordred, the person the angry midget had complained to, had spoken up as if to silence him.

「Eh?」

「We were the ones that were told to move because it's natural for the weak to go out of their way to convenience the strong. Putting on a show of respect is our job, not hers.」

「W-What're you saying bro!?!」

Witnessing the natural manner in which his boss had submitted caused Slunin to shout in surprise. He was quite loud, but Mordred paid him no mind. He instead turned towards Fran and bowed.

「Excuse that subordinate of mine. He tends to be a bit rude.」

「Nn. Don't mind.」

「Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Mordred, I lead the C ranked party known as the Iron God's Breath.」

「C ranked adventurer. Fran.」

Slunin seemed hella pissed. He clearly felt that Fran should've been paying Mordred her respects instead of the opposite because she was just a C ranker. He was about to start yelling again, but Mordred cut him off before he could.

「Am I right in assuming that you're the Black Lightning Princess?」

「Called that often lately.」

「I thought so. I saw all your fights.」

「Was at Ulmutt?」

「Yes, but I was the only one of my party members that was there. I participated, but ended up losing to Fermus in the second round.」

Only then did I realize why I felt like we'd seen him before. We hadn't met him, but we'd watched his matches. Fran also ended up recalling him after I reminded her of one of the battle's key points.

「Lava Mage?」

Mordred had been pretty good at using Lava Magic. I very vividly recalled being impressed by how he'd made it seem like such a valuable skill to have.

「You remembered me?」

「Nn. Because strong.」

「I'm honoured to hear that from the person that defeated an opponent that wiped the floor with me.」

「So uh... boss, care to explain?」

「You guys were holed up in the Crystal Cage back when it happened, so I doubt you know, but she's the person that won third place. She's still a C ranker right now, but she's in no way weaker than an A ranker.」

「Shit!」

「You serious!?!」

「You've gotta be kidding me...!」

「I'm serious. She's way stronger than me.」

「 「 「We're really sorry!」 」 」

All three of Mordred's subordinates dove in front of Fran and started prostrating the moment Mordred's declaration left his mouth. Seeing them had made me realize that they weren't so annoying after all. They were punks, but honest ones. Fran seemed to feel the same, as she wasn't really angry either. Instead, she seemed to be finding the sight of three massive dudes prostrating themselves before her to be more curious than anything else.

[1] Arthurian legend. Mordred the traitor.

245. The Cabin

Chapter 245. The Cabin

The Cabin

Everyone started introducing themselves after the C ranked party, the Iron God's Breath, finished apologizing to Fran.

At first, I thought that they didn't actually need to go as far as prostrating. However, the combination of the willingness with which they did it and the jock-like impression I got from them made me feel that to them, it wasn't really anything out of the ordinary.

Their overbearing attitudes seemed to have entirely vanished. They instead had started to bow submissively over and over as if to make up for their mistakes. It seemed that Mordred's statement, his proclamation that Fran was far stronger than he was, had left a pretty deep impression on them.

I was honestly surprised that one word from him had caused their attitudes to change so drastically. Most other adventurers would still doubt Fran's strength because she looked the way she did. A bit of further consideration led me to realize their willingness to accept Fran's strength came from their trust in Mordred. They seemed absolutely certain he'd never lie to them.

Although Mordred's subordinates didn't really question the authenticity of his words, I did. Fran was definitely stronger than him, but she was only really way stronger than him in her awakened state. The way I saw it, he was an accomplished Magic Warrior skilful enough to match even Colbert in single combat. He'd make for a dangerous opponent if we didn't take him seriously.

「And these are my four party members.」

「 「 「We look forward to workin' with you.」 」 」

「Nn. Same. Will also introduce again. C ranked adventurer. Fran. And Urushi.」

「Woof!」

「Woah, that wolf just came out of nowhere!」

「I-It rose from the shadows!」

「Well then. He looks quite strong.」

「Nn. Reliable.」

Unlike his subordinates, Mordred remained calm even though Urushi, a decently powerful magic beast, had appeared seemingly out of nowhere. In fact, he even ended up smiling after affirming the wolf's strength, as if to express he was glad to see another fighter amongst our ranks. I really did have to take my hat off to him. All the other adventurers had backed off and just stared at the Darkness Wolf from afar.

「I guess I might as well introduce everyone else. First up'll be these guys. They're Red Earth, a D ranked party.」

「It's good to be working with you.」

「'Sup.」

「Eyyyy.」

Though the party's leader seemed to be the formal, uptight kind, the same couldn't be said for its two other members. They both gave off a much more laid back impression. I couldn't help but notice that everyone in the party had green scales growing on their arms and faces, a feature that apparently clearly denoted them as serpentkin. I couldn't help but feel that they were a bit weird, not because they had scales, but because they all seemed to be a part of the exact same demographic. Their well built frames were all about the same size be it in height or width. Likewise, they all wore twin swords and had similar-looking faces.

「Identical.」

「Ahahahaha. That's cause the three of us are brothers. We've been wandering the world and adventuring together for quite some time. It's been a while since we last went home, so we decided to take this escort mission so we could head back for a bit.」

Their appearances weren't all they shared. All three of the serpentkin had been taught by their father, so they'd ended up with the exact same skillset. The uncanny resemblance they bore to one another led me to suspect that they were probably triplets. The only real way for me to tell them apart was to look at their hairstyles. I didn't really think that to be too reliable, so I decided to appraise them each time we spoke to them going forward in order to make sure we knew which was which. For the record, the uptight leader was actually the oldest of the bunch.

Though Red Earth came off as a bit intimidating, I found that they were actually pretty decent people. They didn't seem to hold any prejudice against Fran's tribe.

「These last three belong to the Crystalline Defenders, an E ranked party.」

「H-Hiya.」

「Fancy seeing you again.」

「Ahahaha...」

The last three adventurers were actually our acquaintances. In fact, they were still quite fresh in our minds because we'd only just sparred with them a few days ago. They were Miguel, the greatsword user, Liddick, the earnest spearman, and Naria, the female archer.

「Oh, you guys already knew each other?」

「Kind of. She crushed us in a spar just a few days ago.」

「Right, you guys were the guildmaster's apprentices, huh? Man, I'm jealous. I would've loved me a chance to spar with the Black Lightning Princess. Well, I'm glad you know her. Makes things more convenient.」

Though the Crystalline Defenders barely counted as our acquaintances, I still preferred having them over someone we didn't know for the sole reason that they'd already come to understand that Fran was strong.

「Here, why?」

「Well, the truth is, sparring with you taught us just how weak we really were.」

「Everyone talked a bit, and we realized that we were starting to get sloppy because of how big our party was. Having nine whole people just ended up making us feel too relaxed.」

「We decided to split into three smaller parties so we could start training ourselves again from the ground up.」

Apparently, they hadn't actually wasted the lessons they'd learned from fighting Fran. They'd realized that something was wrong and immediately acted on it.

「Okay. Good luck.」

「Thank you.」

「We'll do our best!」

「Thank you very much for both the instruction and words of encouragement!」

The captain's first mate pulled Fran and Mordred aside for a quick discussion after all everyone introduced themselves because he'd recognized them as the two most influential members of the group. The other adventurers didn't seem to mind, as they'd left after stating that they'd go along with whatever the pair decided.

「We should probably figure out how we're going to handle the chain of command. Any ideas on your end? Me, I don't mind either way. Feel free to take over if you want.」

Mordred was the type of guy that valued ability, or more specifically, strength in combat, over all else. He was more than willing to yield his position to Fran, but honestly, both Fran and I lacked the skill set necessary to fill it. The lava mage was much better suited to the job. Hence, we ended up rejecting his proposal.

「Bad at giving orders.」

「Alright, go on.」

「You take command. Want to be treated as autonomous unit.」

Fran had basically said that she wanted to just be able to do whatever she wanted in response to the situation at hand. In other words, her proposition was a selfish one that allowed her to retain her freedom while also casting away all the troublesome responsibilities that came with taking charge.

「That's fine with me, but can you make sure you check with me when you're going to start acting on your own?」

「Nn. Will be prudent.」

「You're stronger than me, so I'll try not to give you orders if I can, but I still will if we get into the kind of emergency that calls for it.」

「Of course.」

「...Alright.」

Mordred heaved a heavy sigh, but ended up agreeing to go along with our idea nonetheless. It seemed that we were going to be fortunate enough to do as we wished for the most part.

「It looks like the two of you have wrapped up your meeting, so, Fran, why don't I show you to your room?」

「Nn.」

「I'm sorry in advance, but, it's going to have to be just a bit on the smaller side.」

「No problem. Just need bed.」

「I don't think you'll need to worry about that. There's no way we could possible treat you that poorly.」

One of the sailors led Fran to her quarters. The room she was assigned to was a private room meant for the ship's stronger fighters; its close proximity to the deck made it easy for her to get to wherever she needed as quickly as possible in the case of an emergency.

「This'll be your room.」

「Nn. Looks good.」

「Good to hear. I'm glad you like it.」

The sailor seemed to think Fran was complimenting the room just for the sake of it, as he seemed a bit ashamed of it throughout the conversation, but she and I honestly both really liked it.

It was a bit on the smaller side, but that was literally my only complaint. It was a private room with a clean bed, some drawers, a closet, and a decent looking desk. There was even a magic lamp suspended from the ceiling. It was way better than the cheap inns we usually stayed in.

Though, with all that said and out of the way, the one thing that really iced the cake was the round window decorating the room's outside wall. It was exactly the kind of window you'd expect to see on a seafaring vessel. A single ray of light streamed in from it and illuminated the room's otherwise dim interior. That was all it did, but, that alone was enough to really emphasize that we were in a ship's cabin.

Fran seemed to like the room's ambient atmosphere, as she herself down on the bed and started to swing her legs back and forth. The expression that decorated her face was clearly one of excitement.

「I like this room.」

『Yeah, me too.』

She laid down and started rolling back and forth on the bed until she eventually tired herself out.

246. The Algieba Sets Sail

Chapter 246. The Algieba Sets Sail

The Algieba Sets Sail

A sailor brought Fran to a room not too far from her own, one labeled as the Captain's Quarters.

「I heard that you met the other adventurers, and that you seemed to get along quite well. Do you think you can work with them?」

「No problem.」

「Good to hear.」

The captain seemed really relieved to hear that Fran was capable of getting along with the other adventurers. At first, I didn't quite understand why, but then I recalled the rumours. It seemed that he had been worried that she might start a fight with one of the other people he'd hired.

Fran was strong, and honestly speaking, probably one of the best escorts he could get. Therefore, as captain, he needed to consider what his options were. He had be ready to make a choice between her might and his experience in case she ended up antagonizing Mordred

「Chances are, we'll be running into magic beasts, and maybe even a couple pirates. But until that happens, you can just kick back, relax, and do whatever you want.」

「Nn. Got it. Want to explore ship.」

「Explore? I mean, I don't mind, but I don't quite see the fun in it.」

「Okay to?」

「It shouldn't be a problem as long as you don't enter the sailors' private quarters without their permission. I'm also going to have to ask you not to

mess with the magic item we use for propulsion.」

「No problem.」

「Oh, and don't mess up the storehouse. We don't really have anything to hide to begin with, so that should be it for the off limits areas.」

「Really okay? No fear of theft?」

「You're bound by the contract you signed with the Adventurer's Guild, and we're rather inclined to assume it'll hold. 'Sides, none of the stuff we have is valuable enough to warrant you risking your reputation.」

We managed to get the captain's permission to explore the ship, but we didn't go looking around at every nook and cranny right away. We were going to be aboard the ship for quite some time, so we decided to take our time and explore it bit by bit as the voyage went on.

「Oh yeah, can you show me that Beastkins' Country ID you got?」

「This?」

「Is that space time magic...? Sure seems convenient.」

「Nn. Very.」

「I'm jealous. That's something any merchant would want. Anyway, I'd better get to checking this thing for authenticity.」

The captain's voice slowly shifted over to carrying a more serious tone as he spoke. Though he himself couldn't technically be called a merchant, the function he served was rather similar. To that end, he shared many of their sentiments.

Apparently the captain's ring had a sort of function that allowed him to double check whether the ID thing we were given was legit, as he pressed the two against one another.

「Interesting, so it really was the real thing.」

「Nn.」

「We should be setting sail some time in the afternoon. For now, I'll have to ask you to go talk to Mordred.」

「Got it. Mordred's room, where?」

「It should be right next to yours. Do you need me to get someone to help you find it?」

「No need.」

When the captain said right next to, he'd meant that Mordred's room was literally just two over from Fran's. He was sharing a triple room with a couple of his subordinates.

The reason we had to meet with Mordred again was so we could sort out how we were going to handle shifts. Mordred had already sorted out all the details, so he told us that we were going to have to stand guard during the night once every four days.

He then went over a few other escort mission fundamentals, as Fran had very little experience with them. The most important thing he highlighted was that any magic beasts we defeated would end up belonging to the people that'd hired us.

To compensate, the escort group would be granted a bonus based on the total number of enemies defeated. This calculation was done on a group-wide basis as opposed to an individual one in order to prevent the adventurers from arguing with one another.

Individuals could still be given additional rewards in some cases if they proved to be truly outstanding, but that was it.

One of the guild's clerks had already told us all that information when we accepted the request, but Mordred had wanted to reiterate it just to make sure everyone was fine with the rules, as there were many cases in which adventurers would later complain that they were unfair.

「I think that's everything. I'm looking forward to working with you.」

「Nn. Same.」

Fran shook hands with Mordred and headed back to her own room. There wasn't much left to do but wait for departure.

Fortunately, we didn't have to wait too long for some sort of event, as a sailor soon came and informed us that lunch was ready. Today was still our first day here, and we had no idea where to go. The sailor seemed aware of it, as he ended up showing us over to where the food was being served. There, Fran ate her fill before heading back to the room and plopping herself down on the bed yet again. I really had to say, the escort mission we were on had some pretty damned good benefits to it. It included all three meals and the servings were big enough to satisfy even Fran. The fact that it took place on a boat only served to add to just how novel and fresh it felt.

I was about to pay the mission another compliment or two, but my thoughts were cut off by a sudden sense of oscillation. It didn't seem to be just my imagination either, as Fran sat up and started restlessly scanning her surroundings.

「Master, shaking?」

『Just a bit. It doesn't really seem like an earthquake though, so... I guess that means we finally set sail.』

The boat was massive, so it didn't really shake in response to the small waves that'd been constantly hitting it. The same, however, couldn't be said for when it lifted its anchor.

「Will go check.」

『Sounds like a good idea to me.』

We rushed out of the room and gazed toward the port, only to find that it was a bit further away than we remembered. Both Fran and Urushi then ended up running all the way over to the ship's edge and looking down.

『Huh, so we really are moving.』

「Nn.」

「Woof.」

The cityscape slowly began to drift away from us. We weren't being seen off by a crowd of people with streamers and whatnot, but that was probably because we were on a merchant ship as opposed to one meant to transport civilians. Besides, tens of ships left the port every single day. There was no way every single one could be sent off.

『This ship sure is fast.』

The ship was moving much more quickly than I'd expected. I wouldn't have been surprised if its current speed was what it had with its sails hoist, but they were all currently still in their folded up states.

I started to grow curious about the magic item that propelled the ship forwards. It had to be really powerful to be able move such a large vessel so quickly.

One of the first things that I considered was its shape. I really wanted to know whether it used a propeller, an aqua jet, the wind, or maybe even something else altogether.

『Let's go check it out once you've calmed down a bit.』

「Explore!」

『Hell yeah.』

Jerome, the ship's captain, approached us as we continued to look over past the deck.

「Hey. You catch sight of something interesting or somethin'?」

「Moving.」

「Huh? Oh, I'm guessing you don't really spend too much of your time at sea then.」

「Nn. First time on big ship.」

「Makes sense then.」

「Moving using magic item?」

「You got it. This ship has actually get the newest magical propulsion system on the market. That's not all either. It's also equipped with a barrier and eight turrets to help drive off monsters and the like.」

It turned out they were using a whole slew of magical items. Though the ship looked like something from my world's middle ages, it was actually far more technologically advanced. The magical engine system it was using would allow it to continue moving even without the wind's assistance.

Wait, they even have a barrier to help keep things away from them? Why would they need to hire escorts if they had something like that?

Fran relayed my question to the captain, to which he reacted by informing us that the barrier wasn't perfect. Its main function was to hide the ship from larger magic beasts, and thus, it had very little effect on any of the small or medium sized ones, which, to me at least, made a lot of sense. The sea was full of larger magic beasts, and many of them would sink the ship if they struck its hull.

There was a second barrier device that worked against the smaller-scaled magic beasts as well, but all it did was make them less inclined to approach.

One of the bigger reasons ships hired escorts was because they needed more hands on deck to fight off pirates. Most pirates avoided ships that worked directly under a country's command because they were concerned that they would ultimately get wiped out after catching the country's attention. That, in other words, meant that the only thieves interested in targeting the HSS Algieba were infamous pirates confident in their own abilities.

The Algieba's access to the newest magic engine model made it capable of outrunning most of its attackers, but it would still sometimes be intercepted, rammed, and subject to an attack.

「I'm going to be counting on you, Black Lightning Princess.」

「Nn. Leave to me.」

「Hahaha. You sure do sound reliable. Looks like we'll be getting to our destination in one piece.」

247. A Discussion About Routes

Chapter 247. A Discussion About Routes

A Discussion About Routes

And so, a whole day passed.

「Another storehouse.」

『Well I mean, this is a merchant ship, soooooo...』

「Smells good.」

『Yeah, it looks like this is where they keep all the foodstuffs.』

We'd already started exploring the ship's interior. At first, there hadn't really been much to see, reason being that we'd started atop the deck and slowly made our way down. Most of the sailors' rooms were located near the deck so they could react quickly in the case of an emergency. Hence, the first area we ran into was the only one we weren't allowed to check out in too much detail.

Most of the rooms on the lower floors were just storerooms. The door to the room with most of the more valuable stuff in it was locked, but pretty much everything else was still open to exploration.

All we found in the storehouses were boxes, bags, and a whole tonne of dust, but Fran was having fun looking around nonetheless.

Likewise, I also hadn't lost interest in looking at all the odd ingredients, nor the strangely designed goods the boxes seemed to contain.

「Moving on」

『Sure.』

We left the storehouse area and entered a room near one of the ship's outermost sides. There, we found a huge, cylindrical lump of metal with a

hole in the middle. Its surface almost seemed to give off a sort of dark glow.

「What's this?」

『Looks like a magical cannon. It uses those balls of iron as ammo and propels them with magic.』

「Why iron balls?」

『The projectiles it fires are weaker than actual spells, but are probably much more efficient with mana. It runs on magical energy, but it probably only has a finite amount of it.』

The cannons we were looking at seemed to be rather high class, as they could switch between physical and magical rounds. The physical rounds were probably for other ships, while the magical rounds would instead be used on magic beasts.

I couldn't help but feel that the cannon was much bigger than the ones we had back on Earth, in part because it had a magical engine strapped to it.

We ventured further downstairs after inspecting the cannon and found ourselves in the ship's lowermost subsection. Most of the space was taken up by the ship's ballast tanks, many of which were filled with water. The second largest room, however, had an item of interest in it, another large magical device. Said device was almost constantly emitting a sort of low-pitched rumble.

「Huge.」

『I guess this is probably the engine the captain was talking about earlier.』

「Nn. Really loud.」

『Hmm... that part has water coming out of it, and this one looks something like a pump.』

The engine seemed to be the aqua jet type. It used a huge pump to suck in water and then forcefully ejected it in order to propel the ship forwards.

Several of the ejection devices were placed around the ship's hull. It seemed like it could use them to not only change direction, but also make tight turns.

We'd more or less finished exploring, and Fran wanted to get a bit of exercise, so we headed back up to the deck in hopes of being able to find a spot to do a few practice swings. Upon arrival, we found that the deck was actually quite busy. Jerome was ordering the sailors around as they scrambled to raise the masts.

「We're finally out that damned gulf! Men, get ready to sail!」

「Yessir!」

「Get your lazy asses ready! We're going full speed ahead 'till we hit the Kraken's Nest!」

One of the things the captain had said immediately nabbed my attention.

「Kraken's nest?」

「Oh hey, didn't see ya. The Kraken's Nest is exactly what it sounds like, a danger zone where you'll find a whole shitload of Kraken.」

「Passing through?」

「Well, I guess you could say that.」

I knew the ship had a barrier that let it ward off large magic beasts, but I couldn't help but feel as if passing through a place called the Kraken's Nest wasn't too good of an idea.

「We aren't actually going to be passing right through it. We'll just be skimming the edge of it is all.」

Fortunately, the captain's intentions hadn't been what I was imagining them to be.

Kraken were the local ecosystem's top predator, so most other magic beasts naturally chose to avoid their territory. This was especially true of medium sized magic beasts, as kraken had the tendency to prey on them.

「We shouldn't have to worry about getting attacked by magic beasts there so long as we mind the kraken.」

「But kraken?」

I was worried that a kraken would attack us and totally screw us over, but, according to Jerome, the chances of that were particularly low. The barrier was designed to make the ship especially difficult for kraken to detect.

As I wasn't completely convinced, I had Fran ask about the other larger magic beasts that lived in the area, to which the captain replied with a rather simple answer: there were none. The only large magic beasts that lived in the area were the kraken.

「Why?」

「The patch of sea between the Gilbard continent, from which we just departed, and the Chrom continent, our destination, is only a couple hundred meters deep. Relatively speaking, it's quite shallow.」

Apparently, most of the other oceans were much, much deeper.

「Most B ranked magic beasts, like Whale Lords, Water Dragons, Leviathans, and Dagoes, prefer to live in deeper waters.」

None of the types of magic beasts the captain had just mentioned had ever been spotted in the space between the Gilbard and Chrom continents.

「But the part of the sea between the Gilbard and Brohdinn continents, the Demon Sea, makes up for it. It's filled with powerful beasts, and has even got the world's one and only known S rank leviathan.」

The legendary leviathan in question was said to be over 1000 meters long, capable of creating tsunamis while turning over in its sleep, and, all in all, one of the strongest magic beasts to have ever existed.

That said, very little was known about it. Sightings were few and far between. There was, however, a significant mention of it dating about 3000 years back in which it completely obliterated a coastal nation that'd pissed it off overnight. Said report was likely true as it had apparently been confirmed by someone with an oracle-type skill.

One of the most surprising but well known facts about it noted in the aforementioned report was that the S ranked leviathan's staple food was in fact the Midgard Wyrn, an A ranked magic beast. It would leave its nest, capture one, and then slowly feast on it over the course of about 100 years. Most sightings of it would happen precisely during these hunting sessions.

Naturally, the legendary leviathan was only one of the many massive magic beasts that inhabited the Demon Sea, so most ships going between Gilbert and Brohdinn would avoid passing through it. They'd instead take a safer route and stop by Chrom along the way. The route we were currently on was just that much safer.

But despite that, it still had enough kraken for one of its subsections to be labeled the Kraken's Nest.

「You won't have to worry about encountering any Kraken. This ship's got all the kraken countermeasures a sailor could ever ask for.」

「Nn.」

「But we've dedicated most of our resources to it, so we'll have to be relying on you to deal with pirates and all the other magic beasts, y'hear?」

「Got it. Leave to me.」

「'Course.」

248. A Report on Midgard Wyrms Ecology

Chapter 248. A Report on Midgard Wyrms Ecology

A Report on Midgard Wyrms Ecology

Several days had passed since we left Barbra.

All we'd done so far was relax. There wasn't really much to do in the first place unless we ran into some sort of magic beast, so we'd spent our days eating, sleeping, and occasionally enjoying the salty sea breeze while getting a bit of exercise on deck.

Purification magic allowed us to keep the room clean without having to tidy up.

The meals were not only hearty, but also quite healthy. Item box-type skills allowed the sailors to preserve fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the trip. Beriberi and scurvy were both total non-concerns.

That said, depleting the ship's resources wasn't actually the crew's first choice. They would much rather eat whatever they could catch. To that end, they were currently hauling up a giant net they'd thrown down for fishing purposes a bit earlier.

It wasn't something Fran had ever seen before, so she ended up doing more than just observing them. She joined them in saying "heave, heave ho," over and over as they raked the net in. The only difference was that she muttered it under her breath instead of shouting it.

「Gahahaha. You never seen a couple guys lug up a huge net before or somethin'？」

「Nn. Interesting.」

「Thought so. The only ships with nets that big are huge ones.」

「Really?」

「The only way you could haul up a net that big without a bunch of people is if you have some sort of magic item do it for you. And y'see, both those options require big ass ships.」

「Oh.」

「'Sides, the bigger the net, the bigger the catch, and the bigger the catch, the bigger the chance you'll attract or even catch magic beasts. Fighting them off needs manpower and space. It's not something you could do on a small boat 'nless you want to put yourself in danger.」

The captain's words led me to the conclusion that it was about time for us adventurers to finally do our jobs.

「I'm pretty sure my men'll be fine without you for now, but y'might as keep an eye out.」

「Nn.」

Fran got into position just in case anything happened, but nothing really did. The sailors hoisted the net onto the deck and laid out all the seafood they caught without running into any show-stopping issues.

「Those, fish, or?」

『Which ones? Are there magic beasts mixed in or something?』

「Soft and flabby thing.」

『Oh, you were asking about those? Those are goosefish.』

Goosefish were really strange looking, so it did make sense for people that didn't know about them to assume they were magic beasts. I heard that many people outside Japan feared octopuses, but I myself found goosefish way more terrifying.

「And that?」

『Those are hagfish.』

「And those?」

『I'm pretty sure those are sea cucumbers, though they're way bigger than any kind I know.』

The world I was currently in was a veritable fantasy world, but its fish honestly weren't that different from the ones we had back on Earth. In fact, I felt that most of them were easier on the eye; Earth's fish were way uglier on average.

「And that?」

『Which?』

「That.」

There were too many fish jumbled together for me to identify the one Fran was trying to point out to me, so she just ended up walking over and picking it out of the pile.

「This.」

『Oh, ew.』

The fish in question was one of the grossest looking ones I'd ever seen. I really had to commend Fran's willingness to touch it. She'd lifted it up without even the slightest bit of hesitation.

It, the thing in Fran's hand, looked to me like a reddish-black, softball sized, blob of flesh. One end was shaped like an intestine. It came with an alien-like mouth, one that had its sharp teeth arranged in a circular pattern. The other looked like it'd been pinched. My immediate reaction was to assume that it was some sort of deep-sea creature.

Appraising it caused me to telepathically shout in surprise.

『That thing's apparently a midgard wyrm!』

「Midgard Wyrms? This?」

『Y-Yeah, it's probably only that small cause it hasn't grown up yet.』

「Ohhh.」

I almost couldn't believe that the tiny magic beast Fran was holding onto could possibly grow into the 100m long thing we'd fought before. The only way one could possibly describe the creature was to call it fantastical.

『T-There's one over there too.』

「Where?」

『It's that long thing over there.』

「This?」

Fran grabbed the long, rope-like organism I was talking about with her bare hands. Its colour and texture were identical to the midgard wyrm larva Fran was holding in her other hand, but their lengths were incomparable.

The first specimen was about the size of Fran's palm. The second was about a whole meter long. That said, they were still both definitely midgard wyrms.

「This becomes that?」

『I think so... Oh god that thing's gross. Its unevenness only makes it all the worse.』

The longer specimen wasn't just thin and long. It looked like a bunch of spheres stuck onto one another. The indents ran along it in an almost regular sort of pattern.

Jerome approached Fran as she continued to observe the still-wriggling midgard wyrms.

「Oh, so you managed to find a couple puny midgard wyrms.」

「Nn.」

「At that size, I'd say they're probably still only a few months old... Their parents might still be in the area.」

「Thought only kraken around here?」

「For the most part, yeah. There are a couple other things, just not too many of 'em.」

「Fought midgard wyrm before.」

「You mean recently?」

「Nn. Very recent. On way to Barbra.」

「Seriously? If that's the case, then we'd best be on our toes.」

「What to do if attacked?」

「Midgard wyrms tend to react most to smell, so we should be able to outrun them if we just throw a couple barrels overboard as a decoy.」

It looked like we wouldn't have to worry because the ship had countermeasures on hand. That said, we were still quite curious as to their ecology. Jerome actually seemed really knowledgeable about them, so we decided to have him sate our curiosity.

「This becomes that?」

「Yeah, but the stubby one you're holding onto won't just grow longer or anything.」

「Then how?」

「They get longer by sticking together. You see how the longer one's got indents all over? And you see how they're about the same length?」

「Nn. Narrow parts.」

「That's because that's where two midgard wyrms are connected. The larvae bite onto each other's butts in order to form chains. As time passes, they eventually all merge into a single creature.」

The fuck nature?

I was freaked out at first, but immediately recalled that there were similar creatures back on Earth. I wasn't too clear on the details, but I did remember that most were single celled organisms, like jellyfish.

Hearing Jerome's explanation finally led me to understand why the damned things had so many hearts. A midgard wyrm was both a single giant magic beast and an entire colony of smaller magic beasts at the same time. It was that precise trait that stopped them from being affected by Deathgaze's instant kill ability.

「What to do?」

「They're parasitic and not that great for the sea, so we'll gather them up and dispose of all of them at once later. You seem to be able to pick them out, so could you lend us a bit of a hand?」

「Got it.」

Our Appraisal and Magic Perception skills made it easy for us to sort through the pile and pull all the magic beasts it contained. The task's only two downsides were that it was boring, and that it made Fran's hands stink. That said, the stink could be cleansed, so I made a mental note telling myself that I should cast purification magic on Fran's hands once we were done.

The screening process ended up finishing without any real hitches; today's haul hadn't seemed to contain any dangerous magic beasts. More importantly, it looked like tonight's dinner was going to consist of quite a few interesting fish-based dishes.

(Master.)

『What's up?』

(Want to take bath.)

『You do know we're on a ship in the middle of the ocean here, right? That's definitely going to be asking for too mu-wait a second. Maybe not, actually.』

Getting our hands on hot water would be a cinch since it was something we could make with magic. The only real problem was that we didn't have a bathtub. We'd normally just make one out of earth magic, but there wasn't any soil anywhere in sight.

They probably had wooden wash basins somewhere, but I figured we'd be able to find some sort of higher quality substitute if we looked hard enough. Asking led to the surprising answer that the ship actually had a bathtub on board.

At first, I thought that having a bath on board was a luxurious addition that we shouldn't have expected, but soon realized that I was wrong. I should've known there'd be one seeing as how the ship was equipped with a whole slew of expensive magic items to begin with. In fact, it turned out that most larger ships actually did have them.

We only hadn't really heard of other people using it because sailors didn't like bathing. I wasn't really surprised. Sailors were, for the most part, wild seafarers not too different from pirates. I couldn't exactly see them sitting down and soaking in a tub. They didn't normally bother getting the baths ready at a set time because it was just an added cost that few ever made use of.

Fran started heading over the moment they told us we were allowed to make use of it as long as we got our own hot water.

Mordred, Buphett, and several other guys had told us they also wanted to get in, so we ended up telling them it was ready once we finished with it.

Buphett had been particularly happy about being able to take a bath, and even asked us to keep taking them going forward so he could as well. Fran liked washing herself on a daily basis anyways, and I kinda liked the idea of him owing us a favour, so we ended up happily agreeing.

249. Finally, Action

Chapter 249. Finally, Action

Finally, Action

A day had passed since we learned a bit more about midgard wyrms.

We were still living the high life. Fran had taken a bath last night, so she had been in an excellent mood all morning.

For the record, we made sure to drain the bath and refill it with a whole new tub of water once Fran was done with it. No way in hell was I going to let a bunch of dudes soak in the exact same water she'd just finished using.

Fran had spent most of the day gazing at the horizon, observing the fish and dolphins that passed by, and idling around in her room whenever she got bored.

But, that afternoon, our peaceful boat trip finally came to an end.

The clanging of a loud bell filled our ears. It rang four times, paused, and repeated. The four-clang pattern was a signal whose meaning we'd memorized ahead of time. It denoted that the ship was being attacked by pirates.

『Pirates!?!』

「Going!」

「Woof!」

Fran grabbed me and rushed out to the deck. There, she found the captain, who happened to be in the middle of issuing orders to his crew. He had the sailors move around so that they'd be in position for the battle to come.

Mordred seemed to have been on the deck from the start, as he and his men were currently leering at something to the north.

「You're here? That was fast. I'm impressed.」

「Pirates, where?」

「They're right over there.」

We were certainly able to make out something where Mordred was pointing, but it was too far away for us to make out any significant details. We couldn't even tell it was a ship, let alone a pirate ship.

「Those, pirate ships?」

「No way in hell they aren't. Damned things have got pirate flag raised high.」

Jerome sounded really confident. At first, I thought he was somehow able to just naturally see really far, but upon closer inspection, I realized that he had a telescope in hand. He'd clearly used in order to scope out the incoming ship.

「Escape possible?」

「Doubt it. Those over there are fast, small ships, and the wind ain't really doing us any favours right now. They'll probably catch up in about an hour.」

「Then will fight.」

「We'll probably have to. It doesn't seem like they've got any intention of letting us get away.」

I highly doubted that the pirates would be able to damage our large boat with their much smaller ones. I highly doubted that they'd be able to board us even when they finally caught up. That said, there was no way they'd initiate a battle they didn't think they could win.

「Those ship's have got naval rams engineered into their front. They're probably planning to breach our hull and have their men board us.」

The pirate ship's naval ram wasn't entirely solid. It had a passageway built inside of it for ease of infiltration. Their strategy was one crafted under the assumption that the ship they would be attacking was larger than their own.

They would catch up to us with their high speed vessels, stop us by ramming us with several different ships, and then break into our galleon's interior. It was a much safer method than the one I thought of, lining their ships up with ours and boarding via ladder. As the defenders, I found it honestly quite difficult to deal with their approach. We had to be concerned with the fact that there'd be enemies inside our ship from the very start.

「How?」

「We basically have to fall back on the basics and sink 'em with spells and cannonfire before they reach us.」

The thing the captain had told us really was pretty much the most basic possible thing one could do in a naval battle. The pirates needed to get up close and personal if they wanted to be able to board us. All we needed to do to stop them was to make sure they never got close enough to actually reach us. That said, I felt that engaging them up close wouldn't be too bad an idea. We could just beat the pirates down, capture them, confiscate their ships, and trade them in for cash once we reached the shore.

「Sinking 'em is probably the best option, 'cause the aftermath's a huge pain in the ass to deal with if we don't.」

「Reason?」

「Think about it. We need a place to lock 'em up till we reach the shore. We'd also need to feed 'em and keep 'em alive. As for the ship, we'd need to transfer a couple men over it can actually get places.」

「But enemy treasure will also sink?」

「The only way they'd have loot on their ships is if they just finished attacking somethin'. I doubt any of the ones attacking us'll have anythin' valuable on board.」

「Okay.」

The captain had a good point, and more or less convinced me that it was perfectly okay for us to just sink the incoming pirate ships.

「The only ships worth capturing would be the larger ones. Their propulsion systems can fetch a pretty penny on the market. They can rake in such a profit that I'd say it'd even be worth it for us to attack them instead o' the other way 'round.」

Jerome's tone was so serious it sent shivers down my spine. Merchant ships realllly weren't supposed to be attacking pirate ships, were they...?

「I'd be more pissed if they got away than 'nything.」

Though the captain knew of most of the pirates around these parts, he didn't recognize the group attacking us. Their flag was an unfamiliar one.

「They probably either came from the north or south. We'd be best careful, they've already thrown five ships our way.」

That said, the appearance of a brand new group of pirates wasn't anything to be too concerned about. The place was practically a hotbed for pirates because of all the merchants ships that would make use of the route. Pirates practically infested the place, but most merchant ships were ready for them. The act of attacking was actually quite the risk. Still, the sheer frequency with which merchant ships passed through the area still attracted them from all over, often leading to territorial disputes and the like.

Several bigger pirate gangs more or less completely dominated the area. It was really hard for a newly arrived crew to really make too much of a name for themselves, and it was for that reason that the appearance of a new band of pirates really wasn't anything to be concerned with. They were probably just going to end up getting taken over by one of the bigger gangs eventually anyways.

「Them sending out five ships means they think they've got a pretty good idea of exactly where we are and how much we can fight back. It'd be best

for us to sink 'em.」

I wasn't sure what the norm was, nor whether or not it'd be fine for us to butt in just yet, so Fran turned towards someone with a bit more experience for advice.

「Mordred, what do?」

「The battle'll start with an exchange of cannonfire. We adventurers, er, the spellcasters we've got, will start firing spells once we get close enough for it.」

The lava mage's explanation made perfect sense to me, as the ship's cannons had more range than most spells. Still, I felt it was inefficient. Both we and our enemies had cannons, so we'd effectively just be trading damage at first. Jerome and Mordred both told us that taking some damage was a foregone conclusion when we asked them about it. As far as they were concerned, trading hits was just a natural part of naval battles to begin with. We, however, opted to disagree.

「Hey.」

「Yeah?」

「Leave to me.」

「I take it you've got something in mind?」

「Nn. Will sink enemies.」

「Sounds promising to me, but you sure you're up for it?」

「Sure.」

「Hm, I don't want you doing anything that'll put you in too much danger. We've still got a long trip ahead of us, and we'll be needing you to power our way through it.」

Jerome exchanged glances with Mordred, as if silently asking the B ranker whether or not he thought Fran would actually be able to pull it off, to which he replied with a nod.

「A rankers are strong enough for us to call them flat out inhuman, and she's got enough power to take one down. Me, I'd say she'll be just fine.」

「Alright then, go fer it. Just make sure you don't damage our ship, 'lright?」

「Got it. Going now.」

「Going?」

「Nn. Going to sink enemies. Urushi.」

「Woof!」

「Woooah! Your wolf was actually that damned huge?」

「I'm... starting to think that it could probably even beat me up...」

Fran ignored Jerome, who's eyes had shot open in surprise, and mounted Urushi.

「Go.」

「Woof!」

And so, the two of them leapt towards the pirates, leaving naught but a series of shocked sailors in their wake.

250. Anti-Ship Sword

Chapter 250. Anti-Ship Sword

Anti-Ship Sword

Urushi was so fast that he managed to close the gap between us and the pirate ships in the blink of an eye.

We used our birds eye view to observe the pirates, only to find that they were staring up at Fran with dumbfounded looks on their faces. The daze lasted for a moment, as they immediately drew their bows, knocked their arrows, and attempted to shoot us down. It was a vicious attack, but not one that bothered Urushi even in the slightest. He dodged them all with ease.

『Alright, let's do this.』

「Nn.」

『You know what? I'd say this is actually probably as good as chance as any to run a few experiments, just so we can be a bit informed going forward.』

「Explain?」

『I was thinking we could try and figure out the most efficient way for us to sink a ship. What do you think about hitting each of the five with a different kind of attack?』

We were still going to be at sea for quite some time. I highly doubted that we were only going to run into a single group of pirates. Figuring out the most efficient way of eliminating them would definitely function to our own benefit.

Fortunately, none of the pirates out on the deck seemed strong enough to catch my eye. They weren't going to be capable of getting in the way of our experiments—unless we messed up really hard, that is.

『Let's start by trying out Lightning Magic.』

Last time, we'd only managed to sink the pirate ships we encountered by hurling massive rocks at them. We'd grown a lot since then, we now had a much wider variety of options.

「Kanna Kamui?」

『That's a bit too extreme for just pirates, don't you think? Plus, we won't be able to use it several times in rapid succession.』

I figured Kanna Kamui would allow us to obliterate all five ships off at the same time if they happened to be close enough, which, upon further inspection, they actually seemed to be. However, I wrote decided to write it off for the time being, as it would defeat the purpose of the exercise I'd planned.

Kanna Kamui aside, I began to consider our options. Spells like Thunderbolt were rather decent, but they lacked the power to take out an entire ship in just one hit. What we needed was something in the middle.

『Oh, I know.』

I began to focus so I could cast a powerful spell. It wasn't anything on Kanna Kamui's tier, but it was still powerful nonetheless.

『Alright, let's go!』

「Nn!」

『Ekato Keraunos!』 [1]

Countless thunderbolts descended from the sky the moment I chanted the spell's name. They shot towards one of the pirate ships, razed it, and annihilated it in the most literal sense of the word. It had been completely and utterly erased, there wasn't even the slightest trace that it'd been there in the first place.

Looking at the result made me feel as if I'd gone a bit overboard.

Ekato Keraunos was a spell that created exactly 100 bolts of lightning. It was up to its caster to determine exactly how those 100 bolts would act. It didn't take much effort to concentrate them on a single target as I'd just done.

Though it only output 10% of Kanna Kamui's power, it was still evidently way stronger than what was needed to take down a small ship. It looked like we wouldn't need to use anything more than our regular AOE lightning spells to wipe them all out if we wanted.

The pirates stopped attacking. Seeing one of their allied ships flat out vanish seemed to have scared them shitless.

That said, they didn't seem to think Fran had attacked them, but rather, that the ship had been hit by some sort of abnormal, weather-related phenomenon. To them, it must've looked like the lightning bolts had just randomly descended from the clear sky above.

「Next, my turn.」

『Sure.』

「Nn. Thor's Hammer!」

Her follow up, however, clearly revealed that it'd all been her doing from the start.

A huge magic circle appeared right above one of the ships as Fran chanted the name of the spell that we'd gotten by leveling Lightning Magic up to level 8, the spell that'd failed to break Fermus' defenses.

The thick, high powered lightning bolt that came with the spell descended from the magic circle. It tore the ship in half and left the pieces it came into contact with charred black. Whoever named the spell had aptly described it; its aftermath made it look as if the god of lightning himself had descended, swung his might hammer, and smashed it right into the ship.

『That spell looked like a pretty good fit.』

「Nn.」

I could help but think back to our battle with Fermus. He'd managed to mount a perfect defense against an attack that could totally wreck a pirate ship in one hit, albeit a small one, with nothing more than just his threads. He really was one hell of a strong fighter.

『Let's try a different approach now, namely one that doesn't make use of brute force.』

「What do?」

『I mean, all we're doing is sinking a ship here, so we should be able to finish it off by just blasting a hole through its hull or something.』

「Really?」

『I'm pretty sure, yeah. We'll have to see how this goes.』

I used the level 4 flame spell, Exploding Flare, and shot it towards the sea.

It did exactly as it was supposed to, and launched a large fireball that ultimately ended up exploding with a loud boom.

『Welp. That failed.』

「But made hole?」

『Yeah, but I didn't hit the right spot. I was supposed to make a hole in its belly, not in its flank. I mean, they've still got water flooding in, but not enough to sink them right away. Man, Flame Magic gets really hard to control when you're at sea.』

「Then what?」

『We'll have to change it up a bit is all.』

I recast the same spell, but this time, enveloped the resulting projectile in a wall of wind so I could stop it from touching the seawater.

This time, I managed to accomplish my original goal of blowing a hole in the ship's underside, but I didn't actually manage to sink the vessel right away. The seawater had weakened Flare Explosion drastically, so the hole had ended up being way too small.

On the bright side, I did manage to move the fireball to the exact place I wanted it before it detonated, the pirate ship's propulsion system was no more. The ship as a whole wouldn't be sinking right away, but it'd eventually go down, especially seeing as how it could no longer move. Of course, that wasn't to say I'd succeeded. The method I'd just devised would allow the pirates on board more than enough time to escape.

『I guess that means we should fire a few more at it.』

「Got it.」

We fired off another five projectiles and totally wrecked the bottom side of ship's hull. It was no longer able to keep the water out, and so, it began sinking in earnest.

Our third approach did work, but it took far too much time, and required us to get too close to the ship. Honestly speaking, it wasn't very practical.

『Next, I guess.』

「Next method?」

『It's been a long time since I've used a full powered Telekinetic Catapult, so I was thinking of maybe giving it a go.』

「Got it.」

I was really curious as to the total amount of damage I'd be able to output, so we put every last bit of effort into powering up my attack. We used my telekinesis, alongside elemental blade and Fran's wind magic. We poured in every last bit of mana we could and purposefully avoided considering the effect the attack would have on my durability.

「Ready?」

『Ready.』

「Nn!」

Fran borrowed the help of a wind spell to boost me up to a high speed. I telekinetically accelerated myself even further the moment I left her hands.

『Leggoooooooooo bitchesssss!』

It felt really nice to finally let loose and just bash myself into something as hard as I could.

I destroyed both the ship's masts. I hit the first head on and totally wrecked it before striking the second around where it was rooted into the ship. Despite that, I didn't show even the slightest sign of stopping.

My blade smashed through the pirate ship's hull; it penetrated every last wall and pillar before opening a massive hole in the seacraft's belly.

I knew that was what'd happened, but it'd all gone by so quick that I hadn't been able to process it. For me, it'd been more of a three step process. I left Fran's hands, hit the mast dead on, and then suddenly found myself underwater.

Only after returning to Fran did I realize that I'd punched a huge hole in the ship. My telekinetic catapult had done quite a bit more damage than I'd been expecting it to do.

That said, overboosting elemental blade had totally killed my durability. It was kinda wasteful, and probably not worth using on a mere pirate ship.

「One ship left. Last method?」

『It's kinda already started running away, so we should probably find ourselves a method that'll allow us to sink it real quick.』

I began thinking about what we'd done so far in order to figure out what might work. It looked like using wind magic might be a good idea for the time being, as I'd be able to stall them with a cross wind.

「Can I choose?」

『Sure, what do you have in mind?』

「Need to ask Master to do something.」

Fran explained her concept to me. I was honestly quite surprised to hear it, as it involved pushing my ability to transform to the limit. Long story short, she told me to make myself huge.

Shape shifting itself wasn't really anything out of the ordinary. I'd already tried becoming threads, as well as a shield on occasion. But this was going to be my first time literally just supersizing myself and nothing else.

She still wanted to be able to swing me, so I kept my handle the same size, but boosted the hell out of both my blade and guard with everything I had.

I ended up being way bigger than I expected. I'd long surpassed the horse slayer in terms of size; my blade had grown to be almost a whole 10 meters long. I'd more or less transformed into one of the anti-ship swords that a certain mech would always swing around. [2] [3]

『This work for you?』

「Nn. Perfect. Going now.」

『Please do. I won't be able to keep this up for too long, so I'm going to have to ask you to be as quick as you can.』

「No problem!」

Fran more or less did the same thing she did to Rynford to the pirate ship. She jumped off Urushi, boosted my weight, cast elemental blade, and drew me from a sheath made out of air as she approached the ship.

「Haaaaaahhh!」

Naturally, the attack divided the pirate ship in two. The sheer amount of blunt force the strike carried caused the wood that made up the ship's hull

to fly all over the place as Elemental Blade set the whole goddamned thing on fire. The ship had no hope of surviving the attack. Neither its front nor back half could do anything but sink into the ocean's depths.

In the end, we figured that Thor's Hammer and my Anti-Ship Sword mode were probably our two best options, with the former being better against a smaller number of foes, and the latter a larger group.

「Done.」

『Pretty much, yeah.』

[1] I may be wrong, and please correct me if I am, but I believe this means Hundred Thunderbolts in Greek.

[2] A horse slayer, or zanbatou, is often referred to as a sword big enough to split both a man and his horse in half in one slash in the world of fiction. It's a pretty commonly used mention in Japanese culture, and something whose origin can be blamed on China.

[3] I'm thinking this is referring to Schwert Gewehr, a 15.78m Anti-ship Sword from Gundam Seed. Though, in the raw, he says it comes from a game specifically. The game is probably Super Robot Wars, but I'm not actually 100% what the unit+sword he's referring to is, because, though sword gundams are in SRW, they're pulled in from animu, so....

251. MasterShishou and Teacher

Chapter 251. MasterShishou and Teacher

MasterShishou and TeacherSensei

「Well, that's the Black Lightning Princess for ya!」

Captain Jerome happily greeted Fran with a full faced smile upon her return. He was very pleased to see that his ship had remained undamaged despite the pirate's assault.

Likewise, the sailors had even started cheering for her. Not a single one of them seemed to be sympathizing with the pirates, nor the miserable fate they'd met. That said, their actions weren't abnormal. The world we were currently living in was one in which you had to eliminate your enemies and the people that tried to steal from you; it was kill or be killed. To that end, having a powerful ally was something deserving honest gratitude.

Unlike the sailors, most of the adventurers had ended up going quiet and turning meek, but not out of fear. Rather, they seemed to be trying to express their respect. Though adventurer rankings were based on more than just one's ability to enact violence, overwhelming strength was still a force that called for powerful feelings of admiration.

The only member of the group whose expression was any different was Mordred. He, unlike the others, seemed more taken aback than anything. He ended up smiling in a bit of a wry manner as he called out to Fran.

「Man, you're strong. You're the first person I've ever seen whose strength and rank differ as greatly as night and day.」

He had a fair point. Fran was way more powerful than any C ranker should be.

「Listen up y'little shits! We're getting the hell out of this stretch of sea as fast as we possibly can!」

「Yessir!」

「The battle turned out to be a bit too flashy, y'see.」

Jerome was worried that the loud sounds and huge shockwaves would attract Magic Beasts to our current location, especially seeing as how there were a bunch of pirates floating around in the area. They would likely soon be preyed on.

Hence, it would be best for us to get the hell out of the area as soon as possible.

「Went too far.」

「I wouldn't say that. The lil' bit of risk we just incurred is well worth getting out of that situation scot-free.」

「While I do agree with the captain, I'd like to say that it would be better for you to keep try to keep the flashiness in moderation, if possible.」

Jerome was all smiles. He didn't seem to mind what we'd done at all. Buphett, on the other hand, took a bit more reasonable an approach to the whole situation. I decided to adopt it and be a bit more careful going forward.

「W-We'd like to ask a favour!」

「Please make us your apprentices!」

Fran started heading back towards her room right after she finished speaking with Jerome, but she was interrupted before she so much as left the area. Miguel, Liddick, and Naria rushed in front of her, prostrated, and began asking for her guidance.

「The way you fight is incredible.」

「We want to get strong, much stronger than we are now.」

「So please make us your apprentices!」

All three of them seemed earnest, frantic, and desperate for her aid. I wanted to help them, but I didn't feel like it was actually plausible for Fran to take them as her apprentices, as they'd get in the way of her travels. More importantly though, she didn't really seem like the type that'd actually be capable of teaching.

Still, she seemed to have something in mind.

「My apprentices?」

「Yes ma'am!」

「Please!」

「We beg of you!」

All three pressed their foreheads against the ship's deck as they awaited a response.

『Wait, are you actually gonna do it?』

(No. But interested.)

『We can't really have them accompany us though.』

There were two major issues associated with letting them travel with us. The first was that they'd slow us down, and the second was that they might figure out our secret.

(I know.)

『Just had to make sure. But what exactly are you planning then?』

(Nn. Will make apprentices for duration of boat trip.)

『Right. That does sound like it could work.』

Fran's suggestion did sound like it would work. The three had their own room, so they probably wouldn't be able to figure out that I was an

intelligent weapon.

『Well, I mean you do you. My only concern is, do you actually think you'll be able to teach them properly?』

(Nn? Yes. Because interested.)

『Well, alright. Just make sure you let them know that it's your first time teaching anyone. I'll be all for it so long as they don't mind.』

「Nn. Will make apprentices. But just during boat trip.」

「R-Really!?!」

「Thank you so much!」

「But never had apprentices before. No experience teaching. Still okay?」

「That's perfectly fine!」

「We're happy to have your guidance, Master!」

Fran sent Liddick a sharp glare and freaked him out a bit the moment he declared her his master.

「Don't call me master.」

「Huh? Why not?」

「Because no. Not me. Master only reserved for the best.」

I was glad Fran respected me and all that, but calling me “the best” was taking it a bit too far. That said, I wasn't going to stop her or anything. Shit would start getting really confusing if people started referring to Fran as “Master.”

「Can call me anything but Master.」

「A-Alright.」

「Think of different title.」

「S-Sure thing.」

The three adventurers managed to nod even though Fran was looking at them in a serious, intimidating manner. They looked at each other and quietly discussed a few things before finally simultaneously turning back towards her.

「W-What if we called you Ms. Fran then, like we would if you were our teacher?」

「Teacher?」

「Y-Yeah. Does that work?」

「Nn. Teacher acknowledged.」

She seemed to have taken a liking to the title, as she nodded while repeating “I’m a teacher,” several times over.

「Starting training immediately.」

「 「 「Yes Ma’am!」 」 」

The joy of being referred to as a teacher had totally pumped her full of motivation.

I was really curious as to exactly what she was going to tell them to do. Though I was really curious, I wasn’t really planning on butting in regardless of whether or not what she told them to do was anywhere even remotely within the realm of being sane. The three had asked for her to train them, not me. All that mattered to me was that Fran enjoyed the experience.

「First is...」

Fran paused for a moment, which in turn caused her three disciples to curiously repeat her words, as if to urge her to continue.

「Practice swings?」

「Practice swings? Got it! We'll be right on it!」

Though her tone seemed to carry a few hints of confusion with it, Fran had managed to get them off to a pretty decent start. A part of me had even started to suspect that she just might actually have a talent for teaching.

Miguel and Liddick abided by her orders and immediately began practicing. Miguel swung his greatsword up and down, while Liddick started to thrust his spear forwards and backwards.

Naria, however, seemed not to have any idea what to do. Fran's instructions had been directed towards her as well, but she was an archer. And as far as she was concerned, there wasn't really any point in swinging her bow around like a melee weapon.

「Umm... Am I supposed to join them? I don't really use swords or anything...」

「Only carrying bow?」

「Yeah, that's it.」

「Only using bow is bad. Will die in close combat.」

「Umm... So does that mean you want me to learn how to use some sort of weapon I can use up close too?」

「Nn. Recommend shortsword. Not for attacking. Defending or throwing only.」

Watching Fran in action allowed me to confirm that she really did have talent for instructing others. I was surprised at how well she was handling everything.

「Okay!」

「Will feel unnatural at first, but start today.」

「I definitely will!」

Fran pulled a rusted shortsword out of her dimensional storage and handed it to Naria. I was confused as to where she'd got it from, so I asked her about it. Apparently, it was something that she'd looted off one of the goblins we killed some time ago.

「Here.」

「Is it really okay for me to take it?」

「Nn. Rusted, can't be used in combat. But good enough for practice.」

「Thank you very much.」

Fran silently watched over Naria as she began to get a feel for the weapon. Her face had on it a clear look of satisfaction.

「Ummm... Am I doing this right? Do I just keep swinging it around?」

「Nn.」

Though Fran didn't actually give Naria any direct advice on how she was supposed to swing it around, I didn't disagree with her methods. Repetitive training was something that ultimately made one better at wielding a weapon, and the existence of skills only made said training all the more worthwhile. Hence, Fran didn't actually need to say anything to her newfound apprentice. All she needed to do was watch over her so she could make sure she continued to practice her use of the weapon.

And in fact, that was exactly what she did. She tirelessly continued to watch over all three adventurers without getting bored or distracted. As for me, I was really looking forward to seeing whether or not Fran would be able to drive them to improve by the time the boat trip was over. I was excited to finding out just how far they would go, if anywhere at all.

252. Fran As A Teacher

Chapter 252. Fran As A Teacher

Fran As A Teacher

Today was the day after Fran decided to accept the three adventurers she met back at the guild as her temporary apprentices.

It was still quite early in the morning, but she'd already gathered them so they could start another day's worth of training.

「First, stretches.」

「Stretches? What's a stretch?」

Liddick mulled over the word that he'd clearly never heard before, as if contemplating its meaning.

「I dunno, but I think it's probably something related to some sort of super training!」

「Are you sure? It sounds more like a spell to me.」

Miguel and Naria answered him in turn, each with their own respective interpretations of the exercise.

It turned out that stretching wasn't actually something this world's people normally did. They did have warm-up exercises, but none of them were meant to increase one's flexibility. The concept of stretching, as I knew it, was completely foreign to them. In fact, Fran herself had only started stretching after I instructed her to and informed her that it was good for her. And now, she was taking that bit of information and spreading it.

「Warm up before exercise.」

「Er, alright, but is there actually any point to it?」

Liddick began questioning the exercise before Fran could get to demonstrating or explaining.

「Nn.」

「Huh, interesting. Could you explain what the point is?」

「Warming up. Many benefits.」

「Many? Could you give a few specific examples?」

「Nn? Many is many.」

Although Fran knew that stretching would improve her condition, she wasn't able to explain why. She had clearly forgotten all the theory behind it even though I vividly recalled explaining it to her not too long after we first met. As far as she was concerned, stretching was just another routine exercise she drilled into her body for the sake of getting stronger.

All three of her apprentices had initially reacted to her clearly incomplete explanation with a dumbfounded stare. It took them a few moments to shake their heads free of their doubts and begin following her instructions.

「D-Do we really need to do this?」

「Shut up and just do it, idiot! Look, even Teach herself is doing it.」

Liddick continued asking questions, but Miguel silenced him with a shout.

「T-True...」

Though the spearman still seemed unconvinced, he felt that his party member's logic was both solid and believable.

「I'm sure she's doing it for a reason us lower rankers can't even begin to wrap our heads around.」

Sensing that, Miguel appended another convincing argument to the end of his explanation.

「Y-Yeah, you know what, you're probably right. They're even worth Ms. Fran's time, so they're definitely worth ours too!」

Mentioning his lack of knowledge caused Liddick to re-evaluate his stance yet again. Recalling his own faults made him much more willing to accept the unfamiliar exercise despite its purpose still being shrouded in mystery.

「You're right. I'm sure these movements will lead to some sort of incredible effect!」

Like Miguel, Naria had also decided to abide by Fran's instructions.

「Yeah, it has to have something to do with why she's so strong even though she's really young!」

Miguel took the lack of an explanation as a prompt to begin theorizing why Fran wanted them to stretch.

「That's true! It might have something to do with making training more efficient.」

The constant reinforcement his party members were feeding him eventually caused Liddick to come up with a more reasoned out answer.

「That has to be it!」

「Damn, do I like the sound of that. It's getting me hella pumped!」

Naria and Miguel both unhesitatingly latched onto his seemingly logical conclusion.

And surprisingly, despite being overglorified, it wasn't really that far from being the right answer. Stretching didn't have the sort of miraculous effect they were expecting, but it did reduce the chance of injury. Hence, it technically did have the potential to allow one to train more efficiently.

「Stretches, taught by Master.」

「Your master, teach?」

「Nn.」

「What kind of person was your master?」

「Amazing. Best master in world. Made me strong.」

「Wow! He sounds really impressive!」

「Master is best.」

Liddick paused to let Fran make a comment before continuing.

「And he was the one that taught you how to stretch? T-」

「See, I called it! This stretching thing's gotta have some sort drastic effect!」

Feeling validated, Miguel cut Liddick's comment off with his own.

「Let's give stretching our all!」

Neither of Fran's other two apprentices disagreed with Naria's suggestion.

They were all totally gung ho about it, and because of that, started off by trying to force their bodies as far as they could. Fortunately, Fran, who'd realized they misunderstood the exercise's purpose, stopped them before they hurt themselves. She patiently continued to instruct them until they started going about stretching the slow but thorough way one was supposed to.

Fran was doing her job as their teacher incredibly well. The three were moved by the fact that she, someone way stronger than them, was willing to carefully instruct them. Their respect for her had been bolstered many times over even though all she'd taught them to do was stretch.

「Next, sparring.」

「Eh?」

「Seriously?」

「W-Who will we have to go up against?」

Naria, Miguel, and Liddick reacted in that order. The first leaked a sound to represent dumbfounded surprise, the second proclaimed his disbelief, and the third ended up asking a question in hopes of a favourable response.

Even just considering the possibility of sparring with Fran had caused the colour to visibly drain from all three of the trio's faces. They clearly remembered getting totally creamed by her just the other day.

None of them wanted to fight her. They all hoped that she would have them spar with one another instead.

A hope she mercilessly crushed.

「Nn. Me, one by one.」

「...Alright.」

Resigning himself to death, Liddick nodded and acknowledged the idea.

「I can let you go first if you want.」

「Nah, you can go right ahead, Miguel.」

「Sorry Naria, but I'm with Miguel. Ladies first, you see.」

「Damn you Liddick, you traitor!」

Fran was getting tired of seeing the trio's pitiful argument, so she raised one of her arms and pointed in Miguel's direction.

「Swordsman first.」

「S-Seriously...?」

「Hurry up.」

「G-Got it, Teach.」

「Do your beeest.」

「Don't die out there bro.」

「O-Oh shut up! You two are going to be following me straight to hell in a few seconds anyways.」

Miguel stepped up, his face dyed in a shade of hopelessness.

「You attack.」

「H-Here I go then! Oraaaaaahhhh!」

Miguel came right at Fran with his sword in motion. There wasn't even the slightest bit of hesitation in his movements; he swung to kill because he knew just how much stronger than him she really was.

The nearby sailors, however, didn't. All they saw was a hulk of a man viciously lunging at a little girl with his greatsword in hand. Not all of them had watched yesterday's battle unfold, so most judged based off of appearances and assumed that Miguel was way stronger than Fran.

They'd found the sight of her teaching him, the thing they'd been watching up until now, entertaining and humorous. That was precisely why the sudden change in activity had caused them to start screaming in panic.

But their concerns were needless. The tragic event they'd expected to see simply never happened.

「Wind-up too big.」

「Toryaaah!」

「Power important, but no point if can't hit.」

「Shiiit!」

「Smaller swings.」

「Haaaah!」

「Too rushed.」

「Grgghhh!」

Fran basically didn't bother retaliating. She instead spent her time dodging while giving him advice. She would also lightly tap him whenever he exposed an opening in order to show him what he needed to work on.

Watching the two caused the sailors to freeze up; they were completely dumbfounded.

As far as Miguel was concerned, however, things were going roughly as expected. The only thing he didn't account for was that Fran wasn't actually going to retaliate. He was glad to see that she continued instructing him as opposed to just totally wrecking him.

He ended up sinking to the floor completely exhausted after maintaining his all out assault for approximately 10 minutes.

「Nn. Last attack, not bad.」

「T-Thank you very much!」

「Next, spearman.」

「Sure thing!」

Liddick took Miguel's place and began a second vigorous assault on Fran. He tried to strategically angle and shift his attacks such that they'd hit, but she totally saw through all of his tactics and maintained a flawless defense.

「Thinking too much before attacking.」

「Kuh!」

「Too easy to read. More variation.」

「Haaah!」

「Not bad, but too slow.」

She more or less treated him the same way she treated Miguel. She dodged all his attacks and occasionally pressed her palm against his body to demonstrate that he'd made a mistake that would've lead to his death. In the end, Liddick, like Miguel, ended up collapsing out of sheer exhaustion.

Last up was Naria. Firing projectiles from a bow was quite dangerous given that we were on a ship with a bunch of people on it, and Fran wasn't really able to offer too much bow-related advice in the first place. Hence, she instead focused on teaching Naria how to use her short sword.

Her methods remained the same, but she made sure to attack a bit more frequently since she wanted Naria to get more used to blocking than anything else.

「More attention to blocking. Less to attacking.」

「Got it!」

「Dodge if can't block.」

「Ow!」

「Use dagger for control. Feints.」

Naria ended up yielding a bit faster than Miguel and Liddick. I didn't really blame her. She was using a weapon she wasn't used to, and the need to block Fran's strikes had drained her of her energy really quickly.

But either way, Fran was satisfied. She'd proven herself capable of functioning as a teacher.

「Archer, keep practicing with short sword.」

「Got it!」

「Swordsman, spearman, focus on offensive footwork.」

The three nodded after Fran gave them some feedback. She'd successfully managed to root out their weaknesses.

「Archer, can also keep practicing with bow.」

But despite that, she continued to call them by their weapons as opposed to their names, and not because that was just how she wanted to refer to them. It was instead something that needed to be attributed to one of her bad habits: forgetting everything she wasn't really interested in. In other words, although she was interested in having them as her apprentices, she hadn't actually taken to any of the three individuals themselves. I couldn't help but wonder whether or not any of them would be able to get her to remember them by name before the Algieba reached its destination.

253. The Water Dragon Warship

Chapter 253. The Water Dragon Warship

The Water Dragon Warship

Two days had passed since Fran had sunk the five incoming pirate ships. It was currently around noon, the sun was shining directly overhead.

Fran was doing the same thing she'd been doing most of yesterday: training her apprentices. She made them stretch, sparred with them, and showed them how to move. The training itself was going well, but it was cut short by an interruption nonetheless.

The alarm bell began ringing during one of the group's cooldown sessions; its clangs sounded off over and over in a fourfold pattern.

We'd once again found ourselves subject to a pirate assault.

「L-Let's go teach!」

「Shit, pirates again!? Why the hell are there so many? Isn't this supposed to be the Kraken's Nest?」

Both melee ranged fighters, Liddick and Miguel voiced their opinions in that order the moment they heard the bell. The former suggested immediately jumping into the fray, whereas the latter groaned and complained.

「They might be a part of some sort of huge pirate brigade, the kind that can get its hands on brand new, state of the art ships capable of easily outrunning kraken.」

Liddick spoke up yet again. Unlike his immediate reaction, which seemed to function as a call to action, his second set of words seemed to contain a bit more thought.

「You serious man? We might be in some deep shit then.」

「Stop panicking Miguel. We've got Ms. Fran, our teacher, here with us. How's a pirate ship even supposed to begin to compare?」

「R-Right. Good point, Naria.」

Fran had her apprentices to stand by before heading over to the ship's bow. There, she found Captain Jerome already gazing at the incoming pirates through a telescope.

「How many?」

「I was just thinking it was about time for you to show up. They've got 12 this time 'round. There seem to be a couple bigger ships mixed in amongst their ranks too.」

12? Damn, that's pretty big for a band of pirates.

「They're waving the same flag as the five you sank a couple days back.」

「Their friends?」

「Seems like it. They've probably got their HQ somewhere in the area.」

「Sent main force?」

「Sorry princess, but no idea.」

At first, Fran and I had both thought that 12 was a pretty big number, but according to Jerome, it wasn't. Pirate fleets could get big, really big. The ones we were up against were, relatively speaking, so few in number that the captain couldn't actually figure out whether they were some small-time group's main fleet or a larger group's scouting party.

「The one thing I do know is that somethin' feels off.」

「Meaning?」

「No idea. I've just got a bad feelin' is all.」

「Want to see enemies.」

「Right. I'll let ya borrow this then.」

「Nn. Thanks」

Jerome handed Fran a spare telescope. She promptly picked it up, lifted it to her face, and joined him in gazing at the pirate fleet.

『You see anything?』

「Nn... That, weird-looking?」

『Uh, you're asking me? I was asking you cause I can't see shit...』

「So not even you know what that is, Black Lightning Princess?」

「Nn.」

The sight of a really buff dude standing next to a little girl, with the two both speaking in low, guttural tones, was one I couldn't help but find comical. Seeing them side by side made me want to burst into laughter.

「Oh!?!」

「What?」

「Look at that ship over there.」

Jerome seemed to have noticed something.

『Is he maybe talking about the ship's flag, Fran?』

「Nn? Weird flag above skull and crossbone flag.」

『Isn't that just some sort of pirate flag?』

「Strange insignia. Draconic.」

Well, it probably wasn't a pirate's flag if it looked draconic.

「That's... the Sheedran flag. Shit, I knew it!」

Jerome seemed to have figured something out, as, though he still had the telescope to his eye, he'd started to groan in displeasure.

「Well, I've figured out why I felt so on edge.」

「Why?」

「That draconic mark you saw? It's a sign that the ship's from Sheedran, one of the maritime nations to our north.」

We didn't really know much about Sheedran, so we had Jerome elaborate a bit further. According to him, it was an oceanic country whose borders spanned the archipelago with whom it shared its name.

The continent we just departed, Gilbard, had Chrom to its west and Brohdinn to its north. All you needed to do to find the Sheedran islands on a map was to mark the three continents, connect the dots to form a triangle, and find the centerpoint. Visualizing that allowed me to realize that it lay just south west of the demonic sea, the expanse of water between Gilbard and Brohdinn. Taking our current position into account, we'd probably actually be able to reach it if we headed straight north.

Wait, they've got a country's flag hoisted? Does that mean they're not actually pirates?

It turned out the whole situation was much more convoluted than I'd initially suspected.

「Y'see, thing is, Sheedran's status as a country is something that people like arguing about. The place was originally occupied by a group of notorious outlaws called the Sheedran Pirates. They were successful, so successful that they managed to absorb basically every other pirate band in the area. Before long, they started calling themselves a country instead of just a group of criminals. Probably shouldn't really think about that part of

it though. We ain't got no time here to talk politics. All that really matters is the gist. We'll be golden so long as you know that the Sheedran people descend from pirate folk, meanin' they like to be rough. I've even heard rumours sayin' that their entire population's made up of sailors.」

As far as Sheedran's citizens were concerned, the strong and charismatic belonged in society's upper rungs. The country's former king was especially outstanding. He had been so charismatic that he got every single one of the country's citizens to acknowledge him, and then some. Even people like Jerome looked up to him, and that was seriously saying something.

「The king was a hell of a man, but no one lives forever. He kicked the bucket a few years back. His successors jumped right into fightin' over his seat the moment he left it. Ended up throwing one hell of a shitshow.」

The flag fluttering about above the pirate flag indicated that the vessel belonged to Sheedran's royal family.

「Then, Sheedran's navy?」

「Not even Sheedran's navy would be brazen enough to fly a pirate's flag. You see how the royal flag's blue? That's apparently s'pposed to mean that it belongs to the first prince, the guy that lost the power struggle and got his ass kicked outta the country.」

The first prince took his men and started playing pirate after leaving his country. As Sheedran's royals had descended from pirates in the first place, it would technically be more accurate to say that he returned to his roots.

I wasn't quite convinced that we could really conclude that much from just a flag. It could've just been a fake. I didn't need to think too deeply to think up more reasons why that'd be than I could count. Besides, why would someone that's gotten their ass deported want to raise their old country's flag in the first place?

I had Fran express my doubts, but they were shot down. According to Jerome the flag was probably authentic, and the ship most likely bore some sort of connection with Sheedran's royal family.

「Why?」

「Try lookin' at the ship's bow.」

「Bow?」

『You see anything, Fran?』

「Nn... Chains?」

「Right. They're hooked up to a water dragon. Water dragon warships like that one were the whole reason the Sheedran were so powerful at sea.」

The concept of taming magic beasts and using them to pull seafaring vessels had been around for as long as people could remember, but Sheedran's first king was the one and only person to have ever succeeded in taming B ranked magic beasts, water dragons.

「There were only ever four of them, but those four alone gave the Sheedran enough power to plow through every other group of pirates and topple even the fleets sent by the most powerful of countries.」

Water dragon pulled ships were truly terrifying; they totally eclipsed regular ships in terms of both speed and firepower and dominated any battlefields they were sent to. Mentioning their traits and specialities caused Jerome to realize why he'd felt something was wrong. It was the speed. The water dragon ships were closing in on us as quickly as would speedboats.

「They've probably got the flag raised either cause they want to assert themselves, or 'cause they want to intimidate anyone they come across.」

The act of self-assertion sounded really stupid and reckless, but not too unlikely based on what Jerome had told us. After all, the prince had already gone as far as causing a shitstorm inside his own country despite his responsibilities.

「Dealing with 'em isn't something we'd want to do, but they've got too much speed on us for us to get away.」

「Won't fight?」

「Hell no, not against a Water Dragon Ship. Shit's worth a whole fleet 100 strong.」

「But can't escape.」

「Yeah, we're shit out of luck. Damn it! Why the fuck did we have to run into that monster of a ship!?!」

It looked like we weren't going to be able to retreat.

「The Sheedrans hate our country, so I doubt we'd be able to get away with losing only the usual 30 percent of our cargo either...」

Many of the less extreme pirates were willing to let you go scot-free so long as you were willing to pay a toll fee. The ones attacking us, however, had a Water Dragon Warship. They could care less about making an enemy out of a country. It was possible that they'd slaughter everyone on board even if we surrendered immediately.

「Fuck it. Our only hope is ramming their flagship head on and engaging in an all out melee. They've got too many cannons for us to stand a chance at range. Time for you adventurers to earn your keep! Think yer up for it?」

I didn't understand why the captain felt that engaging in melee combat was better than letting Fran do the thing she'd done last time. Logically speaking, that seemed like it'd be the way better choice.

「You'll be up against a water dragon, y'know? That shit's dangerous up close.」

「Can just attack from ship.」

Though water dragons were B ranked threats, it was rather unlikely for them to be capable of sniping us out of the air. All we had to do was find a few openings, and we'd be able to sink the dragon ship alongside all its escorts.

I couldn't say for sure whether or not we'd be able to take the water dragon itself down, but destroying the ship it pulled would honestly be a pretty easy task.

「I like the idea, but it doesn't get us out of the bind we're in. The water dragons could start going berserk if freed. We'd sink for sure if they attacked us.」

The only people that knew how to calm down a raging water dragon were Sheedran's higher ups.

「Hmmm.」

To be honest, I was at a loss. I had no idea what to do.

『We still have a bit of time to figure things out before we actually have to engage them in combat. What do you say to asking Mordred what he thinks?』

「Nn. Got it.」

The most optimal solution would be for us to totally wipe the pirates out, water dragon and all. Our biggest blocker was that we weren't sure we'd actually be able to kill the dragon in question. We'd never fought any sort of dragon before, so we didn't have a frame of reference we could use to figure out our chances. To that end, we needed to keep ourselves on guard, just in case.

254. The Water Dragon Warship's True Power

Chapter 254. The Water Dragon Warship's True Power

The Water Dragon Warship's True Power

Fran and a few others, Mordred included, gathered to discuss the plan going forward immediately after we confirmed that we were going up against a Water Dragon Warship.

「So, just to double check, you said you could wipe out all the ships escorting their flagship?」

「Nn. Leave to me.」

「I guess that means the only thing we'll have to worry about will be the Water Dragon Warship...」

It turned out that not even Mordred had any experience fighting water dragons.

「So you remember how you won against Fermus...? I think you'd be able to take the water dragon down if you used that again. Do you think that's something you can pull off, or does it need some sort of condition you can't fulfill right now?」

「Can use.」

「Great. In that case, all we'll have to do is come up with a contingency in the case that it manages to survive it.」

The ship was sure to get totally wrecked if we launched both Kanna Kamui and Black Lightning Advent at the dragon. It would undoubtedly be set free if we failed to take it down. To prevent that exact situation from unfolding, we needed a more reliable way to damage the dragon, a method of attack that was both precise and extremely high in terms of power.

(Telekinetic Catapult?)

『You were thinking that too?』

(Nn. Only option.)

Taking down the water dragon attached to the ship didn't seem like it'd be too difficult. In fact, it was probably way easier than taking down a wild water dragon. The chains that held the creature to the seaborne chariot it pulled greatly limited its range of movement.

Hitting was going to be fairly simple. All we had to worry about was doing enough damage to kill it through all its defenses—which I figured wouldn't be too hard so long as we hit one of its vitals.

「What if only attacked dragon?」

「That is probably the most ideal solution... but do you know of any ways to realize it?」

「Nn.」

「Then I guess we'll have to leave that to you too. God, I feel pathetic.」

Mordred's inability to act vexed him. He'd basically no choice but to have Fran, an adventurer way younger than he was, resolve everything all on her own. Worse yet, he wasn't being limited because he was weak, but rather, because he lacked the precise skill set needed to make a difference. His speciality, lava magic, was short ranged, but it could provide the ship with excellent defenses, but a focus on defense wasn't exactly what we needed at the moment.

A completely different thought crossed my mind as I contemplated Mordred's capabilities. The ship we were about to attack was one that did technically have a member of a royal family on board. Was killing their dragon and sinking flagship potentially going to lead to some sort of international outcry?

「Okay to sink enemy?」

「What do you mean?」

「Will country retaliate if prince dies?」

「Hahaha, no worries there. The vessel's flying a pirate flag, so sinking it is only the most natural course of action even if it does belong to Sheedran's navy. If anything, we'd be under more scrutiny if we didn't.」

「A pirate flag's basically a threat in and of itself, basically means “hand over your shit or die,” y'know? As far as we seafarers go, attackin' anyone with a pirate's flag is just common sense.」

His argument made sense to me, so we moved on to the next problem: figuring out the order in which we'd sink the ships. We had to choose between focusing on either the flagship or its escorts. Though the options seemed quite different, they resulted in the creation of a similar set of disadvantages. The water dragon warship was likely going to chase the Algieba down if we took down the escorts first. Likewise, targeting the flagship could lead to the rest of its fleet hunting the Algieba down. Making a decision would've been a much simpler task if we were capable of providing time estimates and whatnot, but we honestly had no idea how long we would need to actually beat the dragon.

Jerome ended up solving that problem for us by pointing out that the other ships would likely run the hell away if we took their flagship down, meaning we'd save on the number of things we had to fight if we got our priorities straight.

「They'd probably find it totally suicidal to go up against something that managed to take a Water Dragon Warship down, y'see.」

We found ourselves launching off the ship's deck once the meeting adjourned.

『Urushi, focus on dodging.』

「Woof!」

『Fran, try to aggro the dragon. Make it raise its head out of the water if you can.』

「Got it.」

It would be much more difficult for us to finish the dragon off if it stayed underwater. The dragon itself didn't gain any bonuses from being submerged, but it would still naturally be protected by the seawater around it. Water was much denser than air, and we lacked anything specialized for subaqueous combat. The vast majority of our attacks would simply end up losing force below the ocean's surface.

To that end, I asked Fran to barrage the dragon with weaker spells in an attempt to annoy it enough to lure it out where we could hit it harder.

Arrows, cannonballs, and even spells would periodically fire from the ship. But Urushi, swift as he was, avoided them all with ease. The ratio of spells to other projectiles was surprisingly high, and indicated that there were multiple mages on board the ship. That same statistic further served to indicate that the people on board really weren't just your typical pirates.

As they posed no threat, Fran ignored the incoming attacks and just continued to single mindedly throw spells at the water dragon. She didn't actually seem to be hurting it, but that didn't mean it wasn't getting annoyed.

All it took was five short minutes worth of pestering for the lizard-like beast to emerge from the water, its face adorned with an expression of rage.

To me, the term water dragon suggested something along the lines of a plesiosaurus, a big, underwater creature with flippers on its sides and smooth, slippery skin.

Clearly, I was wrong, or least mostly wrong. The only accurate part of my guess had been the general plesiosaurus-like shape. Unlike a plesiosaurus, however, it was covered in from head to toe with rugged scales, and even

had a sharp horn growing out of its forehead. Its rear was decorated by an abnormally long tail, and its back a pair of fins resembling degenerated wings. Likewise, its arms and legs were also part fin, and bore a strong resemblance to a sea lion's front two limbs. The way they were shaped led me to suspect that the water dragons would probably still be capable of moving around even on land.

The whole creature's body was covered in a layer of what appeared to be seawater. It'd appeared to have wrapped itself up in moisture in order to prevent its skin from dehydrating.

「Master!」

There was no point in thinking about what the dragon was doing or why it looked the way it did. All that could be saved for after we defeated it.

『Yeah, let's do it!』

Fran brandished me and pulled me into position. I'd finished all my preparations ahead of time; I was already ready.

「Haaaah!」

『Fuuuck yeaaaah!』

I boosted myself with Telekinesis and charged towards the dragon's head the moment Fran threw me. Despite being a B ranked threat, it was incapable of reacting given the combination of my speed and the lack of distance between us. Both my aim and our setup had been perfect. I smashed into the water dragon's unprotected face.

「Oryyyywaaat!?!」

A deafening sound echoed throughout my surroundings, but it was neither the sound of the water dragon's head exploding, nor the sound of a new hole opening up in its skull.

It'd instead been the sound of me popping the membrane surrounding the dragon's body. And that was it. There'd been a sort of magical barrier

underneath the layer of seawater. The combination of the two defensive walls had killed all my momentum and minimized the amount of damage I'd actually been able to inflict.

My telekinetic catapult had only managed a scratch. We'd thought that just one hit would be enough to take our foe down, but at this rate, it almost looked as if the dragon would be totally fine even after a couple hundred.

『Well, then how about trying this on for size? Lightning Blast!』

I cast the spell I'd gotten from leveling Lightning Magic up to level 5, Lightning Blast. Though it was rather short ranged, it more than made up for it with its high damage output. I'd assumed that using it would be a good idea because water-aligned life forms seemed like they'd probably be weak to electricity.

『Your defenses won't block shit if I attack you from point blank!』

Electrical energy zapped through the water dragon's head; there was so much of it that it even ended up illuminating our surroundings. But despite that, the water dragon took no damage whatsoever.

I didn't understand what'd happened.

It didn't have any skills that let it resist lightning.

「Groooooooooooooohhhhh!」

『Fuck!』

It seemed that the water dragon was about to try and bite me, so I quickly teleported back into Fran's hands.

「Okay?」

『I only just made it out, but yeah, I'm fine. But shit, that thing's defenses are rock solid. It's got a magical barrier, a layer of seawater, and its scales all working in tandem to protect it. It basically didn't take damage from

Telekinetic Catapult. It didn't seem to take any damage from my lightning magic either.』

I knew we were going up against a B ranked magic beast, but I honestly hadn't expected it to remain perfectly unscathed even after taking several attacks head on.

「Understood something by watching from afar.」

『What?』

「Ship supplying magic to water dragon.」

『Oh...? Yeah, I didn't notice.』

「Biggest mana flow when Master used magic.」

『Wait, so that means the ship has something that it can use to boost the dragon's defense!?!』

The moment I considered the existence of such a device was the moment I realized I should've been expecting it, or something like it, from the very start. Skilled mages and adventurers were difficult to come by, but there were still quite a decent number of them out there. Some sort of dragon-protecting countermeasure should've been par for the course.

Their ship was big, big enough for it to be carrying a whole boatload's worth of magical apparatuses. Moreover, it was a flagship that used to belong to a country that basically dominated every single major power out there in terms of its ability to do naval combat. Magical items with ridiculously powerful, unimaginable effects should've been one of the things we'd expected from them from the very start.

『Well, this is a huge pain in the ass if I've ever seen one. We can't kill the water dragon unless we blow the ship up, but that stupid oversized lizard's probably going to go on rampage the moment we let it loose..』

「Destroy ship first, hunt dragon after?」

『I dunno, that sounds like it could be pretty risky.』

We'd be forced into a pretty tough spot if the dragon decided to dive the moment it was freed. I highly doubted we'd be able to chase it and defeat it if it did. It wouldn't pose too much of a problem if it decided to flee, but, it'd be a huge pain in the ass to deal with if it decided it wanted revenge, and started attacking from the depths. We'd have literally no way of dealing with it if it did.

「Will dragon want revenge?」

『Dunno. It's a B ranked magic beast, so chances are, it's probably at least as smart as Urushi.』

And anything that smart was more than capable of wanting revenge.

「Understood. Troublesome.」

『Yeah, it looks like we've pretty much got no choice but to board them.』

I had no idea how they were actually retaining control over the water dragon, but I suspected it was likely either through a tamer or some sort of magic item. Either way, we'd probably be able to figure it out and deal with whatever it was if we managed to bring the fight to the enemy flagship.

『We're pretty much out of options, so let's head back to the Algieba for now.』

We wouldn't be able to comb through the entire ship on our own. It was way too big. We were going to need more hands on deck if we actually wanted to get much of anywhere at all.

255. The Start of a Melee

Chapter 255. The Start of a Melee

The Start of a Melee

Fran wholeheartedly apologized to Jerome, Mordred, and everyone else that'd placed their faith in her as soon as she got back on the Algieba. Honestly, I wanted to do the same. I was the one that'd kept going on and on about how we'd be able to pull it off, but the Water Dragon Ship had made me totally eat my words. I felt really bad about the fact that Fran had ended up apologizing in my stead.

God damn it, Water Dragon Ship! I swear I'll sink your ass for this!

I'd expected everyone to get mad at us and start yelling at us, but much to my surprise, none of them did.

「So you attacked the water dragon the same way you attacked the pirate ships we ran into the other day?」

「Nn.」

「If it won't take any damage from an attack strong enough to sink a ship in one blow, then we can't really blame you.」

Luckily for us, they were able to understand our circumstances.

「Looks like our only hope at winning this would be to board their flagship and take out whatever or whoever's controlling the dragon.」

「Sounds 'bout right.」

The captain nodded as he thought over Mordred's suggestion.

「Knowledge of control method?」

「None here. What about you, captain?」

「I ain't got any details, but I know the royal family's been handling them for ages.」

「Then, capture royalty?」

「Seems like a pretty good idea. We might be able to figure how to stop the damn dragon if we do. Or maybe, if we're lucky, we might even figure out how we can steal it from 'em, ship and all.」

「Okay.」

We'd be able to bring the Beastkin's Country a nice fancy souvenir. That said, figuring that part out was just a stretch goal. For now, our main focus was going to be stopping the Water Dragon Warship from doing its thing.

「Only problem is we have no idea how to get on board the ship. Far as I know, our only shot at it would be to ram 'em somehow.」

「Can leave to me.」

「You've got something figured out already, princess?」

「Nn. Can move everyone to enemy ship instantly.」

It was finally Dimension Gate's turn to shine.

It would've been difficult for us to open up a gate to any place outside the range of our vision, but the Water Dragon Warship had gotten close enough for its deck to be seen with the naked eye. Linking our ship and theirs was an easy task.

Our confidence was greeted by a set of skeptical-looking gazes. Fran had only just failed spectacularly despite talking big, and space/time magic was a super rare element, so most wouldn't bother suspecting that she could use it.

Realizing that we needed something to back our claim, I had Fran grab the captain's hat through a super short distance gate.

「Woah! That's an incredibly advanced spell...!」

「Y'can even use space/time magic? Colour me impressed.」

「That's our teacher for you!」

Adventurers and sailors alike reacted to our reveal with shock; they began talking amongst each other and making a whole lot of noise.

「So you can use the spell you just cast to get us onto the enemy's ship?」

The quickest to regain his cool and get back to business was Mordred. We were really lucky to have him and his level head on board.

「Nn. Can connect gate to ship's deck.」

「I guess that means we should keep this 'ere ship as far from theirs as we can.」

Likewise, Jerome was also fairly quick to begin contemplating the spell and its implications.

「Nn. No point in boarding enemy if ship sinks.」

「Do you think we'd actually be able to outrun that fleet of theirs, captain? It looks to me like they're faster than us.」

「Yer right, they're bound to catch up. The Algieba's pretty damned solid, but concentrated cannonfire's sure to put 'er in danger.」

Protecting our own ship was a must, so we proposed splitting up our forces. Specifically, our idea was to have Mordred lead a group of people aboard the enemy flagship while Fran sank the rest of the fleet as quickly as possible before hurrying over to reinforce him.

It didn't take long for the plan to be validated as our best option given the current situation.

「Alright boys, let's raid the enemy ship, kick asses, and take names. Are you ready!?!」

Mordred fired the men up as he got to his feet and prepared himself to board the pirate's flagship.

「 「 「Yessir!」 」 」

「Fran, if you could.」

「Nn.」

I opened the gate.

With Mordred at the lead, our forces began pouring through and invading the enemy ship. The strategy we'd employed was a sink or swim approach. Either we won, and everything went well, or we got totally fucked. If the ship sank, we were done for, so there was no point staying on board and just waiting around. Thus, literally every single adventurer and sailor we had on board ended up following Mordred over to the enemy's flagship, Fran's three merry disciples included.

「It's time to shine, Teach, so here we go!」

Liddick readied his weapon as he got ready to head through the portal.

「It's time to show off everything you've taught us!」

「We'll capture the enemy's commanders for sure! Just watch us!」

Likewise, Miguel and Naria totally pumped themselves the hell up as they awaited their turn to sortie.

「Don't push selves too hard. Very important, stay alive.」

「 「 「Yes ma'am!」 」 」

And with that, they left.

Personally, I didn't really want to see any of the three die for the sole reason that Fran would be sad if they did. Hopefully, they wouldn't try too hard.

I started to hear screams, mostly pirate screams, leak over from where the gate was connected. There were bound to be a ton of the seafaring ne'er-dowells on board, but I figured that our allies were rather unlikely to lose given that we had Mordred. Still, it would be in their best interest for us to blow up all the other ships as quickly as possible.

「Time to act.」

『You betcha.』

「Woof!」

「We're counting on you, princess!」

「Nn!」

We exchanged a few words with Jerome, closed the gate, and leapt into action. Time was of the essence, the longer we took, the more casualties our allies would suffer. Given that, we decided to go full throttle from the very start.

「Master! Ready!」

『On it!』

「Urushi, full speed ahead.」

「Woof!」

I transformed into the anti-ship sword form I'd first adopted a couple days back as Urushi plunged straight towards the enemy ship. Fran raised and swung me the moment we passed it by. The combination of her attack's power and the additional boost brought about by Urushi's speed allowed her to cut through it like a hot knife through butter.

A single strike was all it took her to bring my blade from the ship's front all the way through to its back, bisecting it and sinking it one go. Though he wasn't able to continue using gravity to his advantage, Urushi refused to slow down. He pumped his legs over and over, bringing her from ship to ship.

Not a single one of the seacraft he passed survived. Each and every single one was torn right in two. The pirates weren't slow to react, they immediately began bombarding him with their attacks, but to no avail. It simply wasn't possible for them to hit Urushi at his top speed.

While Urushi and Fran targeted nearby ships, I focused on the ones a bit further away. The might of Thor's Hammer struck every ship too far outside my companions' reach.

Urushi managed to maintain his speed for a full 10 minutes, just enough time for us to loop around and sink all the fleet's vessels, flagship aside.

「Nn. Only Water Dragon Warship left.」

『We were pretty lucky that all the other ships were small enough for us to sink in one hit each.』

「Urushi, go to Water Dragon Warship.」

「Woof!」

All we had to now was stop the Water Dragon Ship before it reached the Algieba. In other words, we probably needed to board the ship and find the former prince.

Fran leapt off Urushi's back as soon as we arrived, and started cutting down the pirates that happened to be where she landed.

「Haaaaah!」

「Higyaaah!」

「S-Shit, more enemies!」

She loosed an intense aura of bloodlust after dispatching a couple enemies, one powerful enough to stop every nearby pirate in their tracks. I used the time they spent unmoving to quickly appraise them all, but failed to find anyone that seemed noteworthy in our immediate vicinity.

『Hey Fran, you see how, over there, there's a guy with a huge ass spear? He's an executive. Same goes for the mage that's standing right beside him.』

「Only need to capture them?」

『Pretty much. Let's get rid of everyone else since they'll probably just get in the way when we interrogate their execs.』

「Nn. Got it.」

Fran nodded before charging into the pirate mob.

「Gyaaaah!!」

「Hiiii!!」

The pirates panicked as she cut her way through them. The moment she joined the fray was the moment they realized they were doomed. She moved so fast they weren't even capable of seeing her, let alone keeping track of her. Every time she did appear, their allies would groan scream as they were slaughtered like lambs. But even then, they still wouldn't even so much as catch a glimpse of her. Their lines of sight were cluttered by the fountains of blood erupting from their friends' corpses.

Only after murdering another ten or so pirates did she finally pause to issue a threat.

「Choose. Jump overboard or die.」

She spoke in a low, intimidating tone that only those standing right by her could hear, yet, half the pirates present reacted to it and immediately plunged themselves into the sea.

The other half, the remaining half, managed to keep their wits about them and remain on deck despite her threats. I couldn't tell whether their decisions had stemmed from loyalty, or maybe something like their creed as pirates, but either way, they'd chosen to fight. In vain.

「Made choice? Then die.」

Fran stepped forward.

We'd telepathically told all our allies to move behind her; all the people in front of her were pirates.

And so, as she took a second step, she swung me.

I extended my blade and warped my general shape into that of a five meter long katana the moment she moved and activated a sword technique. Though she'd only swung once, the combination of my form and her masterful attack had reaped 20 entire pirates and heavily injured many more.

All the pirates that'd survived the attack fell onto the deck, groaning in pain. Ignoring them, she continued to step forwards, her gaze focused only on the two execs we'd spotted earlier. Neither was able to move. Both stared right back at her, frozen in terror.

...Wait. Why's the guy with the spear got his face all covered in blood?

『So uh... Fran...』

(Nn. Made small mistake.)

Apparently, we'd happened to make a small incision on the spearman's forehead. We were pretty damned lucky. We would've accidentally killed him before he told us what we wanted to know had he even been the slightest bit closer. That said, almost getting killed had him totally scared shitless, so in a wall, things did kinda end up working out.

「How to control water dragon?」

「O-Oh god!」

「I-I-I'll tell you everything I know! P-Please, just don't kill me!」

256. Suarez

Chapter 256. Suarez

Suarez

Fran disarmed the two executives she captured before sitting them down so she could interrogate them.

Her goal was of course to get them to divulge the Water Dragon Warship's secrets.

「How to control dragon?」

「N-No idea.」

「Nn?」

「Giiiiiiii!」

One of the execs tried to play dumb, to which Fran reacted by mercilessly stabbing me into his thigh.

「How to control dragon?」

「T-The only ones that can tell you that'll be the boss and the guys right under him!」

「W-We're telling the truth! We're just regular pirates that happened to get raised up through the ranks! They wouldn't tell the likes of us anything!」

「Tell all known information. Even if insignificant.」

「I-I'll tell you everything I know, so please, pull your sword out of my leg!」

「Nn.」

The pirate that agreed to talk began wailing in a mix of pain and fear as she removed me from his thigh.

His companion, the mage, paled. He realized that he would soon suffer the same fate as the spearman he'd been working with should he refuse to talk. To that end, the small framed caster immediately began spouting off everything he knew, and even went as far as to elaborate on things without us needing to ask.

Though he really didn't know too many details, he was at least capable of confirming that the dragon simply seemed to obey orders; it wasn't being controlled through some sort of large scale magic item. That said, it would only really ever listen to the prince, the guy the pirates called their boss.

Asking them about exactly how the prince was controlling the dragon failed to lead to any results. They didn't even know whether it just recognized him as someone it should listen to, or if it was being manipulated through some other means. In other words, smaller scaled items, skills, and spells were all possibilities we still had to consider.

The most useful thing we got them to do was tell us a bit about the prince. His name was Suarez Sheedran. He was supposedly a brown-skinned hulk of a man with silver-blond hair adorning his head. He was known for being quite strong; the average adventurer supposedly wouldn't be able to match him. His main weapon was a massive battleaxe, one he was likely to be carrying around right this moment. Capturing him sounded like it was going to be much easier said than done.

Of course, we also managed to get them to talk about the magical device they were using to strengthen the dragon. Apparently it was quite large, and near the ship's rear, but as the part of the ship holding it was cut off from the rest, we wouldn't be able to find it if we just walked around.

Annoyingly enough, neither of the two we captured knew how to get into the cut off section. In fact, they were both oblivious to its precise location. This, of course, stemmed from the fact that the prince didn't trust them. They, unlike many other executives, hadn't started off as his followers. They were instead just the former top brass of the pirate brigades that used

to occupy the area prior to the prince's arrival. Though he did trust them enough to allow them to keep their positions, the prince basically never let them in on anything too important.

「W-We've told you everything you asked for!」

「S-So please, don't kill us...!」

「Got it.」

「T-Thank you so mguraaaaghh!」

Fran kicked the mage right in the face. The sheer force of the strike sent him spiraling off the ship's deck.

「D-Didn't you say you wouldn't kill us if w-we told you what you wanted!?!」

The spearman screamed indignantly as he watched his friend plunge into the sea.

「Didn't kill. Just dumped in sea because in the way.」

「W-What the fuck is that suppraaaaghghhhh!」

She wasn't wrong. Fran hadn't actually killed either of the two men. Instead, she'd just knocked them overboard while also depriving them of their consciousness. Though it was rather likely that they'd die, they could still live if they were lucky, so it would be more accurate to chalk their deaths up to their own inability wake as opposed to attributing them to her. Besides, they were pirates, professional seafaring pests. As far as I was concerned, they were sure to survive.

「Damn Teach, you're totally merciless!」

「I really love that part of her.」

「It looks like we should take after her example and start doing stuff like that too.」

Fran's apprentices threw in a few comments as they watched the second man follow the first into the sea. The first two, Miguel and Naria, seemed impressed, whereas the third, Liddick, began making note of her behaviour. Realizing that they'd been watching led me to contemplate whether or not they would benefit from imitating her merciless tendencies. My first instinct was to refute the thought, but then I considered the possibility that they might one day get stabbed in the back and die because they sympathized with a foe. From that, I determined that Fran's approach would probably be best for them in the long run. Probably.

『A-Anyway, why don't we go hunt Suarez down?』

「Nn.」

We informed all the other adventurers still on the ship's deck about Suarez so we could have them help us look for him. We hadn't been able to talk to Mordred's party directly, as they'd already started invading the ship's interior, but, we attempted to make up for it by asking everyone else to relay the information to him if they happened to see him.

I had no idea exactly how strong Suarez was, but there was a chance that, Fran aside, Mordred's party would be the only ones capable of dealing with him.

「Urushi, search too.」

「Woof!」

All the Algieba's sailors already knew that Urushi was Fran's familiar, so the chance of him getting attacked by one of our allies mid-search was incredibly low.

『Capture him if you can, but come right back if you think he's too strong for you, alright?』

「Woof woof!」

「Start.」

With a single word and nothing more, Fran ventured into the ship's interior through the nearest exit.

Our allies had already taken out most of the pirates within, so we were able to look around without any interference—or at least that was how it went until we went down a flight of stairs.

Enemies began attacking us the moment we descended, and continued to do so as we explored. Not a single one of them was anywhere close to being Fran's match, but they were still quite annoying nonetheless.

A dense aura of battlelust began to assault us as we moved a bit further along. It seemed we'd found our mark.

『Fran!』

「Nn!」

Fran traced it to a remarkably large door, which she kicked down to reveal something along the lines of an empty warehouse.

Several adventurers and pirates were facing off against each other in the room's center. The bloodlust Fran had tracked down had originated from the two most powerful people in the room.

One was our ally, Mordred. And naturally, the other was Suarez, the pirate we'd been looking to capture.

The Sheedran prince was honestly quite strong. He had Divine Bow Arts, and several other skills indicated he was obviously an accomplished warrior. But, despite that, I didn't find him to be qualified enough to function as the captain of a pirate ship. He lacked too much in the boatmanship department for me to really think him a sailor.

Unfortunately, appraising him didn't tell me much about how he was controlling the dragon. None of his skills indicated that he was capable of taming or summoning monsters.

「You're idiots, retards! Did you really think you could defeat a Water Dragon Warship?」

「It's true that your ship is strong, probably the strongest there is, but that doesn't mean shit if we can just take the people aboard it.」

「Gyahahaha! Nice joke! I'll torture you even more than all my usual prey before feeding you to the fishes!」

So he likes torturing the people he captures? That's pretty low...

The two combatants engaged as I pondered the prince's distasteful hobbies.

「Dorryaaaahhhh!」

Suarez swung his battleaxe straight at the crown of Mordred's head. His attack had quite the speed to it; he looked to be at least as strong as a C ranked adventurer.

But despite that, we weren't even the slightest bit concerned.

「Too slow.」

「Kuh! How impertinent!」

Mordred received the blow head on with his spear and cleanly parried it—a move which appeared well within Suarez' calculations. The axe-wielder didn't let the resulting impact throw him off balance. He promptly twisted the weapon around and brought it back for a second slash. I had to admit, the technique was skillful, and it would've been more than enough for him to take down the average adventurer.

But Mordred was no average adventurer.

「Metal Control」

「W-What the!?!」

「Your axe is mine. It's already fallen under my control.」

At a glance, it almost looked as if Mordred had stuck his right arm up out of desperation after realizing that he couldn't block the attack, but of course, that wasn't the case.

The massive axe that had seemed to be on course to sever Mordred's arm bent out of shape the moment it was about to make contact. It almost looked like the battleaxe had actually been made out of clay and not steel.

Though Suarez had already basically lost, Mordred didn't let up. He assured his victory by manipulating the axe's metal and wrapping it around Suarez' body. The way it coiled around its former wielder had almost made it appear like some sort of living creature.

Mordred's actions had demonstrated why Lava Magic was so fearsome. It allowed its wielder to take control of and freely manipulate metal-based substances.

「Shit! What just happened!?!」

Suarez' axe, or rather, his newfound fetters, had already returned to a hardened state. The prince tried to break free, but soon found himself unable escape his restraints. The steel hadn't just been melted down and reshaped. It'd also be strengthened.

「Guooooooooohhhhh! Release me, damn it!」

「Stop struggling. It won't be possible for someone as weak as you to escape.」

And with that, the prince was made our prisoner.

257. A Discussion with Suarez

Chapter 257. A Discussion with Suarez

A Discussion with Suarez

「Y-Your Highness!」

「Shit! Damn you! Let our boss go!」

The prince's many subordinates immediately began kicking up a fuss the moment they realized he'd been captured.

「In the way.」

「Gyaaaah!」

「Guaaaahh!」

But Fran budded into the conflict and cut them down before they could so much as make a move.

「So how did the whole pirate ship thing end up going, Fran?」

「Sank all but this one.」

「That was quick. Nice job.」

「You too. Captured captain.」

「I was just lucky. But enough of that, let's save singing each other praises for later, shall we? We've got a bit of an interrogation to get out of the way first.」

「Nn.」

Suarez still had quite a bit of fight in him. His expression was fierce, and expressed that he wasn't willing to give up. That wasn't to say, however,

that he wasn't intimidated. He twitched a bit, as if daunted, when Fran and Mordred approached him.

「Release me, you mongrel!」

「Why?」

「Insolent! Do you not know who I am!?!」

「Let me guess. A guy that leads a group of criminal scum?」

「Filth, causes problems by being alive?」

「The lot of you are all ignorant fools! I am a man of great importance, Sheedran's king!」

「Mhm. I'm sure you are.」

「How dare you!」

Mordred, being the total badass he was, ignored Suarez' shouts. He instead lifted a foot and started grinding it into the prince's face—an action that Fran soon began to imitate.

「Cease that immediately! I will allow you to acknowledge me as your lord, and yourselves as my retainers if you immediately prostrate yourselves before me and apologize!」

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. There had to be something wrong with the prince's head. He seemed to think that his offer would entice his assailants despite the fact that they'd already defeated him and tied him up.

And he meant it. The expression on his face demonstrated that the offer was as serious as could be.

「I am one of Sheedran's royals, a lord that commands water dragons. All you have to do is the natural act of licking my shoes. Do that, and I'll treat you no different from any other in my service.」

There was no way the prince was simply bad at reading the mood, he must've had some sort of communication disorder or something. I was surprised he lived as long as he did, and I also now fully understood why he'd gotten ripped off the throne and deported.

Still, I could see why the pirates had taken his side. His lack of brain cells was a pretty major issue if you asked me, but he was still strong, and did still have control over a Water Dragon Warship. To them, his threats held plenty of weight; he could easily annihilate them if they failed to yield. Moreover, serving him wasn't without its merits. There were clearly many payouts, of both the immediate and potential future variety. Besides, I highly doubted he'd gotten himself captured by them before starting to negotiate. Given all the aforementioned circumstances, their allegiance to him was almost a given.

That said, neither Fran nor Mordred hadn't bothered caring even the slightest bit for what he had to say. They ignored everything he had to say and immediately began interrogating him.

「Tell everything about controlling water dragons.」

「We won't hurt you if you tell us what we want to know.」

「What!? Why would I tell you anything!? 」

The prince refused to talk. I couldn't tell if he was demonstrating a royal's pride, a pirate's obstinacy, or the simple fact that he couldn't read the mood. But either way, he shut his mouth and turned his face away from his interrogators.

「Fmph.」

「Guaaahh! The paiiin!」

Fed up, Fran pressed once again jammed her foot into Suarez' face and started to grind down on it even harder than she had the first time.

「Cease that immediately, woman!」

Though many would rejoice from having Fran step on them, to the non-masochistic, it was merely a sort of humiliating torture.

「Last chance. Explain controlling water dragons.」

Fran's gaze went cold. She started emitting a heavy aura of bloodlust as she looked down upon the prince. It was powerful enough to make the average person shit their pants. Still, the prince managed to both retain his wits and return her glare as he continued to complain.

「Stop going on and on about that and release me!」

A foolish move.

「Got it.」

「Good. Finally, you understand. Now hurry up and undo these res-」

「Got that you won't talk yet.」

「Gyaaaaah!」

「Heal. Next, feet.」

「S-Stop! Cease that immediately!」

「Say please.」

「H-How dare you ask that of s-」

「Fmph.」

「Gyaaaaaaaaah!」

Fran continued to violently thrust me into his body and casting heal to make up for the hp he lost. At first, Suarez refused to talk. He resisted until the situation repeated itself five times over. Only then did he finally realize that he was unable to appeal to her through the use of his authority.

「P-Please stop! N-N-No more!」

He started to beg her, his face dyed in terror.

「Explain controlling water dragons. Will stab if anything you say anything else.」

Though we didn't really care for his pleas, we did stop so we could repeat our demands.

「Fine! I'll tell you! So stop, cease your acts of viole-」

Stab

「Giiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!」

「Heal.」

「Aarrrrgghhhh! Stop iiiit!」

「Said to only explain controlling water dragons.」

「I-I understand! The water dragons are bound by contract to obey any orders made by anyone with Sheedran's first king's blood flowing through their veins. That's why they'll listen to whatever I say!」

And so, the prince began to speak. Fran threatened him every single time he hesitated by brandishing me, whereas Mordred played more of a good cop kind of role and spoke to him almost sympathetically. The combination of these two methods allow us to draw everything we wanted out of him. Unfortunately, dealing with him was still a pain in the ass. He would start getting all cocky and shit every single time anyone softened even the slightest bit, so Fran had ended up grinding me against his thighs upwards of 30 times throughout the process. I almost felt like we'd gone a bit overboard, but it honestly couldn't be helped. He simply just never learned his lesson.

His abnormally strong willed and ridiculous sense of pride honestly impressed me. Literally anyone else would've long broken into tears and

become obedient. He, on the other hand, somehow managed to regain his defiance every other time he opened his mouth.

Still, we'd made him bend enough to learn what we'd wanted. The water dragons weren't being manipulated through the use of some sort of magic item. Their obedience to him stemmed from the first King of Sheedran's ability to use contract magic.

I was surprised to hear that the dragons the nation used today were the very same ones that they'd had from the very start, well, sort of. The nation had started off with seven dragons. Three had fallen in battle, only four remained.

The dragons weren't the only thing that left me astonished, the device that was used to enhance them did the very same. Their boosts weren't unconditional. Bolstering the dragon's defenses came at a cost. Dragons had powerful offenses, and accidentally firing upon one's allies was quite the concern should the dragon failed to aim its attacks precisely. To that end, the device's designers had traded its capacity to autonomously use breath and other similar abilities for a magical barrier alongside greatly increased self healing and stamina. The only way for the dragon to use its long ranged attacks would be for Suarez to order it to do so.

Learning of this gave rise to a pretty big problem. We couldn't destroy the device without putting the Algieba in danger. The moment we blew it up would be the moment the dragon once again became capable of barraging our ship of its own will.

「What do?」

「The best way to handle the situation would probably to get our friend here to order the dragon to stand down.」

「Only option?」

「Yeah. Once we're done that, we can destroy the item boosting its defense before finally slaying it. We should be able to give you a hand with that last part if its rendered defenseless.」

With that decided, Fran, Mordred, and all the other adventurers present lugged Suarez up to the ship's deck. so he could order the dragon not to attack.

「It looks like we won't have any problems stopping the dragon, but destroying the defensive device it uses may need some more thought.」

「Leave to me. Can teleport.」

「Good point, that sounds like it'd be the best option. I'll leave destroying it up to you then.」

「Nn. Then will check on device once first. Easier to teleport to known locations.」

We could go back and forth between several locations with ease if we decided to drop a few beacons.

「Then leave that to you.」

By “that,” Fran had been referring to Suarez; she'd decided to leave him behind with Mordred.

「Yeah. Be careful.」

「Nn.」

With everything considered and out of the way, Fran set off towards the location Suarez had described to her.

258. No Rest For the Weary

Chapter 258. No Rest For the Weary

No Rest For the Weary

Fran and I navigated our way through the ship's interior, only to eventually stop ourselves in front of an average-looking wall. Nothing about it seemed out of the ordinary, but we were confident that it served as the entrance to the room that contained the device bolstering the water dragon's defenses. Suarez had given us a fairly thorough description when we asked him where we needed to go find it.

We investigated the wall by knocking on it a few times and confirmed that the space behind it did indeed seem hollowed out. The prince had told us exactly what we needed to do to access the room, and I'd memorized all the necessary steps, but we decided to circumvent the prince's ritual through the use of brute force. The method described to us had been far too complex; we simply didn't want to bother with it.

"Fmph."

Fran swung me several times and filled the wall with incisions before giving it a light kick. The cuts themselves had been so clean that they'd allowed the wooden surface to retain its form, but the force she'd applied with her foot had caused its now-unstable structure to collapse. The first thing we did as we stepped into the room was gaze upon the device within. I couldn't help but immediately think of the thing we saw as the product of eccentricity. I'd only ever seen one other device like it. It was a technological oddity, one made from the union of magic and machinery, a pair of clashing concepts.

The magical part, the device's core, was comprised of two smaller pieces: a giant crystal, and the sculpture that supported it. Though the crystal shone like a jewel, my eyes were more drawn to its base, a delicately crafted carving seemingly made out of bone.

The mechanical part, the device's shell, was installed to enclose both the crystalline core and the support that held it in place. Its shape almost seemed to resemble that of a sports car's engine; metallic pipes protruded from it in the same way as would a muffler.

All in all, the strange device looked like it'd come out of a game that mixed steampunk elements with more fantastical ones. In other words, it appeared to be the type of device one would discover in F*inal F*antasy, as opposed to something one would stumble across while playing Dr*gon Qu*st. Like the Algieba's propulsion device, it reminded me very much of heavy machinery even though I knew its functions were derived from a set of magical principles as opposed to the laws of physics.

"Mmph." Fran grunted as she felt a sudden wave of magical energy pulse through her body.

"Holy crap that thing's using up a ton of mana," I thought.

The room had been constructed in such a way that magical energy wouldn't escape it. We weren't able to feel the sheer amount of magical energy whirling around within it until we entered. The device was clearly very powerful; it would've been easy to detect had the room not been manaproofed.

Wait. What if we just took it instead? Destroying it seems like it'd be a waste of a perfectly good item. The water dragon would lose its buff even if I just shove it into my dimensional storage. There really isn't any reason not to take it, is there?

I settled on the idea of stealing the device, but decided to save working out the details for later.

"I'm going to want to take this thing for ourselves a bit later, but let's just drop a beacon and head back up to the deck for now."

"Nn." Fran acknowledged my suggestion, turned around, and got ready to leave.

She'd originally planned on walking her way back up to the deck, but her plans were thrown off the moment I finished setting up a beacon. The boat suddenly began violently shaking from left to right and back and forth at random.

"Earthquake...?" Fran muttered.

"Probably just feels that way because we're inside the ship. Something probably happened. Let's hurry back up to the deck."

"Nn!" She nodded.

Fran rushed to the deck, darting through the ship's swaying corridors and dashing up the stairs on her way. The sheer force with which the vessel continued to wobble throughout her journey seemed to indicate a major change in the status quo.

Upon arrival, we expected to see the water dragon flailing about, but we were instead greeted by a sight completely outside our expectations.

"T-The fuck is that!?"

"Big octopus legs?" Fran tilted her head in confusion.

"Wait! Fuck! Those are kraken tentacles!"

"Oh."

The catkin nodded as she observed the long, thick, wriggling tendrils. Several of the kraken's feelers had already wrapped themselves around the dragon, binding it and forcing it to be subject to the oversized octopuses' attacks.

"What!?" I groaned as I caught sight of our ship out of the corner of my eye. "Something totally busted up one of the Algieba's masts!"

"There you are!" Seeing that she'd emerged from the warship's interior, Mordred rushed over and filled Fran in on the status quo.

“What happened?” Again, she tilted her head in a questioning manner.

“Well, you see...”

He elaborated on the present state of affairs by describing what had been between when we left and when we returned.

Mordred brought Suarez over to the dragon so he could order it to stand down—exactly as we’d discussed ahead of time. Unfortunately, the prince had other ideas. Though we hadn’t the intention, Suarez had been concerned that we would execute him once he issued the order, so he’d told the water dragon that he wanted it to go on a rampage. Mordred immediately attempted to threaten him into rescinding the command, but he refused. No amount of pain or punishment was enough to force the over-dignified royal into submission.

Freed from its fetters, the water dragon loosed a breath attack towards the Algieba. It tore down one of the galleon’s masts and damaged its deck in the process. Our ship was sturdy enough to withstand the hit, but it wouldn’t last for long if the assault continued. Fortunately, and unfortunately, the dragon was attacked by a group of kraken right before it could launch a second projectile.

“Those, kraken?” Fran pointed at the mollusks, her tone filled with curiosity.

“A whole three of them.” Mordred frowned. “I guess you could say they technically saved our skins, but it looks like executing our old plan is out of the question. Let’s hold off on destroying the dragon’s augmentation device for now.”

“Got it.”

As always, Mordred’s judgement failed to disappoint. Water dragons were stronger than kraken—they would almost undoubtedly come out on top given a one versus one scenario—but the difference in strength was not nearly significant enough for the dragons to take on two kraken, let alone three. Our water dragon was currently faring quite well in combat, but only

because its defenses had been bolstered. It seemed rather prone to perishing the moment the device supporting it was deactivated, especially given that it was already in the process of being attacked on all sides.

And if the water dragon died, the kraken would likely set their sights on the Algieba. Preserving it was undoubtedly in our best interest.

“Can’t just kill all?” Fran asked as she stared down all four monsters present

“I do think we can, but it’s probably not a good idea.” I muttered.

Both types of monsters were highly specialized hunters. The water dragon was highly offensive, and quite dextrous. The kraken had outstanding defenses, and they were known to regenerate. I was confident that we could defeat all four monsters regardless of their specialities so long as we used both Kanna Kamui and Black Lightning Advent, but doing so would leave us exhausted—and that was incredibly short sighted.

The area we were currently in was called the Kraken’s Nest. It was not only possible, but rather likely that kraken would continue attacking us even after we left the water dragon’s immediate vicinity, Draining ourselves was unwise.

“I’d say we should probably try to escape while the water dragon and kraken go at each other,” Mordred suggested.

“Got it. Return to Algieba?”

“Yeah. Could I get you move us over again? All our men are already standing by on deck and waiting for you.”

Mordred had clearly already considered our options and come to a conclusion before even prior to our return. Both the sailors and adventurers had already been organised so that they would be ready to depart at a moment’s notice.

All the adventurers were present and accounted for, but we had lost a few sailors in the exchange.

It's kind of unfortunate, but that's just how these things go. I contemplated. A melee was a type of messy skirmish. It just wasn't possible for everyone that participated in it to come out alive.

Putting the relatively depressing thought aside, I opened a Dimension Gate so the survivors could make their way back to the Algieba.

To be honest, I was disappointed. I really wanted to kill the water dragon. I wanted both its core and the materials we could loot off its corpse. I'd also really wanted to steal the device that bolstered its defenses, but it looked like I would have to give it all up. Fran's safety was much more important than any amount of material gain.

All the sailors and adventurers, Mordred aside, left through the portal, leaving Fran and the B ranker as the last two individuals remaining on the enemy's ship.

"Give me a second." He commanded. "I'll cast a spell to make it harder for them to chase us down."

"Doing what?"

"I can't do too much against monsters this strong, but I should at least be able to lock them down a bit."

Mordred pulled an elixir out from one of its pockets and swallowed its contents in a single gulp. Appraising the strange liquid allowed me to identify it as an item that drastically increased both one's proficiency in lava magic and overall magical prowess for several minutes.

"There goes a whole years worth of income," the B ranker grumbled.

"That expensive?"

"Yeah, but it's worth it. It's extremely effective and doesn't have any side effects."

Wait, just how much does a B ranker make in a year anyways? Hmm... Probably somewhere around three million a year, I guess? Wait, that potion costs three whole million? Shit! Though I guess it does kind of seem like it'd be worth it...

Consuming the potion had boosted Mordred's magical powers by a factor of five. He promptly took advantage of his strengthened abilities and cast a spell.

“Vulcan's Order!”

Both the ship's anchors floated from their respective positions over to Mordred. He manipulated the two 10 meter wide lumps of metal, melted them down and merged them to form a single, massive, steel serpent—a feat that would have been impossible had he not consumed an expensive potion.

The massive metallic snake abided his commands. It wrapped itself around both the oversized octopuses and the dragon they were assaulting and bound them as it hardened. Despite their size, the monsters were unable to escape. His spell locked them in place.

“Whew...” He relaxed his shoulders and heaved a sigh. “I've strengthened it as much as I could, but it won't last too long against monsters that powerful. Let's get out of here.”

“Okay.” Fran grabbed Suarez—who'd been rendered unconscious after refusing to listen to Mordred one too many times—and followed the more experienced adventurer through the portal and back onto the Algieba.

After passing through the gate, she turned around and gave us a bigger picture view of the whole kraken-dragon engagement. Frankly, it looked like a fight between several of the giant monsters you'd often see in P*wer R*ngers.

“Wow.” Fran stared at them as they struggled against one another and their newfound metal bindings.

“Any ship that gets caught up in that is bound to sink.” I mused.

Mordred’s spell had denied the water dragon the opportunity to chase us. We would, without a doubt, be able to open up some distance between it and us so we could escape.

“More.”

“Oh god, there’s even more!?” Fran’s statement caused me to panic.

Another Kraken appeared on the water dragon ship’s stern, seemingly attracted by the commotion.

“Man the sails! Full speed ahead, get us the ‘ell out of here immediately!” Jerome yelled.

“Master. There, look.”

“Wher—Oh shit. You have got to be kidding me.”

Only then did I realize that, by “more,” Fran hadn’t been referring to the kraken, but rather, the arrival of another sort of creature, one that looked like it’d come straight out of the realm of nightmares.

“Fran! Get the crew’s attention! Make sure it gets noticed!”

“Nn. Big enemy!” She quietly nodded and voiced her agreement before yelling in a voice loud enough for all the sailors to hear.

“Big...? Ohhhh fuck!”

“The hell is that thing!?”

“You’ve gotta be kidding me!”

“Shit, shit!”

“Oh come on!”

Their eyes widened as they caught sight of the creature she'd directed their attention towards.

“Well, no rest for the weary, I guess.” I grumbled as I examined the monster's features.

The grotesque critter was one that I recognized on sight, one I highly doubted I'd ever be able to forget.

Its body was covered in a thick layer skin made up of red mixed with a yellowish brown. Its head looked very much like that of a sea anemone's, but, with massive fangs lining the inside of its mouth.

A creature known as a parasite that plagued the ocean and leeches off of its life.

A midgard wyrm.

259. The Water Dragon's Demise

Chapter 259. The Water Dragon's Demise

The Water Dragon's Demise

The Midgard Wyrmling wriggled its body as it rapidly darted through the sea at an incredible speed.

Fortunately, the Algieba wasn't its target. It was instead headed straight for the water dragon warship, seemingly because it wanted to attack the monsters in its vicinity.

Or at least that was what I'd thought at first.

「Nn? Midgard wyrmling disappeared?」

『Did it dive out of view or something?』

Wait, wasn't it supposed to be heading straight towards the kraken and water dragon?

The midgard wyrmling resurfaced the moment I questioned its actions.

「Gyagogoggooooooooo!」

It attacked the still entwined dragon and kraken from directly below, a tactic likely derived from its instincts rather than its intellect.

The midgard wyrmling raised their bodies about 10m into the air as a testament to its brute strength before leaning itself on the water dragon warship. Unable to handle the monster's ridiculous weight, the symbol of Sheedran's might creaked and snapped it in two.

The resulting shockwave caused the ocean's tides to turn violent and rock the Algieba as would a heavy storm.

「Uwawawawa!」

「Don't fall into the sea!」

The midgard wyrm's sea anemone-like mouth once again emerged from the ocean with a water dragon's neck and several kraken tentacles hanging from its mouth.

「Kuooooon....」

The plesiosaurus-like monster, which normally would've had the might to decimate a large city, whimpered feebly. It was no longer capable of action.

「Gyoooooooooo!」

The midgard wyrm's proud cry echoed throughout the sea, as if to declare its victory.

「This is looking bad. Hurry the 'ell up, you bilge rats! We need to get outta here immediately!」

「Yessir!」

「Can we actually escape a midgard wyrm, Captain?」

「No clue. It's way faster than us, but we might be able to get away if it decides to attack some more kraken instead of chasing us down.」

Jerome's response to Mordred's question was grim.

Mydgard wyrms swallowed things whole, so they didn't have to stop to chew. In fact, eating didn't inhibit them from moving in any way which. They were known for consuming up everything in an area and then slowly digesting it all later.

Still, we would have more than enough time to get away if it first went after all the kraken and the pirates that'd fallen into the sea. But unfortunately, things weren't going to work out that conveniently for us.

「Looked this way.」

『It's heading for us cause our ship's bigger than pretty much anything else it can find it seems』

It swiveled its head around a bunch and examined its surroundings before finally looking back at us.

Following its instincts, it headed towards the biggest prey it could see, our ship.

It rapidly closed in on us.

「Black Lightning Princess! I need you to do us a favour!」

Jerome ran over to us. Behind him were several sailors carrying a huge barrel.

「What?」

「I need you to fly again, and dump this barrel somewhere off opposite the direction we're headed. It's filled with stuff midgard wyrms love, it should be attracted by its scent and stop chasing us.」

「Nn. Got it.」

「Thanks. Here's to hoping it actually works.」

The barrel was normally supposed to be used while before the wyrm got as close as it was, but Jerome hadn't had the chance to issue the order. He had been preoccupied by the water dragon/kraken fight. He didn't know how much effect it would have given the lack of distance, but he wanted to at least try gambling on it nonetheless.

『Alright, let's try dropping it.』

「Nn. Urushi, go.」

「Woof!」

Fran took the barrel, leapt on Urushi's back, and had him run straight behind the midgard wyrm before dropping the cylindrical, wooden casket into the sea. It broken open as it hit the water's surface and spilled its contents all over.

『Is it working?』

「Nn... No.」

『Tsk.』

The red, yellow and brown abomination was more attracted to the Algieba than the stuff it apparently loved due to the ship's proximity. And as such, it continued to rush the ship down.

Looking at the wyrm from our angle really emphasized its size. The goddamn thing was massive.

『What about getting its attention by attacking it?』

「Nn! Thunderbolt.」

「Groooooowl!」

『Flare Blast!』

We fired spells at the midgard wyrm's exposed back so we could draw its attention away from the ship. I figured that, if we were lucky, we'd be able to draw its attention to the barrel—but we weren't.

『Damn it! It's totally ignoring us!』

It was too big. Our weaker strikes were too insignificant for it to note.

『How about this then!? Thor's Hammer!』

A thunderbolt struck the midgard wyrm dead on and caused an explosion, but not even that was enough to stop the creature's charge. It cared much more about eating than it did our attacks.

(Master, what now?)

『Well... Honestly, our only hope at getting its attention is probably going to be getting between it and the ship. Looks like it's either sink or swim.』

Fighting the midgard wyrm head on was our only choice. I wasn't confident we could beat it, but we didn't need to. We just needed to hit it hard enough to stop it in its tracks.

We went back to the ship and its captain that we were going to hit the monster really hard. We also made sure they were aware that Fran would end up exhausted thereafter. She wouldn't be able to fight anymore.

「Don't be ridiculous! There's no way you could beat a midgard wyrm, is there!?!」

Jerome was shocked by the suggestion.

「Might at least slow down.」

「I guess you're right... Our only choice is to leave it up to you.」

「No problem.」

「Make sure you come back in one piece, alright?」

「To adventurers, own life most important」

「Gahahaha! Good point. Then do your best. Show that thing hell.」

「Nn!」

The task entrusted to us was a simple one. All we had to do was put all our power into one attack and blast it right at the midgard wyrm before retreating.

『Urushi, focus all your efforts in making sure Fran stays safe on her way back, alright?』

「Woof.」

And if worse comes to worst, I'll think of something and hopefully handle the situation myself. But enough of that for now. I'll cross that bridge when I get to it.

260. The Legendary Monster

Chapter 260. The Legendary Monster

The Legendary Monster

『Alright, let's do this!』

「Nn! Awakening.」

Fran awakened as she looked down at the midgard wyrm from Urushi's back. She went full throttle right off the bat and immediately activated Brilliant Lightning Rush.

The electricity radiating off her body caused Urushi's fur to stand on end.

『Let's start by provoking it and making it raise its head.』

「Got it.」

「Woof.」

『And when it opens its mouth, we hit it with everything we've got.』

「Nn! Urushi.」

「Woof woof!」

Urushi slowed down, bravely placed himself right in front of the midgard wyrm, and fired several spells at the creature's submerged head.

『Leave attacking it while it's still underwater to me.』

Urushi's attacks weren't having too much of an effect, so I asked him to relinquish his role as an attacker for the time being.

Taking his place, I dove underwater. I made a beeline for its face and started blasting it with lightning and explosions.

It ignored the first strike, but the second and third ticked it off enough for it to start to twitch.

『Alright, this should do the trick.』

I threw in a telekinetic catapult just for good measure and charged straight at the monster's head. I didn't expect it to do too much damage given the amount I was being slowed by the water resistance, but for some odd reason, the attack managed to get a huge reaction out of the midgard wyrm. It stopped moving and loosed a loud roar the moment it got hit.

「Gyobobobobooo!」

The sea stirred. The massive shockwave spawned from its bellow caused the ocean's waves to violently rock through my surroundings.

『Woah!?!』

I didn't take any damage from the shockwave, but it sure as hell fucked me up. The resulting water pulses knocked me around and disoriented me to the point where I couldn't tell up from down.

I was surprised. It seemed really mad, and I didn't understand why. The telekinetic catapult's damage shouldn't have differed much from my spells'.

After hurrying back to Fran, I realized that the wyrm was totally locked onto us. It raised its head out of the water and stared us down with its neck curved like a goose's. Though its face lacked eyes, I could tell it was giving us a hateful glare. It wanted to kill us so badly that its body had started radiating pure enmity.

「Did something?」

『Dunno. It suddenly got all pissed right after I hit it with a telekinetic catapult.』

「Remembered last fight?」

『Last fight?』

「Nn? Last time, blasted face off with telekinetic catapult.」

『Wait, that's the same one we fought last time?』

「Nn.」

The monster had higher hp than it did last time we saw it, and I'd known that it was possible for the midgard wyrm to grow infinitely, but I'd still presumed it a different individual.

Fran, however, was somehow able to tell that it was the exact same individual. Maybe it's just a beastkin thing?

But that would mean that this wyrm's the exact same one we fed all the monoliths.

『So it remembered me even though it's dumb as a single celled organism?』

Does it not forget grudges? Oh well, it's not the only one that still wanted to fight. It was time for us to show it just how much we'd grown since our last conflict, even if we had to end up running away.

It tried chasing Urushi down, but it was far too big to catch him. He could easily slip somewhere it was harder for the massive creature to reach.

The act of him running around bought me enough time to get my spell ready.

『I'm good to go, Fran.』

「Nn!」

We struck the moment it tried to attack Urushi, and launched our attacks straight into its mouth.

『Now! Kanna Kamuiiiii!』

「Haaaah! Black Lightning Advent!」

My spell, a dragon made of pure white lightning, mixed with Fran's, a burst of jet black lightning, and flew straight into the wyrm's interior.

I used the sorcery skill to put 80% of the mp I had left into the attack and hit the midgard wyrm with the most powerful Kanna Kamui we'd ever used to date. Likewise, Fran had also poured every last bit of her mana into her black thunderbolts.

The wyrm's head exploded into a million pieces. Blood and flesh, its body parts, flew all over the place and fell around us like pieces of a deflated balloon. The explosion had been huge; it covered an area 50 meters in diameter.

It caused waves to pour through the ocean and crash into the Algieba. I quickly turned towards the ship out of concern to check on it, and breathed a sigh of relief after confirming it was still fine.

The only reason it didn't get capsized was because the wyrm's thick ass body had absorbed most of the impact. In a sense, one could say that the wyrm had actually stopped the ship from flipping over.

Speaking of which, the wyrm itself was a terrible sight to behold. A third of its body was flat out missing. Serpent and centipede type monsters were known for their vitality, but the wound was so bad it looked like it would've been more than fatal for any normal member of either of the two aforementioned types.

But the midgard wyrm was an A ranked magic beast, a creature far outside the realm of human imagination. Though its defenses were lackluster, the injury we'd given it was far from fatal.

General Information

Species: Midgard Wyrms (Sea Serpent Type Monster)

Level 62

HP: 28117/39823

MP: 591

STR: 4139

VIT: 4699

AGI: 108

INT: 5

MGC: 112

DEX: 24

Skills

Absorption: Lv 2

Regeneration: Lv 2

Predation

—

It still had over two thirds of its max health, and it was already started to rapidly regenerate.

『Fuck, that thing's a monster. But we at least managed to slo—oh shit.』

「Not... good...」

Wait, what the fuck!? That thing's headed for the Algieba even though it doesn't have a head!? How is it already moving!? Aren't you normally

supposed to wait for your missing body part to regenerate before you start doing shit again!?

Is its brain not in its head, or does it have multiple, like how it has a bunch of different hearts? Wait, does it even have a brain in the first place?

Fuck! Thinking about this shit is just a huge waste of time!

『Urushi, get in front of it again!』

「Woof!」

The only choice I had was use the rest of mana to hit it with another Kanna Kamui. And if that didn't stop it, I'd have no choice but to use my real trump card.

「Mas...ter... okay?」

『Yeah. I'll be fine. You can sit back and rest for now.』

「Nn.」

I left Fran to Urushi and leapt off so I could focus on casting my spell. I wasn't expecting it to do much, I didn't have enough mana.

『I really want to avoid using Latent Potential Release unless I really have to.』

Things were looking pretty grim. I was probably going to have to have to use it in the end—or at least that was what I thought was going to happen.

『Huh?』

The situation suddenly took an unexpected turn.

I felt a powerful, imposing presence. It was several kilometers away, but it was incredibly overbearing nonetheless. The speed at which the thing came at us was incredible. It looked like it was somewhere around the 500 km/h range.

『Fuck, that thing's huge!』

There was no other way to put it. The only part I could see was the part sticking out of the water, the thing I presumed to be its dorsal fin. That alone was already 20 meters high and 100 long. I was certain that the thing coming at us was some sort of monster.

『Urushi, get the hell out of here!』

「W-Woof!」

Retreating, I returned to Fran's side. Urushi was terrified; he was trembling with his tail between his legs. Fortunately, he still somehow managed to move his way back over to the Algieba.

「Master, that, what?」

『No idea. Appraisal won't work because I can only see its fin.』

That said, I had more than enough information to guess. Its aura carried way more magical energy than the midgard wyrms. It was clearly a monster even more powerful than the one we'd just fought.

「Master, that.」

『I knew it!』

The mystery monster rushed the midgard wyrm and attacked it.

「Gaaaaaooooooooooooooooooooo!」

It drove its fangs into the midgard wyrms body and lifted it, and in doing so, showcased its 100m long neck. It was adored from head to tail in beautiful scales, like a kingfisher. I couldn't help but feel that it both resembled a dragon and a sort of serpent.

General Information

Species: Leviathan (Oceanic Divine Dragon//Divine Beast)

Lv 87

HP: 92336

MP: 36887

STR: 18139

VIT: 22699

AGI: 3123

INT: 6039

MGC: 9996

DEX: 1698

Skills: Unknown

Description: Unknown

『Haaaah...hahahaha』

Appraising caused me to break into laughter. There simply wasn't anything for me to do but laugh. It was so strong I couldn't even see its skills. It was a veritable S ranked monster, a ridiculously overpowered creature capable of destroying the entire world if it wished to.

Just appraising it had completely drained me of the will to fight.

I immediately began to think of the worst case scenario, and what I needed to do. If the Leviathan attacked, then my only choice would be to abandon the Algieba and focus on preserving Fran.

I would have to teleport us away the moment it showed even the slightest sign of aggression.

Right as I started working out the details, the leviathan looked at us—but its eyes lacked even the slightest semblance of hostility.

Its gaze instead seemed to momentarily reflect a sense of amusement, as if it was entertained. The impression only seemed to last for a second, so I wrote it off as just my imagination. Me hoping it wouldn't antagonize us seemed to have led to a delusion of sorts.

Either way, the leviathan ended up leaving; it turned around and nonchalantly carried off the midgard wyrm despite its desperate struggles to break free of the more powerful monster's grasp.

『It looks like... it let us off the hook...?』

「Nn...」

「Whimper...」

261. Returning to the Ship

Chapter 261. Returning to the Ship

Returning to the Ship

Though the leviathan, the Divine Beast, had saved us, it'd also kind created its own sort of trouble for the sole reason that encountering it was nothing short of extraordinary. Upon returning to the ship, we'd realized that everyone had totally lost their wits.

Some had spaced out, whereas others had started smiling like idiots. There was even a group that'd started to offer the heavens their prayers.

Like basically everyone else, Jerome and his first mate had been unable to respond in their usual manners. Instead, they'd started laughing dryly.

I was honestly impressed that the Algieba was still upright and floating. The crew's current state seemed to indicate that it should've already capsized, especially given what'd just happened. The leviathan was huge, so massive waves accompanying its advent were only a given—

—Except they weren't.

It somehow managed to avoid disturbing the ocean and creating waves despite its massive size.

Does that mean it was trying to avoid capsizing the Algieba? Nah, no way, right? It was probably just coincidentally using something that let it swim faster through the reduction of water resistance or something.

Mordred, Jerome, and Buphett regained their senses in that order, mostly because that was the order Fran decided to lightly shake them in.

Despite being known for his calmness and rationality, he was panicked. The event had shocked him enough to make him start shouting hysterically the moment he finally regained his capacity of speech.

“Shit! I just sweat enough cold sweat for a whole goddamn lifetime. I’m surprised my heart didn’t stop. Holy fuck, that was absolutely terrifying. I think I’m not going to accept any boat related escort jobs for a good while!” Mordred screamed.

We ran into a water dragon, some kraken, a midgard wrym, and then the S ranked leviathan to top it all off. We had a total of four different encounters in a matter of moments. Each one of the four groups of creatures was powerful enough to cause instant death, and hence, we’d ended up getting swept into a series of fierce battles. It’d been far too much to take in, even for Mordred. The experienced adventurer had been reduced to a terrified mess.

“Dude. Woah. Shit. Did ya see that thing? Did ya!?” Jerome, on the other hand, was excited as all hell. He was leaning over the ship’s edge and staring off in the direction the leviathan had went.

“Aye, captain... But I do have to say, I never did imagine we’d see it around these parts...” Buphett commented. “Wait, what if...”

Unlike the other two, Buphett’s state was more akin to one of suspicion. He’d already moved on to questioning the leviathan’s motives.

“Leviathan, wasn’t supposed to only show up in demonic ocean?” Fran directed her question towards Jerome, as his state of mind had seemed much more sound than that of anyone else present.

Man, that thing was god damned massive. It would’ve have measured somewhere in the 100m range even if you only looked everything from the base of its neck up till the tip of its nose. Its head alone seemed to be about 40-50m tall. I didn’t see how it could’ve possibly even fit around these parts. The deepest areas apparently only go 300m down, meaning there are likely many spots with a depth of 100m or less.

Given its size, the leviathan most likely would have ended up scraping itself around the ocean floor as it moved about.

“That’s how it’s always been in the past, but the past and the present are clearly two completely different things. S’t true that it’s only ever been seen in the demonic sea, but, that ain’t enough evidence for us to say that it’ll never show up anywhere else. The thing’s a goddamn legend. Ain’t no way for us humans to understand everything ’bout it,” Jerome shrugged.

Yeah, makes sense. There isn’t any reason for it not to leave its nest to hunt and what not, especially seeing as how it literally just did exactly that.

There was no reason for the leviathan to stay in a small, confined area given its speed. There seemed to be a good chance that it just so happened to have only been sighted in the demonic sea, and that it was actually moving around and going wherever it wanted while remaining under water all the time.

“Alrighty, now that that’s over with, we should probably get the ‘ell out of ‘ere,” the captain quickly recovered and got back on task.

“That seems like quite a good idea. All the kraken have fled due to their fear of the leviathan, so we’ve got ourselves just the chance we need.” Likewise, his first mate also refocused himself on a more current set of priorities.

The kraken were no match for the midgard wurm or leviathan, so they’d all long escaped the area. Likewise, the pirates we’d cast into the ocean were also nowhere to be seen. They’d all either been dragged off by kraken, swallowed by the sea serpent, or simply caught in the massive waves that resulted from the creatures’ advent and washed away.

“So what are we going to do with him?” The first thing Mordred did after regaining his wits was kicking the prisoner rolling around at his feet. Suarez just happened to have gotten brought back to the Algieba because that was simply the most natural flow of things. He was still unconscious, mostly due to all the pain Mordred had inflicted on him while trying to get him to fold.

“What do you say to randomly dumping him somewhere?” He commented while giving the man another kick.

There isn't really any point in keeping him alive much longer seeing as how the dragon is already gone and whatnot, but, he is still royalty, so keeping him alive might present us with some sort of merit.

He could be used as a sort of bargaining chip, but at the same time, it was also possible for him to end up functioning to ignite some sort of political conflict. There was no way for us to know the consequences of our actions for sure, so we instead chose to leave the decision in a more qualified person's hands. That is, we had Jerome, a man officially sanctioned by the Beastkin's country, make the final call.

"Hmm... I'd say we'd best keep 'im in the ship's hold for now,"

"Aye, captain, I agree, especially seeing as how he might even have some sort of bounty on his head," Buphett added.

"You don't say. Stealing one of those Water Dragon Warships is a surefire way to earn a country's ire," the captain smirked.

A part of me had thought that it might've ended up being some sort of gift, but apparently that was definitely not the case. Every Water Dragon Warship was a vital part of the country's forces. Having one rampage about was prone to leading to diplomatic problems.

In other words, there was no way Suarez had any claim to the ship he'd been in possession of.

"It'd be much more convenient for us to get rid of 'im, but I'd say he's got enough use to keep around," Jerome grumbled.

With that, Suarez' fate was decided. Mordred took him in the hold and organised the adventurers so they could keep watch.

"How are you feeling, princess?"

With all urgent business dealt with, Jerome turned back towards Fran and asked her about her condition.

"She looks quite exhausted to me," his first mate commented.

“Nn... Body feels heavy.”

The Black Lightning Advent Fran put all her power into had drained her of most of her stamina and magic. She could still walk, but she lacked the ability to engage in any sort of serious conflict.

“I would expect so, seeing the amount of power behind the attack you launched. I doubt you’ll be able to perform too well in combat given your current state, so please do get back to your room and get some rest.”
Buphett dismissed her from her duties so she could heal up and be ready for any battles to come going forward.

“Nn. Will do.”

We decided to have Urushi guard the deck in Fran’s place while she rested. He and Mordred would probably be more than enough to handle any magic beasts that came the ship’s way while Fran was out of commision.

“We’re counting on you Urushi.”

“Do best.”

“Woof!”

262. Greyseal

Chapter 262. Greyseal

Greyseal

Two days had passed since we'd run into the Leviathan and nearly met our demises.

"Drop the anchors!" Jerome shouted.

"Aye aye captain!"

"One of you is going to need to run over to the magistrate's office. We've a serious political situation on our hands, one involving royalty," Buphett noted as the crew began getting to work.

"Yes sir!" One of the sailors immediately responded and began running an errand as per his instructions.

The Algieba managed to safely reach Chrom. More specifically, it found itself currently docked in the port of a seaside city named Greyseal. Both the city and the port were about a whole size smaller than Barbra's, but still of a respectable scale nonetheless.

All the adventurers had already gotten off the ship after receiving a hefty bonus. The total number of battles we engaged in was on the relatively low side, but they rewarded us handsomely nonetheless given the whole midgard wrym incident. Fran in particular had been paid a whole hundred thousand golde.

With her duties completed and renumerations rewarded, she, like all the other adventurers, had gotten off the ship. She was currently standing in front of it, saying her goodbyes to her three apprentices.

"Thank you very much, Ms. Fran."

"You taught us a whole lot."

“We’ll do our best to make sure we keep training ourselves hard! We’ll get strong enough to impress you next time we see each other!”

Naria, Miguel and Liddick responded in their usual ways as they got ready to leave, to which Fran responded with a simple “Nn.”

“Good bye!”

“Later!”

“Farewell!”

Their training had only lasted a few days, but it seemed to have been impactful nonetheless, as the three all seemed to have taken her teachings quite seriously. Fran had tried her best to play the role of an instructor as well, albeit seemingly because she wanted to kill time. I couldn’t tell whether or not she really thought of them as her apprentices. She didn’t seem reluctant to part with them, and I wasn’t even really sure whether she ever ended up remembering their names.

“We should probably heat out too.”

“Miguel, Naria, Liddick,” I many doubts about her stance on the matter, but Fran struck them all down before I even so much as had a chance to voice them by calling out to her three apprentices in turn.

“Huh?” Miguel’s jaw dropped.

“Teach just called us by our names!? That has to be the first time she’s ever done that!”

“D-Does that mean she’s acknowledged us?” Likewise, Naria and Liddick also responded with their voices filled by surprise.

“See ya.”

“See ya, teach!”

All three immediately responded in loud, clear voices.

Satisfied, Fran turned around and began to move without so much as even showing any sign of turning back.

“So you actually did end up memorizing their names?”

“Nn. Because apprentices.”

Fran’s response made it clear that she’d taken from the experience and matured, even if only a bit. As her guardian, I was overjoyed, both because she’d grown up and because a part of me empathized with her disciples. She’d reciprocated their emotions; their efforts hadn’t been in vain.

The first place Fran decided to head towards was the guild so she could pick up the request’s standard reward. She didn’t know where it was though, so she had Mordred and his buddies show her over.

“It should be right over there,” Mordred gestured towards the guild as it came into sight.

“Huge.”

“That’d be because Greyseal is a pretty big city.”

Greyseal’s guild wasn’t too far away from its port. The building was quite large, as per Fran’s description. Apparently, it was relatively influential because it was frequented by adventurers that liked picking up ship-related escort tasks.

Upon entering, we found ourselves staring down a bar with a large number of adventurers hanging around it. Some seemed to gaze upon Fran in one of many unrespectful ways, but quickly averted their eyes once they saw Mordred enter right behind her.

Being a B ranker, Mordred was quite well known, even in Greyseal. There weren’t any adventurers dumb enough to mess with anyone accompanying him.

Fran was both a cute child and a Black Catkin, so I expected a few people to try messing with her, but fortunately, it didn't look like we would need to bother this time around. Though no one tried to explicitly attack her, that didn't actually mean we didn't have to deal with any sort of annoyances. A bearded, lazy looking middle aged man that seemed a bit too thin to be an adventurer waded through the crowd and approached us.

My immediate thought was that we were going to have to deal with him and whatever idiocy he would pull, but I was well off the mark.

“That’s a cute girl you found there Mordred. Is she travelling with you?”
The lanky looking man grinned as he spoke in a teasing tone.

“Oh, hey Leroy. You’re a bit off the mark this time. She and I just happened to be escorting the same ship. It was her first time in Greyseal, so I lended her a hand and showed her over to the guild.”

“Huh. Well, I guess I’d better introduce myself then. The name’s Leroy, I work as an adventurer around these parts.”

“He’s only a D ranker, but he’s got great memory, so he can come in handy. I’ve often asked him for help so I could work around these parts without needing a map,” Mordred nodded as he affirmed the other man’s usefulness.

The fact that even Mordred asked him for help made me understand that Leroy was a respectable adventurer in his own right even though he didn’t look the part.

“Nn. C ranker, Fran.” The catgirl named herself curtly.

“You’re a C ranker at that age!? I could tell that you were pretty strong, but god damn!” Leroy’s eyes opened wide in response to Fran’s introduction, a reaction that caused Mordred to put on a bit of a wry smile and look at Leroy with an almost pitying gaze. He’d only just called Fran out the other day for being way stronger than was justified for a C ranker.

“I think you might want to change the way you introduce yourself, Fran,” he suggested.

“Why? Not lying.”

“That’s true, but I think you should at least make sure you mention that you’re the Black Lightning Princess.”

“What? She’s the Black Lightning Princess everyone’s been talking about lately?”

“That she is, friend.”

“That would mean she’s way stronger than me... Man, and her rank made me think we weren’t all that different in terms of our combat ability too...”
Leroy was completely taken aback by Fran’s identity.

It seemed that information about Fran had already made its way to Greyseal through the merchants given Leroy’s reaction and willingness to accept Fran’s identity. Mordred, once again, had voiced a really good point that proved his judgement solid. Fran would be able to stop people from looking down on her so long as she revealed a bit more about herself.

There was, however, a certain risk related to Mordred’s suggestion. Anyone that had yet to hear about Fran’s exploits would likely think her an idiot with a self proclaimed identity. I wouldn’t be able to stand for someone making fun of her as a result.

For that reason, we decided to stick with the C ranker thing for the time being.

“You serious!?”

“That’s the Black Lightning Princess?”

“Wait, the Black Lightning Princess is here!? Where!?”

“Damn!”

“Y-Yo, you serious?”

It seemed that all the adventurers present had heard of her, as they immediately began kicking up a huge fuss. Some stood up in order to get a better look at Fran, while others let their curiosity get so out of control that they approached despite the heavy aura Mordred was giving off.

The reaction we got out of making Fran's identity public was even bigger than the one we'd gotten back in Barbra. Upon further observation, I realized that over 90% of the adventurers were beastkin, and that the beastkin were much more curious about Fran than I'd initially thought. Though their interests were far outside my expectations, I did at least understand them. Black Catkin weren't supposed to be able to evolve, but Fran had done it nonetheless. But more importantly, she had defeated Goldalfa, a veritable hero that all of the country's citizens knew.

"Did that little girl really manage to beat Goldalfa?"

"That's what they say. It's probably true too, seein' as how the info came from a merchant sanctioned by the crown."

"Must've been because he let her win though, right?"

"Huh, you've got a point. It might be one of those public appearance things."

"Are you guys stupid? We're talking about Goldalfa here, there's no way he'd ever do that."

"Yeah man, there's no way Goldalfa would just fork over a win, especially not to a kid. That'd tarnish his reputation."

"Exactly. You all know he's not the type to pull his punches."

"And you've gotta consider this. It wasn't a spar either. I could see him holding back if it was a spar, but Barbra's tournament lets its participants fight for real, so he must've been going all out."

A fair number of the adventurers seemed to think that Goldalfa had allowed Fran to beat him. I couldn't really refute their sentiments. It was quite hard

to believe unless you were actually there.

People continued to stare at Fran even as she turned in her quest.

“And she’s really evolved too.”

“I know, right?」

“How the hell did she manage that?”

“I remember the merchants saying something about killing evil beings. I don’t remember the details though, ’cause I thought it was bullshit at the time.”

We’d long turned Evolution Concealment off so we could spread the idea that Black Catkin were indeed capable of evolution.

The merchants and nobles had already started to spread the method we told the Beast Lord. People would probably start believing it once we went around and showed off that Fran really had evolved.

Gazes continued to follow Fran all the way up to the moment she finally left.

“Alright, let’s find ourselves a place to spend the night and figure out how we’re supposed to get to the capital.”

“Nn.”

Stats below. Note: skills in master’s memory excluded by author

General Information

Name: Master

Wielder: Fran (Bound)

Species: Intelligent Weapon

Attack: 672

MP: 4800/4800

Durability: 4600/4600

Magical Conductivity: A+

Skills

Appraisal: MAX

Appraisal Blocking

Shape Shifting

High Speed Self Repair

Self Evolution (Rank 13 / Cores Absorbed: 8378/9100 / Memory: 124 // Points: 0)

Transformation (Superiorized)

Telekinesis

Lesser Telekinetic Boost

Telapathy

Lesser Attack Boost

Space/Time Magic: MAX

Skill Sharing

Intermediate Wielder Status Boost

Lesser Wielder Recovery Boost

Eye of Empyrea

Unsealable

Lesser MP Boost

Knowledge of Monsters

Sorcerer

Intermediate Memory Boost

Unique Skills

Principle of Falsehood: Lv 5

Dimension Magic: Lv 4"

Superior Skills

Sword Arts SP

Skill Taker

Doppelganger Synthesis SP

—

Name: Fran

Age: 12

Species: Beastkin (Black Cat/Black Heavenly Tiger)

Class: Magic Warrior

Status: Bound by Contract

Level: 45/99

HP: 551

MP: 432

STR: 306

VIT: 240

AGI: 295

INT: 212

MGC: 241

DEX: 210

Skills

Espionage: Lv 5

Wind Magic: Lv 2

Court Etiquette: Lv 4

Presence Detection: Lv 6

Sword Techniques: Lv 7

Sword Arts: Lv 8

Evil Resistance: Lv 1

Blink: Lv 6

Fire Magic: Lv 5

Lightning Magic: Lv 1

Cooking: Lv 2

Trap Disarmament: Lv 2

Trap Detection: Lv 2

Undead Killer

Evil Killer

Insect Killer

Vigour Manipulation

Goblin Killer

Sound of Mind

Demon Killer

Skilled Dismantler

Conviction

Sense of Direction

Magic Manipulation

Night Vision

Innate Skills

Awakening

Brilliant Lightning Rush

Magic Convergence

Special Skills

Black Cat's Protection

Titles

Undead Killer

Match For a Thousand

Evil Killer

Insect Killer

Lord of Dismantling

Recovery Magic User

Sword Lord

Goblin Killer

One Who Massacres

Skill Collector

Skill Maniac

Dungeon Conquerer

Super Big Eater

Demon Killer

Fire Magic User

Wind Magic User

Lightning Magic User

King of Cooking

263. The Horned Carriage Association

Chapter 263. The Horned Carriage Association

The Horned Carriage Association

Translation: SupremeTentacle

Editor: SupremeTentacle (Want your name here? Volunteer today and get TSKD chapters out more quickly! Poke me on discord for details.)

We found ourselves wandering around the suburbs not too long after we booked ourselves a place to stay the night. The original plan was for us to head back to the guild so we could figure out what we needed to in order to get back to the capital, but speaking with the lady running the inn we chose had caused us to change our minds.

The innkeeper was a businessman with a whole plethora of connections. The combination of the information she'd gotten from her peers and her instincts as a beastkin had immediately allowed her to identify Fran the moment she walked through the door. As a result, she'd treated Fran with as much fidelity as she could possibly manage. That is, she offered the best room she had for an extremely discounted price.

She then went onto declare that she would treat the form Fran filled out as a family heirloom before hearing out our plans and giving us a bit of advice.

It was precisely her advise that led us to our current destination.

"That?" Fran tilted her head as she pointed to a building that seemed to match what what the innkeeper had described to her.

"I think so. The roof's blue, and structure makes it look kinda like a barn. It's pretty much a perfect match."

Approaching the building a bit more confirmed that it was the exact one we were looking for; the sign hanging outside it labeled it as a branch of the Horned Carriage Association.

“Welcome,” a calm, collected woman in her twenties called out to us as we entered the building. She looked quite similar to the type of girl one would often find working at the Adventurers’ Guild, with the sole difference being that her uniform had been swapped out for another.

Unlike the innkeeper we met earlier, the association’s receptionist was human, so she didn’t immediately identify Fran. Many of the people we’d met along the way, however, did. Most of the people she walked by totally frozen the moment they realized she was what she was. Even those that had yet to hear about the Black Lightning Princess ended up stopping and staring the moment they realized that she was an evolved Black Catkin.

Some of the older men that saw her had been shocked so far out of their wits that they started worshipping her on the spot. All in all, she was treated kinda like the type of mythical creature that would bless all that managed to spot it with happiness — basically every beastkin she came across would stop in their tracks just to get a good look at her.

“Want information,” Fran got to business and began questioning the clerk as I recalled the events that’d just transpired.

“Might this be your first time riding a horned carriage?”

“Nn.”

The receptionist gave us a quick overview and explained the services the Horned Carriage association offered. Simply put, they basically provided a transportation service. They rented out carriages pulled by Dual Horns, rhino-like monsters with high speed and endurance. They took very few breaks, so they were able to get places roughly twice as quickly as horses could. They themselves were considered F ranked monsters, so they could also function to scare off thieves and other weaker potential assailants.

“ I see,” Fran nodded.

“Here are the prices,” the receptionist showed Fran a piece of paper with a whole bunch of numbers written all over it. The fees seemed to vary based off of two main factors. The first was whether or not one was willing to

share a carriage with other passengers. The second had to do with the amount of distance traveled.

“Want to go to capital.”

“Your destination is Vestia then?” The receptionist pointed towards the fees written on the page and paused for a moment before continuing. “In that case, the fee will be 40,000 golde if you’re willing to ride with other passengers, or 120,000 golde if you’d like to reserve a carriage for yourself. The trip should take a total of around 10 days.”

“Expensive.” Fran’s one word comment referred to more than just the cash cost. She also meant that the trip would eat up far too much of our time. Seeing that Fran seemed rather confused, the receptionist showed her a map and began to explain the circumstances.

“This is where Greyseal is on the map. Vestia is right over here, to its west.”

“Not that far?”

Greyseal was on Chrom’s eastern coast. Vestia seemed like it was just a little to the west of it. I wasn’t able to make any definitive conclusions seeing as how the map was missing a scale, but it didn’t really look like it would take 10 days nonetheless to move between the two relatively close points nonetheless.

Being an experienced as she was, the receptionist addressed all my concerns before I even voiced them.

“The straight line distance between the two cities isn’t too far, but you see this green patch?” She moved her finger over to the large green area right between Greyseal and Vestia.

“Scorpion Lion Forest?” Fran read the words aloud.

“Exactly. The Scorpion Lion Forest is area designated as a C ranked haunt. Manticores, C ranked monsters, are known to live within it.”

Oh, so that’s why people avoid going straight through the forest.

There wasn't any way the average person was going to be able to somehow manage to make their way through a C ranked haunt.

"The forest extends quite far, both to the north and to the south. The carriages have to go a rather long ways to loop around it," the receptionist explained.

"No places to pass through?"

"It isn't possible for a regular person, more skilled adventurers are known able to do it."

"I'm an adventurer."

"It does appear that way, but I don't advise trying on your own."

The receptionist was a really nice person. She seemed to think that Fran was a brand new adventurer, but she didn't immediately shoot her down rudely, and instead phrased her statement in such a way to avoid injuring Fran's pride. Moreover, she didn't question whether or not Fran could afford a carriage ride, and simply continued to attentively answer all her questions regardless.

"Most adventurers setting off from Greyseal prefer passing through Argentlapn instead. The town's fairly close to where the Scorpion Lion Forest is at its thinnest. You might be able to find yourself a party that's looking to get through if you head over."

In other words, we had two choices. The first was to loop around the Scorpion Lion forest by taking a huge detour. The second was to pass through it by heading over to Argentlapn. The haunt was apparently only ranked in at C. It likely wouldn't give us too much trouble, so we would probably be much better off breaking through it..

That said, getting to Argentlapn was still a task in and of itself. The map made it seem like we could reach it so long as we headed in a south-westerly direction, but it probably wouldn't be that simple in reality. The

route undoubtedly had its own ups and downs, ones that a mere map wasn't capable of illustrating.

"How much to Argentlapn?"

"It should take about a day. The cost is 3000 golde if you're willing to ride with other people and 9000 if you want a private carriage."

"Riding a Horned Carriage sounds like a pretty good idea as far as I'm concerned. It'll be much more difficult for us to get lost if we get ourselves one."

"Agreed," Fran responded telepathically.

We'd been curious about horned carriages to begin with, so we ended up booking one that would set out first thing tomorrow morning. We spent a good bit of time debating whether or not we wanted to ride a public carriage or rent one out ourselves and ultimately ended up choosing the first option over the second. Publicity was important, and riding with other people was a pretty good way to advertise Fran's status as an evolved Black Catkin.

"Do you have anything to serve as identification?"

"Adventurer's Guild card okay?"

"Of course."

"Then here."

"Thank yooouwahat! You're a C ranker!? Really!?" The receptionist's eyes widened as she looked over Fran's guild card. She flipped it over several times and examined it from all different angles before finally confirming its authenticity by scanning it with a sort of crystalline device.

"It's... the real thing?" She was clearly taken aback and impressed by Fran's ability.

"Nn. Real."

“R-Right! I should give this back to you. I’m terribly sorry if I came off as rude.”

“No problem.”

“So I hope you don’t mind, but there’s something I’d like you ask you, seeing as how you’re a C ranked adventurer.”

“Nn,” Fran prompted the receptionist to continue with a nod.

“To be honest, we’re in need of escorts. We can’t seem to find enough to fill all our positions, so Would you be okay with being a guard rather than a passenger? You’re a C ranker, so we’d be willing to give you a 50% discount if you’re willing to accept.”

“Why not enough? City has lots of adventurers.”

“Most of this city’s adventurers focus primarily on escorting ships. That’s all the more true right now given the current state of international affairs.”

“Meaning?” Fran tilted her head in confusion.

“Oh, did you perhaps come to Greyseal by sea?”

“Nn.”

“Things have started to get a bit tense between us and the neighbouring country, in part because the king’s currently off abroad. Most of the soldiers have been assigned to the border. Very few have been left to perform the usual patrols.”

The lack of soldiers led to a proportional increase in the number of thieves and monsters. Many of the adventurers that normally worked escort jobs were busy exterminating all the vermin that’d arisen due to the lapse in the usual military presence.

“War going to happen?”

“I doubt it given the agreements our country has with the Kingdom of Bashar, but tensions are rising nonetheless. That would in part because the Basharians don’t really quite like Beastkin.”

At present, the beastkin’s country was relatively free of discrimination. It was a peaceful, relatively accepting country. However, it hadn’t always been that way in the past. Beastkin used to hold many social advantages. Most other races were discriminated against, and even oppressed if one was to go further back in time.

Bashar was a kingdom comprised precisely of these discriminated people. It was originally established by a group that had either escaped from or been driven out of the Beastkin’s country. To that end, the Basharians hated the beastkin. They instead advocated human supremacy and ensured that humans were given more leverage and opportunities.

“As human, Bashar’s past makes me feel ashamed. The country used to proclaim that humans were the ultimate race and that beastkin were just inferior beings meant to be treated as slaves.”

“Explained using past tense. Different now?”

“The royal family’s non-extremist faction came into approximately a hundred years ago. Though the two countries have yet to get along, the basharians have become much more tolerant of our country than ever before.”

Unfortunately, the two countries were still keeping an eye on each other. The Beastkin’s Country recognized that they were currently in a state that made it so that the Basharians wouldn’t actually be able to do much against them, especially with the king being as strong as he was, but they still couldn’t help but have their soldiers gather up upon learning that the Basharians had done the same—even though the Basharians had declared that they were only using their military might to clear a dungeon.

“And that’s why we’re a bit short on hands at the moment,” the receptionist concluded. “Would you be willing to take up the job and help us out?”

The 4.5k golde we would save was honestly just chump change for us, but the request was one that would officially go through the Adventurer's Guild and add to our credit, so we figured there wasn't really anything to lose."

"Will accept escort job to Argentlappn."

"That's great," the receptionist smiled. "Is 6 in the morning a good time for you?"

"Nn. No problem."

"Then we'll see you then."

Woo. Transportation get.

"Alright. I guess we can just kick back and relax until tomorrow."

"First, eat all local specialities."

"There's local specialities around here?"

"Saw on sign just now."

"You've always been quick to notice that kind of stuff... But alright, let's go check it out."

"Nn!"

264. A Journey Aboard a Horned Carriage

Chapter 264. A Journey Aboard a Horned Carriage

A Journey Aboard a Horned Carriage

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editor: Also SupremeTentacle (This is going to change soon! I'll be done going through the applications as soon as I'm done with my upcoming milestones.)

The horned carriage we were riding in rattled as it travelled down the highway at a pace a horse-pulled vehicle could never match. Its destination was, of course, Argentlaphn, the town closest to the Scorpion Lion Woods' most traversable subsection. Although we were working as guards, we were basically acting in the same manner as would any other passenger. We wouldn't need to do anything unless we were subject to an attack.

A calm atmosphere filled the carriage's interior. It was a strange mix, one that was somehow both relaxing and festive at the same time.

"Would you like a snack, milady?" One of the passengers handed Fran a treat.

"Thanks," Fran gratefully accepted with a nod.

A second and third passenger soon imitated the first and offered Fran a couple treats, which again, she accepted. Her acknowledgement of their offerings caused the other passengers aboard the carriage to react with joy. Speaking of the other passengers, most of them were older, unevolved individuals well past their prime. It was precisely this status of theirs that caused them to view her as an idol to worship and pay her a near superfluous amount of respect. The fact that she was a black catkin, a member of a tribe known not to evolve, only amplified the admiration they held for her all the more.

In other words, the festive mood had stemmed from Fran's presence. She was being celebrated for allowing the older beastkin to breathe the same air as her. That said, they had given her too many offerings for her to hold; the many snacks presented to her ended up getting laid out in front of her.

The older individuals weren't the only ones aboard the coach. Some of the grandchildren were too. One would normally expect children to look upon the mound of snacks with greed or envy, but they weren't. Like their grandparents, they too were too busy idolizing Fran. As far as they were concerned, she was a hero. The combination of their grandparents' attitudes and their instincts as beastkin had deemed her as such.

Young, innocent sounding cries of "Ebolving ish so cool!", "I wanna be like Fuwan!", and "Awesome!" filled the carriage as toddlers scrambled about and admired her.

Again, the atmosphere was peaceful and relaxing. But alas, it wasn't to last.

"M-Monsters sighted!" The coachman shouted in panic as he spotted a group of enemies up ahead. The contents of his message caused the passengers to curl up in fear and direct their gazes towards Fran, as if begging for her to bring them salvation by resolving the situation.

"Milady, please! Eliminate the beasts!" The driver raised his voice again as he regained a bit of his composure.

"Nn. Got it," Fran nodded as she stepped onto the coachman's platform and looked ahead.

"T-Thank you very much!"

Ten odd german shepherd sized dog monsters looked to be waiting for us a bit down the road.

"Can't just break through? Only around 10."

"I-I'm sorry milady, but I'm 'fraid that ain't gonna be possible!" The coachman replied.

That wasn't quite the response I was expecting. I knew that the dogs were monsters, but the Dual Horn was still the size of a god damned rhino. I assumed it would be able to just smash the dog like creatures out of its way and keep moving.

A bit of a closer examination revealed to me why I'd been wrong.

—

General Information

Species: Venom Dog

Dog type monster

Level: 11

HP: 33

MP: 13

STR: 17

VIT: 13

AGI: 61

INT: 8

MGC: 14

DEX: 12

Skills

Pursuit: Lv 3

Roar: Lv 1

Enhanced Sense of Smell

Magical Poison Fang

—

The monsters were called Venom Dogs. Their stats were quite low, but they were capable of delivering toxic bites through the use of their agility. Moreover, they would then use that superior agility stat to kite their foe around until it succumbed to their venom. It was an effective strategy, and one even the Dual Horn was prone to falling victim to given the sheer number of Venom Dogs. There was, however, a fairly simple solution. All we needed to do was obliterate the enemies before they closed in on us.

“Don’t slow down,” Fran ordered the driver as she got into position and lifted me into a combat ready stance.

“A-Are you sure?”

“Nn. Just leave to me.”

“Y-Yes ma’am!” Though he seemed to lack confidence, the driver still ended up obeying Fran’s commands because she’d evolved and he hadn’t.

“Alright, let’s do this!” I telepathically shouted.

“Nn.”

Fran launched me towards the monsters as I boosted my velocity with telekinesis. The attack was swift; I pierced through two of our enemies’ cores and absorbed them with pinpoint accuracy. I then used a mix of wind magic and sheer telekinetic force to prevent them from escaping before tearing through them one after another.

I grabbed their corpses and shoved them into my storage immediately after defeating them. Venom dogs were quite weak. They probably weren’t worth too much, but I decided to loot them regardless, just in case.

The coachman seemed to want to say something about the fact that the monsters had vanished in an instant, corpses and all, but ended up rescinding his comment because he didn't want to spoil Fran's mood. He instead heaved a sigh of relief and thanked her, to which she responded by nodding lightly as she returned to the vehicle's interior. There, she found herself showered in a shouts of gratitude and praise.

She responded to them one by one at first by stating that she hadn't done anything impressive, and that she was just doing her job, but was eventually overwhelmed by their enthusiasm and forced to retreat back to the coachman's seat.

She'd already fulfilled her duty and showed off just how strong black catkin could be, so there wasn't really any issue with her retreating. That said, she still made herself an excuse and stated that she was repositioning herself so she could better remain vigilant of any additional monsters.

"Haha, they sure have kicked up a fuss." The coachman smiled wryly. The passengers had been quite noisy, so he knew exactly what had just happened.

"Nn."

The only thing that followed her reply was silence. The driver recognized that there was a large rift between her social status and his own and thus, remained silent and didn't really try talking to her. That said, he didn't seem particularly bothered by the silence. He simply continued to look straight ahead and direct the dual horn along the road before him.

And just like that, 4 hours flew right by.

"Town spotted," Fran commented as she awoke from a nap.

"You've got some really good eyes! We're just about coming up on Argentlaphn," the driver replied, surprised.

It took a good bit of time, we finally reached our destination. There was only a single group of monsters on the way. Fran didn't really have much to do. The combination of her boredom and the vehicle's gentle shaking caused her to end up napping atop the driver's platform for most of the trip's duration.

“Adventurer's Guild in town?”

“A pretty big ‘un. It's right by the town's entrance, so you'll prob'ly see it soon.”

Unlike Greyseal, Argentlaphn lacked a space specifically intended for horned carriages. Our vehicle had ended up pulling up beside a stagecoach just outside town.

The passengers began to get off shortly after the vehicle reached its destination. They each thanked Fran and then the driver in that order as they left.

“Thank you!”

“We owe you our lives, milady!”

“Bai bai Fuwan!”

She responded to them with the usual “Nn,” before departing from the drop off area.

To be honest, having people treat us like that is kind of draining. It looks like we're going to have to put with it if we want to keep bolstering the Black Cat Tribe's place in beastkin society though...

I felt the urge let out a mental groan as I entertained the thought, but was interrupted by Fran before I could.

“Master.”

“What's up?”

“Tired...”

It looked like I wasn't the only one. But still, it wasn't really an issue. We were sure to grow accustomed to it in due time.

265. Argentlapn

Chapter 265. Argentlapn

Argentlapn

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editor: Exkalamity

We found Argentlapn's Adventures' Guild immediately after passing through the town's front gate.

The size of the guild was, like Greyseal's, quite impressive. This made me believe that all the Beastkin's Country's guilds were large, but apparently that was a misunderstanding. Us seeing two larger guilds in a row was just a coincidence. Greyseal was a portside city and Argentlapn was right by the best place one could pass through the Scorpion Lion Forest. As far as adventurers were concerned, both were hotspots.

『There seem to be a good number of adventurers hanging around.』

“Nn.”

Upon entering, we found more than 30 adventurers sitting around what looked like a bar and drinking booze.

All their gazes immediately flew right at Fran, evaluating her. Most were beastkin, so they immediately recognized Fran as someone who had evolved. The realization not only shocked them, but also eliminated any thoughts they had of harassing us. The reckless and ignorant adventurers that would've otherwise tried were immediately told to stand down by their buddies.

“W-Welcome.”

“Nn. Want to sell monster parts.”

“Sure thing. Could I please see your guild card?”

“Nn. C ranked adventurer. Fran.”

“I-I knew it...!”

The receptionist already knew who Fran was. The guild’s intelligence network reached both far and wide and its employees were held to a high standard, so they were always kept in the loop. She soon realized that she’d been timidly staring at Fran’s card, so she lightly cleared her throat before returning it.

“I-I’m sorry, please excuse me. We handle all monster related transactions over there,” she said, pointing towards a table

“Got it.”

Fran brought out the corpses of the venom dogs she’d slain on her way over to the guild. They were not yet dismantled because we hadn’t had the time to get to it.

For some odd reason, the adventurers were riled up by her bounty.

Wait, why do they seem so impressed? Venom dogs are only F ranked threats, aren’t they? How is killing 10 of them any bit of a big deal?

Diving deeper into the conversation led me to understand the reasons for their admiration.

“That’s quite the number of venom dogs, miss,” said the guild’s receptionist, her eyes wide. “Did you perhaps encounter a pack?”

“Nn,” replied Fran.

“Wow, how impressive.. I should’ve expected nothing less.”

Venom dogs were quite difficult for weaker adventurers to handle because they had access to the Magic Poison Fang skill. Packs of 10 or more were considered especially dangerous and boosted their threat level up to E. In

other words, one needed to be at least as strong as a D-ranker to handle a pack all by oneself.

It was obvious from looking at the corpses that Fran killed each one with a single blow, yet another testament to the extent of her skill.

“Meat edible?”

“It’s poisoned, so unfortunately not. But on the flip side, the guild is willing to buy any sort of poison, so we’ll be happy to take it off your hands regardless.”

The guild ended up paying us 5k Golde a pop. The price was that low because the monsters had yet to be dismantled and all were missing their cores. The 50k profit we got seemed like it would probably be about enough to cover the night’s lodging expenses.

“And here is your 50,000 Golde. Thank you for doing business with us,” said the guild’s receptionist, handing Fran a large bag of coins.

“Thanks,” replied Fran. “Also, wanted to ask question.”

“Please go right ahead.”

“How to get to capital?”

“Give me just a second and I’ll show you.”

The receptionist pulled out a map of the surrounding area.

“The most important thing is knowing exactly where to go.”

I looked at it and realized that we could enter the most narrow part of the Scorpion Lion Forest by heading south from where the town was located. It certainly did look like a good spot to use to break through.

“As I’m sure you’ve noticed already, this is where the forest is thinnest,” she said, pointing to a spot on the map. “It only takes about a day to get out

of the forest if you pass through here. The adventurers tend to call it ‘The Shortcut.’”

“Got it. Chance of encountering manticore?”

“About one in one hundred.”

“Seems low?” asked Fran, tilting her head.

“Manticores tend to avoid preying on adventurers if possible,” explained the receptionist.

Weaker adventurers were easy prey, but the manticores would be overwhelmed if they ran into stronger adventurers. As a result, they believed attacking adventurers as risky and instead focused on the consumption of other monsters.

That said, some manticores would still attack adventures near The Shortcut. Those were either young and inexperienced, or desperate because they’d been driven out of their territory by stronger manticores.

“There’s a road leading all the way to The Shortcut, so it should be quite easy to find.”

Passing through the shortcut took one straight to the town of Roseraccoon, another large town bordering the Scorpion Lion Forest.

“While I do think you’d be perfectly fine on your own, you can find yourself a party if you so wish by checking the recruitment board over there.” She pointed towards a large wooden board behind Fran.

“Recruitment board?”

“Yes. Safety comes from one’s individual combat prowess, but can also come from numbers for those who are lacking.”

Partying up allowed you to take on stronger opponents by working together with other people also capable of putting up a fight. Moreover, it also

allowed the possibility of escaping by sacrificing one's companions in times of desperation.

That was why it was only natural for those that liked to solo or work in small groups to temporarily join up with each other and form slightly larger parties before attempting to move through the forest.

I, however, was against it. Partying up with people would only serve to slow us down.

"Hey there."

"Nn? Hi?"

"You're planning to head through the Scorpion Lion Forest, right? You wanna join us? We may not really look it, but we're E-rankers, so we won't slow you down or get in your way."

A handsome looking human adventurer approached and called out to Fran right as she attempted to leave the guild.

I couldn't help but feel a bit of suspicion with regards to his motives. I highly doubted a non-beastkin E ranker would be able to discern the extent of Fran's might at a glance.

That said, why was he going about assuming Fran isn't a weakling?

"Called out to me, why?"

"Well I mean, you've pretty much got everyone's sights on you, and I just overheard something about you saying you were a C ranker."

"You believed that?"

"Well, you beastkin tend to have higher stats than us humans, and a good portion of you tend to be able to hold your own in a fight. I met another young, but incredibly strong beastkin girl around your age the other day too, so I'm pretty confident that you're a strong one."

“I see.”

Welp, don't I feel like an asshole. He'd actually been wanting to party up with Fran and not trying to mess with her.

That said, we ended up turning down his invitation because he wasn't leaving until the day after tomorrow, and we couldn't afford to just sit around and waste time with our schedule. Moreover, I'd been thinking that it was possible for us to just get on Urushi and fly over the forest. Though, that would eat through his mana, so I wanted to go as far as possible on foot first. Thus having companions wouldn't quite work out with what we had in mind.

“We should leave now.”

“Nn.”

So, with that done, we thanked the receptionist and headed back out the front door.

“It's still morning, and we've still got the whole day ahead of us, so why don't we head right over to The Shortcut?”

“Think will encounter manticores?”

“Why again do you seem like you're looking forward to it...? Though, you've probably gone and jinxed it now, so I'd say we're more or less sure to run into one.”

“Can't wait.”

266. Scorpion Lion Forest

Chapter 266. Scorpion Lion Forest

Scorpion Lion Forest

Translation: SupremeTentacle

Editing: Exkalamity, Sebas Tian

The act of “jinxing” something, also known as “raising a flag”, has always been one that has both brought trouble and evoked fear. It has changed all sorts of destinies. It’s known for hooking up average losers with the hottest girls in school, brutally murdering loving fathers serving in the military, reversing all but guaranteed victories, and everything in between.

So you’re probably wondering where I’m going with this tangent and all.

“Garuooooohhh!”

“Wasn’t there only supposed to be a 1% chance for us to run into a manticore?!” I complained.

“Nn. Lucked out,” Fran happily replied.

“More like this only happened ’cause you jinxed it!”

We happened to encounter a 5 meter tall lion with a scorpion’s tail as we tried passing through The Shortcut.

—

General Information

Species: Manticore (Lion-type Monster)

Level: 31

HP: 398/819

MP: 81/196

STR: 201

VIT: 591

AGI: 350

INT: 203

MGC: 187

DEX: 267

Skills

Sole Sense: Lv 1

Sharp Nose: Lv 6

Espionage: Lv 4

Flame Breath: Lv 6

Vigilance: Lv 4

Harden: Lv 8

Herculean Strength: Lv 5

Shock Resistance: Lv 6

Resistance to Abnormal Status: Lv 6

Life Force Detection: Lv 4

Claw Arts: Lv 9

Claw Techniques: Lv 7

Earth Magic: Lv 5

Poison Spray: Lv 6

Tail Strike: Lv 9

Fire Magic: Lv 4

Physical Barrier: Lv 7

Roar: Lv 5

Night Vision

Vigour Manipulation

Reinforced Fur

Magic Poison Fang

Description: A monster that resembles a lion with a scorpion's tail. Its rank is justified by its defensive prowess as it's offensive stats tend to be relatively lackluster. It is quite easy to combat so long as you take note of its tail. Its core is located within its heart. Threat level: C.

—

The manticore's stats seemed reasonable and rather fitting given its rank. That is, it was about as strong as all the other C ranked monsters we'd fought to date. As indicated by its description, its skills were mostly centered around bolstering its defenses.

That said, it had both Magic Poison Fang and Herculean Strength, so its ability to attack wasn't something to be underestimated.

Or at least that would've been the case if we'd run into it when it was in perfect condition.

"Dying?" asked Fran, as she tilted her head.

"Not quite. It's health and mana are both sitting at about half."

The manticore had deep wounds carved all over its body. The guild had said that younger manticores and manticores that'd been kicked out of their territory were the only two types that adventurers would normally encounter on The Shortcut.

The one we were staring down seemed to belong to the latter of the two categories. Its right leg had a deep gash in it and its right eye had a cut that seemed to render it useless. Its ever important tail had been torn down the middle and was missing its upper half, stinger and all.

"Nn."

"Groooooowl!"

It seemed to have sensed Fran's strength, as its back was arched like an aggravated housecat. Its injured leg had prevented it from running away, so it instead chose to ready itself to engage her in combat.

"Alright. Let's get ourselves some exp and loot its corpse once we're done."

"Nn!" Fran nodded, excited at the prospect of combat.

"Stay on guard, Urushi. Whatever almost killed our manticore friend here might still be nearby."

"Woof!" Urushi replied reliably.

"Let's go, Fran!"

"Nn! Awakening!"

The manticore's defenses were focused towards physical resistance as opposed to magical resistance. To that end, I was going to be taking charge of our offensive efforts; Fran's capacity for magic fell behind my own.

Fran was going to be focused on defense. She awakened in order to make it easier to avoid the enemy's attacks by using her perception-type skills in tandem with her boosted dex stat. She'd be using her Sword Lord Arts and Perfect Barrier to parry and mitigate anything she couldn't dodge. Though I was going to be focused on attacking, that wasn't all. I was also preparing a teleportation spell just in case we ever needed to escape.

"Graaaaaaohhhh!" the manticore roared as it lunged towards Fran.

"Fmph," Fran grunted as she dodged the manticore's strike and took to its rear.

"Sweet! It looks like you've got us into a pretty good position. Thunderbolt! Thunderbolt!!"

"Gyaaaaoooooooo!" the beast howled as the magical projectiles drove themselves into its body.

Lightning Magic's biggest perk was the crowd-control type effect that came with its damage. The paralyzing bolts slowed its limbs and allowed us to better avoid its strikes.

"Nn! Effective!"

"Yeah! Let's keep this up till it dies!"

We continued to fire off spells. We probably could've opened with Kanna Kamui or even Thor's Hammer and just straight up won, but, we didn't want to blow up the monster's core by spamming spells with too much power.

Thus we whittled our foe down with medium powered spells instead.

"Lightning Blast! Lightning Blast!!"

I called them medium powered, but that was only because I was used to casting the two other spells I'd just mentioned. Truth be told, the spells I was casting were probably considered high powered given that they could hurt C ranked monsters.

Another four blasts of lightning caused the manticore to die.

“...Dead?” Fran narrowed her eyes, still on guard.

“Oh god damn it Fran! You're jinxing things again!” I groaned.

“Nn?”

Fortunately, we were fine this time around. The manticore was actually dead. It didn't get back up and attack. I pierced through its corpse and absorbed its core.

“It's been a while since I've last absorbed anything this strong.”

My mood improved as I felt the manticore's magical energy flow into me. I ended up gaining a whole 200 monster core points worth of value from it, which was a lot more than I imagined. I almost wanted to run into another manticore now.

Unfortunately, it didn't seem like there were any other manticores nearby. They weren't the kind of monster one encountered regularly.

“Grr!” Urushi let out a low growl to warn us of an incoming entity.

“Something coming...!”

Likewise, Fran's ears twitched as she picked up on the individual the wolf had detected.

“Whatever it is has got quite a bit of magical energy.”

The thing coming towards us had about the same amount of magical energy as a manticore, but it wasn't one. Whatever it was, it was approaching incredibly quickly.

And it wasn't alone. There was what seemed to be one of its allies following behind it as well. If they were monsters, it was possible that they were the type that hunted in pairs.

"I'll get us ready to teleport the hell out if need be."

"Nn."

Fran kept her guard up and took a combat ready stance with me in hand as she awaited the incoming pair. But both she and I were taken aback regardless.

"What impudence! I have been robbed of my prey!"

A young girl that looked to be only the slightest bit older than Fran complained as sprang from the bushes. Her voice carried with it the sort of tone one would expect from a highborn.

She was pretty. She was really pretty. Her beauty was of such importance that I had to say it twice. Twice! [1]

Her hair was cut rather short, but curled inwards at the ends. Her eyebrows were thick, but not too long horizontally. They almost seemed a bit like the kind you'd see in Imperial, historical Japanese courts if you looked at her from afar. When combined with her big forehead, it made her give off a youthful charm. Both her hair and the ears that adorned her head were a platinum blonde while her skin was white as snow.

Her deep, crimson eyes clearly stood out from the rest of her visage. They were big, round, and carried within them all the girl's obstinacy and determination. The sheer strength of her gaze was more than enough to draw attention to her.

Furthermore, her eyes weren't the only thing that contrasted with her skin and hair; her armour did too. It was like her opposite: everything she wore was dyed in black. Her metal armour was ornamented all over with gold, giving her an air that was magnanimous and threatening. I couldn't help but

feel like it was too over the top for a child to wear, but for some odd reason it seemed to suit her nonetheless.

I could tell at a glance that she was a beastkin, but I had no way of knowing what race she was in particular. I appraised her, given that it was only natural in our current circumstances, but I wasn't able to get anything out of it. She must've had a skill or item powerful enough to totally ward off the effects of even my Eye of Empyrea.

I instead had to rely on using my experiences to discern that she was some sort of cat-related beastkin.

"I can't appraise her, so I can't say for sure, but it looks like she's probably a White Catkin or something," I pondered.

"White Catkin. Doesn't exist," Fran telepathically replied.

"Shit, seriously?"

"Nn. Know all catkin types since also catkin. No white."

"Right..."

Wait, so what is she then? Is she not a cat? Nah, she has to be a cat based on how her ears and tail look. Maybe she's like a White Pantherkin or White Tigerkin or something, assuming they exist?

"Not evolved yet," she remarked conclusively.

"Huh. Well then..."

"Nn... But strange. Can't tell species."

She could not only stop me from appraising her, but also somehow had the ability to prevent other beastkin from figuring out her precise species.

The girl briskly walked towards us as I found myself lost in thought. She was giving off an extremely hostile aura, but not the murderous kind. We decided to take a wait-and-see approach and hear her out for the time being.

That said, we weren't going to let her approach us any more than she already had.

"Stop there," Fran narrowed her eyes as she issued a warning.

"...I need not for you to tell me that," the other girl replied.

Much to my surprise, she stopped right where we told her to. Thinking about it, I realized it made sense. There was no reason for her to step within range of our attacks.

That action alone was more than enough to inform me that the girl was a skilled fighter. With a single glance she had not only discerned that Fran was strong, but also accurately estimated her effective range.

Her eyes widened as she took a second look at Fran. I couldn't tell whether it was because she'd realized Fran was the Black Lightning Princess, or if it was simply because she was an evolved Black Catkin.

I wanted Fran to ask her who she was, but that had to wait. There were more important issues to be addressed.

"Approaching person, your party member?"

"Indeed."

A second individual emerged from a bush behind the girl as she answered Fran's question.

"Please don't rush on ahead of me, my lady," the individual rebuked.

A wave of shock coursed through my brain the moment I saw her. The sheer impact I felt was on par with the one I'd felt when I saw the Leviathan just the other day.

I was so surprised I couldn't stop myself from muttering under my breath.

"Is that... a maid...?"

[1] Shitty meme. “If something’s important, you say it twice!”

267. Mare and Kuina

Chapter 267. Mare and Kuina

Mare and Kuina

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editors: Exkalamity, Sebas Tian

The individual that had pushed her way through the bushes was undoubtedly a maid. Wait. Weren't we supposed to be in the midst of a haunt containing C ranked monsters? The hell is a maid doing here? If there was a limit to how out of place one could possibly be, then this maid had just exceeded the hell out of it.

Her being a maid wasn't really the part that surprised me the most. I'd already met many maids post reincarnation.

I was as surprised as I was because the maid before me was a whole cut above the rest. She wasn't wearing the traditional servant wear one normally saw on the maids around these parts. Rather, she wore a less sexualized version of the frilly, lacy, gothic-lolita style dress you'd typically see in anime and manga. Her clothes clearly put cuteness well above functionality.

The dress, whose main colours were white and navy, came with an equally fancy apron attached to it. The bottom part of the dress extended almost all the way towards the ground. It gave her a really prim and proper kinda feel, which really got me going. The girl wearing the maid uniform had a well proportioned figure and clear body lines. Her curves reminded me greatly of Fujiko's. [1] Moreover, her eyes made her seem cold. She was just the type of maid I liked. Her long chestnut hair was styled into three distinct braids. Her long bangs had been pushed aside to put her forehead on display.

Her nose was decorated with a pair of thick-lensed glasses. They were heavy, and if you looked at her straight on, it almost looked like they were

falling off her face.

Man, round glasses are the best.

There was no doubt in my mind that her glasses were sexy as hell. Her ears were black and resembled those of a horse's. They were a bit difficult to see, in part because of the brim she was wearing and in part because they'd been pushed back such that they blended in with her hair. At first, I'd thought that they were just accessories.

Unlike her companion, the maid could actually be appraised.

—

General Information

Name: Kuina

Age: 29

Species: Beastkin (Grey Tapirkin / Phantom Dream Tapirkin)

Class: First Class Maid

Status Level: 49/99

HP: 539

MP: 651

STR: 297

VIT: 230

AGI: 231

INT: 333

MGC: 311

DEX: 336

Skills

Assassination: Lv 7

Espionage: Lv 8

Healing Magic: MAX

Recovery Magic: Lv 4

Court Etiquette: Lv 6

Presence Detection: Lv 4

Presence Concealment: Lv 8

Illusion Magic: MAX

Greater Illusion Magic: Lv 2

Restrain: Lv 6

Sewing: Lv 7

Murderous Intent Detection: Lv 8

Silenced Action: Lv 7

Purification Magic: Lv 4

Resistance to Abnormal Status: Lv 6

Interrogation: Lv 7

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 8

Laundry: Lv 8

Cleaning: MAX

Throwing Arts: Lv 9

Throwing Techniques: Lv 8

Knowledge of Poisons: Lv 8

Poison Perception: Lv 8

Magic Resist: Lv 4

Magic Perception: Lv 6

Magic Absorption: Lv 6

Water Magic: Lv 5

Cooking: Lv 8

Alchemy: Lv 4

Ignore Pain

Iron Will

Magic Mastery

Innate Skills

Awakening

A Maid's Prudence

Phantom Dream Matrix

Titles

Assassin Killer

Illusion Mage

One That has Experienced and Surpassed Hell

Lord of Cleaning

Royal Maid

Equipment

Divine Silk Maid's Uniform

Divine Silk Gloves

Ring of Sorcery

Illusion Sealing Bracelet

—

She was pretty strong, seeing as how she'd evolved. She looked like she was more than fit for combat, or rather assassination, even though she was a maid.

Classifying her in adventurer terms, she was at least as strong as a B ranker. I wouldn't be surprised if she were an A ranker either, given that I had no idea how large the powerboost she'd get from awakening was.

"My lady, I've told you time and time again to slow down. I can't keep up with you, and it's dangerous for you to dash on ahead of me," rebuked the maid.

"I do apologize, Kuina. Chasing down my prey caused me to lose myself," replied the little girl.

"And who might this newfound acquaintance of yours be?"

The maid, Kuina, turned her eyes in Fran's direction. Her gaze remained cold, but it didn't seem like she was judging Fran. Instead, it seemed more like she was simply sleepy, but at the same time, she gave off a mysterious feel. The lack of emotion within made it difficult to guess her thoughts. Her eyes were similar to Fran's, but gave the impression that she had even less interest in other people.

In fact, she didn't seem surprised even though she'd stared Fran down. Of all the beastkin we met she gave the smallest reaction to Fran's evolution.

"That... is surprising, so much so that I almost tripped and fell," the maid remarked.

"Indeed. Never before have I seen your face decorated with such a deep expression of surprise."

Apparently, she was not actually uninterested in Fran. Her emotions just didn't show on her face. I was honestly impressed that her companion was even capable of discerning her emotions, let alone their intensity.

"You, name yourself!" the silver haired girl commanded.

I wanted Fran tell her that it was rude to ask another's name without first providing one's own, but—

"Rather, it would be more appropriate for me to provide my own name first. I am Mare, and I allow you to refer to me as such!" the girl that had named herself Mare declared in an imposing, self-important tone.

"And I'm Kuina. Nice to meet you."

Mare placed both hands on her hips and took a proud stance as she declared herself, whereas Kuina instead performed a clean, crisp bow as she gave her name. They seemed really disorganized given the disparity between the manner in which they introduced themselves, but didn't really come off as bad people nonetheless.

“C ranked adventurer, Fran. This, Urushi,” Fran replied in her usual tone. She was clearly undaunted.

“Woof!”

“Fran...? So you really are the Black Lightning Princess,” Mare nodded, as if to confirm her own suspicions.

“Nn.”

She knew about the Black Lightning Princess. So wait, does that mean she’s an adventurer? She’s got a maid though, so she’s probably not... Is she a merchant or something? No, that doesn’t seem quite right...

“I never would have thought that we would meet you under circumstances like these,” said Kuina. “I would have liked us to meet in a more peaceful environment.”

“That reminds me! How dare you rob me of my prey!?” exclaimed Mare, outraged.

“Prey?”

“I am speaking of the manticore that you slew! I was in the midst of hunting it down. You snatched the most enjoyable part of the hunt from right under my nose!” Mare shouted indignantly as she pointed towards the roasted manticore corpse lying right by us. Apparently, the manticore hadn’t been in our way because it’d lost its territory but rather because it had chosen to flee from Mare and her maid.

Under normal circumstances, my first reaction would be to accuse Mare of bullshitting, but I was pretty sure that she and Kuina would be able to handle a manticore without issue.

There was no debating that we’d stolen their kill. But at the same time, it was also their fault for letting their prey run from them in the first place. Still, we would’ve likely also began complaining if we were in their shoes.

“I’d prefer not turning this into any sort of major conflict if possible. What say you, Fran?”

“Nn...? Can just give manticore?” she replied nonchalantly.

“You sure?”

“Don’t mind.”

I personally had no problem giving them the materials if it meant avoiding conflict. The only issue would be that I’ve already absorbed the core. Cores were valuable to adventurers, and given that there was obviously no way we could’ve possibly sold it already, I wasn’t sure we were going to be able to talk our way through the current circumstances.

“Then can give you manticore materials,” offered Fran.

“Keep them. I need them not.” Mare flatly rejected her.

“My lady, I beg you to reconsider,” interjected Kuina. “We do require them given our funds are beginning to run dry.”

“...I do admit that there is no harm in procuring them. However, they are but an extra. I was more interested in the slaying of the manticore and the experience I would gain, as I am quite close to leveling up.” Mare complained.

Oh, so they were grinding. That made sense. If Mare was anywhere near as strong as Kuina, then she’d need to defeat something at least as strong as a manticore if she wanted to gain any significant amount of experience.

“Your fault. Let prey escape,” pointed out Fran.

Mare grumbled in dissatisfaction, her face scrunching up.

“I believe the Black Lightning Princess is in the right here, My Lady,” Kuina noted.

“...I understand,” Mare relented. “...But I won’t forgive you lest you engage me in a spar!”

Again, Mare spoke in a cocky, self-important tone, but I didn’t mind it. At first I thought it was because of how pretty she looked, but Fran felt the same way I did, so that probably wasn’t it. Mysteriously, Fran didn’t feel repulsed by it like she often did when other nobles did the same.

Was it just because her cuteness seemed to overrule her stubbornness? Or because her pride almost seemed a natural fit for her? Of course, I don’t feel the urge to suddenly kneel before her and obey her every whim, but I did feel like nodding along and agreeing was the natural thing to do.

“Interested,” said Fran.

“I’m not sure that’s a request you would typically spring on someone so suddenly, My Lady,” Kuina remarked.

“A duel with the famous Black Lightning Princess,” said Mare, ignoring her maid, “should more than suffice to make up for the loss of the manticore. What say you, Black Lightning Princess?”

I didn’t even need to hear Fran’s answer to know exactly what she was thinking. Her eyes were blazing in a way that they only ever did when she was in battle mode. It was completely self-evident that she was going to comply with Mare’s request.

“Got it.”

“A splendid response!” said Mare, happily. “Let us find a more convenient place to spar. This area is not exactly what I would claim the most suitable.”

“Nn!”

Oh well, I guess it’s fine. Neither Kuina or Mare had lied, and neither was giving off the impression that they wanted to kill her, so why not.

[1] Lupin III reference.

268. Dueling Mare

Chapter 268. Dueling Mare

Dueling Mare

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editor: Exkalamity

We followed Mare and Kuina out the Scorpion Lion Forest so Fran could spar with Mare. Our party was so strong we instantly obliterated all the goblins and other weaker creatures we encountered on sight. Mare and Fran would immediately charge at any unfortunate monsters they could find. They competed for kills so intensely that I felt not even a manticore could survive a hit from the two combined.

We negotiated to keep all the cores of the monsters defeated along the way and relinquished all the remaining materials to Mare and Kuina. They didn't particularly mind since all they really wanted was money. Kuina was responsible for transporting all the monsters we defeated. She put the materials into an interesting sort of item bag. It had a small opening, but would suck things inside and had no issues storing things larger than it.

The two catkin chattered and debated their favourite foods as they walked. Kuina, on the other hand, mostly stayed silent. She instead focused on examining the surroundings for any potential danger. Her ears would move about and occasionally twitch. It really was hard to read her expressions though. I couldn't tell what she was thinking at all.

We journeyed through the Scorpion Lion Forest effectively unhindered, taking about two hours to pass through it. Exiting the forest, we found ourselves greeted by a wide, open plain.

"Shall we begin!?" Mare suggested.

"Nn!" said Fran as she reached for my hilt.

The two warriors, both exhilarated by the idea of a spar, turned to face each other as they prepared to draw their weapons—only to be interrupted.

“Stop right there,” said Kuina as she grabbed onto Mare’s head with an iron-claw grip.

“What now!?” shouted Mare.

“You’ll bother everyone else that wishes to use this route should you two spar right here” said Kuina, adjusting the rim of her glasses with her free hand. “Please move a bit further into the plains so you won’t be in anyone’s way.”

I had to admit, she had a point. I highly doubted that the duel would end with just a clash of blades. The two would likely destroy the road if we did not relocate.

And so we continued walking for another ten minutes and stopped once we were sure that there was nothing important nearby.

“Okay, this will suffice,” said Kuina. “Remember two things: do not kill each other, and do not awaken.”

“That much is obvious!” Mare complained.

“Nn!”

“But you needn’t hold back too much. I can heal both of you even if you bring each other to the verge of death.”

Mare laughed. “I can hardly wait! This will truly be a test of my skill!”

“Same.”

“Will that wolf be joining you in combat? I mind not if it participates.”

“Numerical advantage?”

“That is not a concern.” Mare drew the blade she carried on her back, raised it to the sky, and shouted, “Llinde!”

A red light radiated from its blade and from that light materialized a dragon.

“Kyuooooohhh!”

“Cute,” was Fran’s first response.

It was fairly small, but a dragon nonetheless. If I had to guess, I would assume it to be a child.

“Monster Weapon?”

“Nuhahahaha! Amazing, is it not?” replied Mare. “My sword is none other than Llinde, the Dragonblade!”

Mare’s ability to block me from appraising her didn’t apply to her sword. I was able to appraise both it and the dragon that had emerged from it.

General Stats

Name: Dragonblade Llinde

Attack: 963

MP: 669

Durability: 887

Magical Conductivity: B+

Skills

Flame Resistance

Self-Repair

Summon Dragonsoul

—

T-The fuck, that thing is strong! Hell, it has even more attack than I do! And it's a Monster Weapon to boot? Shit, I mean it's not as impressive as a Godblade, but it was still without a doubt a high class magic sword.

B-But I'm still totally the better weapon. I-I have skills and stuff. I-I'm definitely not worse j-just because it's got a dragon.

—

General Information

Name: Llinde

Species: Dragon (Dragonsoul)

Status:

HP: 887

MP: 669

STR: 120

VIT: 100

AGI: 300

INT: 200

MGC: 400

DEX: 100

Skills

Flame Breath: Lv 6

Fang Techniques: Lv 4

Fang Arts: Lv 5

Presence Detection: Lv 4

Regeneration: Lv 5

Resistance to Abnormal Status: Lv 5

Resistance to Mental Abnormalities: Lv 5

Charge: Lv 6

Heat Detection: Lv 5

Flight: Lv 8

Fire Magic: Lv 5

Roar: Lv 4

Dragon Magic: Lv 5

Reinforced Scales

Flame Nullification

Magic Manipulation

Unique Skills

Principle of Flame: Lv 6 [1]

Description: N/A

The reason the dragon lacked a description was likely because it was associated with the blade and lived within it. That aside, it was decently strong. It wasn't a match for Urushi, but it was powerful enough to be considered a D ranked threat. Its unique skill apparently allowed it to manipulate any flames in its vicinity.

"Llinde here will take that wolf of yours on."

"Got it," said Fran. "Urushi, no losing."

"Woof!"

"The very same applies to you, Llinde! Show them what it means to have a dragon's pride!"

"Kyuoohhh!"

"This is a spar, so no hard feelings from either of you regardless of the outcome," said Kuina. "Do I make myself clear?"

"Naturally," Mare affirmed.

"Nn"

And so, the two began their duel. They did not immediately charge at each other right out of the gate. The match began with neither fighter willing to make the first move.

The two instead stared each other down with their blades raised. They made only the slightest of feints to keep each other in check. The moment I thought the two would be forever stuck in a deadlock, Mare suddenly charged.

"Haaaahhh!"

“Fmph!”

The sharp ring of steel on steel echoed throughout the plains as the two young girls let loose their battlecries.

Mare was quite the swordsman. She was able to cross blades with Fran and hold her ground through a short exchange of blows. But unfortunately for her, Fran held the Sword Lord Arts skill, which gave her the edge and allowed her to gradually overwhelm her foe through sheer technique.

“Hahahah! Impressive, Black Lightning Princess! I expect no less from a tribe whose name has been carved into legend!”

“Also impressed. Not bad.”

“Frustrating as it is, I must admit that my skill fails to surpass your own. I’ve no choice but to up the ante.”

“Bring it on!”

The two seemed to be getting along; they somehow found the time to trade words despite being engaged in a furious exchange of blows.

Mare attacked Fran with flame magic, but the black catkin managed to ward off her spell through the use of just her sword and a barrier before returning fire with spells of her own. Fran was the more agile type of fighter, so her attacks came in the form of a relentless barrage. On the other hand, Mare was more a strength type. She launched fewer attacks, but each was much more powerful. The two girls smiled as they unhesitantly launched attacks that each carried lethal force. It was clear that both did not want to yield to the other.

Some of Mare’s flame-based attacks would come without any chants. I couldn’t tell if these attacks were magical spells or if they were instead a trait of her species. I suspected it was the latter, but at the same time I highly doubted it. She was too white to be a Red Catkin, after all.

Thinking about Red Catkin, I remembered that the Beast Lord had once mentioned that he had a daughter, but I highly doubted said daughter would be gallivanting around doing adventurer-like things with a maid by her side...

Wait... that does seem possible seeing as how the Beast Lord is who he is...

I looked towards Urushi and his foe.

"Grrr!"

"Kyuuoooh!"

The wolf and dragon were engaged in a high speed battle. The two were using the wide open space they were given to its fullest, trying to chase each other down without being caught. I couldn't help but be surprised at Llinde's speed. It could generate bursts of speed that exceeded Urushi at his fastest even though the latter had a higher agility stat.

Of course, its ability to fly contributed in part to its speed, but the bigger part seemed to be attributed to the flames that would trail behind it whenever it accelerated. It seemed to be using something similar to the Burnia spell. [2]

That said, speed was the only thing the dragonling had on Urushi. The wolf was superior in every other category. He held the advantage from start to end even though he was holding back. I was pretty sure he'd eventually win if I just left him be, so I turned my attention back over to Fran.

She and Mare were still happily exchanging blows, but the winner was already clear. Mare had substantial wounds all over, but Fran had only suffered a few light scratches. Mare's hands were tied. Fran was both the better swordsman and the better mage of the two. There was simply nothing she could do.

Realizing that, Mare used her flame magic to create an opening and distanced herself from her opponent. It seemed that she still had something up her sleeve. Fran defended against the spell, and had more than enough

liberty to pursue, but stood her ground. She wanted to see what Mare was planning to do.

Mare's eyes were filled with exhilaration. The battle was giving her an adrenaline rush, one that caused to raise her voice and loose a bestial howl.

“...Coming.”

A massive amount of magical energy began gathering within Mare's body. There was so much of it that it caused the air around her to begin crackling with energy. Was she awakening? Or maybe using some other skill?

I couldn't tell. I only knew that she was trying something big, so I focused my attention on her in hopes of figuring out exactly what it was.

Fran's expression was identical to Mare's. She was excited to see what would happen next, to see the challenge she would have to overcome—but it didn't. Something appeared behind Mare and caused the magical energy she started building up to disperse.

“Ngyaaah!”

“Geez. Were you seriously about to go ahead and do that, My Lady?”

“K-Kuina...”

Kuina had suddenly appeared behind Mare and dumped a large volume of magically created water over her head. The sudden wetness caused the startled catkin to scream and leap before turning back towards Kuina with a resentful gaze.

Naturally, I had picked up on Kuina's actions ahead of time. I had my guard up against her just in case. She'd suddenly disappeared using what I assumed to be illusion magic, but I did not mind it because she directed her next actions towards Mare and not Fran. Fran had also picked up on the maid's movements. Mare, however, didn't. All her focus had been directed towards Fran.

“And what exactly did I say about attempting to kill your opponent, My Lady?”

“B-But I was going to lose if I did not attempt drastic measures...”
whimpered Mare.

“And why exactly are you being so obstinate about winning or losing a spar?”

“Mmph...”

“Well?”

“V-Very well, I apologize!”

And so, that was how the spar ended with the pair apologizing to Fran. She was a bit disappointed with how things ended, but still decently satisfied, so she ended up letting things be. It was a good place to call it quits. Fran was starting to get hot headed as well. We managed to avoid having her and Mare actually try to kill each other, so this was probably as well as things could’ve possibly ended.

[1] Lit. Principle of fire manipulation, but that sounds lame af

[2] Recall, this is the spell that Fran uses to accelerate.

269. The Princess

Chapter 269. The Princess

The Princess

Translation: SupremeTentacle

Editing: Exkalamity

“Next time I will surely win! You wait and see!”

“Kyuuuu!”

With those parting words we separated from Mare and Kuina and made our way towards the town of Roserracoon. We asked them to come with us but they declined. For some reason the two of them wanted to avoid the town. Maybe they were involved in some sort of incident? Regardless we decided to let matters be and head towards the town ourselves.

“They were surely a lively pair.”

“Nn. Will win next time.”

“Woof!”

“Nn. Both of us.”

Our encounter was definitely a fruitful one. I got to see a hella gorgeous maid and Fran met Mare, the first person in her age group capable of putting up a good fight. We won the spar, and Mare didn't seem like the type of fighter to pull her punches, but I wasn't certain we would have won a serious death match. She was clearly holding onto some final trump card at the end. This fight will definitely encourage Fran's growth as a warrior down the future. My only worry is that she may become too much of a battle junkie.

After walking for a distance, we spotted walls rising out of the horizon.

“Master, town spotted.”

“Yeah and it’s pretty big too. The walls are impressive. This is probably Roserraccoon.”

“Nn.”

As we approached the town we noticed a commotion outside the walls. Although it wasn’t strange for a town as large as this to be noisy, it was strange to see so many people milling around outside the walls. As we approached we saw that all the people were adventurers. There were about thirty of them, all trying to board the same horned carriage. Fran called out to one of the adventurers.

“Something happen?”

“Hah? The hell do ya want ki– WHOA HOLY SHIT!”

The man took a glance at Fran and cut himself short. He froze, one foot on the horned carriage, the other still on the ground, his eyes bulging out of their sockets.

“Well?”

“My ba-” he coughed. “My apologies.”

He clearly cleaned up his act the moment he saw Fran. He probably realized she evolved.

“Okay?” asked Fran.

“Yes,” he said. “We’re currently tasked with escorting a noble. Our destination is a town down south.”

“Adventurers for guards? Not soldiers?”

“Yeah. All the knights and soldiers are headed to the border. There aren’t any to spare.”

“Understood.”

It seems there were some extenuating circumstances in this case. Normally a noble will be escorted by knights and soldiers unless they wanted to travel incognito. In that case they would hire adventurers as escorts, but having a full entourage of thirty people was antithetical to staying under the radar. I urged Fran to continue questioning.

“So many people, cause trouble?” asked Fran.

“Well this amount is to be expected given we are escorting the princess herself,” he said.

“Princess, here?”

“Yeah. The guildmaster decided to go over the top with this escort commission.”

It seemed the guildmaster was trying to please the royal family by sending the princess a large group of guards.

“In fact you can see her over there,” the adventurer said.

We looked over towards the direction he indicated. There stood a girl in a very ostentatious, out of place dress.

Maybe we should go talk to her... We are pretty heavily indebted to the Beast Lord, after all.

That said her entourage was giving the surroundings quite the stink-eye.

“What do?” asked Fran telepathically.

“We might as well get closer and check things out.” I said.

“Nn.”

Fran thanked the adventurer and we headed towards the princess. As we approached we suddenly felt something terribly wrong. A chill ran down

our spines. It felt similar to when we were made subject to Coerced Camaraderie in Ulmutt. But maybe not that specifically. Were we appraised by the princess' guards? Probably not since the sensation was very brief.

“Fran back off a bit.”

“Nn.”

We backed away about twenty meters and the offputting sensation disappeared. I then used magic perception and found some sort of active skill covering the entirety of the princess' surroundings. I decided to try appraising the situation. I had to be very careful in case one of the guards had appraisal detection, I didn't want Fran to be accused of a serious breach of privacy. It's best to stay out of trouble.

I first made a copy of myself while still hiding behind Fran. I switched places with that copy so it looked like I was still on Fran's back. Then I shrunk all the way down to about the size of a ping pong ball. Finally I teleported to right above the princess. Making myself smaller was harder than making myself larger, so I probably couldn't keep this form for long. I recalled what Kuina did and made an illusion to blend into the sky behind me. I was able to get an appraisal but what I saw was really odd.

General Information

Name: Nemea Narasimha

Age: 16

Species: Red Catkin/Golden Lionkin

Class: Swordsman

Status Level: 45/99

HP: 198

MP: 129

STR: 181

VIT: 188

AGI: 202

INT: 147

MGC: 189

DEX: 110

Skills

(Acting: Lv 7)

Singing: Lv 5

Court Etiquette: Lv 6

Presence Detection: Lv 5

Sword Techniques: Lv 5

Sword Arts: Lv 5

Shield Techniques: Lv 2

Shield Arts: Lv 4

Poison Perception: Lv 4

Fire Magic: Lv 5

Dancing: Lv 5

Innate Skills

Awakening

Titles

Princess (Royal Guard)

Equipment

Divine Silk Dress

Appraisal Disguise Ring

Bracelet of Substitution

Why the hell is there some stuff in parenthesis? There's a bunch of notable stuff like acting, royal guard, and even an appraisal disguise ring. Is the stuff in parenthesis things that are disguised that my max appraisal and Eye of Empyrea can see through? I can't be certain since there might be stuff hidden behind an even stronger layer of disguise. Another confusing part is the "Princess (Royal Guard)". I can't tell if it means a guard of royal blood or a guard that specifically attends a person of royalty. I wanted to investigate further but appraisal disguise obscured any further details.

Either way, the princess looked really weak considering she was that Beast Lord's daughter. Though, I guess it's a bit unfair to compare her to someone that's S ranked. Besides, she's actually pretty good for a sixteen year old. The only real issue I saw was that her skill levels were low compared to her status level. Maybe someone carried the hell out of her? I highly doubted that the Beast Lord would powerlevel his daughter but that was the only way to explain the discrepancy.

Wait! Wasn't she supposed to be fifteen? Did her birthday just pass?

I concluded that the source of my malaise was the appraisal disguise ring. She probably was not someone too suspicious given that the guildmaster was showing her out. Appraising some people around her, I found them to

be court ladies and attendants so that made things seem even more legitimate. There likely wasn't any danger in approaching her.

I slowly made my way back to Fran.

"Looks like we're in the clear. We can go greet her"

"Nn. Got it" she replied.

Since there currently was only one evolved black catkin and it was well known that it was a little girl, they should instead realize she was Fran. The Black Lightning Princess nickname was a good as identification and provided us a decent social standing in these parts.

We approached the princess and this time got close enough for her to notice us.

"Oh. Are you perhaps the Black Lightning Princess?" she asked.

"Nn."

"Oi watch your mouth!" a guard shouted. "You are to address Her Highness with respect!"

Apparently he didn't like how curtly Fran responded. But the princess reproached her guard.

"Stand down!" she said. "Do you recall that my father specifically ordered us to receive her graciously?"

Apparently the Beast Lord already arranged for stuff ahead of time. Shiet, thanks dude.

270. Assassin Discovered

Chapter 270. Assassin Discovered

Assassin Discovered

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

“Normally I would hold a proper reception for you but unfortunately currently we are in the midst of an emergency,” said the princess.

“Nn. Don’t mind.”

“Thank you so much for understanding.”

The princess bowed apologetically as we watched the adventurers around her scramble to board the horned carriage. It was clear they needed to depart as soon as possible.

Upon getting closer I saw that she looked nothing like the current Beast Lord.

She’s also kinda weak, so I doubt she’s really his daughter. She’s probably a body double, I think?

That would explain her bizzare status page. All evolved beastkin should receive a species specific skill upon awakening. For example, a black tigerkin would get Lightning Rush and a black heavenly tigerkin would get Brilliant Lightning Rush. The Beast Lord is a golden flame lionkin and I saw he had Golden Flame of Extinction, so this gold lionkin should have had something similar.

Hmm... Nothing quite seems to add up. There are too many inconsistencies. She has to be a body double or something.

I doubted that the guildmaster would fall for such a disguise. He was likely aware of the situation. The extravagant escort he commissioned was probably intended to help sell the story and trick people into thinking that the royal guard really was the princess. With this level of preparation, it was impossible for anyone that didn't already know her to tell that she was a fake, especially if they saw her treated and addressed as a member of the royal family.

“Master?”

“Nah, it's nothing. I'm just thinking about the princess and how she's probably a fake.”

“Fake? What do?”

“Good question. Honestly, I dunno.”

There was zero benefit towards pointing out the princess was a fake. We would probably jeopardize some important mission, piss off the Beastkin's Country, and have our backs marked as a result.

In the end, we just saw the “princess” off. She gave us a light bow, boarded her personal carriage, and then quickly departed with the rest of her entourage. She had only exchanged a few words with Fran, but we didn't mind. If anything, it worked in our favour. We wanted to get the capital ASAP and being asked to have tea with the princess or even guard her would have been a bother.

“Alright. Let's go to the guild.”

“Nn.”

And so we turned towards town but Fran suddenly stopped as we found ourselves upon the town's gate.

“What's wrong Fran?”

“Master, something there.”

“Where?”

She pointed towards one of the gate’s supports. There, I picked up a strange presence, like a monster trying to escape detection. The person in question was quite skilled, but not enough to escape Fran’s senses. The only reason why I didn’t pick up on him myself was because he wasn’t hostile. He was just trying to hide, it seemed.

Wow, I’m impressed she actually noticed him.

I decided to scope the mystery man out since he was clearly beyond your average back alley punk.

“Wait here,” I told Fran.

“Nn.”

I teleported closer to better investigate. I found the person in an alley beside the gate. He was hiding in the shadows and using a skill to further hide his presence. I quickly appraised him.

Hmm. So he’s an assassin.

The man’s name was Genro and his class was assassin. He must have been a veteran given his Noble Killer title. I would have ignored him if he was just another punk or hired sword but someone of his caliber shouldn’t be left to his own devices. I decided to capture and forcefully interrogate him. I used telekinesis to freeze him in place, then used earth magic to mold the ground and constrain his lower half.

Fuck yeah! Surprise attack success!

“W-What!?” he exclaimed.

“I’ve caught you.” I spoke to him telepathically. “Don’t try to resist.”

“Don’t fuck wi—”

“You won’t find me. Don’t bother trying”

“Kuh...”

I was actually just hiding on the other side of the wall behind him. But being a sword, I didn't get caught by skills capable of searching for living creatures. Only people with high leveled magic detection skills could track me down.

“Now let's get down to business, Genro.”

“Wha-?!”

“Don't try to lie. I already know everything about you.”

“You have appraisal?!”

“Why are you here? To assassinate the princess?”

“...”

“Silence, huh?”

“...Guh.”

Genro bit into his mouth. He had a poisoned capsule embedded into his tooth. As his face turned purple and his pupils began to widen,

“Nice try asshole. Antidote!”

I healed him.

“What!?” he shouted.

“That was a strong poison. But too bad my healing magic is stronger.”

“-are you kidding me?!”

“And don't bother biting your tongue. I can heal that too.”

“...”

“Now answer my questions. I’ll have to get rough if you don’t.”

“...”

“Well, you asked for it.”

And so I beat him close to death. He didn’t actually tell me anything, but I was able to put together what happened by using Principle of Falsehood whenever he said “no” or “I don’t know.” The results? Genro was an assassin from the Kingdom of Bashar and he was actively targeting Princess Nemea. His plan was to chase down the convoy and kill her. He apparently thinks that princess is real. That body double must be doing a good job if they can draw people of his caliber out. Genro moaned in pain. Now what to do with a half-dead assassin?

I should probably hand him over to the guards if I can find a way to call them over.

While carefully aiming high into the sky, I fired a flame-based explosion above the town. The sound of the blast reverberated throughout the town.

Guards will definitely come running after that. Yep, in fact here comes three of them.

“You there! Freeze!” they shouted.

“Yeah yeah I know.”

I had made a human shaped doppelganger beforehand. I raised its arms as if to surrender and then gestured towards Genro’s body.

“This guy is a Basharian assassin.” I spoke through the doppelganger.

“What? How do you know this?”

“He was after Princess Nemea so I captured him. I’m turning him over to you. Have fun~”

“Wait what do you mea- holy crap he’s vanishing!?”

The guards, stunned, watched my doppelganger melt into thin air. After blinking a few times, they suddenly remembered they had an alleged assassin to deal with. They looked down and saw his hands and feet were already bound, courtesy of me, of course. After watching them take the assassin in, I pat myself on the back for a job well done.

Welp. Back to Fran I go.

271. Roserraccoon's Guildmaster

Chapter 271. Roserraccoon's Guildmaster

Roserraccoon's Guildmaster

Translator: Supremetentacle

Editor: Exkalamity

After handing off the assassin to the guards, I returned to Fran. Together, we made our way to the Adventurers' Guild. We entered and found the inside to be unusually quiet.

Well a whole load of adventurers just left with the princess so I guess it makes sense for it to be empty.

“Ey! ‘Elcome!”

A loud voice called out to us from the counter. The receptionist was a hearty, middle aged man with a rolled up headband around his forehead, one that would not look out of place at a fisherman's market by the wharf. We approached the counter.

“Interestin’. You the Black Lightning Princess, lassie?” he asked.

“Nn. Me.”

“I knew it! Good to have you ’ere!”

He nodded as he examined Fran's guild card.

Goddamn, this dude is way too lively!

“So what can I help ya with today?” he asked.

“Want to know how to get to capital,” said Fran.

“The capital? Oh, ya wanna go to Vestia? Normally, ya wanna find yourself a horned carriage.”

“Normally?”

“Yeah.” He scratched his head. “They’ve all been rented out for the time being.”

“Princess?”

“Yeah. I told the guildmaster he was spendin’ way too much on the adventurers and the horned carriages, but he didn’t listen to me. Our guildmaster’s the type that really likes to please his higher ups, ya see.”

The guildmaster employed all the adventurers and horned carriages available just to ingratiate himself to the royals.

“But honestly, I can’t really say anythin’ too negative ‘bout it. I can get why he’s goin’ all out for our royals, y’see.”

“Why?” asked Fran.

“O’course. The country’s been doin’ real well since the current Beast Lord took over. He ‘imself used to be an adventurer, so he’s been givin’ the guild a good cut of benefits too.”

At first, I’d thought that the guildmaster was just a tool, but it turned out there was a bit more to it. He and many other adventurers simply adored the Beast Lord and the adventurer-benefiting policies he stood behind.

But will Roserracoon be okay with so many adventurers and horned carriages missing? What if there is an emergency?

“Guild empty, okay?” asked Fran.

“Haha don’t ya worry! We can deal with it lassie” he replied. “This city’s a hotspot as far as adventurers go. They gather here from all over the country, ‘specially if they’re planning on makin’ use of The Shortcut. Give it 10 days or so, and we’ll be just as full as we were this mornin’.”

“Got it,” Fran nodded.

“We’ll ask for reinforcements from the guild in the capital,” he said.
“Couple o’ strong guys would come and keep us covered for a bit. Our guildmaster’s pretty capable too.”

“Guildmaster, strong?” asked Fran.

“Yeah. He’s gotta be to be a guildmaster,” he said. “Plus we’re in this situation cuz of his selfishness, so we’re gonna work ‘im to the bone haha!”

Seems like my worries about the lack of manpower were needless.

“So,” he said. “A normal horse carriage takes ‘round five to six days to reach Vestia, ya see.”

“Route complicated?” asked Fran.

“Route? Naw it’s basically a straight line from ‘ere to Vestia. There’s even a highway built for carriages, so ya can’t get lost.”

“Okay. Thanks.”

“You plannin’ to head over by yerself?”

“Nn.”

“Well, if even half the rumors ‘bout ya are true, then you’d be there sooner without a carriage.”

I don’t know what these rumors are but if they are basically equating us with an A rank adventurer then they’re probably accurate enough.

“They be some crazy rumours. They sa—” the receptionist was about to continue talking, but suddenly stopped himself short.

“Something wrong?” asked Fran.

“Seems like the guildmaster’s callin’ for ya,” he said.

“Nn?”

“Our guildmaster here’s a wind mage. ‘e can send his voice to specific people.”

Huh, interesting.

It definitely sounds plausible if you can control vibrations in the air. Although you’d probably need a good amount of skill in order to make the message clearly reach the person you’re targeting. It seems the guildmaster uses this technique to give orders to people around the guild.

“Just go upstairs?” asked Fran.

“Yeah. Sorry in advance,” he said. “If our guildmaster says somethin’ stupid just smack ‘im.”

“Got it.”

“But he’s not a bad person at heart so don’t worry.”

Those words alone gave me a rough understanding of his character. We went upstairs and entered the indicated door only to find a frivolous looking man standing beyond the doorway.

“Hello there!” he said with a cheap smile. “I am Emyute, the guildmaster of Rosserracoon’s adventurer guild and a Wind Soul Tanukikin.”

“Rank C adventurer, Fran. Black Heavenly Tigerkin.”

“So you’re the legendary beastkin? This is an amazing moment for me. You definitely look as strong as you look cute, so I can see why the Beast Lord approves of you.”

He seems to be an evolved tanukikin, and from the species name, he is a subspecies that specializes in wind magic. Overall the receptionist was right about him. He seemed lighthearted and kind of annoying but not a bad person at heart.

“Had business with me?” asked Fran.

“Straight to the point I see,” he said. “To be honest I wanted a favor from you.”

“Favor?”

“Yes. You see we just captured an foreign assassin. The problem is, his target was the princess.”

“Princess Nemea?”

“Exactly.”

Does he mean the assassin I just caught? Holy shit, information in this town travels really freaking fast. I really didn't think information would have gotten all the way from the guards to the guildmaster even if there were no delays up the chain of command.

“You see, we have a magical item for communications in the guard room,” he said. “Everything they report goes to me. I just got this information a few minutes ago so your timing was absolutely perfect.”

“So, need what?” asked Fran.

“It's simple. Deliver this letter to the capital. You can treat it as a proper quest.”

“Okay to deliver to guild in capital?”

“You can move much faster than a horse-drawn carriage, right?”

We're being directly asked by the guildmaster himself so why not? We're going to the capital anyway and doing this will put the guildmaster in our debt.

“We should accept,” I said.

“Got it,” said Fran. “Will accept quest.”

“Thank you so much!” said the guildmaster. “You’re doing me such a huge favor. Inside this letter is a request for more escorts for the princess so the faster the better okay?”

“But guarded by lots of adventurers already?” asked Fran.

“Hmm...well I guess it’s okay to tell you since I want this letter delivered for sure. But no telling other people, okay? An oath of silence will be included in this quest.”

“No problem” said Fran. “Will swear on tail.”

“The truth is that the princess that just left town is a fake. The real princess is elsewhere.”

Booyah! I fucking called it!

Sending thirty adventurers and all those horned carriages with the fake princess seemed kind of questionable. It turned out it really was all a ploy to make the fake princess seem more real. The assassin I captured had some doubts. There was a chance that other assassins may have started catching on as well.

“Delivering the letter is also for the safety of the real princess,” said the guildmaster.

“Got it.”

“That aside, would you care to join me for a meal before departing?”

“Not hurried?”

“That is that and this is this. It would not do for you to travel on an empty stomach. Above all else I get to have a meal with a lovely lady!”

But Fran is a still a child, you pedophile!

“Hmph.” Fran landed a beautiful jab right into his abdomen.

The guildmaster groaned. “But why...?” he asked.

“Receptionist said: ‘If our guildmaster says somethin’ stupid just smack ‘im’.”

“Damn him...ugh that hurt.”

“Hurry up. Tell way to get to capital.”

“Fine...”

And so we got the letter and managed to extract detailed directions to the capital from the guildmaster. It was pretty much just a straight line down the highway with only one branch somewhere in the middle. We had to turn right there then just follow the road. Information in hand, we exited the guild and made our way out of town to a place suitable for departure.

“Alright let’s do this!”

“Urushi, do best.”

“Woof!”

Fran mounted Urushi.

“Fly, Urushi! Fly!” I commanded.

“Woof woof!”

Urushi accelerated into a full run. His top speed was so fast we might even reach the capital in a single day.

“Aww hell yeah! YAHOOOOOOOOOO~!”

“Yahoo!”

“Woof woof!”

Urushi's clearly having fun since it's his first time running without hindrances in quite some time. Wait. Holy shit, he's still accelerating. We might arrive even earlier than I anticipated.

272. Guendalfa

Chapter 272. Guendalfa

Guendalfa

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editor: Exkalamity

Urushi, full of spirit, raced non-stop down the highway connecting Roserracoon and Vestia. After a mere eight hours of travel, we spotted the capital city looming in the horizon. This was the first time I had travelled to any capital city since reincarnating as a sword, so I was absolutely stunned by the sight. Barbara was the largest city I'd been to so far and it paled in comparison to Vestia. It was night time, so the whole city was illuminated by torchlight and magical fire. The flickering lights dancing on the massive 20 meter high ramparts were magnificent to behold. The Royal Castle could be seen standing tall over the walls and towering over the city. Its spire was easily the tallest building I had seen yet, easily visible even from a distance.

"You'll think they'll let us in at this time of night?"

"Nnn... Don't mind camping out."

"Yeah but I'd rather we not. Let's just keep that in mind as a backup plan."

Some cities closed their gates after dark as a preventive measure against thieves and monsters, and I wasn't sure if the capital had similar policies. As we approached, we thankfully found that the gates were still open. Merchants and adventurers were lined up outside the gate in an orderly fashion. There appeared to be some formal procedures that must be taken care of before being allowed to enter. As expected of a capital city, the security was much tighter.

We joined a line that was around twenty people long with Urushi once again in his smaller form. People were already nervous because it was night

time and we didn't want to exacerbate that by having a giant wolf suddenly appear in front of them.

I wanted to casually join the line without drawing any attention but apparently Fran stands out a bit too much for that. We're getting a lot of stares.

It seemed people were surprised to see a girl her age travelling with only a wolf by her side. Even more so that she was a black catkin, which was supposed to be the weakest of the beastkin tribes. Those that curiously observed her would realize that she had evolved, which caused them to be taken aback.

"Huh, wha?"

"Are my eyes actually working?"

"No way! It's her, the..."

"Dude, it's the Black Lightning Princess."

"Black Lightning Princess? Who's that?"

The merchants and adventurers around us whispered in hushed voices. But since we're already used to it, Fran, Urushi, and I paid no heed to it. After waiting in line for a few minutes, we were approached by three catkin.

"Umm... sorry to bother you. Are you perhaps the Black Lightning Princess?"

"Nn?"

"We call ourselves The Six Whiskers. We're a party of catkin. We're huge fans of you and your accomplishments. "

The speaker was a young red catkin. Standing behind him were his companions, another red catkin who looked to be in his twenties and an older blue catkin likely in his thirties or forties.

“Dang... She really did evolve.”

“Looks like those rumors were true.”

The two whispered to one another. I was on guard against the blue catkin. I expected him to try badmouthing Fran, but he did nothing of the sort. If anything, his face showed only a look of admiration.

Huh, I’m surprised to see a blue catkin that isn’t a scumbag. Though, I probably shouldn’t be, given the Beast Lord’s black catkin-related reforms.
[1]

In the end, the Six Whiskers didn’t have any particular business with Fran besides wanting to greet her. They were mostly interested in her because she evolved. At first, I got a little nervous over questions that might expose the exploit we used to evolve her, but thankfully that didn’t come up. Our discussions did however inform them about the conditions needed for black catkin to evolve. We explained to them that black catkin needed to either slay a thousand Evil Beings or defeat an A ranked one in single combat to evolve. It was good way to kill some time while waiting in line.

As more people started to approach us, a huge figure suddenly cut in through the crowd. The man stood two meters tall and was emanating a clear aura of hostility.

“Hey you,” he said. “Are you the brat they call the ‘Black Lightning Princess’?”

“Nn? Mhm.”

“Gwahaha! My shitty uncle must be losing it if he even lost to a brat like you!”

I was filled with an unpleasant feeling when he burst into laughter. I appraised him and saw that he was a white rhinokin, not yet evolved. His name was Guendalfa. Given his race and the similarity of the names, I could only think of one acquaintance that he could possibly be related to:

Goldalfa, the white rhinokin and Beast Lord's guard that fought Fran in the tournament at Ulmutt and lost.

"Hey Fran. I think this guy's related to Goldalfa."

"Goldalfa's acquaintance?" she said.

"Hah!" he snorted. "A little brat is addressing you without a title. Look how far you've fallen." He pointed to his chest. "I am Guendalfa. The one you speak of, Goldalfa, is a coward. As much as I hate to admit it, he's my father's older brother."

"Coward?"

Fran's face twitched in annoyance. Goldalfa was a warrior Fran came to respect through fierce battle. She did not like some condescending little shit disrespecting him.

"He's a fucking coward," said Guendalfa. "He threw away his position of patriarch of our clan just to become the Beast Lord's little bitch."

"Not coward. Strong, brave warrior!"

"Strong? After losing to someone as fucking puny as you? What a joke. How about I kick your little ass and prove how much of a pussy he really is?"

"You're free to take him down but be mindful of our surroundings." I tried to calm Fran down. "We don't want to be refused entry because we caused a scene."

"Nn. Change locations." said Fran.

"Haaaaaaah?" he sneered. "Why? You scared? Come at me, brat!"

"Don't wanna cause a scene."

"Stuff your bitch-ass mouth and just fucking do it!"

Fran did not respond.

“Hey Fran. Calm down a bit. Rather, you’re totally ready to go at it aren’t you!?”

“No problem. Instant victory.”

Welp we’ve passed the point of no return.

The crowd began to shout.

“Don’t worry Black Lightning Princess!”

“We’ll testify that he started it!”

“Go kick his ass!”

Oi! Peanut Gallery! Don’t encourage her dammit!

I quickly used Stonewall to enclose Guendalfa and Fran to block them from the surroundings.

“Take this. Awakening. Brilliant Lightning Rush. Serious Punch.”

“Guboh-!” Fran’s lightning straight landed square on Guendalfa’s chest.

“-GWUAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!”

ONE PUNCH FRAN!

Guendalfa was sent flying, crashing straight through the stonewall I erected. His armor was completely caved in and blood was flying from his mouth.

Fran shook her wrist.

“Hmph. So weak for talking so big?”

[1] For those that don't remember. The beast lord's reforms fought back against black catkin slavery and effectively ran a lot of blue catkin out of their original line of work. Master is stating that fewer of them are criminals because they had to pick up more respectable jobs.

273. Reasons

Chapter 273. Reasons

Reasons

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

“You, weak,” said Fran.

Guendalfa did not reply

“So I don’t think he can respond very well while unconscious...”

“That punch? Goldalfa would barely feel.”

“Well, yeah. Goldalfa was almost immortal. Not a fair comparison.”

So what the hell are we supposed to do with a knocked out rhinokin anyway...?

Fran wasn’t satisfied and was glaring terribly at Guendalfa.

“Get up.”

She kicked him, but the only response she got was an unconscious groan. The rhinokin showed no sign of waking, so she kicked him again and again. A guard came out of the station and approached us.

“Okay okay, that’s enough, everyone break it up,” he said.

“Hmph,” said Fran, giving one last kick.

“Oh man though. Hell of a way to knock him out in one hit!”

Oh shit! We may have gone way too far. I hope they’ll still let us in.

The guard poured a generous amount of recovery potion on Guendalfa's body and spoke to Fran.

"Sooo, can you let him go now? I know he was being an ass, but I don't think he deserves to be killed."

Huh? So we're not in trouble at all? Wait. If he knew he was being a little shit, this means that he saw the confrontation leading up to the fight. Why didn't he stop us?

"Didn't stop, why?" asked Fran.

"To be honest, he had it coming and I wanted to see someone beat the crap out of him," said the guard. "I already knew how strong you were, so I thought you would be the perfect person for the job."

"Nn. Easy," Fran boasted.

Oh god dammit Fran. Don't go tooting your god damn horn just 'cause he praised your ability to beat up some random grunt.

"I used to know Goldalfa back in the day," said the guard. "He really saved my ass when I was starting up myself. I really looked up to him. Guen too. He was really attached to his uncle back in they day. He would go on and on about how he was going to do everything to help ol' Gold out once he became the family Patriarch."

Goldalfa as some sort of patriarch? Yeah, I could see that. The guy's mad strong, so I could totally see him pulling it off.

"Goldalfa became the Beast Lord's guard and renounced his position before it was even passed to him," continued the guard, "Guen saw that as betraying expectations. The position went to Guen's father instead. And as of recent, Guen's started channeling his emotions into surpassing his uncle."

So that's why he challenged Fran. If he could beat Fran, who beat Goldalfa, then the implication is that he would be stronger than Goldalfa. He's

oversimplifying it and kind of wrong, but I can at least see where he's coming from.

"Sorry about him," said the guard. "I'll make sure to tell him off. I'm not sure if this is enough to make up for this, but if you need any help just call me. I'll do whatever I can. You have my word."

The guard bowed then effortlessly picked up Guendalfa with one hand and slung him over his shoulder. I was shocked because the guard was a scrawny man and Guendalfa was no lightweight. After a quick appraisal I saw that the guard was a high leveled oxkin on the verge of evolving.

Not bad for a city guard.

He was apparently going to be throwing Guendalfa into the slammer for a bit so he could cool his head.

"At this point I think we should just forgive him. It's not like dealing with him really cost us anything, after all. "

"Nn. Good exercise."

After that we managed to enter the capital without further incident. We got its location of the Adventurers Guild from a guard when passing through the gate, so we didn't have to stop and look for it en route. Passing through the city had once again demonstrated to us the sheer amount of respect with which beastkin treated those that had evolved. Not a single beastkin adventurer messed with on our way to the guild, and all the non-beastkin that seemed to want to were quickly shut down by their buddies. Guendalfa had been the only odd one out.

Vestia was an enormous city, so we expected the guild to be scaled up proportionally. But upon reaching it, we found that it was disappointingly only about the same size as the guilds in Roserraccoon and Argentlappn. Fran entered the guild.

"Good evening," she said.

“Welcome,” replied the receptionist. “How can I hel- ahh. Would you happen to be Fran?”

“Nn. Know me?”

“Yes! All of us guild staff in the beastkin country know you. The staff from the Argentlaphn branch sent out a message from a magic communicator informing the other branches of your arrival.”

Wait, there’s such an item for long distance communication? That’s probably how the guildmaster in Roseraccoon quickly received the info on the assassin I nabbed. Thinking about it, It only makes sense for every branch to have such a device. But then, why would they need to have us deliver a letter if they have something that convenient? I thought they gave us this letter because they had no other way to send messages over long distances. Then again, Dias did mention they he talked to other guildmasters around the time of the tournament. At this point I don’t know what to make of the situation so let’s just hand over the letter.

“This. From Roseraccoon’s guildmaster,” said Fran.

“A letter?” The receptionist received the envelope. “Let’s see. Hmm... I see. There’s no mistake. Please wait a moment.”

After examining the seal on the letter, the receptionist got up and hurried to an office in the back. After a couple minutes of waiting, she came back, brought us around the counter, and took us to the back.

“Guildmaster, I have brought her,” said the receptionist.

“Good work. Please return to your post,” said the voice of an old man.

“Understood.”

We entered the office and saw an old man with a crooked back, a set of white fox ears, and a white tail.

Normally, I’d get all excited if upon encountering someone with real fox ears and a fluffy tail, but an old man...? Yeah, no.

“I am Melrosse,” he said. “Master of the Vestia’s Adventurers’ Guild.”

“C ranked adventurer, Fran.”

“Hohoho I see. You are even more powerful than the rumors suggest. Indeed very reliable.”

My first impression was that he was just a kind old man. But his eyes carried a very sharp glint as they evaluated Fran.

There’s more to him than he gives off. We can’t underestimate him.

274. Of Letters and Items

Chapter 274. Of Letters and Items

Of Letters and Items

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

Melrosse opened the letter and read it carefully.

“I see... Well done, Black Lightning Princess! We will hereby move to immediately support the princess.”

So the letter really was about guarding the princess. But again, why use a letter when they have magical long distance communicators?

“Why letter?” asked Fran telepathically.

“Good question,” I replied.

“Nn. Faster to use item.”

It seemed Fran and I were wondering the same thing.

“You were of great help,” said Melrosse.

“Nn...”

“Ho? What is it young one? Your face clearly shows unvoiced dissatisfaction.”

What!? How did he know that?

It really bothered me that he had accurately interpreted Fran’s expression. Fran was never the type of person to wear her emotions and that was true even now. The change in her expression was so subtle that I’d assumed I was the only one capable of noticing it. I unconsciously appraised him

before I could stop myself. Since I'd already gone ahead and done it, I decided I might as well check his skills and confirmed that he didn't have anything that would allow him to read her mind.

"Could tell, how?" asked Fran.

"Ho. When you have lived as long as I have you can observe what other people often miss."

Seriously? Just pure wisdom from age? What the hell!.

"...Can use item. Why send letter?" asked Fran.

"Hoho, so it was the letter that was bothering you. There is a significant reason why we chose to use that method in particular. Would you like me to explain it?"

"Nn."

"Very well."

The guildmaster held the letter out to Fran.

"Okay to read?" she asked.

"Indeed."

Fran and I took a look at the contents. The letter described how a Basharian assassin was caught in the beastkin country and that the evident danger was reason to provide the princess with additional guards. It didn't seem like anything out of the ordinary save the code-like numbers that followed the rest of the letter's content. I glanced at Melrose and found him carefully observing Fran.

"Weird numbers? Meaning?" asked Fran.

"They contain information pertaining to the princess' destination," he said.
"We encrypt the information for security reasons."

The guildmaster went on to explain why they used a letter and not the long distance communication tool. It turned out the Basharians also had similar tools, and the concern was that they could eavesdrop on conversations in the beastkin country. Information on assassinations and invasion plans had apparently been compromised in the past. If that was the case, I could see why they would rely on a physical letter for top secret information.

“If we knew the exact methods they used to eavesdrop on us we could deploy countermeasures,” he frowned.

“Not known?” asked Fran.

“Yes, their methods are unknown to us. That is the only reason we fall back on more traditional methods of communication, like letters. Strong couriers like you are essential to the swift relay of information.”

I was using Principle of Falsehood during the entire conversation. All the parts that the guildmaster said about Bashar was true. But the very last part about it being the only reason was a lie. It could be that simply an organization as large as the guild would naturally have one or two secrets. But I couldn't help but feel bothered that we were used for more than just confidential communication..

I hope we weren't used for something malicious.

I discussed my suspicions with Fran.

“Nn. Will ask discreetly,” she said.

“Yeah, let's try not to make an enemy of the guild. If he doesn't talk then just drop the matter.”

“Nn.”

Fran turned to the guildmaster.

“What are other reasons?”

Oi! What's with that straight-ball question!? There's nothing discreet about that!

"Hmm?" said Melrosse.

"If need speed, then send letter by bird," said Fran. "Still hiding something. Wanted me to deliver. Why?"

"Hm. You are certainly right that a messenger bird would be quicker, or some other method of communication too. But we still have our reasons."

"Which are?"

"Not telling. This information is not privy to a C ranker."

Welp we just got stonewalled by the bureaucracy. Can't do anything about that.

"Don't glare at me like that," he said. "I'll still tell you what I can. You see, that letter was intended to verify whether or not our country's guilds could trust you."

"Some sort of test?" asked Fran.

"No comment. But just like how you are doubting me right now, we were also doubting you since you came to our country. You have yet to do anything to earn our trust."

And so they asked us to deliver a top secret letter? I don't know how it proves our trustworthiness, but I'm glad we actually did our job properly and refrained from breaking the seal on the envelope. We were accustomed to being welcomed with open arms in the beastkin country simply because Fran evolved. Most of the people we met had assumed that Fran was someone that would help them in their time of need. But in reality, not all beastkin would necessarily ally themselves with the beastkin country. As far as the guild was concerned, we'd started off on the list of those that couldn't be trusted, but with this task under our belts we were under far less scrutiny.

“Got it,” said Fran.

“Hoh. So are you satisfied with this explanation?” he asked.

“For now.”

“Very good. We are grateful for the work you have done for us, so we shall give you a suitable reward.”

“Nn. Got it.”

We exited the guildmaster’s room and headed to the counter where we received our reward. By the time we headed to an inn recommended by the adventurers guild it was well into the night. Thankfully the inn had a receptionist posted 24 hours a day. It was quite suitable for adventurers who did not have consistent schedules and would often request lodging and random times at night..

When we got to our room Fran jumped headfirst into the bed.

“At least take off your cloak.”

“Uuu...”

“I’ll cast purification on you and clean you up.”

“Nmmm”

“Come on. Get into the covers too, okay?”

“Mmph.”

I tucked Fran, who was half asleep, into bed using telekinesis.

“Goodnight.”

“Nn.”

Fran was out within three seconds.

Children do need their sleep after all.

Tomorrow's the day we finally visit the castle. I was a bit concerned about getting around at first, but luckily the guildmaster said that he would provide us with a guide. Hopefully we'll finally get to meet Kiara, the older catkin who was instrumental towards Fran's growth. I wonder what kind of person she is. Hopefully someone that will spoil Fran like a child.

275. An Unexpected Reunion

Chapter 275. An Unexpected Reunion

An Unexpected Reunion

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

Fran and I were both eager to get on with the day, so we headed over to the Adventurers' Guild as soon as we finished our morning routines.

"Good Morning Fran," greeted the receptionist.

"Morning."

"Are you planning to head to the castle right now?"

"Nn."

"Understood. Please wait a moment while I go retrieve your guide."

"Nn."

We found a seat in the guild's lobby while we waited. There wasn't much to do besides observing the guild staff members as they went about their day-to-day activities, so we resigned ourselves to watching them.

"Hey babe! Won't you do dinner with me tonight?"

"Hmph. Like you don't say that to every girl you meet."

"Hey! Isn't this way to cheap for these materials?"

"Nah, they're in terrible shape so they aren't worth crap."

Most of the receptionists were conducting themselves rather unprofessionally. Their default approach was to deal with the adventurers as

casually as they would their buddies. Fran was the only one they treated with courtesy and respect.

We were currently the center of attention and received many a curious glance from the adventurers around us. In spite of that, we remained undisturbed. Anyone that tried to approach us would immediately be stopped by one of the guild's staff members. We eavesdropped on their conversations and overheard them claim that there were orders to ensure Fran was left alone.

We couldn't help but wonder why the guild was preventing people from approaching us, but we didn't want to bother the guild's staff while they were busy, so the question remained unanswered until one of the staff members approached Fran and served her a cup of tea.

"The guildmaster's ordered us not to let anybody bother you," she said. "You are the only evolved black catkin, and adventurers are a curious bunch, so he was concerned that you would be subject to the discomfort of becoming a circus attraction."

Preventing curious onlookers from bothering has eliminated the chance that an unfortunate confrontation would ignite between Fran and some newbie ignorant of her strength. It was a preventative measure that not only allowed the guild to protect its adventurers from getting hurt, but also benefit us by keeping the morons off our backs. It was a win-win situation.

The guildmaster is doing us a favor here, so we better thank him later. Though, it seems being left alone is making Fran awfully bored.

The receptionist we first interacted with returned by the time Fran had finished her cup of tea, our supposed guide in tow.

"Guendalfa?" said Fran.

Fran was frightfully bad at remembering people's names but even she wouldn't forget the name of someone she met the day before.

“Yeah, I heard about that little scuffle you had with him yesterday,” said the receptionist. “If you would like, I could make arrangements for a replacement guide. What do you say?”

If they heard about yesterday’s fight, why bother bringing him out in the first place?

While I was thinking that Guendalfa suddenly prostrated himself in front of Fran. Seeing him with his hands, face, and knees all pressed against the floor really emphasized the sheer size of his frame. He was so massive that he was still taller than Fran even in his current state.

“My deepest apologies, Black Lightning Princess!” he shouted, digging his forehead into the ground. “My unseemly actions yesterday were truly regrettable.”

His attitude had taken a full 180.

“I am uncertain if this will suffice as compensation but I offer my services to you during the entirety of your stay in the capital,” he said.

I was deeply suspicious of him just trying to get closer to Fran again for some banal revenge plot but his eyes were full of sincerity. A single glance was enough to convince me that his actions had been driven by earnesty and earnestly alone.

“Ate something bad?” asked Fran, crept out.

“After being blown away by you and then lectured by my buddy, Brass, I have realized how deeply shallow I have been behaving,” he said.

“Brass?”

“Brass was the gate guard that carried me off yesterday.”

“The oxkin?”

“Yes.” Guendalfa raised his head. “Black Lightning Princess! I plan to use this opportunity to turn my life around. But first I must show gratitude to

the one who opened my eyes. Please let me be of service to you.”

“What should we do, Fran?” I asked her telepathically. His change was so sudden that it left me at a loss.

“Nn. Don’t care.”

It seems she no longer bore any animosity towards Guendalfa. A good night’s sleep had been more than enough for her to forgive him. While we had our internal dialogue, the receptionist whispered in Fran’s ear.

“The rhinokin are a tribe of warriors,” she said. “It’s natural for them to show respect to those who defeat them in combat. On top of that, you are an evolved beastkin while he is not. His respectful attitude is completely naturally.”

So basically he’s a musclehead that believes power and strength are everything?

“Also, he’s the son of the rhinokin patriarch,” continued the receptionist. “His face is well known, he has standing, and some authority. He is probably the best guide you could get.”

In the end, we decided to accept Guendalfa as our guide. He seemed to have seriously reflected on his actions. Sending him away and finding a new guide seemed like more like a waste of time than anything.

“Look forward to working with you,” said Fran.

“No, it is my honor to be of use to you,” he replied.

“Nn.”

“I know you want to go to the castle, but could I perhaps interest you in a tour of the capital? I was born and raised in Vestia and I could take you to the best spots around town.”

“No thanks. Person want to meet as soon as possible.”

“I see. Is that person in the royal castle?”

“Nn. Black catkin: Kiara.”

“Master Kiara? Understood.”

“Acquainted?”

“Yes. I have been her disciple since I was a child.”

Given that his former attachment to Goldalfa, one of Kiara’s disciples, his relationship with the old black catkin came as no surprise.

“Understood. I will introduce you to her,” he said.

“Please do.”

“Leave it to me.”

Guendalfa stuck his chest out proudly as he nodded. He seemed really confident. I was almost inclined to think that we could actually trust him to get the job done.

276. Vestia's Royal Castle

Chapter 276. Vestia's Royal Castle

Vestia's Royal Castle

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

Guendalfa led us out of the Adventurers' Guild and onto the street after boasting that he would introduce us to Kiara. His massive frame parted the bustling crowd like water, making it really easy for us to follow behind him. We could see the Royal Castle from the Adventurers' Guild but that didn't mean it was close by. That was just how big it was; its sheer size messed with my sense of distance. It took us twenty minutes to walk from the Adventurers' Guild to the gate of the Royal Castle. As we approached, we saw that the walls around the castle were just as tall and wide as the walls surrounding Vestia. There was even a moat carved around the castle like a muddy serpent gouged into the earth, complete with a wooden drawbridge featuring a stone portcullis on top.

"This castle was designed as the capital city's final bastion," explained Guendalfa. He seemed to have decided to play the role of tour guide for us. "If need be, the castle can be turned into a fully armed and fortified stronghold. Any enemies that manage to breach the city's walls will have to deal with a second set."

As we approached, a guard appeared out of a house next to the drawbridge on the town side.

"Halt," he said. "You are now entering upon the royal castle. All who wish to pass must first validate their identities."

Guendalfa approached the guard.

"I am Guendalfa, son of the Patriarch of the Rhinokin. With me is the Black Lightning Princess herself! I vouch for her identity on my honour. I also

carry a letter of recommendation from the guildmaster in Vestia.”

He handed over a black card and a sealed letter to the guard. After opening up the letter and reading the contents carefully, the guard looked at us in disbelief.

“You could get an audience with the king with this letter,” he muttered.

An audience with the king? What the hell kind of recommendation did that guildmaster write us? He puts way too much faith into us for just completing one delivery quest.

It would make sense if the guildmaster had planned to give Fran such a recommendation all along with the quest as a pretext to give it to her. The guild probably wanted to build ties with the first black catkin to evolve since the tribe’s downfall. Fran may as well have been a living legend, and because of that, the guild wanted to gain her favor early into her career. Likewise, the Beast Lord had given her a crest with his personal ensignia engraved into it back in Ulmutt right after the tournament. He was probably thinking the same thing.

Actually given his musclehead personality, probably not. But Royce, his aide, had definitely thought that quickly establishing a working relationship with Fran was prudent given her circumstances.

I urged Fran to give the guard the crest. It was most likely a more trustworthy form of ID, and I figured there was no harm in showing it.

“Nn.”

“This is...!” The guard’s eyes bulged from their sockets. Guendalfa also stared daggers into the crest.

“P-P-Please wait one moment, ma’am!” stuttered the guard and he dashed back into the guardhouse. We saw him hold the crest up to a crystal shard, which flashed briefly upon activation. Afterwards, the guard ran back to us and gingerly handed the crest back to Fran.

“H-here’s your ID back, ma’am,” he said. “Everything is in order. Please enter!”

He signaled behind him and the gates of the portcullis across the drawbridge slowly began to open.

“Amazing! You even had the Beast Lord’s crest with you,” said Guendalfa. “You didn’t need me at all. You should have left someone like me behind.”

“Not true.”

Fran was right. Even if we wouldn’t have needed Guendalfa to pass through the gates, he really helped smoothen the process out by escorting us and interacting with the guard on our behalf. More importantly, his company had made us seem like the real deal. I was sure the guards would have doubted us more and spent more time investigating our motives had he not been present. I had to say, his change in attitude had really benefited us. Guendalfa’s behaviour had come as a bit of a surprise, but it was by no means unprecedented. Goldalfa had also become more deferential to Fran after losing to her in single combat.

After passing through the gates on the castle side, Fran and I noticed another set of walls set up down the road.

“Another wall?”

“Yes,” said Guendalfa. “The castle is right past it.”

“Why two walls?”

“The wall ahead of us separates the nobles and the common folk. The outskirts are designated as the living quarters for the guards and servants. It also works as a place for merchants to do business. Behind the wall is where you’ll find all the nobles.”

“How to enter?”

“Allow me to show you. Please follow me.”

We walked along side the wall and found a massive gate as big as the entrance to the city. There was what appeared to be a large mansion built next to the gate. Guendalfa led us inside. The building's lobby was enormous. It contained enough space to comfortably house several dozen people on top of the numerous guards and other staff members already stationed throughout. The rhinokin led us up to the counter and spoke to a receptionist.

"I am Guendalfa, and with me is the Black Lightning Princess. We are here to request an audience with my master, Kiara."

"Very well, we will process your request," said the receptionist. "Please allow us to guide you to a private waiting room in the meantime."

Fran's gaze curiously flickered back and forth as a guard guided us through the mansion. We went up stairways and down hallways, passing by many decorated waiting rooms before finally arriving at our destination.

"You see," said Guendalfa, resuming his role as tour guide, "the royal family had this mansion built as an extravagant waiting room next to the gate. They wanted as many lounges and private rooms as possible. With security being as high as it is, it takes time to process even just one person's entry request. And really, you can't have nobles lining up outside like at some festival stall, can you?"

The guard stopped in front of intricately patterned door and opened it. Inside was the most lavishly decorated room we've seen yet, complete with a sofa and two armchairs around a coffee table. It also contained a fireplace, an ornate desk with matching chair, a bookshelf, and a window that let the gentle sunlight seep through. Fran and Guendalfa sat down on the sofa, with Guendalfa sinking a little deeper into the cushions than Fran. After a couple minutes, there was a knock on the door. A maid entered with a cart featuring some freshly brewed tea and a variety of pastries. The moment the maid set the food onto the coffee table, Fran lunged at it. Guendalfa did the same after waiting for her to grab the first bite. Together, the two hungry companions devoured the snacks they were presented in less than a minute.

After letting out a contented sigh, Guendalfa once again began to speak.

“You really are something, Black Lightning Princess.”

“Nn?” said Fran, sipping on a cup of tea.

“You see, this room was made to entertain people of noble birth. Normally, common folk wouldn’t feel right being in such a fancy place, but you look right at home,” he said. “The food too. What they just brought us was some high class stuff but you scarfed it right down like it was ‘nuthin.’”

“You too.”

“Well of course. I am a noble, so this much is normal for me.”

Fran and I stared.

What the hell! He was a blue blood?! How the hell does he still have peerage given the attitude he was going around with?

“What? Why are you so surprised?” laughed Guendalfa. “I know I don’t seem like a noble, but my father is technically the patriarch of an entire tribe of beastkin, so I’m used to all the bells and frills that comes with having status.”

After that surprising revelation, a knock came from the door.

“Excuse me. Madam Fran, Mr. Guendalfa, Lady Kiara will see you now.”

The door opened and two maids were waiting for us. We followed them deep into the castle, passing by large banquet halls and wide ballrooms along the way.

“You used to be able to find her on the practice grounds in the outskirts of the castle,” said Guendalfa. “But lately her health is getting worse, so she’s been confined to her room.”

“Bad health? Will be okay?” asked Fran.

“I’m worried too,” he replied. “She is getting pretty old. But the fact that they let us see her means she’s alright.”

It can't be help. She's around 70 years old.

"It's finally time to meet Kiara," I said to Fran.

"Nn."

277. Kiara

Chapter 277. Kiara

Kiara

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

After taking us deep into the heart of the castle, the maid responsible for guiding us stopped in front of a door with a red carpet and turned around to face us.

“We have arrived at Lady Kiara’s private bedchambers,” she said. “Please wait a moment as I seek permission to enter.”

Fran and Guendalfa nodded as the maid turned around and knocked gently on the door.

“Lady Kiara? Guendalfa and the Black Lightning Princess are here to see you.”

“Yeah, come in,” said a voice from inside the room.

The maid opened the door for us. There was a desk with a chair next to the window, a full length mirror next to a vanity closet, an armchair in the corner, and a king sized bed in the middle. All the furniture and interior was done with gold or gold leaf, but the designs weren’t gaudy. Rather, they were carefully crafted such that they appeared subdued and pleasing to the eye. The curtains, carpet, and bedsheets were all made of luxurious cloth or silk. The entire room was cleaned and tidy. It was obvious that its inhabitant was being treated as a guest of honor.

An old, black catkin sat upright on the bed. We knew that she was supposed to be a black catkin, but she didn’t quite look the part. The hair on her ears and tail had long turned completely white. Her posture was good, which indicated that she was probably still active in spite of how haggard and thin

her body appeared. She was tall too. It looked like she could probably reach 170 cm when standing. She definitely did not give the impression of a frail old lady whose body was wasting away.

She looked at Fran with a gaze of such intensity that I was intimidated for a brief moment. I felt like my heart stopped and that I was pierced with daggers. If I were still human, I probably would have instinctively prostrated myself on the ground out of fear. Fran, however, was completely unperturbed.

“You’re Kiara?”

“And who exactly told you that you could speak to me so bluntly?”

“Beast Lord.”

“Hah!” She slapped her knee. “Good to know. I’ll be sure to smack him hard next time I see him.”

Whoa she definitely speaks pretty brusquely. But, surprisingly, it fits her quite well.

“To answer your question,” she continued: “Yes. I am Kiara. I know the snot-nosed brat over there.” She jerked her chin at Guendalfa.

“Snot nosed? I’m already 22!” retorted Guendalfa

“Quiet you!” yelled Kiara. “Everyone under 40 is a snot-nosed brat to me. So, who’s the girl?”

“Master Kiara,” said Guendalfa, surprised. “Have you not heard of the Black Lightning Princess?”

“Lady Kiara just woke up today,” said the maid who guided us to this room. “For the past twenty days Lady Kiara has been in a coma.”

Holy shit! A coma for twenty days!? If she was out for that long it’s not too surprising that she hasn’t heard of Fran yet.

I took a closer look and saw that her cheeks were a little sunken and her lips were really dry. Her arms looked rather thin and brittle, indicating that they had been out of use.

“She is-” began the maid, but Kiara interrupted her.

“Hold up.” She gestured to Fran and said in a gentle voice, “Come here dear.”

Fran trotted over to the bedside.

“What’s your name?”

“Fran.”

Kiara opened her arms and Fran embraced her. At first it was a light hug but after a few seconds, Kiara suddenly pulled Fran tightly into her.

“All these years I feared that the goal I sought was unachievable,” she said. “Now I have proof of success standing right before me. Thank you Fran, for coming to me and showing me that my journey was not meaningless.”

Kiara buried her face into Fran’s shoulder. I felt my heart twist when I heard what she said. Her whisper, which carried the weight of 50 years of doubt, uncertainty, and resolve, seemed to reverberate throughout the room.

After a few moments of silence, Kiara eventually calmed down and released Fran.

“Can you give me the details?” asked Kiara. “How did you do it? Unless there is some reason you can’t tell me. I won’t force you.”

“Of course,” Fran nodded. “But heard Granny Kiara should already know method.”

“Who told you that?”

“Dias”

“Wha...? So he still remembers me...?”

“Nn. Aurel and Rumina too.”

Kiara’s eyes began to waver, and she smiled.

“Those fools,” she said. “They should have forgotten me and moved on long ago.”

“They didn’t. Always looking for you,” said Fran.

Kiara sighed, “What I have is just a hypothesis. Let me get more comfortable first.”

Kiara turned and got out of the bed. Guendalfa frantically held his hand out but she shooed him away and sat herself down in her armchair.

“So it all started back in the day in Ulmutt. I ventured into the depths of a dungeon, only to discover that its master was an evolved black catkin,” she said. “That was how I met Rumina 50 years ago. She was really too sweet for her own good. She offered to help me evolve, but her method was too contrived. It required her to turn herself into an evil being.”

Fran blinked.

“Turn into evil being, how?”

“In the past, one of the Black Cat Tribe’s chiefs invoked a ritual to drown our species in the power of the Evil God,” said Kiara. “It was for something stupid like for the sake of strengthening the tribe. Like many members of the tribe, Rumina had also been caught up in the ritual’s processes. She too had the power of the Evil God embedded into her.”

She grimaced at this point.

“So she told me to stand back, and I did, and suddenly my Evil Presence Detection skill went crazy. I felt a disgusting presence coming from Rumina, one that only grew stronger and stronger as I stared it down. She was probably using her powers as a dungeon master to unlock some tainted

part of her soul or something. Anyway, I knew whatever she was doing was bad news, so I ran over and punched her. Told her that I didn't want to evolve if it meant losing a friend. And that was the end of that."

"But why turn into evil being?" asked Fran.

"I wanted to find that out myself," said Kiara. "After thinking about it, I recalled the research I did on our clan's inability to evolve. There was a lot of misinformation being spread about at the time. Some of it was by our own tribe members trying to save face or keep the morale of the younger kinsman up. Some of it was spread by blue catkin that just wanted to mess with us. And there wasn't much written evidence wherever I searched."

She sighed.

"One of the few items that came to mind was an old, torn-up scroll that was barely readable. The parts that I could read said that our tribe invoked the Gods' wrath and we were cursed. We needed to defeat something on the level of the Evil God to break that curse. I think Rumina was trying to become that evil thing herself. She wanted to let me defeat her so that I would evolve."

Rumina folded her arms and leaned back as she wrapped up her explanation.

"So, that's my theory," she said. "How does that match up to your experiences?"

278. Kiara's Circumstances

Chapter 278. Kiara's Circumstances

Kiara's Circumstances

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

Fran spoke up after Kiara finished talking about her journey and her understanding of evolving black catkin.

"Got it," said Fran. "Kiara not wrong, but more than one way."

"What! There was more than one way?"

"Mhmm. Kiara's way would redeem entire tribe. Must kill one S ranked evil being with only black catkin. But two easier ways to just evolve self. First, kill 1000 evil beings. Second, solo kill 1 A ranked evil being."

"That's it?"

"Nn."

Kiara's shoulders began to tremble. I thought she was about to cry or something, so her next actions took me by surprise.

"Kukukuku... Ahahahahahahaha!"

Kiara grinned, threw her head back, and roared with laughter. Her eyes teared up as she pushed up on the sides of the armchair and jumped onto her feet.

"Mia! Bring me my sword!"

Fran blinked a few times in surprise. Guendalfa's eyes shot wide open. The maid, however, was unperturbed.

“What are you planning, Lady Kiara?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Kiara let out a fierce grin. “I’m going to beat the shit out of 1000 goblins.”

“You have to be kidding me,” said the maid. “It was only yesterday that you were still in a coma.”

“You think a couple of goblins will get the best of me just because I didn’t get a little rest? Not a chance! I can kick their asses all day any day!”

Guendalfa tried to usher Kiara back into her seat but she darted right past him towards the closet. Her belongings clattered about as she rummaged through its contents.

“It must have been fate that brought Fran here to see me the day I open my eyes again,” said Kiara. “I will not let this chance pass me by. All these years, I’ve been wondering why that detestable beast lord didn’t kill me even though I held the secrets of evolving black catkin. Now I understand: he didn’t need to kill me at all. What I knew was the hardest way to evolve as a black catkin. Nothing would’ve come of it even if I had spread the news. No one could’ve possibly pulled it off. Knowing would only have brought my people despair. But now things are different. I can do it. I can finally evolve. All I have to do is kick the shit out of a couple goblins, and I’ll be done.”

“But you aren’t as able as you were before,” said Guendalfa. “You’ve even lost your blessing!”

“Blessing?” asked Fran.

“Right, you wouldn’t know,” said Kiara. She turned to us while still holding onto an old belt. “For a very long time I held the Blessing of the Warrior God.”

“Ohh! Amazing!” Fran clapped.

“Right? I’ve already passed it down to another, but I’m still quite the fighter without it.”

I had no idea what this blessing thing was.

“What’s this Blessing of the Warrior God thing anyway?”

“Nn. Very famous skill.”

Fran’s explanation left me in shock. Blessing of the Warrior God was an extra skill with world wide renown. The basics were that it gave its user a flat increase to all stat values. It also doubled the stat values gained upon each level up. But the most famous part of the skill was the condition required for retaining it. Once each month, the skill’s bearer had to put his or her life on the line in combat. The exact definition of “life on the line,” was not well known, but something on the level of beating up a bunch of back-alley grunts wouldn’t cut it. If this condition was not fulfilled even once, the skill will leave its user and pass itself onto another.

“I first got it when I was seven years old,” continued Kiara. “I had to keep fighting and fighting in order not to lose it. I got pretty strong because of that. I managed to hold onto it for five whole decades. Sadly, I lost it about ten years back.”

“Lost it, why?” asked Fran.

“There was a time I was bedridden for six months due to illness. Because I was confined and couldn’t fight, the skill moved on from me.”

“But how keep skill while slave?”

“Oh that? When I was still working at the castle, once a month they would let me hunt monsters near the capital. That way I would keep my blessing. Slaves with extra skills were pretty valuable back in they day.”

Kiara grinned.

“So yes, I’ve lost my blessing, but I don’t give a damn. I’ve been training for decades for this moment. I will not let anyone stop me!”

279. Kiara's Social Status

Chapter 279. Kiara's Social Status

Kiara's Social Status

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

Kiara addressed Fran after she finished rummaging through her closet.

“First, we head towards Schwartzkatze! We gotta tell everyone that us black catkin can evolve.”

“Everyone in the village has already been informed while you were asleep,” said Guendalfa.

“Excellent! I’m sure those that are interested in evolving have already started recruiting party members to hunt evil beings. I shall join them at once”

“Schwartzkatze?” Fran tilted her head.

“It’s a village of black catkin,” explained Guendalfa. “After being freed from slavery, many black catkin either lost their homes or couldn’t make the journey back to their hometowns. The village was built as a place where they could recover their livelihoods in a safe environment.”

“Yeah you should come with me and show your face around,” said Kiara to Fran. “Everyone will probably love you.”

With that Kiara headed towards the door but was stopped by the maid who grabbed her by the arm.

“I won’t let you go,” she said. “You’ve been bedridden for almost twenty days. You need to rest for at least another week.”

“Ugh. Dammit Mia! Let me go!”

Kiara tugged on her arm but it would not budge no matter how much she struggled. She even grabbed the edge of the doorway to help pull herself through but all that did was make the doorway bend and creak.

Holy shit! That maid is strong! Aren't Kiara's stats supposed to be massive since she gets double the normal stat growth from that blessing she had? Goddamn dude, that maid hasn't moved an inch! Wait that maid's already evolved!?

"These royal maids are really do live up to their reputations," said Guendalfa.

"Famous?"

"Definitely. Royal maids are the cream of the crop, hand picked to serve the royal family and guests of honor. They are selected from an early age and trained extensively in etiquette, housekeeping, hospitality, and even combat. I'd get totally slaughtered if I tried picking a fight with any one of them."

Having given up on struggling against Mia, Kiara turned to Fran.

"Oh so by the way I heard that you came here by boat from the other country. How was the weather on your journey?"

"Nn. Good."

An awkward silence followed. Kiara gave her arm a quick tug but the maid still gripped it tightly.

She tried to distract the maid with small talk! How embarrassing!

"...So what did you come here for?" asked Kiara sheepishly.

"Came here to meet Kiara. And one more person."

"Wait Fran. I don't think you should mention the god-tier blacksmith. The Beast Lord said that all info on him was supposed to be classified.."

"I know." She replied telepathically. "Won't say more."

“I see,” said Kiara. “Well I wish I could help you more since you’re a black catkin like me but I don’t think I can. I might live in a fancy room like this but I have no influence outside of that doorway.”

“Nonsense,” said Mia. “There is almost no one who would oppose your will, Lady Kiara.”

“Hmph. Anyone that listens to an old crank like me should throw themselves in jail.”

“I’m sure they would if you asked them to.”

Wow. Mia seems pretty relaxed for a royal maid. She isn’t as uptight as the other maids we’ve met.

“But seriously,” Mia continued, “You cannot call yourself unimportant after providing many of the country’s most important individuals with your teachings. The Beast Lord, the Princess, the generals, the royal maids, the castle guards. Many of us spent our entire childhood under your care, and we would come running to your bedside if you called.”

“Damn I messed up,” said Kiara. “I shouldn’t have trained you so hard when you were younger if I knew you were going to get strong enough to stop me at this point!”

“Too bad. You’ll have to be more careful next time.”

“Nrrrggh!”

“Give it up. You’re not in top shape right now. The adrenaline rush you are having is keeping you from noticing that fact.”

“Haaah.”

“You don’t have to exert yourself right this minute. The evil beings aren’t going to vanish anytime soon. Have someone at the top lay out the groundwork for you. I was not kidding when I said like half the castle would come running if you called.”

“Fine.” The tension in Kiara vanished. “Mia, go and get me someone decently competent from the castle.”

“As you wish.”

Mia let go of Kiara, took out a piece of paper, wrote down a small message, and handed it off to a maid waiting outside the door.

Kiara straightened out her clothing.

“Fran, I know I said this before, but I’m very grateful that you came here to see me. You are truly a light in my life. I would like to do something for you to express my thanks. As you can see, I have a fair bit of unofficial power in this castle.”

“No need. Didn’t do for thanks.”

“Hah! Good answer. But I’m not asking out of any sense of obligation. I just want to do something for you. It really can be anything, ya know? For example, I don’t mind permanently removing somebody you consider an eyesore.”

“No thanks. Would do that myself.”

“Really? No, you’re right. It’s more fun to do it by yourself.”

“Nn.”

Dias was right. Fran and Kiara do get along in weird ways. Both are female black catkin warriors that could casually talk about assassinating someone they didn’t like.

Fran and Kiara continued to chat about some rather concerning topics, stopping only after they were interrupted by a knock outside the door.

“Excuse me. Did you call for me, Madam Kiara?”

“Yeah come in.”

An old man entered the room. He had silvery gray hair and was wearing an embroidered vestment robe. He spoke cheerfully.

“Madam Kiara, I have come to answer your call.”

“There you are. I was wanting to introduce you to someone.”

“Oh?” he turned to Fran. “You must be the Black Lightning Princess.”

“What? You already know of her?”

“Of course. I think you were the only person in the country that didn’t.”

The man bowed elegantly to Fran.

“Greetings, my lady. Forgive me for not introducing myself earlier. My name is Raymond, and I hold the position of Prime Minister of this country.”

Holy shit! I knew he looked important, but he’s actually the Prime Minister!? Kiara really knows how to throw her weight around.

“C ranked adventurer, Fran. Sometimes called Black Lightning Princess.”

“Stop it with the excessive bowing already,” said Kiara. “You made it to Prime Minister, so if you keep on lowering your head people will stop respecting your position. Hold your head up high and keep your eyes looking forward. ”

“That was simply due to the grace of the current beast lord. At heart, I am simply a humble public servant.” He turned back to Fran. “I was previously informed of your circumstances by His Majesty and was told to accommodate your needs during your stay. I will also get that letter of recommendation to that person written as you requested. Is there anything else you require of me?”

Fran spoke to me telepathically.

“Master. Anything?”

“Nothin’ from me. You?”

“Just one. Want to visit black catkin village.”

“Sounds good to me. Go for it.”

Fran told Raymond her request.

“Understood,” he said. “Truth be told, I was actually going to ask you to visit Schwartzkatze. Your request is most timely. I have a map already prepared for you.”

“Thanks.”

280. Greengoa

Chapter 280. Greengoat

Greengoat

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

Raymond opened up a large map and handed it over to Fran.

“Schwarzkatz is located near the foot of these mountains that serve as our border,” he said. “It’s a three to four day journey by horned carriage, but I suspect that you have means of covering that distance more quickly. In that case, I suggest that you make a stop at Greengoat. It is one of the country’s largest trading hubs. Many major roads converge on it.”

“Nn. Thanks.”

“And here is that letter of recommendation that the Beast Lord instructed me to write for you.” He handed Fran a letter adorned with a fancy wax seal.

“I believe that is everything on the agenda. If you have no further concerns, I shall excuse myself here. May your journey be safe and prosperous.”

Raymond exited the room. He was gone and we had everything we came for, so it was time for us to go too.

“Will be leaving too,” said Fran.

“Aww, already?” asked Kiara.

“Nn. Bye Kiara, Guen.”

“Bye Fran,” said Guendalfa. “And uhh... about that thing... when we first met...”

“Nn. No problem. I forgive you.”

“Hmm? What’s this?” said Kiara. “Why is she forgiving you, brat? What did you do to her?”

“N-Nothing! I didn’t do any-”

“Guen picked a fight”

“Gahhhhh!” Guendalfa covered his head with his hands and cowered down on the floor.

Fran explained in detail our first encounter with Guendalfa, starting with him being an arrogant son of a bitch and ending with Fran flooring him with a single punch. After listening to our story, Kiara directed a furious gaze at Guendalfa.

“I can’t believe you!” she shouted, drilling her fist into the top of his skull
“Why are you still so obsessed with your uncle?”

“I’m not obsessed!” he stammered. “I couldn’t care less about that traitor. He-”

“That right there is what makes you a goddamn snot nosed brat! You’re over 20 years old and you’re still throwing a tantrum over Gold leaving. It’s an honor to serve the Beast Lord, and you shouldn’t think of it any other way.”

“But-”

“No buts! Stop being so goddamn immature. I know you’re just mad he left the tribe without telling you first. Get over it already.”

“Urk…”

Guendalfa couldn’t find a way to retort, so he just sat angrily on the floor with a frown on his face. Kiara turned to the maid, Mia.

“Mia. Get this snot nosed brat out of my room.”

“Understood, Lady Kiara.”

Mia grabbed Guendalfa by the collar and dragged him out the room. Kiara turned back to Fran and gave her a hug.

“Do come back and visit,” she said.

“Nn. Kiara, don’t push self to hard.”

“Hahaha! I can’t promise you that. I’m trying to evolve, after all.”

“Nn. Then push self just enough to avoid death.”

It seems both Kiara and Fran are the type of people to constantly push themselves to their limits to achieve their goals. I can protect Fran along the way but the same can’t be said for Kiara. I hope she stays safe, for Fran’s sake.

“I won’t die,” said Kiara. “I haven’t felt this alive in years!”

She shifted towards the open door.

“In fact, I feel so great that why don’t I just get a head start on evil beings. I think I’ll just accompany you an-”

“Not so fast, Lady Kiara.” Mia suddenly appeared behind Kiara and grabbed her by the shoulder.

“Goddammit Mia! Let me go! How did you even get back here that fast? I thought I told you to remove that snot nosed brat.”

“I had a feeling that you would try to bolt while I was away so I just dumped him in the hallway around the corner.”

“Nrrrgh!”

After a brief struggle, Kiara gave up trying to escape the maid.

“It looks like I can’t go, so won’t you stay with me a bit longer?” she said.

“Can’t. Need to leave.”

“I see.” Kiara smiled gently. “In that case, do visit again!”

“Will do!”

With that, we exited Kiara’s room. We turned the corner and found Guendalfa still sitting on the ground and sulking, so Fran asked him to escort us out. Guendalfa seemed to perk right back up and he happily accompanied us out of the castle and stuck with us all the way until we reached the city’s front gates.

“Well then. Be safe, Black Lightning Princess.”

“Nn. You too. Stop picking fights.”

“Haha yeah. I kinda learned my lesson the hard way.”

Once outside, Fran summoned Urushi in his large form and mounted him.

“Go Urushi! Go!”

“Woof!”

Urushi raced through the sky. We left the capital around noon. Only after travelling for about eight hours could we finally see some city lights emerging from beyond the horizon.

“It’s pretty late Fran. I think that’s Greengoat in the distance. Let’s touch down there and find an inn where we can have a meal and get some rest. We can continue travelling in the morning.”

“Nn. Urushi, descend.”

2 hours later, Fran lay contentedly on the bed, just having finished dinner.

What the hell was that? We got through this city way too smoothly! Nobody batted an eye when we arrived at the town gate and the guard let us through without issue. Nobody gave us shit at the guild when we were selling our monster mats either. Nor were we disturbed during the check in process. I swear to god, I'm so used to Fran getting harassed that being left alone actually bothers me more. Oh shit, did I just totally jinx it? Is something terrible going to happen to Greengoat now?

"Master, what's wrong?" asked Fran, half asleep.

"Nothing really big. I think it's odd that no one in Greengoat's messed with us yet."

"Is that a bad thing?"

"It's not. I'll let it go."

I decided to put the matter aside and let Fran get some rest. Surprisingly, the next morning was just as uneventful. We managed to set off from Greengoat without a hitch.

So nothing actually happened while we were in Greengoat? Well damn, I guess there really is a first time for everything after all.

As soon as I thought that, Fran and I spotted two adventurers standing on either side of the road about twenty meters from where we were. They weren't doing anything besides just loitering around and suspiciously scouring their surroundings. We were currently riding Urushi so we slowed down and kept our guard up because they directed their gazes at us, but again, nothing happened. As we passed them we saw that the two adventurers were not beastkin, but human. I thought we were in the clear after we passed them by, but then three more adventures on horseback appeared from the side of the road and stopped in front of us, blocking our way forward. Two more came out and stopped behind us. We were surrounded.

"Whew. We managed to make it here in time!" said one.

“Yeah! What the hell is that wolf? It’s crazy fast!”

“The guys on the ground should have signalled us sooner.”

One of the men dismounted.

“Oi you! Are you Fran, the Black Lightning Princess?” said one of the adventurers.

“Nn.”

He made an ugly smile. The other 4 adventurers dismounted and moved inwards, tightening the circle around Fran.

Are these guys seriously attacking us when Urushi is out in the open? He’s even in his large form. Are they brave? Or just plain stupid?

“Well then. It may be a bit sudden but you will forfeit your life here!”

“If you want to curse something, then curse the day you were born a beastkin!”

The five adventurers each reached into their bags and pulled out a large purple ball. I appraised them.

“Fran! Those balls create poisonous chunks of fog that weakens everything in them. It’s probably too weak to affect you but I think I’ll teleport you out just in case. Urushi. You have the Nullify Poison skill. Go waste them.”

“Woof”

The men threw the balls straight at Fran but I teleported her high into the sky before they reached. The adventurers’ stats were so low that I felt like I was watching them in slow motion. After missing their target, the balls exploded, covering the area below us with a thick purple fog.

“Did we get her?” said one of the men.

The next moment an enormous black shadow emerged from the fog and scooped up the man in its jaws. After violently shaking its head side to side a few times, the shadow loosened its grip and sent the man's chewed up corpse flying.

"Hiiii-!"

The other four turned tail and ran but Urushi was much too fast for them. Two of the men got their heads bitten off and the other two were pinned under his massive paws. The first two men who were monitoring the road were pierced by spears of Darkness Magic.

I checked our surroundings as we descended to see if there were any more attackers, but it was just those seven.

"Good boy!" said Fran.

"Wooooof!"

Five out of the seven men were dead. The last two were bound to bleed out within a couple minutes. I quickly healed them but left them under Urushi's paws. Fran kicked them awake. They put up some resistance but our tried and true process of Fran beating them half to death then healing them over and over made them quickly loosen their tongues.

"I really don't know who hired us! I never saw his face!"

"The guy just left us the money as well as these poison balls."

"Told us that these could subdue even the mightiest beastkin."

"He fucking lied to us!"

"Please don't kill me! I was set up!"

"Master. What do?"

"I think we should take them to the guards. They aren't a threat anymore and they don't seem to have any more companions, so it's safe to hand them

over. They were probably disposable pawns or something. I'm not too sure why they were actually after us in the first place, but if I had to guess, I'd say they were probably just sent out to harass you. There's no way anyone with half a brain could expect goons on their level to take us out.

"Nn okay."

We headed back to town with the two goons hanging limply from Urushi's mouth.

"Master, something wrong?" Fran tilted her head as we closed in on the city's gates.

"N-Nah, it's nothing. Don't worry about it."

"Nn. Okay."

Holy crap, I can't believe she almost noticed. I can't tell her that being attacked by these guys actually made me feel relieved...

281. Regarding a Failed Assassination of the Black Lightning Princess

Chapter 281. Regarding a Failed Assassination of the Black Lightning Princess

Regarding a Failed Assassination of the Black Lightning Princess.

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

We walked back to Greengoat with the two remaining adventurers hanging from Urushi's mouth. We were greeted by one of the guards as we approached to the gate.

"Didn't you just leave?" he asked.

"Nn. Dealt with business."

"Wait... What's with those two guys being dragged by your wolf?"

"Business. They attacked me. Here to turn them in."

"Y-You were attacked!? Are you hurt in any way?"

"No."

The guard gave a sigh of relief.

"Thank God! This is definitely strange though. There shouldn't be any bandits in these parts anymore. The Beast Lord subjugated them all last year."

"Not bandits. Assassins. Were targeting me specifically."

"Assassins!? P-Please wait a moment. I must notify my superiors immediately." He turned to the other guard. "Go get the squad leader immediately!"

“Yes sir!”

The second guard took off. We handed the two adventurers to the remaining guard, who tied them up, dragged them to the guard tower, and dumped them into a jail cell. By the time he returned, so had his partner, their boss in tow.

“Black Lightning Princess!” said the squad leader. “Are you unharmed?”

“Nn. Unharmed.”

“That’s good news.” He turned to the guard that had stayed. “You! What’s the status report!”

The guard recounted to the chief everything that we told him and that he had thrown the assassins in prison.

“I see.” The squad leader turned to Fran. “Rest assured, we will find those responsible for this despicable attack immediately. I will also have this matter conveyed to the town’s lord right away. May I serve you some tea in the meantime?”

“Nn.”

He guided us over to the guard tower and ushered us through the front entrance. After climbing a set of stairs, we were seated in a reception room. Compared to the reception mansion in the capital this room was quite shabby, but it was probably the best room that they had.

“Oi you lot!” shouted the squad leader. “Go grab the finest tea that we have! And something for her to eat!”

“Yes sir!”

One of the guards at the entrance dashed back downstairs. After a few minutes, he returned carrying a tray with a teapot, a porcelain tea cup, some first flush tea, and an assortment of jams and honey. The guard poured a cup of tea and handed it to Fran alongside the honey and a spoon.

“Is it to your liking?” asked the squad leader.

“Nn. Not bad,” said Fran.

“Thank you very much!”

Two more guards entered the room carrying a large platter with a silver covering right as Fran finished her first cup of tea. They gently placed the platter in front of Fran and removed the lid.

What the hell!? What’s up with that massive steak!? Are they seriously serving that with tea?

Nobody else in the room seemed to share my disbelief. Fran happily munched on the steak as the rest of the beastkin guards stood by just in case she had any sort of request. It seemed that, to beastkin, steak and tea were a natural pair.

I guess being a glutton is a beastkin trait, not exclusive to Fran. Wait, Fran could probably down two or three of those so she’s probably considered a glutton even among beastkin.

Fran was approaching her last bite when we could hear the sound of heavy footsteps racing up the stairs. The footsteps stopped short of the door, and then the person quietly knocked on the door, as if they remembered their manners at the last minute.

“Enter,” said Fran.

“Please excuse my intrusion. Are you the Black Lightning Princess?”

“Nn.”

“I am Marmanno, lord of the city of Greengoat.”

The man spoke with a loud voice that filled the room. He was a large man with bulging muscles and had a large sword hanging by his waist. I quickly appraised him and saw that his species was green goatkin.

What the heck? He doesn't look like a goat. And did he name the freaking town after himself!?

"I received word of what happened and decided to take a look at the situation directly." He turned to the squad leader. "What's the latest status update?"

"Sir! My subordinates have reported that we are currently interrogating the suspects."

"Basharian bastards," said the goatkin. "I'm certain it was them."

"I concur," said the squad leader.

"Get them to speak even if you have to pry their finger nails off to do it! Don't let the mastermind escape. Capture him by all means necessary if you find him. He had the gall to attack the Black Lightning Princess, a veritable hero, so make sure he pays the price!!"

Wow, this burly ass dude considers Fran a hero? He's not even a black catkin.

"Roger that sir," replied the squad leader. "I have already dispatched soldiers to the scene of the crime."

"Very good. What about searching the city for suspicious characters?"

"That..." the squad leader faltered. "I've already sent two squads to locations in the town where ruffians are known to gather, but we just don't have the manpower to search the entire city. Most of the garrison has been deployed to the Basharian border."

"Damn those Basharian bastards!" bellowed the goatkin, slamming his fist onto the table. "Deploy the knights. Have them comb this city from top to bottom!"

"Is that okay sir? Wouldn't that compromise the security of the castle?"

“That is of little concern! They harmed the Black Lightning Princess! I will make those Basharian bastards pay! No matter the cost!”

I doubt that searching the city will turn up any additional clues. If all the mastermind wanted to do was harass Fran, then by now they would have skipped town. Though, it looks like the lord and his guards are getting fired up, so it'd probably be best for me to hold my tongue for now. It would be rude of me to dampen their enthusiasm.

“So Black Lightning Princess,” said Marmanno, “would you stay with us until we finish investigating these assassins? I will host you in my mansion and provide you the most luxurious accommodations I can offer. We can dine together and trade stories from the battlefield. What say you?”

“Master, what do?” asked Fran telepathically.

“I think we should turn him down. He seems like an honest guy but we don't have the time to sit around and wait for them to catch a criminal that's probably no longer in town.”

“Nn. Okay.”

Fran gently declined and we made our way out of the guard tower and through the gates of the city. Once outside, Fran brought out Urushi and mounted him.

“It looks like we got held up a bit, but whatever. Let's go!”

“Ohh!”

Urushi started speeding northwards from Greengoat. He was running faster than normal trying to make up for lost time. After travelling for a few hours, we spotted a river at the foot of the mountain range.

“Master. Up there. That river.”

“Yeah. Right beyond that river is Schwartzkatze. But we shouldn't cross it just yet.”

“Why?”

“It’s just in case we’re being tracked by the same dude that sent those assassins. Let’s throw them off our trail.”

I had Urushi double back and head south for a bit before turning eastward and making a wide circle around the village. Once we were north of the village, we ran forward for a little ways before ducking behind some bushes. I then teleported all three of us back to where we first saw the river.

“Alright. That should be good. Let’s cross that river.”

Beyond the river, we found a crossroads with two diverging paths. We took the path going west and followed it until we found a reassuring sight.

“Master! Black catkin spotted!”

282. Villagers Discovered

Chapter 282. Villagers Discovered

Villagers Discovered

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editor: Exkalamity

We spotted a group of three black catkin men on our way to Schwartzkatze walking along the same path as us. Unlike Fran, all three of them were fully grown adults. They looked to be in the midst of returning from gathering firewood as bundles of sticks could be seen attached to the packs on their backs. We approached them from behind and called out to them.

“Hey,” said Fran.

“Wh- Aaaaaaaah!” One of the men turned around and then jumped back in fright when he saw Urushi.

“A-A monster! A giant wolf”

“Run away!”

The three men dropped the packs they were carrying and ran off into the distance.

“We messed up.”

“Yeah. It was probably a bad idea to approach with Urushi in his giant wolf form. They’re members of the weakest tribe, so seeing a monster as intimidating as Urushi probably overwhelmed them.”

“What do?”

“Hmm. We should probably chase them down and explain the situation. Things will get hairy if they start reporting that there’s a giant wolf on the prowl.”

“Nn.”

“Also, Urushi we need you to stand by for a bit.”

“Woof”

Fran hopped off of Urushi’s back and had him melt into her shadow. We decided to do the three men we’d just scared a favor and store branches they dropped in our dimensional storage. We ran down the path following their footprints until we saw their tracks split off into three directions. We then decided to start by catching the one closest to us.

“Fran, go all out.”

“Nn.”

Fran clad herself in wind magic and used it to boost herself towards the fleeing black catkin. She landed right in front of him, cutting him off.

“Hi again.”

“Whoa!”

He stumbled back onto the ground. His face relaxed momentarily when he saw that Fran was a black catkin just like him. But then, after looking at her for a couple more seconds, his eyes widened and he began trembling.

“A- a- a- a-....!”

“Nn?”

“E-e-e-e-e-ev...!”

“You okay?”

“AN EVOLVED BLACK CATKIN?!”

He rushed over to Fran on his hands and knees and grasped her hand tightly.

“W-w-w-w-w-w...”

“Speak normally”

“Y-y-y-y-y-y-y-...!”

“Come on.”

“Would you happen to be the Black Lightning Princess herself!?”

“Nn.”

The man collapsed onto the ground and burst into tears.

“It finally happened!” he wailed. “One of us has finally evolved! For such a long time we have suffered! It was almost as if we were cursed by misfortune itself, but finally we have someone from our tribe that has a promising future. Uwaaaaaaah!”

His reaction was the most extreme out of all the beastkin we have met. Probably because he himself suffered under the curse the gods have put on the black catkin. He can probably tell she’s a Black Heavenly Tigerkin because they’re from the same tribe.

“I’m so sorry about all the trouble I have caused you,” he said, after calming down.

“Nn, no problem.”

“Also, if you could go get the other two that are still running away. They are probably way too far away for me to catch them.”

“Got it.”

Fran used wind magic to boost herself to the other two black catkin and retrieved them. Both showed similar reactions to the first.

“You are our savior! I will follow you forever!” one wailed.

“I-I will never forget this moment for the rest of my life!” declared the other.

They look like kittens admiring a local badass.

After reuniting the three black catkin, we asked them if they could lead us to Schwartzkatze.

“It would be an honor to guide you to the village,” said one of the black catkin. “Let me return first and inform them that you are coming.” He seemed to want to leave immediately, but Fran stopped him before he did.

“Here,” said Fran, taking the dropped firewood out of her dimensional storage and handing it over to the remaining two black catkin.

“Ohh! Thank you very much!”

“You are so generous! Now we don’t have to go back to that forest!”

“Was that space/time magic? I thought that was the stuff of legends. As expected of the Black Lightning Princess!”

After taking his firewood back from her, the man that’d offered to act as a messenger kicked off and started running back to the village.

If this was back in Japan they probably would have asked her to autograph the firewood.

“Oh. Brought companion,” said Fran.

“Huh? I don’t see him.”

“Nn. Can call him?”

“Of course! The companion of the Black Lightning Princess must surely be a person worthy of our respect.”

“Urushi”

“Woof!”

“Gyaaaaah! It’s a wolf.”

“Run away!”

The two black catkin fell back when they saw Urushi in his small form. Despite no longer being a giant wolf, they were still frightened by him. Fran quickly managed to calm them down and we were able to resume our journey.

“Why so frightened?” asked Fran.

“Normal wolves are a danger for us,” said one of the men. “And it’s really obvious from his fur that your companion is not a normal wolf but a monster. Of course we would be scared!”

“My bad,” said Fran. “Big wolf from before, also Urushi.”

“Really? We should tell the villagers that the giant wolf that was spotted is not a threat. I’ll run off ahead and let them know!” A second black catkin ran off, leaving the last one to escort us.

As we walked the remaining black catkin started talking about Schwartzkatze. He explained that currently the population of the village was around 300 people. About 90% of them were black catkin, mostly civilians. The other 10% were guards, adventurers, and their families. The Beast Lord had personally arranged to have the village constructed. He ordered a solid wooden wall to be built, which is normally uncommon for such a remote village.

He seems to be treating the black cat tribe really well. Though, a part of me feels as if he’s just doing it to make Kiara happy.

We started to see the wooden walls emerge from beyond the horizon after walking along the road for about ten minutes. Standing in front of the wooden gate were three people. Two of them were the black catkin that ran

off ahead of us. The last one was an elderly black catkin with a hunched back. The elderly man approached Fran, completely ignoring Urushi.

“Oh.... Ohhhhhhhh! It’s true! She really has evolved!” he said with wide eyes.

“See? I told you so, chief” said one of the black catkin.

“And you think I could possibly believe that a member of our tribe had evolved?”

“But His Majesty the Beast Lord already sent us a messenger telling us exactly that, didn’t he?”

“And you are telling me that you completely believed that? That every fibre of your being believed those words and didn’t harbor even the slightest amount of doubt?”

“Well...”

It seems like not all the black catkin believed the news that one of their tribe members had evolved. The thinking that ‘it is impossible for black catkin to evolve’ was so deeply embedded into their minds that they couldn’t even believe the words of the Beast Lord himself.

Fran stepped forward.

“It’s true,” she said. “Have evolved.”

Hearing those words and seeing her appearance, the village chief began to tremble. He finally was able to believe the reality in front of him.

“So does that mean the requirements for evolving that they told us are true?” asked the chief. “That all you have to do is defeat 1000 evil beings?”

“Nn.”

“Hooray! I thought it was too good to be true! But now more of us really can evolve.”

It took us a while to calm the excited village chief down.

“Well, it seems like they are happy you came, which is good, I guess.”

“Nn.”

“Woof.”

283. Hero or Idol?

Chapter 283. Hero or Idol?

Hero or Idol?

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editor: Exkalamity

The village chief danced around for a bit before settling down and guiding us into the village. A huge mass of people crowded around the area in front of the gate. There were at least two hundred black catkin gathered around us. Despite that large number, the crowd was awfully quiet. We could hear some murmuring alongside the occasional sob, but nobody was cheering or shouting. Most of the villagers were stunned in silence.

One of the black catkin in front of us knelt onto the ground. He clasped his hands together in prayer and stared fervently at Fran, as if she was the Messiah. One by one, the other black catkin around him followed suit. It didn't take long for the entire crowd to begin praying, with Fran as the object of their worship. The bizarre atmosphere left Fran and I bewildered.

"People, people, stop it," said the village chief. "Can't you see that you are bothering the Black Lightning Princess?"

The people around Fran awkwardly got to their feet, though they did still continue to send her their ardent stares.

"I'm sorry about that," said the village chief. "As far as we black catkin are concerned, you may as well be a walking miracle. Everyone's just acting like this because seeing you has moved their hearts. Could you forgive them?"

"Nn. No problem."

As if Fran's voice was a signal, the crowd started to buzz.

“Oh my god, she talked!”

“Her voice is so adorable!”

“She is truly divine!”

“Mommy, how do I become like her?”

The people around us were talking excitedly. They were treating Fran more like a famous idol than an adventurer or warrior. The crowd rapidly closed in on her. Everyone was trying to get a closer look at her all at once.

“Enough!” shouted the chief. He waved his hands, shooing the crowd away. “I must show her our village’s hospitality. If you would please follow me, Black Lightning Princess.”

“Nn.”

The crowd parted and allowed the chief to lead us to a slightly larger house in the middle of the village. A large group of black catkin trailed behind us. Most of them were kids, so I half expected them to call out to us. But none of them did. It was obvious from the looks in their eyes that they were too busy admiring Fran to remember how to use their voices.

When we got to the chief’s house he sat us down and then personally brewed Fran a cup of tea. A bunch of black catkin crowded outside the window, watching her drink. I could sense that a lot more had their ears pressed to the walls.

“I apologize for being unable to serve you anything better,” said the chief.

“Nn. Not problem. Tasty,” said Fran, after taking a sip.

“Ohhhh! That’s good to hear! Thank you for your kind words!”

The people outside the house cheered.

“These tea leaves were produced by this village. Everyone will be honored to hear that you enjoyed them.”

“Nn.”

I hope Fran wasn't just providing them with lip service. What would they have done if she said it was bad? Probably have someone run off and buy expensive tea.

“Now then.” The chief sat down. “May I ask the reason for your visit?”

“Not much,” said Fran. “Just wanted to see black catkin village.”

“Oh I see!” The chief smiled as he nodded. “It's an honor for you to show interest in us. Please let me offer you my home for you to stay the night. There are no inns in this village and my house is the biggest here.”

“Don't worry. Just a few days. Will camp outside.”

“Nononono! How could I possibly allow the Black Lightning Princess herself to stay outdoors? Please, make yourself at home.”

“Really? Thanks.”

“If there is anything else you need, please feel free to let me know.”

This is a little troubling. We didn't come here to impose on the village. Rather, we came here to see if there was anything we could do to help.

“Tell if any trouble,” said Fran. “Will help with anything.”

“I am truly happy to hear those words,” said the chief. “But we could not possibly ask that of you, who has already brought so much hope to our tribe.”

“It's fine,” insisted Fran. “Tell me. Any monster problems?”

“We are in a secluded area that doesn't see many monsters,” he explained, “so they haven't been a threat for a while. We have the beast lord to thank for finding us this location. The land isn't very fertile, and it's hard to grow crops, but at least we can live here in peace. That said,” he paused, “could I ask one thing of you?”

“Nn. Happy to do anything”

“Can you show our young ones how strong you are?”

“Combat prowess?”

“Yes. It isn’t possible for us old folk to hunt 1000 evil beings. We’re just too old. But the younger generation has a chance. I would really appreciate it if you could show them that it’s possible for us black catkin to be more than just the weakest tribe. You may even be able inspire them to go out and hunt evil beings for themselves.”

“Nn. Got it. Right now, tribe a little cowardly.”

“Great! I’m glad to hear it!”

The black catkin outside of the house started kicking up a fuss right as we wrapped up the conversation. The commotion grew louder and louder until they were shouting with their voices laced with panic. And before long, someone began violently knocking on the chief’s door.

“Chief! Chief are you in? It’s an emergency!” the person shouted.

The chief hurried to the door and opened it.

“What is going on? You are being loud,” said the chief.

“Chief it’s bad! Goblins! We sighted goblins nearby the village!”

“Why are you so panicked? We have the guards. What are they doing?”

“This is more than the guards can handle!” shouted the man at the doorway.

“There are over 20 goblins!”

“What did you say? That’s way too many! Schwartzekatze is doomed!”

Hmm? Is twenty goblins alot? Maybe for a small village, I guess, but their reaction is totally overblown.

Fran stood up.

“Will handle them,” she said. “Will show my strength.”

“Will you really take care of it for us?” asked the chief nervously.

“Nn. Have some people follow. Will put on a show.”

“Got it! I’ll send some promising fellows your way.”

The chief nodded and dashed out the house in a hurry.

284. A Look into How Black Catkin Are Treated In Modern Times

Chapter 284. A Look into How Black Catkin Are Treated In Modern Times

A Look into How Black Catkin Are Treated In Modern Times

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Exkalamity

A single red dogkin guard led Fran and a group of around thirty black catkin towards the area that the goblins were spotted. All of the black catkin were carrying weapons, albeit crude ones. Some were stuck with just sticks or farm tools. They all wore timid expressions on their faces and their eyes nervously darted all over the place.

What the hell? Why are they being so paranoid? All they have to do is sit around and watch Fran kill twenty goblins. Is it because they're so used to running away that they find it unthinkable for them to knowingly approach a group of monsters of their own accord?

"Anyone, combat experience?" asked Fran.

The black catkin all shook their heads vigorously.

"Never sent to fight Bashar?" asked Fran

"No we were never sent," answered a black catkin. "The beastkin country doesn't conscript black catkin. Our tribe's too weak to fight."

"Other tribes no complaints?"

"They don't. All the other tribes consider us a nuisance on the battlefield. They all say 'don't bother coming'. We couldn't contribute anything at all even if we did insist on joining."

“Before we were actually used as meatshields,” said another black catkin. “But that was in the past when slavery was still a thing. The Beast Lord quickly banned the practice once he freed all of us. We are grateful to him for that.”

“Yeah. So basically, outside of being a meatshield, we are useless in a fight.”

I was expecting that there would be at least one or two decent warriors among the black catkin living in the beastkin country. There’s a whole ton of them living here, after all. But looks like I was wrong. Rather, the exceptional black catkin seemed to be those that travelled outside the beastkin country like Fran’s parents or Kiara. The black catkin that live here are so cowardly that it’s almost kinda heartbreaking.

“Treated poorly?” asked Fran.

“Not really anymore. Before, when we were slaves, times were tough. But now that we are free, the other tribes don’t harm us directly anymore. But they still look down on us.”

“It’s not like we look down upon you,” chimed in the red dogkin leading the expedition. “You know how it is. Black catkin being weak is just a fact. Like how the sky is blue and the grass is green. Common sense says that it’s only natural for black catkin to be weak.”

Judging by his expression, he really doesn’t think anything malicious about the black catkin. It’s just that he grew up believing that the whole race was weak. The idea was probably reinforced by the fact that all the tribes except the black catkin were capable of evolution.

“But looking at you makes me feel like I should reconsider, ” said the red dogkin. “I can’t wait to see you in action.”

The guard seemed to acknowledge that black catkin did in fact have potential, but sadly, his opinion didn’t seem particularly widespread. Fran’s strength didn’t look like it would change everyone’s perception of the black catkin race as a whole.

15 minutes after departing from Schwartzkatz, we arrived at the area where the goblins were spotted. We found ourselves in a wilderness sparsely populated by trees. The soil in the area around the black catkin village was poor. It simply didn't have enough nutrients to support a dense woodland.

"This place, huh," remarked one of the black catkin.

"What's wrong with this place?" asked Fran.

"You see, there was a period of time that we wanted to cultivate crops and such around here," he explained. "Since our race is weak, we didn't have the manpower to deforest the entire area around the village. We could only cut down a few trees at a time and try to make do with a small area. When we found this clearing, we thought we would be able to build some big farms here, but it turned out that the soil was not fertile enough to grow anything."

The black catkin around him looked sadly at the ground. He continued.

"There are more fertile lands a bit further north, but those places are too cold for us to bear. Also, they are infested with monsters."

"Speaking of monsters, I see the goblins," said the red dogkin.

Fran quickly ushered the group to hide behind a large boulder. We spotted the group of goblins marching southwards in a rocky area up ahead. They would definitely come across the village if they kept their current course. The goblins were equipped with iron armor and were holding metal weapons like swords and spears.

That's odd. Goblins usually aren't that well armed. Most of the time goblins wear loincloths and carry around sticks. At best they tend to have the leather armor that they would loot off adventurers every now and then. But the only time I've seen goblins wearing legit armor was back in Alessa during the Goblin Stampede. And even then, the only ones that had it were hobgoblins. Is there supposed to be a dungeon nearby or something?

“Those goblins are way too well armed,” said the red dogkin. “They must have stolen their equipment from a group of bandits or mercenaries.”

“Goblins too weak for that,” said Fran.

“No, not if the group was bigger. If the mercenaries or bandits were too severely outnumbered, the goblins probably could have done them in. It would make sense if that group over there is all that was left of what started off as a larger horde.”

“It should still be a cakewalk,” I told her telepathically. “These are just still normal goblins, and I am not detecting any reinforcements in the vicinity. Go wreck them.”

“Got it.”

Fran stepped out from behind the boulder and turned to the crowd of black catkin behind her.

“Going now. Will eliminate goblins. Watch me.”

The crowd stared at her nervously.

“Please don’t go!”

“Don’t abandon us!”

“Don’t worry,” said Fran. “Urushi staying here.”

“Woof!”

Urushi popped out of Fran’s shadow and trotted over to the huddling villagers. Their faces relaxed when they saw that the big black wolf would be guarding them.

I’m glad that the villagers are no longer afraid of Urushi. They warmed up to him after seeing him being friendly and happily interacting with Fran.

“Will be quick,” said Fran.

“A-Alright.”

“Please be safe!”

“W-We’ll be watching.”

Fran left the villagers and stealthily approached the goblins under the cover of the rocky terrain.

“You should hold back a bit. You want to demonstrate your strength at an extent that the villagers can actually see it.”

“Nn. Awakening. Brilliant Lightning Rush!”

Black lightning bolts sizzled around Fran’s body. Her tail changed from solid black to black with gray stripes and stuck out like a lightning bolt. A cloud of dust to whipped up around her.

“What did I just say about holding back!?”

“Nn. Cooler this way. Will slowly demonstrate sword skills.”

“Alright then.”

Fran unsheathed me and slowly walked up to the goblins. The goblins noticed her and began eyeing her. Three of them approached her with swords drawn and their tongues hanging from their mouths. With three smooth strokes, Fran cut those goblins down. The remaining goblins, now seeing her as a threat, surrounded her with their weapons ready. Three more goblins lunged at her, but she stabbed the first through the chest after ducking under his blow, then spun around and beheaded the other two as they tried to attack her back. To the onlookers, she moved so effortlessly and gracefully that it looked like she was performing a dance.

“Welp. The goblin’s formation is already starting to collapse. Wait. Doesn’t that one on the ground look more nicely dressed than the others? You probably defeated their leader without even noticing.”

“Nn. Will use flashy magic now.”

While the goblin's were caught between either fighting or fleeing, Fran fired Tri-Explosion towards the edge of the goblin's formation. There was a great flash of light and one goblin was instantly vaporized. The two around him were blown a great distance away, their charred bodies tumbling on the rocky ground.

The remaining eleven goblins turned around and fled at full speed. But Fran was too quick for them.

"Stun Bolt. Stun Bolt. Stun Bolt."

"Gyaaoooooh!"

"Gyooooaaoo!"

Fran paralyzed the leftover goblins by firing weak lightning magic at them. After the final goblin hit the ground, Fran inspected their convulsing bodies.

"You're not going to kill them?"

"Nn. Will make others finish them off."

"Oh nice idea! That's a great way to give them some confidence and experience."

"Nn," she said smugly.

"I think it's safe now. You should go get them."

As we walked back towards the group of huddling black catkin, I took one last look at the twitching goblins.

I hope that the black catkin have the guts to finish them off. Hopefully their feral and ferocious side hasn't been completely extinguished.

285. A Crash Course on Killing Goblins

Chapter 285. A Crash Course on Killing Goblins

A Crash Course on Killing Goblins

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editor: Exkalamity

We returned to the boulder where all the other beastkin were hiding. There, we found everyone was staring at us with stunned expressions on their faces.

“Everyone, over here,” said Fran.

“O-Okay.”

The group obediently followed Fran. They began to murmur the moment they saw the many goblins that been strewn across the undergrowth.

“A-Amazing!”

“As expected of the Black Lightning Princess!”

“Man! Evolved black catkin are awesome!”

“Now I get why there is so much hype around evolving.”

The red dogkin guard approached Fran.

“I was right not to judge you like other black catkin,” he said. “You really do live up to your reputation.”

He kept his expression calm and composed, but his tail was wagging like mad and his eyes were burning with admiration. He was clearly just as excited and impressed as everyone else.

Suddenly a scream ripped through our surroundings.

“Aiieeee! This one’s still alive”

“What? Oh no! That one is too!”

“We’re all gonna die!!”

The surrounding black catkin finally noticed that some of the goblins were still breathing. They all paled at the thought that they were casually standing around monsters that were still alive.

“Left alive for you,” said Fran. “Finish them.”

“What?”

“Letting you kill,” repeated Fran.

“What!? Why?”

The black catkin responded with shock. Many even seemed devastated. It was almost as if they thought Fran had betrayed them.

“Goblins, evil beings. Kill for evolution. Also confidence, ” said Fran.

None of the black catkin responded. They all just continued staring at her in mute horror.

Well, they’ve probably never held weapons before, so they probably lack the mental strength to instantly kill something on command. The most they’ve probably done is hunt. They don’t have the strong, warrior-like mentality shared by Fran and most other beastkin.

“Quick,” chided Fran. “Paralysis running out.”

“O-Oh lord!”

“You three!” She pointed at three young black catkin at the edge of the group. “Do it.”

The three black catkin jumped back in surprise, almost dropping their weapons.

“No way! Hitting monsters is scary!.”

“I’ll d-do it tomorrow. I promise.”

“I’ve never held a weapon in my life! Please spare me!”

“No!” Fran took an intimidating step forward. “Do it. Now.”

“But-”

“Paralysis wearing out.”

“A-Anything but that!”

“Now!”

“Y-Yes ma’am!” One of the young black catkin lurched forward towards the goblins. His fear had buckled under Fran’s intimidating glare.

“You two. Follow him,” said Fran.

“Oh god, why did it come to this?”

“W-We’ve got no choice but to do it.”

Goblins are the Evil God’s subordinates. If anything, it would be morally wrong not to kill them off. I’m sure these black catkin understand that. Their fear probably stems from the idea of raising a weapon and inflicting harm on another living being.

The three black catkin positioned themselves around of a single collapsed goblin. Each raised his weapon above his head and prepared to swing. Their faces were covered in sweat.

“Now swing!”

The three black catkin shut their eyes and brought their swords down. There was a clang as the swords bounced off the goblin's armor. The goblin let out a painful screech. Hearing it caused the three black catkin to yelp and scramble back behind Fran.

What the hell! That attack was so weak! Forget about cutting down goblins. Holy shit, you can't even till the earth with that kind of swing. Their fear is really hampering their abilities.

"Nn. Put hips into swing," said Fran.

"B-But..."

"Again. Use hips. Like this," she said, swinging me a few times.

"Yes ma'am..."

"Ugh..."

"I can't do this! I can't take it anymore."

"You gotta do it man. Come on! Don't leave us hanging."

Overpowered by Fran's forceful aura, the three of them once again stood in front of a goblin, raised their swords, and swung them down. This time, they followed through with their entire body and also they actually aimed for the head and other exposed parts. It took them a good thirty seconds, but they eventually managed to kill it.

"Haa...hahh..."

"How's that?"

"Did we... do it...?"

"Nn. Good job. Goblin dead," said Fran.

"Hell yeeaaaah!"

The three of them raised their hands and let out a cheer! They huddled together and started crying, their joy showing clearly on their faces.

Fran stepped in before they started getting out of hand.

“Bad. Getting cocky. Three attackers, one goblin. Still needed 10 swings,” she pointed out. “And goblin immobile. Need one hit kill.”

“Urk... Y-Yeah, I guess...”

“Yeah...she’s right.”

“Damn. We were getting carried away...”

“But not bad for first time,” said Fran. “If train and choose skills, can be stronger than goblins.”

“Yes ma’am!” the three shouted in unison.

Fran’s becoming a pretty good teacher. She’s employing the carrot and the stick method very effectively, making the black catkin both fear and worship her.

“Next three,” said Fran.

“Y-Yes ma’am!”

The remaining black catkin all stepped up in groups of three and finished off one goblin each. Most of the later groups had already completed their mental preparations by the time they were called. They knew it was coming; they’d already watched their comrades perform the very same act. Few resisted as much as the first group. The black catkin began noisily chattering the moment the last goblin fell.

“The Black Lightning Princess says I gained a level!”

“Me too! Me too!”

“Aww... That’s not fair! She let you hit its head! All I did was smack its feet.”

“I’m gonna totally start training when I get back home!”

“You do that. I’m totally done with this. I can’t handle any more.”

Fran rounded up the villagers.

“Okay. No more monsters around. Returning to village,” said Fran.

“Okay, but what about the corpses?”

“Will hold onto them for now.”

Fran walked over and swiftly placed the corpses into my dimensional storage before turning around and leading the group back to the village.

286. A Banquet with the Black Catkin

Chapter 286. A Banquet with the Black Catkin

A Banquet with the Black Catkin

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Position now vacant. Taking applications. The test is tough. Apply if you dare.

The black catkin were fired up. They continued excitedly conversing with one another as we made our way back to the village. Content wise, their conversations were rather serious. They were earnestly trying to form parties and learn more about areas in which they could hunt evil beings. Schwarzekatze's surroundings were almost completely devoid of monsters, so their only choices were either to head towards the capital or set sail for Gilbard, the continent Fran and I had just come from.

I'm glad they're motivated, but I'm also kind of worried. They'll probably die if they push themselves too hard right off the bat. We might've stirred them up a bit too much.

"Might be a good idea for you to hang around Schwartzekatze and train these guys up a bit."

"But then won't make to auction."

Fran shook her head disapprovingly.

"Yeah, I know, but I'm kinda worried they'll go out and just get themselves killed without actually getting anything done, y'know?"

"Can't stay. Need to keep promise."

"I'm not really sure if you can call what happened making a promise. I know Gallus left us a letter and whatnot, but we never sent him a reply. We technically didn't promise anyone anything."

“Still no.

“Well... if you say so.”

Fran firmly rejected my suggestion and left no room for negotiation. She could get surprisingly stubborn when it came to things like this. The young black catkin hated being wishy washy. She'd always stick to anything she decided on without so much as a second thought. There was no point in arguing with her, so I gave my metaphorical shoulders a shrug and laid off.

I wanted her to take care of the other black catkin, but I wasn't about make her go back on her word. The strength of her resolve was one of the most charming things about her, after all.

The black catkin that'd accompanied us in the assault began bragging about their exploits the moment we returned to the village. They talked about how they'd killed goblins, and how they'd witnessed Fran's heroic display of strength. Each and every single one of them had their voices filled with both pride and fervor. Even those that'd decided never to fight again spoke well of the encounter.

Witnessing the invigorated youth, the village's chief bowed to Fran.

“Thank you, Black Lightning Princess.” His voice dripped with gratitude and delight.

“I can't thank you enough for what you've done.”

“Not big deal.” Fran shrugged.

“It is to us. Our tribe has finally gained the vigour and determination it lacked. None of this would have been possible without you. I must thank you for everything that you've done. You make us proud to be black catkin.”

“Good,” said Fran, with a nod.

She stopped for a moment to open up her dimensional storage and extract a portion of its contents. Specifically, she took out all the armour she'd just

looted off the goblins.

“This, can leave here?”

All of it was made out of iron. As far as veterans were concerned, the stuff was useless. But it was still pretty damned good compared to what most fresh adventurers could get their hands on.

“Sorry, I don’t quite follow. What do you mean?” The chief scratched the back of his head as he gazed at her with a clear look of confusion.

“Don’t need.”

“Y-You’re offering to give it to us!? We couldn’t possibly accept it. I’m sure it would make a fair amount of money if sold, so you’d best hold onto it.”

“Not big deal. Have enough money.”

“A-Are you sure? Can we really have all of it!?”

“Nn.”

“T-Thank you so much! I’ll make sure the villager’s youngers put it to good use!”

“Nn. Good. Then this too.”

“Y-you’re giving us all that!?”

The chief’s eyes practically bulged out of his sockets as Fran dumped a bunch of the equipment we’d been keeping around in her storage. We’d looted it from the corpses of goblins, bandits, pirates, and everything else we’d killed on our journey. Most of it was busted up, but none of it was really beyond repair. The leather stuff could just be stitched back together, whereas the metal stuff could be melted down and reforged.

The reason we hadn’t sold any of it was because the guild only dealt in monster parts. Armour and the like needed to be taken to stores and

merchants, and neither Fran nor I had really wanted to go through the trouble of selling it all.

“Don’t need this. Can’t be bothered to sell. Would be glad if you took.”

“Thank you! Thank you so much!”

The chief began tearing up. He’d interpreted Fran’s actions as generosity, and her words as a pretext.

He seems really moved. It’s kind of a shame that Fran was actually telling the truth. She’d only decided to give him all that stuff because she was too lazy to sell it.

And so, the rest of the day passed by rather peacefully. That night, Schwartzekatze held a banquet. The town threw a huge party, all for the sake of welcoming Fran. Their land was infertile, so we didn’t really quite understand where they were getting the money or supplies to hold the event.

The chief informed us that he was planning to use up the village’s emergency rations. Of course, there was no way we could possibly allow that. We’d come to visit, not drain the village of its assets. We ended up supplying all the food instead. There was a lot of stuff in our storage. We had meat, vegetables, grains, eggs, and fish from all over the place.

At first, the black catkin had been hesitant to use our foodstuffs. In fact, they’d even tried to refuse, but Fran eventually forced them to comply by explaining that she really needed to clean up the gigantic mess that was her inventory. She told them that she had so much food it would literally be impossible for her to ever finish it all, and that she needed Schwartzekatze’s villagers to help her polish it off.

Again, the chief ended up choking back tears of joy. He’d thought of Fran as a sort of hero from the very start, but now, he’d begun seeing her as something even more than just that.

The chief's wife had actually taught us a recipe for a traditional black catkin stew. The taste was apparently kind of mediocre, but I still found it rather interesting because of the way it was made. It'd been cooked in an oddly shaped pot. The large vat was thick as a wall, and had the overall shape of a balance ball. Cooking in it had warmed up the entire room, likely due to something along the lines of the far infrared effect.

The meat and root vegetables that filled the pot softened extremely quickly. The village chief's wife had added two main seasonings: salt, and a fermented seasoning that kind of resembled soy sauce. She then just let the pot sit above an open and let it stew, occasionally stirring until it was thick and syrupy.

All in all, it turned out like something along the lines of a Japanese-styled stew. I decided to not only memorize the recipe, but also improve on it going forward so I could make Fran a tastier version of the soup that'd fed her people for generations.

The chief's wife had been curious about our recipes as well, so we'd taught her how to make stock, specifically from bones and vegetables.

She hadn't been the only one cooking up a storm. Many other villagers had joined in as well. There ended up being a whole ton of food, as one would expect from a banquet. All the villagers were super excited to see the sheer amount they had to eat.

They kicked off the banquet by practically worshipping Fran. Many of the black catkin danced as they sang the songs they would always repeat when faced with hardship.

At first, the atmosphere had almost been solemn. But as the hour passed, people started getting drunk. They cheered up and started getting all festive. They drank together, sung out of tune songs, and danced in a jolly manner that starkly contrasted the reverent atmosphere the banquet had started with.

Though many were dead drunk, the villagers failed to forget their appreciation. They started crowding around Fran; everyone wanted to thank her at least once.

They'd all the circle leave as soon as they spoke their words of appreciation but the number of people gathered around her didn't decrease in the slightest. In fact, more and more started lining up and crowding around her as the booze started getting to them.

"You okay, Fran?"

"Nn. Fine." She seemed happy.

Right, to her, this must be a dream come true. She's always wanted to evolve, both for her own sake, and for her tribe's.

The many black catkin continued to sing throughout the night with smiles on their faces. Fran stayed quiet, and her expression remained as usual, but I could tell that being the centre of attention had brought her joy.

I really want to encourage Fran to hang around for a bit longer, but I know she won't change her mind. I've no doubt she'll tell me that she wants to leave in a few days. But you know what, it's fine. All that matters is that she enjoys the time she spends here.

287. Ms. Fran's Magic Course

Chapter 287. Ms. Fran's Magic Course

Ms. Fran's Magic Course

The banquet had evidently exhausted Fran quite a bit. She got out of bed a good bit later than usual the next day. There wasn't anything in particular for her to do, so she started wandering around the village after eating her fill.

Everyone Fran passed bowed to her. The action was a clear indication of their reverence. This respect was most obvious in the older folk, as many even took to their knees the moment they laid eyes on her.

"It sure is quiet around here."

"Nn. Just fields, nothing else."

Schwartzekatz was a farming village. The many black catkin that lived here spent their days tilling the fields. Only a select few were hunters; most of the village's meat came from peddlers and travelling merchants. And since the village was poor, it couldn't afford to buy much, so most of its members basically ended up being herbivores.

The younglings were especially thin and frail. Their frames were so lacking in meat that I was worried whether they would actually be capable of living on given how infertile the surrounding land was. It didn't look to me like they were capable of lasting.

Most of the older black catkin had lived through the previous Beastlord's reign. Though they were still cowardly, they'd known that they were going to be used as decoys and meatshields, so they'd at least built up their muscle mass and whatnot. They were unlike the youngsters, that'd known that they'd never need to step on the battlefield. That, combined with the fact that they thought they were weak, had totally robbed them of the will to strengthen themselves.

That was why they'd spent their lives slowly tilling away at the fields. And that was why they'd never learned ambition. None of them had ever considered trying to evolve prior to Fran's advent.

Those that did want to evolve needed to kill a thousand evil beings. But of course, that wasn't the only restriction, it was merely the one placed upon them as punishment. They still needed to hit level 45 before they could actually awaken. And the way I saw it, none of the tribes members had possessed the conviction to go through that much combat.

Despite that, Fran wasn't worried, and for good reason. Unlike me, she'd known of the issue from the start. I was sure that she not only thought about it, but also came to the conclusion that it was impossible for the tribe's attitude to take a sudden 180. It seemed that she didn't expect any other black catkin to evolve within the next few years. It was possible that it'd even take several decades for one to fulfill all the necessary conditions.

"Want to do one thing."

"What?"

"Want to teach magic training method."

"Makes sense."

All one needed to do to evolve was kill a thousand evil beings and cap out their level. But all that would do was turn one into a Black Tigerkin. To become Black Heavenly Tigerkin, it was necessary to not only learn lightning magic, but also boost one's MGC and DEX stats. Grinding out stats wasn't too hard. All you had to do was work stat specific training segments into your routine, and you'd more or less be home free. Lightning magic, however, was much more difficult to obtain. Casting lightning magic required not just an affinity for the element, but also a high level in both fire and wind magic. It would be very unlikely for another Black Heavenly Tigerkin to pop up unless the Black Cat Tribe trained its younger members in the art of magecraft. Fran knew that leaving behind the techniques required for such an act would benefit her species greatly.

“Yeah, I don’t see why not. Go for it.”

Amanda had taught us everything we needed to know about magic-oriented training. I was confident we would be able to pass that knowledge on so long as we bundled it with a few hands-on examples. And so, Fran began to search for the village’s chief. The village was fairly small, so it didn’t take long for her to catch sight of him discussing something with a bunch of the tribe’s younger members, a serious expression decorating his face all the while.

“Chief. Morning.”

“Good morning, Black Lightning Princess.”

“Something wrong?”

“Everything’s just fine, thank you. A few of the youngsters had said they wanted to start training, so they came to me for advice, and we were talking it through.”

The youngsters in question were ones whose faces I recognized. They were members of the group that’d joined Fran on her goblin-slaying expedition.

“W-We want to get strong!” one said.

“I don’t know whether I’ll actually ever manage to evolve, but I want to try. I’m sick of just running away,” claimed another.

“As for me, I’d just like to get strong enough to at least protect myself and everyone else around me,” added a third.

It looks like Fran really did succeed in influencing them.

Hearing their opinions led my cat eared companion to contently nod before opening her mouth to speak.

“Got it. Good timing. Had idea.”

“I might be pushing our luck here, but are you perhaps willing to train them?” asked the chief.

“Kind of? Will teach how to learn magic.”

“How wonderful!”

The Black Cat Tribe as a whole had long forgotten the techniques required to awaken one’s magical talents. And because of that, its members thought that gaining the ability to cast magic would be akin to living a dream.

“I-Is it really possible for us to learn magic?” asked the chief.

“Probably. Not all will have affinity.”

“Yes, but some will, right?”

“Nn. Wind and fire probably common.”

Lightning magic was effectively the black cat tribe’s speciality, so it only made sense for many of their members to have an affinity for fire and wind.

“Anyone already can use magic?” asked Fran.

If such a person existed, then we could make the task easier on ourselves by turning them into the village’s mage instructor. Unfortunately, it seemed we’d gotten our hopes up. The chief had responded by telling us that there was simply no way a village as rural as Schwartzekatz would be home to a magic caster. Mages were in high demand all over. There was no reason for anyone with that much talent to stay in an area surrounded by nothing but infertile land.

“Ok. Then gather villagers.”

“R-Right away! I’ll grab everyone available!”

“Wa—”

Fran tried to tell the chief that there wasn't any issue in waiting until the villagers were done with the day's work, but he ran off before she could.

It only took ten minutes for him to return. He'd ended up gathering almost 200 black catkin. They were gathered and seated around Fran, their eyes full of hope and anticipation. Every single last one of the villagers was present, save for those that absolutely couldn't leave their posts.

"Will teach how to train magic," said Fran, nonchalantly.

"Yes ma'am!" Most of the black catkin replied at once. Their voices thundered throughout the village at a volume I'd never imagined possible from a group as timid as they were.

"Fire first."

And so, Fran's lecture began. Its contents pretty much mirrored what Amanda had told her when she was just starting out. She told them to work with fire and flame on a daily basis, to stare at it, approach it, and even touch it while resolving oneself to be burnt. She explained to the tribe's members that they needed to accustom themselves with fire to the extent of seeing it in their dreams if they wished to cast fire magic.

Hearing her explanation had caused the entire black cat tribe to go silent.

I guess the training must've sounded too harsh and fanatical.

The only one to speak was the chief.

"A-And doing that will allow us to learn how to cast fire magic?"

"Nn. If affinity."

"Understood. I'll prepare a place for our tribe's members to train immediately."

I'd thought that Fran would have to give a bit more insight into the theory for the tribe's members to actually believe her, but I was wrong. They'd all easily been convinced. They didn't worry about whether or not they would

actually be able to tolerate the training. Nor did they concern themselves with its effectiveness. They simply took in every word she said and believed her.

“Next, wind.”

Fran continued explaining everything away in her usual tone. The tribe was getting riled up despite the fact that she herself didn't sound particularly excited or enthusiastic. They continued listening to her until her lecture came to an end, their eyes filled with a fiery passion throughout.

288. Village Chief Fran...?

Chapter 288. Village Chief Fran...?

Village Chief Fran...?

Many of Schwartzekatze's black catkin sat down by a fire or began fanning themselves the moment Fran's lecture came to an end. She'd not only taught them about the two elements needed for lightning magic, but also about water and earth magic as well. It seemed that the topics had piqued quite a bit of interest here and there, as a couple black catkin had started practicing the methods she'd mentioned for those two in particular. The vigour with which the villagers trained convinced me that at least one or two mages would end up popping up in due time. Or so I thought, until I'd come to a realization.

"Wait, don't they need to get magic manipulation to actually cast stuff?"

Amanda had told us that the magic manipulation skill was the key to learning magecraft, and I highly doubted that any of Shcwartzekatze's villagers already had the skill. Simply interacting with the magical energy abundant in the natural environments around them wasn't nearly enough to actually teach them how to manipulate mana.

"Chief."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Nn. Stand here."

"Sure thing."

The village chief obiently listened to Fran's orders and stood himself up right in front of her while she raised a palm and began to focus.

"I-I'm feeling some sort of strange sensation. What's happening?"

"Nn. Using magic."

She tried seizing control of the chief's mana through the use of her magic manipulation skill. Much to her surprise, it'd worked out surprisingly well. She wasn't able to gain full control, but she at least managed to gain the ability to mess with it and stir it up.

"Feel?"

"I... can! I can't tell what it is, but I can feel something!"

"Nn. Magical energy."

"I see!"

Huh, that's a pretty solid idea.

"Nn. Get everyone. Form line."

"Right away!"

The chief ran around the town square and gathered all the villagers before Fran. It only took them an instant to form a pair of perfectly neat lines.

And so, both Fran and I got to work. We began manipulating the mana within each black catkin in turn in order to get them accustomed to the flow of mana. Neither of us really knew exactly how effective the action was, but we were convinced that it was at least better than leaving Schwartzekatze's villagers completely unaware of what manipulating magical energy was supposed to feel like.

It took us a good bit to go through each and every single black catkin, but neither of us particularly minded it. We didn't really have anything else to do.

"Thank you very much," said the chief.

"Not big deal."

"It is, for us! You not only taught us that it truly was possible to evolve, but also mentored us in magecraft. We're so grateful for your actions that we've

no way to express it!”

A couple other black catkin chimed in and mentioned that what we’d just taught them would normally be considered top secret information as they nodded along in agreement.

Magic wasn’t the only thing the villagers were focused on. Some asked Fran questions about swordplay as well. There were quite the number of them, so Fran ended up hosting a second lecture not too long after she was done the first, one focused on the more physical aspects of combat.

She taught them how to hold their blades, how to swing them, and what they needed to do to improve. The experience she’d gained from training her three apprentices had really shown. She managed to give effective, meaningful explanations despite still speaking in her usual taciturn manner.

The combination of the magic and swordplay lectures caused Fran’s popularity to skyrocket and reach even greater heights. It seemed that all of Schwartzekatzke adored her. I was pretty sure the chief would be totally willing to hand his position over to her should she ask for it.

Speaking of which, the chief ended up approaching Fran not too long after she finished answering most of her newfound students’ questions.

“To be honest, I would love for you to take over as chief so that you could lead our villagers and teach them your ways.”

Holy shit, I called it.

“Leaving in few days.”

“I see...”

Unfortunately for the villagers, Fran refused. Disappointed expressions immediately appeared on all their faces.

“But will do best while still here.”

“That sounds both wonderful and awe-inspiring. Thank you!”

The chief perked up and began to sing Fran praise the moment she voiced that she'd be willing to help.

God damn, I really have to give it to Fran. She's gotta be one helluva bigshot to remain completely unaffected by the fact that they're all worshipping her and shit.

Once Fran finished speaking to the chief, she began another training session centered around magic. But unlike the other two, the third training session failed to reach completion.

"C-Chief!"

"What is it?"

The red dogkin guard that'd accompanied us on the goblin hunt dashed into the town square. He was out of breath and panting as heavily as he could. A single glance was enough to tell that there was once again some sort of emergency.

"We've found another group of goblins!"

"What!? How many of them are there?"

"There's only ten, but it isn't normal for them to come around so often."

"Hmmm... You're right. That really is weird."

Wait what? Aren't goblins supposed to be everywhere anyway? Like, I swear they're fertile as all hell, so seeing them really shouldn't come as much of a surprise, should it?

Fran shared my opinion, so she asked the chief, only to learn that there'd never actually been many evil beings in Schwartzekatze's vicinity to begin with.

Most of the youngers that'd accompanied us yesterday had never even seen a goblin before. They were born and raised in Schwartzekatze, where it was, for the part, peaceful and devoid of creatures hostile to the black cat

tribe. Getting attacked two days in a row was so out of the ordinary that it meant that there was probably something wrong.

“There might be a nest nearby.”

“Hmmm... I hope that there isn't going to be a stampede...Schwartzekatzke will be in deep trouble if the goblins birth a king.”

“Yeah... We'll need to find the nest as soon as possible.” The red dogkin grimaced.

If twenty goblins were already more than enough to plunge the village into despair, then an entire nest was sure to lead to its complete collapse. Or at least it would've under normal circumstances. Fran was currently in town, and it was highly unlikely for any harm to come to the village so long as she was around. Schwartzekatzke's villagers were really lucky. They would've been screwed had the nest shown up any earlier or later.

“Chief. Will check surrounding area.”

“W-Will you really do that for us?”

“Nn. But can't bring everyone along.”

“I understand. All we'd be good for is dead weight.”

The chief seemed to think that Fran would have a hard time protecting all the other black catkin mid-combat, but that wasn't actually true. We'd long become strong enough to kill a hundred goblins in less than ten minutes, even while keeping everyone that came with us safe.

The reason we didn't want to take all the other black catkin along was because we needed to get around as quickly as possible if we wanted to find the goblin nest. Specifically, we were going to teleport. And since we needed to crush the goblin nest ASAP, we'd judged that it would be much more effective for us to go alone.

“New goblins, where?”

“T-They’re hovering around the same place we found them last time.”

“Got it. Don’t let anyone leave village. Call people out looking back.”

“Yes ma’am, I’ll get that done immediately!”

Wow. Fran’s influence sure is coming in handy.

The guard’s obedience allowed us to focus on the matter at hand.

“Will leave now.”

“Good luck on your hunt.”

“Nn.”

I know he said good luck, but for some odd reason, I could’ve sworn it sounded kind of like “gob luck.” I mean, we’re hunting goblins, so I guess it kinda fits.

“Alright, here’s to hoping we find that goblin nest sooner than later.”

289. The Goblin Nest

Chapter 289. The Goblin Nest

The Goblin Nest

TL: SupremeTentacle

ED: Sebas Tian

Dashing over to where the goblins had been spotted was the first thing Fran did after agreeing to exterminate them. She made sure to keep herself concealed throughout the journey so that she wouldn't spook her foes before she found them.

“Master, how to find nest?”

“We'll probably have to either find their tracks or tail one of 'em.”

“Got it.”

“It might be best for us to split up. Urushi, you mind sticking around here and seeing if you can find anything?”

“Woof!”

Urushi's nose was nothing short of impressive. I was willing to bet that he'd be able to find the goblin nest with his sense of smell alone so long as it was nearby.

“As for us, Fran, we should probably start by hunting the goblins the guard spotted.”

“Nn.”

“Make sure you let a few live so they can lead us back to their base.”

“Got it.”

It didn't take long for us to find the goblins. They weren't too far from where we'd encountered the last group.

"Strange."

"Yeah..."

"Taking break?"

"Doubt it..."

It almost looked like the goblins were investigating the rocky area, which in and of itself, was already quite odd.

To make matters even more confusing was the fact that this group of goblins were just as well armed as the last. In fact, their equipment was pretty much identical.

It was immediately clear to me that they were from the same nest as the last group. The only difference my appraisal skill informed me of was that the second group was even weaker than the first. The combination of their apparent weakness and their smaller numbers made me feel as if they were relatively low on the chain of command; they were probably just your everyday grunts.

But that raises the question. Just how well off does a horde of goblins need to be to arm every single one of its lowly grunts with this kind of equipment? Like holy shit, they're goblins, not knights. God damn!

"It looks like they really might've birthed a king or something...No way they'd be this coordinated otherwise."

"Nn."

Okay, yeah, it looks like we're going to have to find that nest and obliterate it ASAP.

"Start with the leader. If we kill it, then the rest'll probably start running. We should probably let at least three of them live. There are ten of them, so

I guess that means you can kill up to seven.”

“Okay.”

“Alright, let’s do this!”

“Nn!”

I teleported us behind the goblin that appeared to be in charge of the group. Fran swiftly dispatched both it and the one to its side in a single motion.

“Gyaooo!”

“Gya gya!”

“Slow.”

The goblins realized that they were under attack and attempted to react, but they were unable to. Fran cut down another two while I roasted three with a fire spell.

All three of the remaining goblins began turning their heads and looking at their allies. Their eyes wandered back and forth between the cut up corpses and the flame-broiled corpses before they finally realized that only they had survived our assault.

“Gyahiii!”

“Gyoeehhhh!”

“Hyahohiii!”

The goblins let loose what I assumed to be screams as they turned tail and began to flee. Naturally, we chose not to attack even though they’d made themselves totally vulnerable. We stealthily began to chase after them, ensuring that we remained hidden even while on the move.

None of the goblins so much as turned around as they sprinted forwards with everything they had. They were so terrified that they pissed their pants

and shat themselves as they ran.

“Perfect,” said Fran.

Those mother fucking goblins! How dare they show Fran something that god damn filthy!? I swear to God that I’m going to “disinfect” the shit out of them the moment they lead us back to their nest.

The goblins couldn’t sense us, so it didn’t take too long for them to come to the conclusion that we were no longer pursuing them. They slowed themselves down to a fast walk. Though they thought they were safe, they were too terrified to stop, so they continued to advance as they fearfully gazed around.

They passed a water skin between each other. The goblins took turns drinking from it as they interacted with each other. Their gestures were strangely human-like.

Something about this whole scenario just feels... off. I remember chasing Goblins around back when I was still exploring the Demonic Wolf’s Plains. These goblins are stupid, but the ones I met back then were even dumber. They’d randomly start playing around and napping, as if they weren’t able to focus on anything for too long.

“Master. There.”

“Is that their base? It looks like it.”

The nest we discovered looked like it contained somewhere in the realm of a hundred goblins. I saw a couple goblin fighters and thieves mingled in with all the others.

“There.”

Fran directed my attention towards a specific part of the goblin base.

“Shit, is that a goblin king!? God damn, the guards were right!”

Well, at least they're not hiding away in some cave. Them being out in the open makes getting rid of them much more convenient.

"Huh, that's weird. They've all got the exact same equipment."

How the hell did that happen? Like, murdering a mercenary group or two isn't nearly enough to arm an entire group of goblins with the exact same shit.

"Doesn't matter if wipe out."

"Yeah, true."

Fran had a point. King aside, all the goblins were just negligibly weak grunts.

The three we tailed immediately ran up to the king and began making a sort of report. I couldn't understand their language, but I didn't need to. I knew that they were making some sort of report concerning Fran regardless.

"Well then. Looks like the goblin king's got balls."

He immediately began rallying his troops once the three goblins had finished with their report. Based on his gestures, it seemed likely that the king intended to take the whole horde to Fran's location.

"We should probably cage them up so none of them get away."

"Nn. Got it."

Fran and I both preceded by casting Thunder Wall, the spell that came with Lightning Magic's second level. The two of us focused our magical energy to create five large walls. Specifically, Fran created two, and I created three. They came together to form a sort of pentagon, enclosing all the goblins within. The large panels of lightning suddenly popped up around the goblins. They were buzzing with electricity, and clearly had the ability to electrocute anything they touched.

"Gogogyaaaaoooh!?"

“Agyaga!”

Wow, colour me impressed.

The goblin king remained rational as he ordered a subordinate to attack the walls. A goblin soldier immediately complied and smashed his axe into the electric fence, only to receive a sudden shock and collapse on the spot. Though the soldier hadn't died, he had temporarily lost his ability to move.

We then pelted the goblins from the sky with all sorts of lightning magic. Only after they were all dead did we finally undo the cage.

“Looks like we're done. I'mma go around absorbing all the cores.”

“Nn.”

“Most of their equipment got damaged by our magic, but I'm pretty sure some of it is at least still useable.”

“Nn. Will put in storage.”

“Yeah, might as well bring it back to the village.”

Killing the goblins had granted Fran a significant amount of experience. It managed to push her over the threshold.

“Grats! It looks like you've hit level 46.”

“Nn!”

Fran's level cap had changed due to her evolution, but only now did we finally actually smash through her old cap. Breaking past level 45 really did imprint a powerful sense of progression. I couldn't wait to see Fran continue growing to the point where she would be able to overpower even the Beast Lord and everyone else on his level.

290. The Black Catkin Princess

Chapter 290. The Black Catkin Princess

The Black Catkin Princess

Translator: SupremeTentacle

Editors: Sebas Tian, Joker

We decided to give the area another quick check after defeating the goblins. Our goal was to check if there were any scouts or stragglers and hunt them down if there were.

Urushi joined Fran and aided in her search, but the three of us failed to uncover any clues even after an hour of investigation. We couldn't even find the nest the goblins had crawled out of. The result left me confused. Normally, goblins dug out massive shelters for their communities. Both the goblins Fran and I had worked together to defeat and the stupid ass goblins I'd destroyed back when I first came to this world had possessed huge nests. It didn't quite make sense for the group we just encountered to live out in the open.

They couldn't have just migrated over from elsewhere, right? Nah, no way. There were way too many of them for that.

As we found ourselves unable to find anything, we ultimately ended up returning to the village as is.

We did happen to see a monster called a Chicken Deer along the way, so we eliminated it and brought it along, so we technically didn't return completely empty handed. We at least picked up a half decent souvenir. The deer itself posed little challenge to us. It was extremely cowardly and attempted to turn tail and run the moment it spotted us, but it couldn't come anywhere close to keeping up with Urushi's speed, so he chased it down and ended it with ease.

The black catkin erupted into cheers as Fran arrived in Schwartzekatz. The flashy spells we cast were apparently so brilliant and showy that the villagers had seen them from within the walls.

“W-What power! Wow! That spell of yours was like a natural disaster in and of itself!”

“That’s the Black Lightning Princess for you!”

“Yeah! She’s so cool!”

They only became even more excited upon seeing her pull a chicken deer out from her storage.

“Woah! Holy shit dude, look at that! She even took out that deer monster all by herself!”

“Ermagawd!”

“I want to marry her!”

“Brought souvenir. For everyone. Eat.”

“I-Is that really okay!?” asked the chief.

“Nn.”

“T-Thank you so much!” The old man began bowing as he thanked her profusely. His voice was tinged with all sorts of emotion. Her actions had clearly moved him. He wasn’t the only one either, as many villagers began bowing and paying her their respects. Despite being a mere F ranked threat, the chicken deer was apparently one of the region’s toughest monsters. Seeing her bring one back had led the villagers to gaze upon her with renewed respect.

Because they were so fast and eager to run, their horns were actually worth a good bit. The black catkin would often salvage the horns off chicken deer that had naturally reached the end of their lives and sell them to supplement the village’s income.

“And this.”

“You’ve acquired more armour?” The chief’s eyes practically bulged out of their sockets. “And so much of it too!”

“Nn.”

A decent portion of the armour we dumped out had melted due to the intense heat of the electrical charges we’d sent pulsing through them, but a good bit of it could still be salvaged and put to use.

“Only this one barely burnt.”

“You’re right. It does seem quite special.”

The set of armour Fran was pointing at was the one worn by the goblin king. Being made of steel, it was a good bit stronger than everything else we gathered. None of the black catkin present were able to make good use of it as they were right now. It would be much better for the chief to hold onto it until the clan’s members grew more powerful. A thick stream of tears burst from the chief’s eyes as Fran explained her intentions.

“O-Of course! I’ll make sure it falls into the hands of someone worthy!”

The second night, like the first, ended up as a banquet, albeit a much quieter one. The black catkin were all too focused on magecraft and martial prowess to do anything more than quietly speak amongst themselves.

Tonight’s main dish was the four meter tall deer Fran had hunted. It was large enough to provide every villager with a cut of meat.

“Here, have some of this.”

“Nn.”

“Try this out too.”

“Nom nom.”

“And don’t forget to have some tea!”

“Nn.”

Many of the female villagers were taking turns serving Fran. She was clearly the party’s guest of honour. They had not only cooked up a storm, but also brewed tea for her because she was too young for alcohol. The manner in which they were bringing Fran her food was reverent; it was almost as if they were handing her offerings.

“Is the dish to your taste, Princess?”

“What about this one? Would you like to try it, Princess?”

Halfway through the party, the black catkin stopped referring to Fran as the Black Lightning Princess. They’d instead just started referring to her as just “Princess.” As Fran didn’t particularly care either way, she didn’t stop them, so the habit soon spread throughout the village.

Oh well, not like anything bad’s going to come out of it. Fran’s more than cute enough to be a princess, so if anything, I’d say the title suits her.

I’d never actually met the beastkin country’s princess, but I was certain that Fran was cuter than her regardless.

“We can’t thank you enough for all the equipment you’ve graced us with, Princess,” said the village elder. Even he had given the nickname the green light.

“Just dumped junk.”

“To us, your ‘junk’ is an entire mountain of treasure. Unfortunately, we don’t have a blacksmith present, but we’ll take it over to another nearby village and have everything repaired as soon as possible so we can distribute your gifts to the villagers.”

“No blacksmith here?”

“Unfortunately not. He passed away several years ago after suddenly being struck by illness.”

While he did have an apprentice, the apprentice was far too green to be worthwhile, so he temporarily moved to another village so he could learn from the blacksmith there. And because of that, Schwartzekatz was currently blacksmithless.

I guess that means they’ll need to wait a good while before actually putting the stuff we gave them to use.

“Master.”

“Sup?”

“Us, do something?”

“Hmmm...”

We’d stumbled across a rare chance for us to make use of the blacksmithing skill that we’d spent so many points on. Fran had never done anything past just maintaining me, so I was almost certain the opportunity would serve as good practice for her to brush up on her skills.

“Sure. I don’t see why not.”

“And here we are. This is the smithy.”

“Nn.”

“Are you sure you don’t need any help?”

“Sure. Because secret techniques.”

“My apologies! I understand, I won’t pry any further!” said the chief, enthusiastically.

Fran nodded. She'd decided to get to work the moment the banquet came to a close, so she'd decided to spend the night in the home that belonged to the former blacksmith. Looking inside, we confirmed that it had all the tools we needed.

"We've kept the place clean, but that's it, so feel free to use it however you wish."

"Thanks."

"Princess, please! You've no need to thank us. In fact, we should be thanking you!"

We got to work as soon as the chief left. Since we had the blacksmithing skill, we were able to do everything we needed to do quite smoothly. Our first task was converting everything irreparable back to ingots. We'd already finished sorting through everything before actually arriving. We'd handed everything that could be made usable after a bit of maintenance over to the villagers. They'd already begun the mending process, so I was sure they'd have all sorts of usable gear in the near future.

All the stuff we brought with us either required a lot of work to fix, or was flat out beyond repair. And again, everything was already sorted. The plan was to melt down the stuff that was beyond repair and use it to fix the stuff that still had a bit of life left in it.

"Alright, I'll get to work. Feel free to sleep, Fran."

"No need."

"You sure? Well, works for me I guess. Let's get started together then."

"Nn."

And so, Fran and I worked the forge together until she started nodding off.

291. A Sword Makes Swords

Chapter 291. A Sword Makes Swords

A Sword Makes Swords

Editors: Sebas Tian, Joker

I had telekinetically swung my hammer so many times throughout the night that its methodical, rhythmic ring had become almost natural for me to hear. I was so immersed in the tempo that I could immediately discern when any sound, hammer-related or not, was off beat. And it was for that exact reason that I was able to pick up on the fact that there was a bit of an odd knocking interfering with my sense of flow.

“Hey Fran, could you get the door? It seems like we’ve got a visitor.”

“Nn.”

Luckily, Fran had already gotten out of bed. She was about as far from a morning person as could be, so she would have appeared half asleep if I had to wake her up to open the door. And if that happened, we would’ve been hard pressed to explain why the forge was running so smoothly even though she’d yet to fully awaken. We would’ve had no choice but to play it off as a case of sleepsmithing. You know, like sleepwalking, but with a forge.

“Who?”

“Good morning Princess! It’s me, the village chief!”

Fran opened the door to find the man in charge of the village with his body already bent into a deep bow. He was holding a basket with a few pieces of bread poking out the top; he had come to deliver Fran her meal.

“I’ve brought you some breakfast. I hope it’s to your taste.”

“Thanks.”

“The pleasure is mine. Oh and are you holding up alright? It seems like you’ve been smithing all night.”

Uh, whoops. Hopefully the forge didn’t keep anyone up all night.

“Too loud? Sorry.”

“Don’t you worry about it, milady! If anything, we’re grateful that you stayed up all night for us! We’re so blessed by your actions that we don’t even know how to express our thanks!”

We talked with the chief a bit and exchanged our schedules. We told him that we were going to be at the smithy for the rest of the day, whereas he informed us that most of the villagers would be practicing either their swordplay or magic. The older black catkin would begin cleaning up the equipment in the meantime.

“Don’t need to force to learn magic or swordplay.”

“Oh, no no no, we’re not forcing anyone, princess. Everyone’s just really eager to join in!”

It seemed that the whole village wished to cast magic. Everyone wanted to harness its mysterious power for themselves; the fact that they’d learned methods to acquire it had made them highly motivated.

At this rate, black catkin mages are bound to pop up in no time.

“I’ll be heading off now, but please let me know if you ever need anything.”

“Nn.”

We went back to focusing on our work as soon as the chief left. Specifically, I started to make blades out of the ingots I’d spent last night creating while Fran focused on fixing up shields and armour.

The best part about this world was that its skill system allowed me to gain knowledge seemingly out of nowhere.

Though I had never done any sort of smithing before, the maxed out blacksmithing skill I had taught me everything I need to know about forging a blade. The most common way they were made nowadays was through casting. Molten metal would be poured into a mould and hammered into shape afterwards if need be.

I vaguely recalled something about most western-made swords being cast, whereas most Japanese swords were made in a forge. If I were to track these methods to their roots, I assumed that they likely only deviated due to the differences in resources and the knowledge of how one processed them. Of course, that was only a guess, as I had no real knowledge of how blacksmithing worked back in my world.

This world didn't require those that wanted to use Japanese swords to go through a complicated folding process. Blacksmiths could easily use magic-infused metals and magically enchanted tools to create sturdy Japanese-style blades through a typical casting process.

Magically infused metals were strong from the start. Hitting them with hammers while dousing them in magical fire would only enhance them even further. Thus, there was no need for one to go out of their way to fold a blade over a thousand times. Of course, one could go through a typical forging process if they wished, but that kind of treatment was reserved for high quality luxury goods. The common weapon had no need for such an intensive process.

Thus, I began by casting all the blades I wanted to make.

I combined parallel processing and telekinesis to cast, hammer, and polish different blades at the same time. I functioned as a one man factory and somehow managed to mass produce a whole slew of regular swords. Though I paid very little attention to each blade, my maxed out blacksmithing skill ensured that they were still of a decent quality.

But needless to say, none were good enough to surpass their maker. Of all the swords present, I was still by far the most powerful.

“Alrighty, that’s a whole 50. Should be enough for now, I guess.”

If one were to count the undamaged weapons that we'd looted, there were about 80 swords in total. All 80 were of a fairly standard make, so they weren't too difficult for the black catkin to use even though they were all beginners.

I'd saved a few extra ingots so I could experiment and attempt to make a few weapons that packed a bit more of a punch. The first thing I wanted to try was to make a blade that was folded several times and forged from beginning to end.

I followed the steps my blacksmithing skill imprinted into my mind, heated up an ingot, and began hammering at it once it started glowing red. It took a while, but I eventually managed to get the weapon to take the shape I wanted.

The skill was telling me that the product was complete, so I checked it over. All in all, it was surprisingly okay. It wasn't terrible, but it wasn't great either. It was just mediocre, which couldn't really be helped given the material it was crafted from. The biggest difference was that, unlike the blades I'd casted, it wasn't an Iron Sword, but rather a Low Grade Steel Sword.

It was the best thing I could make given my current materials and skills. Or at least it would be if I continued with my current, straightforward approach.

I decided to change things up a bit as I forged the next blade. The materials themselves were lackluster and couldn't actually hold that much magical energy, but the quality of the blade was still likely to improve if I packed it with as much as it could take. I made use of the bones of some of the monsters I'd planned to use for stock and burned them to ashes before mixing them into the metal. Though the monsters they came from were weak, they were still monsters nonetheless. Since the bones contained a bit of mana, I hypothesized that adding them would serve to increase the amount of mana the weapon could store.

Keyword: hypothesized. I had no clue if it would actually work out the way I was expecting.

“Huh, it actually turned out better than I thought.”

It took even longer to make than the blade that I’d forged, but the end result was indeed a bit better than the last. The change in materials had actually ended up leading to my hammer’s destruction, much to my surprise.

The third type of blade was a Low Grade Magic Steel Sword. Though I hadn’t managed to get rid of the “Low Grade” tag, I’d at least managed to create magic steel. Though it was minuscule, I could indeed feel a bit of magical energy emanating off the blade. Its magical conductivity was also a good bit higher than all the others, as it sat at an F+ as opposed to an F or F-. In other words, the third type of blade had the potential to hit creatures with ethereal bodies. That said, it would likely take hundreds upon hundreds of swings to actually slay one given that the weapon had only the slightest bit of magical energy.

The stats of each type of weapon were as follows.

Name: Iron Sword

ATK: 88

MP: 0

Durability: 300

Magical Conductivity: F-

Skills: None

Name: Low Grade Steel Sword

ATK: 114

MP: 1

Durability: 380

Magical Conductivity: F

Skills: None

Name: Low Grade Magic Steel Sword

ATK: 124

MP: 10

Durability: 390

Magical Conductivity: F+

Skills: None

Given that, I decided to make all the remaining swords into Low Grade Magic Steel Swords.

And for comparison's sake, Old Man Gallus' swords had the tendency to look much more powerful. I recalled one of their stat pages as I worked.

Name: High Grade Steel Longsword

ATK: 398

MP: 5

Durability: 600

Magical Conductivity: F

Skills: None

The thought reaffirmed the fact that Gallus was one hell of a smith.

Fran approached as I lost myself in thought. Her expression seemed somewhat distorted, and one of her hands was rested on her stomach.

“Master.”

“What’s up?”

“Hungry.”

“Woof...”

“Oh crap, is it lunch time already?”

I was so lost in thought that I’d totally forgotten that food was even a thing; it was long past noon.

“My bad. I’ll make something real quick.”

“Thanks.”

The reason the village chief hadn’t supplied lunch was because Schwartzekatze’s villagers didn’t eat it. To them, only having two meals a day was the norm despite the fact that most other beastkin had three. One could tell from that alone that the villagers were living in poverty.

We should probably come back again some time after meeting Gallus. Preferably with lots of seeds and saplings in tow.

“In fact, I’ll even serve curry to make it up to you guys.”

“Really?”

“Woof?”

“Yup, and you can have as much of it as you want.”

“In heaven.”

“That’s an exaggeration if I’ve ever seen one.”

“Curry heaven, I shall soon be upon thee. For I will now depart for the promised land,” said Fran. She was so happy that she recited something that sounded like a poem.

Well, I’m glad she’s in a better mood, at least.

The only problem was that our curry supply was actually starting to run a bit low since we’d more or less served it en masse every time something happened. I was highly concerned that Fran’s mood would plummet if we ran out.

“Tasty.”

“Woof!”

And it went without saying that I would feel bad for Fran if she wasn’t allowed to eat her favourite food. Fortunately, the place we were in now had a private kitchen in which I could work. Thus, I decided to spend the rest of my spare time making as much of it as I possibly could.

Editor’s Thoughts: Hey guys. Sorry I haven’t introduced myself. I’m Joker. I’ll be editing for the boss until he decides that either he doesn’t like my work, or I start asking about my payment. ☺ Let me know what you guys think about this little blurb, by the way. If you would like to hear about the trials and tribulations of being a translator’s editor... I probably wouldn’t be the right guy to ask. I mostly proofread it. Heh. But if you don’t like and want to just have the story, I’ll keep them out and put them in the comments. Maybe. If I get around to making an account for that. ./ Anyway, about this current arc, I actually find myself in the minority opinion and enjoying it greatly. I love the world building arcs, as well as my favorite

characters getting their moment in the spotlight. Something about the hero's hard work being acknowledged has always struck a chord with me. Anyways, hope you guys enjoyed the chapter! I'll see you next time!

Joker

292. An Evening Centered Around Fran

Chapter 292. An Evening Centered Around Fran

An Evening Centered Around Fran

Editors: Sebas Tian, Joker

Three nightly parties in a row seemed a bit too overwhelming, so we spoke to the village chief and asked him to refrain from organizing yet another banquet. Instead, Fran spent the night telling the villagers about her journey.

It all started because a few of the children, who'd finally grown accustomed to Fran, approached her and asked about her adventures. She promptly began spinning her tale, albeit in her usual way. She wasn't all that great at exaggerating things or spicing them up, so her stories ended up being much more realistic than they were heroic. But the villagers, both young and old, gathered around her nonetheless. All it took was a few moments for the whole village to rally to her side. She told them of the lich, described her exploits in Ulmutt's tournament, and then finally summed it all up by telling them what had happened on the ship.

"Then saved by Leviathan."

"Woahhh!"

"That's awesome!"

The entire village took a collective breath as she wrapped everything up. Every last member of its populace was so tense that they'd started sweating. But none had noticed until she was done. *That* was just how much attention they paid her.

"What happened next!?"

"I can't wait to hear more!"

“Mmph.” Fran frowned. She had basically told the villagers all she was willing to, so she was at a loss as to what to say. After a moment of deliberating, she decided to talk a bit about mythology.

Specifically, she decided to talk about the reason the black catkin were unable to evolve, as she decided that there likely wasn’t going to be any harm in telling her tribesmen about their curse.

“Hard to imagine now. But in past, black catkin high status.”

The black catkin seemed to sense that Fran was about to dive into a whole different type of topic, but they perked up their ears and listened with interest nonetheless. The more she said, however, the more their expressions changed. They slowly realized the gravity of the tale they were told, so they began to regard her lecture from a more serious standpoint.

Though they weren’t quite at the level of being solemn, they stayed quiet. They made sure not to speak so they wouldn’t miss a word. They learned that the Black Cat Tribe had, at one point, ruled over all the other beastkin as the Beast Lord, that their ruler had lost control after discovering a method to absorb the evil god’s strength, and that divine punishment was the reason they’d lost the ability to evolve. Through Fran’s words, they came to understand that their fetters existed for the sake of atonement. They needed to kill evil beings to make up for the sins committed by their ancestors.

“Nn. That’s all.”

This time, the black catkin stayed silent even after Fran finished speaking. They were having a hard time digesting all the information they’d just been fed.

The first to move was the chief.

“Thank you. Thank you so much for telling us about our past.” He kneeled as he spoke to her.

“Nn.”

“We must learn from this!” The chief turned towards the villagers as he raised his voice. “Listen, my kin! Our ancestors have committed a grave, deadly sin, one that we can’t waste our time lamenting! We have to move forward while making up for all they’ve done to prove to the gods that lenience was the right decision! It may be tough, but the path of recompense is not without benefit, it is also the path that will lead our tribe to evolution. We can finally change! We no longer need to be weak kittens abandoned in the dark! We can stop aimlessly running around, living in solitude, and enduring unjust violence! We must follow our own paths! We must carve them with strength, dignity, and honour! We black catkin must become more powerful! We have to get strong enough to make up for our sins! I hereby declare that the village will support the effort no matter the cost! While I won’t force you, I will encourage you to at least try! Let us all work towards redemption, together!”

Damn dude, I can see why the village chief got his position. Really gotta give to him, he’s good at getting people totally fired up.

The whole village remained silent, but the residents’ intentions were clear. Their eyes burned with the very same fiery passion the chief had just ignited in their hearts.

And it was for that reason that the silence only lasted an instant.

The whole village shook as a thunderous roar of sound blasted through it. Every single black catkin had stood up and started to clap.

“I will evolve! I swear it on my name!”

“It’s a shame. I’m far too old to try evolving myself, but that don’t mean jack! I’ll make sure I give you youngsters all the support I can!”

“And I’ll use my skills to inscribe the princess’ words in stone! I’ll even make a monument and set it up in this very plaza!”

Every last villager acknowledged and accepted at least some part of the chief’s speech. Though not all of them decided that they themselves would seek evolution, they at least agreed to contribute to the effort, one way or

another. The fact that they were both atoning and working towards their own personal goals at the same time served to drive the ball home.

Wow. I really didn't think that they would believe us so easily. They're not mad at the gods either. That's a full set of expectations down the drain right there. I mean like, holy crap, talk about devout. They totally seem to think that it's their fault, and that there's nothing to blame the gods for. Though, I guess it does make sense seeing as how the gods here actually exist.

The adults began celebrating the newfound policy by breaking out the alcohol. I didn't want Fran to drink, so I had her join the rest of the children for the time being.

"I'm glad they believed us."

"Nn."

"It looks like the black cat tribe's full of kind-hearted, trusting people." I wanted to follow up the statement by telling Fran that there was nothing wrong in making the choice to stay, to remain in Schwartzekatze, even if it was just for a little while longer—

"Leaving tomorrow."

— But she cut me off before I could.

"Already?"

"Nn. Everything wanted to say already said."

"You sure you want to leave already? This is pretty sudden."

"Can't stay. Too comfortable here. Need to leave."

"I mean, isn't that all the more reason to—"

"Decision final. Tomorrow."

Looks like there's no convincing her.

“Alright. I guess we can always just come again some other time.”

“Nn!”

It’s not like Schwartzekatze is going to just up and disappear, after all.

Night fell, the party ended, and peace returned to the village. Like Schwartzekatze’s residents, Fran and Urushi were already sound asleep—or at least they were. The two suddenly got up in tandem.

Are we under attack!? Can’t be... I don’t sense anything, and Fran’s movements had a bit of lethargy to them, so I doubt it’s that...

“What’s wrong?”

“Nn...?”

“Woof...?”

Neither of the two understood the reason they’d suddenly awoken. They couldn’t identify what they’d reacted to. They looked around and tried to find the source of the disturbance.

“Well?”

“Don’t know.”

“Ruff.”

But their conclusion was exactly the same as mine: nothing was out of the ordinary.

The heck? Was there an earthquake somewhere or something? Er, wait, right, earthquakes aren’t as common here as they were back in Japan so everyone would probably be kicking up a much bigger fuss if there was one.

We decided to take a look around the village just in case a monster had snuck in through the use of a stealth skill.

But again, we weren't able to find anything too far out of the ordinary. All we saw were plastered drunks passed out on the side of the road. We had no idea as to where each one lived, so we couldn't carry them all the way home, but we at least made sure to move them onto grass as opposed to just leaving them face first in dirt.

Though our search proved to be in vain, I highly doubted that there could be as big a coincidence as Fran and Urushi suddenly waking up at the same time for no real reason.

"I know we haven't found anything yet, and that it's already late, but let's keep looking."

"Nn."

Hey, guys! Joker here. Well, another day, another chapter of Master and Fran. This time, they appear to be starting a cult of cat people. Can't wait to see where this leads. Haha. Also, very mysterious circumstances surrounding the ending. Wonder what's going on. Hmmm. Also, as of the writing of this comment, I'm now almost completely done with my second full playthrough of Persona 5. And honestly, it was just as much fun the second time around. 140 hours so far on the save file, and I have created essentially what is the Persona equivalent of God Himself. Absorbs all elements except fire AND blocks physical. Oh, and he's strong against fire, so all that can hurt me are Gun skills. OP Persona, plz nerf, am I right? All right. Enough rambling for now. See y'all in the next chapter!

293. An Incident To the North

Chapter 293. An Incident To the North

An Incident To the North

Editor: Joker

Though we didn't discover anything no matter how hard we looked, neither Fran nor Urushi could quite calm down. Both the catkin and the wolf had better senses than me. I trusted their instincts and deduced that *something* had gone awry.

"Whaddya say we try taking to the sky instead? Might be easier to figure out what's wrong that way."

"Nn."

"Woof."

With Fran on his back, Urushi kicked off the ground and rapidly ascended. The three of us then used the artificial vantage point to examine our surroundings. Or at least we tried. The skies were overcast; clouds blocked out both the moons and the stars. It was far too dark for us to make out any significant detail.

"Hmm..."

"Don't see anything." Unlike me, Fran could see in the dark, so she was at least able to scour our surroundings.

"What about you, Urushi?"

"Whimper..."

For some odd reason, the wolf seemed adamant about tracking down the cause of his unease. Urushi continued to look around even though his eyes had failed to detect anything. He stayed on guard and even tried sniffing

around, but he still couldn't find anything, as he had no idea what he was supposed to be sniffing for.

And that was when it happened. A single sliver of moonlight momentarily shot through the clouds and allowed me to catch sight of something.

“Woah...”

“Master?”

“I think I just saw something move over there...”

“Over where?”

“Er, my bad. It was to the north.”

It happened several kilometers away from us. At a glance, it looked to be somewhere near the most barren part of the forest. There wasn't anything obstructing my line of sight. I would've been able to see everything if it was still day, or if there weren't as many clouds. But alas, we had no choice but to work under the existing sub-optimal conditions.

The distance made it so not even Fran could see anything, despite having night vision.

“Could you get us a bit closer, Urushi?”

“Woof!”

Urushi sped through the sky. He moved us straight north with all the precision of a compass. The moon peeked through the clouds for another second about halfway through Urushi's journey.

“Master, saw?”

“Yup, clear as day.”

“Grrrrr...”

Though I only caught a glimpse of it, I was confident in what I just witnessed. A large group of monsters was slowly marching straight south. The group's scale was entirely blown out of proportion. It was far more than just a single nest or pack's worth. There were so many that the wasteland itself had been obscured from view. There were only monster, monsters, and more monsters as far as the eye could see. It was a veritable army.

I didn't know its final destination, but at this rate, it was going to collide with Schwartzekatze.

"Shit! We need to get closer and make sure of what we saw!"

"Woof!"

"What and why?"

"I don't know, but either way, we've got one hell of a situation on our hands!"

It took Urushi another five minutes to get right above the horde. We were now at close enough a distance for us to see them with the naked eye, even without the moon's aid. I didn't need to count to know that the army was at least ten thousand heads strong.

Their march was rigid and steady. It was clear that they were being controlled. I didn't know the extent to which the monsters were being manipulated, but at the very least, whoever was responsible for them had enough of a grasp on them to keep them silent as they moved.

"What now?"

"It'd be pretty hard for us to take all these out with just us."

"But villagers can't fight."

"Yeah, I know. Honestly, something like this calls for an army, if anything."

"Nn."

“First things first, we need to get back to the village and have all the villagers evacuate.”

“Got it. First, preemptive strike?”

“Let’s not. There’s too many of them. We can’t check to see how strong each one is, and there might be something too strong for us to handle mixed in with all the trash mobs.”

We would end up having to run if there really was anything that strong. The only place to retreat to is the village, and leading a strong monster there would be a disaster and a half in and of itself.

“I know you want to fight, but we should probably wait until we’ve at least emptied out Schwartzekatze first.”

“Got it.”

“Alright Urushi, head back to the village! Full speed ahead!”

“Woof!”

“Hurry!” added Fran.

“Woof woof!”

Our first stop was the chief’s house. Urushi barked and howled to grab his attention as we approached.

“Chief! Open! Now!” Fran jumped off Urushi’s back and began knocking on the door the moment he landed.

“W-What is the matter, Princess?” The wolf had succeeded in waking him, so he answered the door immediately, rubbing his tired eyes as he did.

“Emergency!”

“W-What kind of emergency...?”

“Horde of monsters. Headed for village.”

“W-What!? Enough for even you to be this panicked, milady!?”

“Nn. In wasteland right now. Huge group. Need army.”

“W-What!? They’re just to the north!? I’ll go wake up the guards right away!”

“Evacuation. Need to start soon.”

“Understood, milady!”

“What’s all the noise, chief?” A few of the black catkin, awoken by Urushi’s voice, joined us right before the chief set off, so he immediately roped them in and got them to help. The process went far more painlessly than it would have anywhere else. All the black catkin trusted Fran, so they immediately believed the warning the moment they heard that she was its source.

“Listen well! The Princess has found a huge army of monsters marching right for us! There are so many of them that they fill the entire wasteland!”

“What?”

“S-Seriously...? What the heck!?” A couple catkin began to panic, but the chief stopped them before they totally lost their minds.

“Stay calm, don’t lose your cool! They’re close, but they’re not on our gates just yet. We’ve got enough time to organise an evacuation so long as everyone does their part! Wake everyone up and have them get ready to leave! Split up so you can wake everyone up as quickly as possible.”

“G-Got it!”

“Sure thing, chief!”

“Thank you. I’ll go wake the guards in the meantime.”

The black catkin moved quickly. According to them, they were quite used to this. Running away was the one thing they excelled at.

Many lived as wanderers before settling down in Schwartzekatze. They polished their ability to escape by running from the monsters and bandits they encountered on their travels. In fact, evacuation drills were apparently a part of everyday life in Schwartzekatze. They'd hold training roughly once a year.

"Where are we supposed to evacuate to?" One black catkin voiced.

This time, however, was a bit different. Normally, evacuation was simple because all the black catkin had to do was find another nearby village. But this time, they didn't really know where to go. Schwartzekatze was among the sturdiest of the villages in its vicinity. No nearby settlement had walls large enough to withstand over ten thousand monsters.

"We'll probably need to head to Greengoat," answered the chief.

The villagers were good at escaping, but that didn't mean they could outpace monsters. They needed to get all their stuff ready to go right away so they could get as early a head start as possible. But still, many doubted they would be able to make it all the way.

The chief's reply to their concerns was calm and rational. "It doesn't matter, we've got to make sure the information propagates. We'll have to scatter and send people all over. We'll both warn the other nearby villages and have our people head to Greengoat to tell the army what's happened."

"Nn," agreed Fran.

Though the battle had yet to start, it had already devolved into a race against the clock.

Editor's Note: Hey guys! Joker here. Another chapter of Sword-bro down. Seems like there's some machinations happening behind the scenes. Could

be interesting to see how Master, Fran, and Urushi handle this. Wonder who, or what, could be behind it. Have to say, I'm going to miss the relaxing mini-arc we had in the village, but I guess plot has to happen sooner or later. No rest for the wicked, or rather, the Web/Light novel protagon. Haha. Well, I'll leave it here for now. See y'all in the next chapter!

294. Revisiting Greengoat

Chapter 294. Revisiting Greengoat

Revisiting Greengoat

Editors: Sebas Tian, Joker

“A-Are you sure!?”

“Did you just say an entire army!?” A pair of panicked guards asked the equally flustered chief to confirm his claim the moment they heard it.

“You heard what I said! The Princess saw it herself!”

“Look, I know what you’re trying to say, but we can’t just...” As they were soldiers and not black catkin, the men in charge of the city’s defense didn’t trust Fran’s testimony nearly as readily as everyone else, but the chief talked them down and convinced them that there was a need for concern.

“Enough of that! Just hurry! You need to get to both Greengoat and all the surrounding villages and let them know the news!”

“Sir, please understand. We just have to make sure of it first. We can’t just be going around reporting whatever we hear.”

Yeah, this isn’t working. Looks like we’ll have to step in a bit.

“Is truth. Don’t believe?”

“That’s not really what I’m trying to say here...”

“Will handle responsibility. Hurry. Move.”

Fran activated her Intimidation skill as she spoke to the guards. For the record, she wasn’t threatening them. She was simply making them understand their place in the metaphorical food chain. As beastkin, the guards respected those that were stronger than them, so she was only doing

the most natural thing and putting on a show of her strength to emphasize that they should listen to her.

“I-I understand.” And surely enough, they were immediately rendered obedient.

“We’ll get on it right away. In fact, I’ll head out right this instant.”

“Will go to Greengoat myself,” said Fran.

“W-will you really?” asked a guard.

“Nn. Faster that way. Will leave you responsible for evacuation. Nearby villages.”

“Yes Ma’am! We’ll make sure it gets done.” The chief was so full of energy that he promptly responded in the guards’ places.

“Then going now. Urushi.”

“Woof!”

We already knew exactly where Greengoat was relative to our current location, so we soared through the sky and made a beeline straight for it. We had to get Urushi to push himself a bit beyond what would’ve otherwise been his limits to get there in a timely manner, but it was well worth it. We managed to cut the journey, which had taken us over four hours the first time around, to less than a quarter of that; sixtyish minutes was all it took for the Urushi Express to transport us to Greengoat.

A part of me had been tempted to just have our wolf companion ferry us right to the governor’s doorstep, but I ultimately decided against it. Dropping in uninvited is a terrible idea. We’d have a lot of explaining to do and not enough time to carry any of it through.

With no other choice, we suppressed our fiery emotions and stopped by Greengoat’s gate.

We didn't bother making Urushi shrink. He approached the gate with us while in his larger form. Naturally, having a massive wolf close in on one of the city's entrances in the middle of the night sent the guards into panic mode, but it really couldn't be helped. It was an emergency. We needed every last second we could get.

"I'm Black Lightning Princess. Need to talk to governor. Emergency. Let through now."

"S-Sure, I'll get right on it!"

He's doing a pretty good job of keeping his cool, but I'm totally convinced that he's in full blown panic mode on the inside right now. This whole scenario's hella blown out of proportion. Like, this dude was casually going about doing his night patrol, only to suddenly have a giant ass wolf drop in front of him. If I was him, I would've been expecting to die. And that's not even it. Next thing he knows, he sees a pretty girl riding it, only to find out that she's the Black Lightning Princess. And that she has business with someone way high up the chain of command. If this scenario isn't nerve racking, then I don't know what is. Must suck real hard to be him right now.

His surprise was clear. The man was so shocked, in fact, that he readily agreed to our request without so much as asking a question. He simply nodded as he opened the gate in a hurry.

"Thanks."

As today was a bit of a special case, Fran didn't dismount Urushi. She rode him through town and had him fly above the buildings it was comprised of. The wolf flew straight as an arrow and made it to the lord's house, the manor that lay at the town's centre, in a mere matter of moments.

"W-what!? A wolf!?" shouted one of the guards. His partner made a similar remark.

"This. Governor's house?"

“Huh? Wait, might you be the the Black Lightning Princess herself?” The bolder man stepped forward and began to speak with Fran.

“Nn. So? This, governor’s house?”

“Y-Yes ma’am! That it is!”

“Need to meet him. Urgent.”

“P-Please wait just a second. I’ll have someone let him know immediately!”

“In a hurry. Will enter myself if takes more than ten minutes.” Knowing that Fran was dead serious, the man went pale. He immediately had the other guard get a move on. Unlike his partner, he remained to keep an eye on Fran, but I wasn’t sure if he really was up to the job. It looked like he’d been scared stiff. “C-Could you please tell me a bit more about this urgent matter of yours?”

He was intimidated to the point of stuttering, but he managed to do his job nonetheless.

“Will tell governor.”

“A-Alright, I understand.” The guard knew not to stick his nose into the confidential, so he promptly dropped the topic.

“This city, has knights?”

“We do. There’s an order serving directly under the governor’s command.”

Good to hear. I’d imagine that this country’s knights would be pretty damn strong.

The guard’s partner returned right as we were about to ask him about the number of knights present. Woah, that was quick. It only took him like five minutes.

“O-Our lord says that he will meet with you immediately! Follow me!”

“Nn.”

I was expecting the guard to lead us to an audience chamber, but he instead brought us to a smaller building placed not too far from the manor’s entrance, one apparently built to receive guests of a more noble background.

The lord, Marmanno, was already awaiting us within. His bulky, muscle laden frame lay exposed under his thin, translucent nightshirt. The sight of him in what was basically a negligee contrasted his muscular image to such an extent that I likely would’ve laughed uncontrollably had we not been caught up in an emergency.

“Welcome, Black Lightning Princess. I’ve not seen you around these parts for a whole four odd days.”

“Nn. Thanks for agreeing to meeting.”

“It’s no big deal. Any request of yours that I am able to complete is a request I’m willing to at least consider. And meeting with you, even at this hour, is nothing particularly troubling. Personally, I would’ve preferred if I was to be properly dressed, but I decided not to waste your time after hearing that you only came at the behest of an urgent matter.”

So he only decided to meet with Fran right away because of who she was? Damn, that reputation of hers sure has been coming in handy lately.

“Not problem. Looks good on you.”

“Your words are too kind. But anyway, enough pleasantries. I’m sure you wish to get right down to business. What’s this urgent matter that the guards have been telling me about? Did you perhaps find out more about the assassins?”

“Not that.”

“Hmm... I’m out of ideas then. I can’t say I’m capable of imagining anything else too realistic.”

“North. Whole army of monsters approaching.”

“Did you just say an entire army?”

“Nn. In wasteland north of Schwartzekatz. Headed south.”

“How many of them are there?”

“Nn...” Fran tilted her head to the side as she tried to figure out how to convey her thoughts. “Enough to fill entire wasteland.”

“T-The entire wasteland...!?” Marmanno’s eyes went wide. “Surely this is not something you’re speaking in jest, is it?”

“Not jest. Truth. Swear on my life.”

“T-That’s going a bit too far, Fran!”

Holy shit, talk about going overboard.

“Is truth, so not problem.”

“You’ve got a point, but that’s not what I’m trying to get at here. Don’t ever say that you’re going to swear anything on your life ever again, alright?”

“Nn? ...Okay?” She didn’t quite seem to understand what I was saying, but she trusted me, so she agreed nonetheless.

“Is it a stampede...?” The governor began muttering his thoughts on the matter as I convinced Fran to place more value on her life. “No, that can’t be right. The area has no dungeons.”

Marmanno’s doubts were justified. I understood exactly where he was coming from. He was Greengoa’s lord, so there was no way he wouldn’t have known if there were any dungeons nearby, even if they’d only existed in the past. It wouldn’t make sense for the invasion to be the cause of a newly spawned dungeon either. Fresh dungeons didn’t have the means to produce tens of thousands of troops.

“Any other things in north?”

“I cannot think of too much worth mention. There is the Kingdom of Eldia to the northeast and Bashar to the northwest. However, the uncharted mountain range to the north functions as a natural barrier. I doubt either country’s troops could cross it.”

According to Marmanno, the only creatures that lived in the mountains were monsters that had adapted to it. Its climate was far too harsh for humans and beastkin to withstand. It was for that reason that the country deployed very few troops to the north.

Wait, but then... Just where the hell did all those monsters come from? Hmmm. Oh, wait, right. That’s not important right now. We need to figure out how we’re actually going to deal with all the monsters first.

“Need army.”

“...”

Marmanno frowned and scrunched up his brows. The look on his face was one of dismay.

“I am very sorry, but the army cannot be immediately deployed.”

The words that left his mouth were the exact opposite of the ones that we’d hoped for.

Editor’s Note: Hey guys! Joker here. Another chapter of Sword-Dad down, and we’ve got an issue. They need the army, but it can’t be ‘immediately’ deployed. Supply issue maybe? If so, hopefully Sword-Dad can help with it, even if it means revealing himself to the lord. After all, you’ve got thousands of lives on the line, you can’t really be worrying about keeping a secret like that. Or maybe the army is somewhere else, in which case... uh oh. Fran might have to work for her curry this time around as well. Or maybe, and this is a guess way out of left field, so I doubt it’s actually the

case, maybe the entire army is under the control of someone who wants to help the black catkin evolve, so all of them will just stand there and let the catkin kill them. Now wouldn't that be a twist? Sadly, I don't think M. Night Shyamalan is the author of this story, so that probably won't happen. Still, food for thought. But, in the end, there's only one way to find out, and that's to wait for the next chapter. So, you all know what to say, so say it with me: See y'all in the next chapter!

295. Of Soldiers and War

Chapter 295. Of Soldiers and War

Of Soldiers and War

Editors: Sebas Tian, Joker

“I am very sorry, but the army cannot be immediately deployed.” Marmanno spoke in a strained tone. He wanted to help and almost seemed mortified at the fact that he couldn’t.

“Why?”

“The Basharian army engaged our own near our country’s southwestern border only three days prior.”

Damn it. I guess that means they got their hands full.

“More than half of Greengoat’s soldiers have been dispatched to serve on the war front.”

“But still some here?”

“The forces we have remaining are just shy of what’s needed to match an army of ten thousand monsters.” Marmanno cast his gaze downward and frowned.

“I’m sorry. All I can do is pray that the villagers are able to escape and make it all the way here, to Greengoat. This city’s walls are the only ones sturdy enough to ward off a literal army of monsters, and I will be needing my troops to defend the city when the time comes. I can’t afford to have them march. That’d be no different from telling them to cast their lives aside.”

Oh, I get it. He’s thinking about letting the monsters siege the city since he doesn’t have enough troops to face them head on, and he can’t exactly keep turtling without the numbers to fight the damned things off.

“Any earth mages? Can make big wall to stall.”

“The only man in this country capable of making a wall big enough to stop an entire army has already taken his place on the Basharian front. I doubt we’d be able to get him to respond to our calls.”

“Okay.”

“But at the very least, I’ll get in touch with all the other governors immediately and check to see if they have any troops to spare. I’ll confer with the army as well, just in case.”

“How much time to arrive?”

“A few days at the very least...” Marmanno frowned. “We’ll have to wait till they’re here to march. We can’t have our troops losing their lives and exhausting themselves before we’ve amassed our forces.”

I understand that Marmanno’s not throwing his troops at the army right away because it’d be a huge waste of lives, but I can’t really bring myself to accept the notion of abandoning all the villages. I know it’s ultimately a choice that’ll save more lives, but he’s practically just leaving them to burn. Not that I’m trying to blame him or anything. As a governor, his choices made sense. Each village only has a few hundred people at best. Numerically speaking, it makes much more sense to focus on protecting the tens of thousands that live here in Greengoat. I had nothing to say. There was no fault in his logic.

Fran also understood the lord’s grievances, so she immediately stood up and got ready to leave.

“Got it.”

“T-Thanks for understanding.” He heaved a sigh of relief. “Where are you headed now?”

“Finished business here. Next, Adventurers’ Guild.”

“W-What do you think of spending a few more days in Greengoat?” Marmanno would benefit greatly from having Fran remain. The widespread knowledge of her might made her mere presence enough to relieve the townsfolk of their concerns and boost the soldiers’ morale, not to mention that she would be able to contribute drastically to the city’s fighting force. There was no doubt that she would strengthen its defenses.

“No. Will not abandon my tribe.” Fran turned to him and spoke with purpose, blunt and concise as always. It was ironic. The two were effectively working towards the same goal: protecting their people. And Fran’s tone reflected just that. There was no malice in her voice, only conviction.

Marmanno, however, failed to catch her drift. He seemed to think that her ironic statement was meant as a critique of his policy. The goatkin promptly got to his feet as his expression twisted in frustration.

Oh shit. He’s pissed. Or so I thought.

“I’m... sorry.” Contrary to my expectations, Marmanno wasn’t actually angry. He was frustrated, but not irritated by Fran’s actions.

“As a man and a warrior myself, I respect your decision. I would do the very same if I was in your shoes. Saving those in need is none other than my creed, the pillar atop which my pride rests. But as lord of this land, I cannot act.”

Rather, he was vexed by his own inability to take to the field and save all that he could.

“Nn.”

“Please, Black Lightning Princess, go in my stead. Save the villagers to whom I’m unable to extend my hand!”

The goatkin’s body quivered with emotion as he bent his hips forward and bowed as deeply as he could.

“Got it.”

“Thank you. I can’t possibly express just how much this means to me.”

Fran charged out of Marmanno’s mansion and made a beeline straight for the guild. Greengoat was as large as one would expect of a city in which several major trade routes converged, so it took her a good bit to make it all the way over.

“Hellooooo?” Fran called out as she entered the guild to get as quick a response as she could.

“Good evening, Black Lightning Princess. How many I help you?”

“Emergency. Need to talk to Guildmaster. Let me meet right now.”

“Yes ma’am.” Again, Fran’s reputation came in handy. She managed to get the receptionist to do exactly as she wanted with no questions asked whatsoever. She disappeared for about three minutes to get permission before returning and leading Fran to her destination: The guildmaster’s room.

The man we ended up being shown to was an old mage with a long, white beard. Like Fran, he had evolved. He was pretty damned strong.

“What brings you here today, Black Lightning Princess?”

“North. Army of monsters incoming.”

“Come again?” The old mage’s eyes went wide.

Fran immediately filled him in on the details. He first reacted to her query with shock, but soon got ahold of himself.

“You say that this army contains over ten thousand members?”

“Want adventurers to help.”

“Of course. I don’t see any reason for them not to, but...” The guildmaster as he pressed a fist against his chin.

“Problem?”

“We lack our usual numbers. About half of our adventurers have already gone south.”

“Adventurers joining war too?”

Wait a second. Aren’t adventurers supposed to be exempt from conscription? I could’ve sworn I saw something like that in the rules back when we first joined up.

After a moment of pondering, I soon recalled that adventurers were often people that didn’t wish to be tied down to any particular state. They travelled all over and often operated outside their country of origin. Thus, they lacked patriotism. Most didn’t want to be pulled into international conflicts. I’m pretty sure there’d be far fewer adventurers affiliated with the guild if they didn’t have the anti-conscription clause in place.

In fact, the guild had signed many an international treaty that guaranteed its members freedom from conscription. The guild was responsible for taking care of bandits and monsters, but that was it. Of course, like all treaties, the guild’s contract was not respected by all. The Reidosians had blatantly ignored it and conscripted adventurers in the past. All those that attempted to defy them were deported and banned from the country. And yet, despite their underhanded douchebaggery, the Reidosians were still completely and utterly defeated. The Reidosian Adventurers’ Guild was shut down, and the country itself was rendered almost completely devoid of the profession’s practitioners, even to this day.

The Reidosians were both the first and the last to ever attempt conscripting adventurers. Countries still do try forming contracts with specific adventurers with clauses that mention cases pertaining to war, but that’s pretty much it these days. The only people who accept those contracts are people who are passionate about the countries they live in, like Amanda and Jean.

Consent had become the key word—forcibly recruiting adventurers was just a flat out no go.

“All of those who went did so of their own accord.” The guildmaster smiled. “This country is made by Beastkin, for Beastkin. The knights and soldiers that serve in the military are not the only ones that wish to protect it.”

Ohhh. Right. I forgot. This country’s a bit special. The Beast Lord used to be an adventurer, didn’t he? I guess his policies must really support people that share his background in that case. Huh. I think I can see why so many of this country’s adventurers are willing to fight.

“So we’re short on hands. I doubt you’d be able to get enough people to fight off an entire army, even if we went around recruiting from all the nearby towns.”

“Want as much help as can get.”

“Got it. But do keep in mind that it’s possible we might not be able to gather more than just what’s needed to keep Greengoat defended.”

“Nn...” Fran frowned, but nodded regardless. “Got it.”

“Will you fight to your last?”

The guildmaster cast his gaze on Fran as she got to her feet. His eyes seemed to be telling her that he wanted to say it was better for her not to go, but a single glance at her face silenced him. He knew. He knew her people lay to the north. And from her eyes alone, he’d determined her stance.

“Bye.” Choosing not to answer, Fran left his question unanswered.

“Farewell. May the tides of battle surge in your favour.”

Editor’s note: Hey guys! Joker here. Man, Fran can’t seem to catch a break, can she? First the army is gone, now the adventurers? It’s all because of that

battle. I'm starting to think the opposing side is the one controlling the monsters, wanting to have them attack all the underdefended towns and villages. My isekai sense is tingling is tingling in that regard. But I guess I'll have to wait to find out, sinc I can't read any Japanese. Should probably get on learning that so i can help the boss more. But... eh. We'll see. All right, everyone. See y'all in the next chapter!

296.Resolve and Preparation

Chapter 296.Resolve and Preparation

Resolve and Preparation

Editors: Sebas Tian, Joker (Editor's Note Only)

Fran and I discussed our course of action as we got back on Urushi's back and sped away from Greengoat.

Neither the army nor the adventurers were able to act, at least not right away. But we couldn't just sit around and watch until we finally had allies at our backs. Schwartzekatze's inhabitants had the tendency to be fairly proficient in the art of escape, but there was no way they could outrun a literal army of monsters. The villagers were sure to be devoured by the still marching horde if left alone.

Something had to be done.

We might be able to get the younger ones out if we stick 'em on a carriage and get it moving asap. But all that really means is sentencing the rest of Schwartzekatze to death, and that's a choice Fran isn't willing to make. I knew the young black catkin well enough to understand that Schwartzekatze was effectively the embodiment of one of her many aspirations, a literal dream come true. There was absolutely no chance of her abandoning it. It doesn't really matter if the village itself burns down. Everything can be rebuilt and restored so long as the villagers are saved.

"Things are looking a bit tough this time... I'm not actually sure we'll be able to do too much." I muttered to myself telepathically as I brooded over my thoughts. I don't really want to let Fran down. But let's be real here...

"Master? Something wrong?" The catgirl perked her ears up as she caught wind of my voice.

"Listen closely, Fran. The only way Schwartzekatze's citizens are going to make it out in one piece is if we fight. All by ourselves. There aren't any

reinforcements standing by behind us. It's all you, me, and Urushi."

"Nn."

"You do understand how much danger we'll have to put ourselves in, right?"

"Nn. I know." Fran nodded. Her expression was a serious one and her resolve was clear as day.

"I know what you're going to say, but I'm just going to go ahead and tell you this anyway. I don't think you should fight. You need to get the hell out of here, fast. In fact, I'd even go as far as saying that we should leave the Beastkin's Country."

"Sorry, Master. Will fight. Won't change my mind." Fran's reply was instant. She didn't even stop to consider my advice. It was clear that she'd set her sights on a goal, and she wasn't going to stop until she achieved it, even if that meant fighting to her last breath.

"No matter what?"

"Nn!"

Yeah, I figured as much. She's not the type to abandon her tribesmen. I mean, it doesn't hurt to try, but god damn. She's so committed to this that I'm starting to worry that I'll lose her.

"Alright then. Sorry 'bout trying to stop you. Don't worry about it, just me being silly old me." I mean, who am I to question the extent of Fran's resolve...?

"Not problem. Master not silly. Amazing sword."

"Thanks." Right. Right... How could I've forgotten? I'm Fran's sword. My job is to cleave through her enemies and support her in all her goals, not make her decisions for her. "My bad there, had a brain fart. I'm all good now."

“Thanks, Master. I know. Thinking about my safety. But won’t focus on safety. Will save other black catkin. And will need your power.”

“Got it. You have my blade.”

“Nn!”

“But that said... I highly doubt that we’ll be able to take out all of those monsters by ourselves.”

“Nn. I know.”

We might’ve been able to handle it if it was just a massive ass horde of goblins, but life, being the bitch it was, threw us for a loop. I knew for a fact that there were much larger monsters mingled into the army. It’s probably better to plan for the worst and assume the army’s got a couple A and B ranks mixed into it.

“Alright, first things first, we mess with the vanguard and throw it into a state of disarray. It doesn’t matter how many troops they have. They can’t keep moving forward if they’re stuck in traffic.” I said, conclusively. Er wait, that’s not true. They could just step over or trample their peers and keep walking. We’ll have to find a way to actually slow down the army. Oh, I know! Maybe we could build a wall...

Figuring out a way to stop the army was important, but thinking about the steps we’d take after were even more so. The entire army’ll probably turn on us and attack us the moment it realizes that we’re getting in its way.

We’ll need to figure out what we need to do to keep the army occupied for as long as possible. Ideally, we’d want to confuse the shit out of the person in control and have them make the monsters retreat, but I don’t really see that happening. And once we lose the ability to hold the whole army back, we’ll have to switch to killing off everything that heads in the direction the black catkin are going to be headed. A part of me doubted that we’d be able to fight off all the foes that came our way while also protecting the tribe.

Fran and I were pretty good at going on the offensive, but neither she nor I knew much about playing the part of a bodyguard. Not even we knew how well we'd be able to fill the role.

"Doesn't matter. Need to do it, so will do it."

"Point taken." I agreed. Again, it was my role to give her desires form, and I wasn't about to let her down.

"Villagers spotted."

"Oh, nice. It looks like they've already started to evacuate." The black cat tribe was moving as one huge lump. It looked like the entire village had moved in tandem. We got down from the sky and landed right in front of them.

"Welcome back, Princess! I'm very glad to see you." The chief, one of the members leading the group, greeted her the moment Urushi's feet touched the ground.

"Nn. Everyone here?"

"Of course."

Seeing her had brought a look of relief to his face. It seemed that her absence had caused him undue stress, likely in part because he was anxious as to whether or not she was safe. Wow, they're fast. I didn't think they'd have gotten this far already. Hell, a part of me even thought they might still be back at the village.

It turned out that the entire village had actually finished packing up not too long after we informed them of the situation. They'd grabbed all the stuff they could carry and set out before the crack of dawn with a few days worth of food in tow. The group travelled with the children encased between groups of adults such that they could stay safe in the case of an attack. Wow uh. They really are used to this.

That said, their overall pace was still painfully slow. They had no choice given that there were children and old timers amongst their ranks. At the very least, it'd take them a few days to make it all the way to Greengoat.

“Can’t escort you. Will still be okay?”

“We’ll be just fine, Princess. We’ve armed ourselves with the weapons you so graciously granted us. We’re ready for anything,” said the chief.

“All this gear is great,” added another black catkin. “We’re not the greatest of fighters, but you know what they say, fine feathers make fine birds. With these in hand, even we can handle the monsters that pop up around these parts!”

“Everything here’ll be okay, so you do you, Princess!” said a third.

Every last grown man was armed. They were still quite weak, of course, but they were motivated and at least capable of holding their own against the area’s wildlife.

“Will go now.”

“Please, be safe,” said the chief.

The chief didn’t ask Fran where she was headed. Nor did any of the villagers. They already knew. They knew that they wouldn’t be able to escape unless Fran engaged the monsters in combat. They knew that she was going to fight with everything she had and put her life on the line. For them.

And that was why they remained silent as they watched her go. They didn’t even try to stop her from going. They held her resolve in far too high a regard to disgrace it.

We parted ways with the black cat tribe and headed north.

Schwartzekatz soon came into view. It was quiet and still as could be, like a candle with its flame extinguished. One night was all it took to turn the lively village into a veritable ghost town. It was impossible to tell that, just a few hours prior, it'd been a lively place filled with song and laughter. Now, the only sound I heard was that of the wind, whooshing by its empty houses.

“...Have to protect everyone.”

“That we do, Fran. That we do.”

“Woof!”

“Just flat out charging in is way too reckless, so let's take a bit to figure out a plan and get everything ready.”

“Got it.”

Though I wanted to stop before initiating, I didn't want to keep us for too long. It would be best for us to initiate an attack before the army managed to march its way past the plains. It'd be a whole lot easier to keep the whole army pinned down if we had a good sightline. The area beyond the plains was forested and the trees were sure to obstruct our vision.

Of course, there was no such thing as a free lunch. Fighting them on the plains also meant exposing ourselves. That said, we would still be susceptible to surprise attacks from stealthy monsters even if we did decide to make use of the forest, so there's really more benefit than harm in fighting on the plains.

“Yeah, it pretty much looks like the monsters mostly headed straight south.”

“Need to hurry.”

“Woof!”

297. Paper Mache

Chapter 297. Paper Mache

Paper Mache

Editor: Joker

We contemplated our plans before engaging the enemy army. Specifically, we looked into slowing them down and figuring out if we could make our lives easier through some sort of preemptive action.

“What now, Master?” Fran asked. “Make walls? Dig holes?”

“Hmmm...” I stroked my figurative beard as I contemplated her suggestions. They were legitimate options. In fact, the best case scenario would be one in which we built a wall capable of keeping the black catkin safe and the monsters out. The ideal wall would also come armed with a nice deep moat, and make it so that it would be impossible for any monster, weak or strong, to cross it.

Of course, creating such a structure was but a pipe dream. Neither Fran nor I had the mana or ability to do such a thing. The only mage in the country that could was on the Basharian front.

The largest hole we could possibly make was only three meters wide, three meters deep, and five meters long. Of course, it was possible for us to use the spell over and over, but crafting something in such a manner would take hours, hours we didn't have. The army was sure to arrive before we finished. That said, I wouldn't have suggested such a flawed method even if we had enough time to actually carry it out. Creating countless large holes would exhaust both Fran and I, and draining oneself of magic right before engaging in a large scale battle was naught but a fool's errand. And that's not even factoring in the fact that it could just end up splitting the army in two. Having the two halves each assault a different place would be bad. Really, really bad.

I recalled my old world as I thought about the many strategies we could potentially employ. I barely knew anything about the military tactics they used back there. The only military-like word that I knew off the top of my head was guerrilla warfare—the tactic in which a smaller group wore down a larger group through the use of traps, ambushes, and other similar techniques. The tactic was powerful in the sense that it was able to slow the larger group's movements by forcing them on guard. Soldiers on the receiving end of the guerrilla tactics would become anxious. They would fear the fact that they could be subject to an attack around every corner, and through said fear, lose their morale. Or at least that's how it tends to go in novels and movies.

But again, the option was unavailable to us. Our trap creation skill was too low a level to mass produce anything useful. We could go around dropping pitfalls everywhere, but I have a feeling that'll cause more harm than it'll prevent.

It was impossible for us to remove every single hole we created, especially if we camouflaged them by covering them with dirt. In other words, we were bound to leave at least a few lying around and anything we failed to clean up would be to the black catkin what landmines were to the vietnamese. Yeah, can't have that. Gotta learn from history's mistakes, not repeat them.

“Well. It looks like our only real choice is to dive right in. We'll probably need to start with something flashy so we get the army's attention.”

“Got it.”

That said, we weren't about to actually just march right on in. We were still going to do something, and I had just the thing in mind.

“Alright Fran, Plan B.”

“Nn.”

The two of us began casting the Stonewall skill over and over to produce a series of large, rocky blocks. They were a bit flimsy because we traded

thickness for overall size, but they more than served our purposes.

“Master, good enough?”

“Yeah. The whole thing’s got a pretty good feel to it. You can even see the windows.”

“Nn.”

“Alright, I’ll handle this next part,” I said, as I activated Earth Control.

I used the skill to maneuver the stony walls and close the gaps between them. Before long, we had ourselves a makeshift fortress. Located in the middle of the forest north of Schwartzekatz, the building was large enough even to be seen from afar. Its gate was so large that it almost seemed to resemble the Arc de Triomphe. Appearance wise, it was perfect. But durability wise, it may as well have been made of paper mache. The entire construction was hollow, through and through.

Still, it was good enough. It didn’t need solid defenses. We hadn’t planned on using it as a point of defense. It was a weenie, a landmark. The whole point of it was to tower above the forest such that it could be seen from afar.

The monsters would be unable to leave it alone. They would have to attack it else risk getting flanked after they passed it by. In other words, it provided us a method to predict their actions. I’m not actually sure how effective it’ll be, but they should at least notice it. And if they notice it, they’ll probably at least be wary of it.

“That’s that.” All the building needed now was a couple soldiers. Of course, I didn’t actually have any soldiers under my employ, nor were there any nearby willing to risk their lives in a fort doomed to fall. The only solution was therefore to make them ourselves.

I retrieved ten corpses from my inventory. I didn’t look for anything in particular. I just chose the ten humanoids in the best condition, so there ended up being goblins and stuff thrown into the mix.

“Alright Urushi, do your thing.”

“Woof!”

The wolf cast spirit magic and instilled force and will into the lifeless corpses laid before him. All ten reanimated bodies soon rose to action and immediately readied themselves to receive his orders. I grabbed a couple random worn out bows and handed them to our makeshift soldiers such that they could fire arrows at any monsters that neared. As I only had five, I armed the remaining undead with broken swords and spears.

Silhouette wise, they looked exactly like soldiers, and the monsters would likely be deceived so long as they continued moving around atop the fort.

And with that, our preparations were complete. Everything was perfectly in order.

“Fort’s done, Fran.”

“Then, let’s go?”

“Yeah. Let’s go.”

We enchanted ourselves with all sorts of support magic before flying off into the sky yet again. As we didn’t want our enemies catching wind of our actions, we made sure to climb until we hit an altitude at which they would be unlikely to spot us.

“Ugh.” I groaned as I looked down on the army. “The way they’re swarming is kinda gross.”

“Looks like garbage,” added Fran. I know, right?

“Alright, let’s do this. Let’s hit them hard and make it as flashy as we can while we’re at it. Once we’re done with that, we’ll charge right in. You ready?”

“Nn!”

298. The Start of a Battle

Chapter 298. The Start of a Battle

The Start of a Battle

Editors: Sebas Tian

We got ready to launch our pre-emptive strike as we watched the army of monsters beneath us.

“Alright, I’m ready. What about you, Fran?”

“Also ready.”

“Woof!”

There wasn’t much holding us back now that all three of us had gotten our preparations in order, so we had Fran give us the signal.

“Awakening!”

All three of us began raining spells down on the army the moment Fran awakened. The battle was sure to be a long one, so we didn’t go as far as activating Brilliant Lightning Rush. Its suicidal downsides made it difficult to use given the circumstances.

“Ekato Kernauros!”

“It’s showtime! Kanna Kamui!”

“Aroooo!”

Fran’s thunderbolts, which rained down over a wide area, caused rampant destruction. The monsters subjected to the attack howled in pain as their bodies were torn apart by the magical lighting. Likewise, my Kanna Kamui, which had landed right in the middle of the vanguard, swallowed well over a hundred monsters, ending them before they could even make a noise. Urushi, the only one of us not to cast lighting magic, had gone with a bit

more indirect approach. He had unleashed a toxic mist into our surroundings, one that caused the monsters that inhaled it to convulse as they were subject to an intense pain.

“Gyaaaoooo!”

The monsters began to howl and squeal in confusion as they attempted to figure out where the sudden attack had come from. Confusion quickly spread through their ranks. Operation Pre-emptive Strike success.

“On with the plan!”

“Nn!”

Urushi began running in circles above the army as I pulled rocks and trees out from my inventory and dropped them on the monsters below. Likewise, Fran also followed up by firing magical, flaming arrows.

We used to have a whole swamp’s worth of toxins at our disposal, but we’d used most of it to create delicious food back when we were in Barbra. Even the last little bit that remained had already been converted to water with restorative properties.

Most of the giant rocks we gained when the floating islands fell apart were gone. I’d dumped all but five of them into the stomach of a midgard wyrm. They wouldn’t be able to cause too much widespread destruction because they were few in quantity, but that didn’t mean I was going to skimp out on dropping them. Sure, they won’t really kill too many, but I’m sure it’ll probably either confuse them or scare them shitless. I mean, just look at how big they are. Besides, our goal has always been just to stall them, and they’ll make for some pretty good obstacles.

The tactic ended up being quite effective. Some monsters ended up so confused that they panicked and started running around like headless chickens, screaming all the way.

“Next, we crush the vanguard!”

“Nn!”

“Ruff!”

We landed right at the front of the army and dialed our bloodlust up all the way to eleven.

“Gya, gyagya!?”

“Gii!”

The immense pressure that Fran emitted caused unrest to spread through their ranks. The vanguard, the only part of the army that had eyes on her, took a step back in fear, only to be pushed back towards her by the poor, unknowing saps that stood at the rear.

Most of the monsters that populated the vanguard were weak. They roughly fit into four categories: evil beings, beasts, scabies, and undead. The evil beings, that is, the orcs and goblins, weren't nearly as well equipped as the ones that had attacked Schwartzekatz just a few days prior. Their appearances were much more typical of their species' norms. They were pretty much limited to just rags and wooden clubs. Wait, are all the weak monsters up front so they can act as meatshields or something? I really hope not. That would mean that the mastermind has got a good head on his shoulders, and I sure as hell don't want to have to deal with any crazy tactics.

“Haaah!” Fran dived right into their ranks and began cutting down every goblin and wolf that she neared.

Her actions were precise and efficient. She instantly judged the strength of the foes around her before removing the weaker ones by going for their cores and smashing the stronger ones' heads. Truth be told, we didn't actually need to go after any monster cores whatsoever, but there wasn't any need not to, and as Fran only went after them in the case that they wouldn't dull her efficiency, I had no qualms with her methods. It's not like any of these monsters are particularly rare or anything anyway. Yeah, this'll work. If we stack enough corpses together, we might be able to create a pile

large enough to slow down the rest of the army by making it take a detour or something.

“Take this! Blast Flame! Gale Hazard! Thunder Web! Blast Flame! Gale Hazard!”

With a strategy in mind, I focused my attention on creating as many corpses as possible. All the spells I launched were of the same type. They had large areas of effect, but they were weak. I bolstered their power a good bit by putting more mana into each cast, but there was nothing I could do about the spells’ natures. Each cast was about strong enough to kill a goblin, leave an orc half dead, and take off about a fifth of an ogre’s max health.

All the monsters that we used the spells on were weak, but they had to be eradicated nonetheless. They were sure to attack any evacuating villagers they happened to come across if we let them advance or scatter. Dismantling the swarm as a whole was much more important than eliminating its strongest members.

Of course, not all monsters were susceptible to magical damage. But those that resisted my attacks were torn to pieces the moment they approached either Fran or Urushi.

Urushi’s primary role was to function like something along the lines of a shortstop. He covered Fran’s blind spots and attacked everything that went after her with his venomous fog. I couldn’t help but be impressed by the sheer toxicity of the spell. Its poison was potent enough to permanently cripple a goblin, if not outright kill it upon exposure. The only problem is that it’s a bit too strong. We can’t use it near allies or if we’re in town.

It was so potent, in fact, that it was even capable of damaging Fran should she inhale it. Fortunately, the wolf was prudent enough not to fire it off in her direction, and I covered for him by blowing away any that did drift over with my magic. Of course, it was still a bit risky nonetheless, but we didn’t have the liberty to really care. We had to exterminate as many monsters as we could as fast as possible.

“Haaaaah!”

“Thunder Web!”

“Woooof!”

And so, the battle continued. We were surrounded on all sides, but we kept slaying our enemies nonetheless. Our methods were effective. The army had halted. It stopped advancing in order to focus on moving us out of its way. They only ever moved past us in order to better surround us. Thank god.

The only problem was that casting spells nonstop had taken quite a toll on my mana. We would soon have to shift into a different style of battle.

Of course, I had been making liberal use of Magic Absorption. I wrenched everything I could from our enemies each time my blade struck them. But it still wasn't enough. My consumption far outweighed my intake.

“I'm going to stop casting for a bit and focus on support instead.”

“Nn.”

I continued to drain everything she slashed of its magic each time she swung me. It would take a good bit for me to recover all my mana given the weak nature of the monsters we were currently locked in combat with, but it would eventually recover. And that was what mattered. Losing time was something that just couldn't be helped.

We had to be at our best if we wanted to be able to take down the army's more powerful members.

The monsters began to approach with more vigour when they realized that they were no longer going to be pelted with spells on their way in. But even so, Fran remained unharmed. The weaklings before her were simply unable to cause her any damage.

“You holding up okay?” Still, I was concerned. The catkin was unharmed, and I had been restoring her stamina with my magic throughout the battle, so I knew that she felt no real physical load. But the same couldn't be said

for her mind. She was sure to grow tired eventually, and there was really nothing I could do about any sort of mental fatigue.

“Nn. Fine.”

Her reply, however, indicated that my worries were needless. I could tell that she wasn't just putting up a front, that she was actually perfectly okay. As far as she was concerned, taking down the enemies that had appeared before her was as easy as a walk in the park. Wow. She really has grown. This kinda thing used to exhaust the hell out of her back when we were helping Jean raid that one dungeon.

Of course, a walk in the park was still a type of exercise, and Fran had indeed accrued a slight bit of exhaustion. Her breath had started to get ragged, but that was basically it.

“We've still got a ton of battles lined up for us, so don't push yourself too hard just yet.”

“Nn!”

299. Strong Monsters

Chapter 299. Strong Monsters

Strong Monsters

Editor(s): Sebas Tian, Speedphoenix, Joker

We continued to engage the army of monsters in head-on combat.

I managed to recover most of my mana after a good bit of skirmishing, but it was still a bit shy of full. But of course, there was no way the monsters would know that, let alone work with us to make things more convenient.

“Grrrr!”

“Big ones coming.”

“I guess that must mean the show’s finally on the road. Alright. Let’s kick it up a notch.”

“Okay.”

A group of monsters with numbers in the tens moved through the crowd and began attacking Fran. There was a four meter tall lizard, a huge lion with green fur, and a high ogre with an iron club amongst many others.

It seemed that the mob had finally realized that it wouldn’t be able to defeat Fran with just small fry. She could cleave through hundreds of them without breaking a sweat.

The stronger monsters that approached ranked in the D to E range. Each was capable of crushing an entire village all by their lonesome. Of course, we were far superior. None of the monsters could pose any sort of threat to either Fran or Urushi in a one versus one scenario. But there were far too many of them for us to treat the battle as a leisurely stroll. We had to remain vigilant.

And of course, the weaker monsters hadn't just up and disappeared now that their superior counterparts had come around. Those that were capable of it were still providing long ranged support.

"Listen up, Urushi! Sink into the shadows and start sniping them one by one. Your goal is to thin them out as much as possible."

"Woof!"

"And be careful out there. Make sure you don't get yourself surrounded. I'll make sure we don't get hit by projectiles. Fran, you focus on destroying everything nearby."

"Nn!"

Fran fearlessly plunged into the mob. She slipped under a monster whose legs were as thick as her hips, and danced around another that tried to stab her with a horn that was as thick as a telephone pole.

The monsters she fought were as strong as the ones that I'd only barely managed to defeat not too long after my reincarnation. She and I had both gotten much stronger. While we weren't able to slay each enemy in a single hit, we were still able to take them down with ease.

Agitation spread through the monsters' ranks as their army's members fell one by one. They didn't seem to understand how the tiny little thing that stood in their way was anywhere near as powerful as them, let alone much stronger than they were. They looked at her as they would mere prey. But her attacks and spells were both much more lethal than theirs could ever be.

At first, they'd just blindly charged in. But now that they had calmed down a bit, they came to understand that she was much more powerful than she appeared.

Their eyes filled with fear. And from that fear, I finally came to understand the gravity of the situation we were dealing with. The fact that the monsters were afraid meant that they weren't being manipulated. They were following orders. Whoever had amassed this army was powerful enough to

make ten thousand monsters follow their commands. I really hope that they haven't gathered under someone purely because that someone happened to be overwhelmingly powerful. I really don't want to have to even imagine how strong anyone capable of that would be. They'd have to be A rank tier, at the very least.

Lost in my thoughts as I was, I was still actively participating in the battle. The reason I was able to manage all these thoughts while fighting was because I had activated Parallel Processing and dedicated one of my mind's newly found branches to considering the status quo.

The situation was honestly not looking all that great. Magic wasn't the only long ranged attack we had to avoid. We also had to somehow dodge corpses. The monsters were throwing their dead companions without a care in the world. They didn't even mind the projectile's final destination. They would still throw them at full force even if they were at risk of hitting an ally. This recklessness of theirs made their attacks incredibly hard to predict.

The number of monsters engaging Fran in combat gradually began to shrink. Unfortunately, our resources had suffered a similar fate. My MP, which we had oh so painstakingly worked to recover had once again been reduced to only half its maximum value. Fran was very clearly exhausted as well. She was panting heavily, so heavily that her shoulders would heave with every breath she took.

I had already healed her back up to full, but she had spent a good bit of the fight covered in wounds of all shapes and sizes. Her face and clothes were all stained by the sheer amount of blood that she had been soaked in. Not all monsters had the same coloured blood, and mixing it all together had eventually caused the stuff that coated her to turn black.

As it impacted her ability to see, I made sure to clean the stuff off of her face every once in a while, but my efforts were fruitless, as it didn't take very long for her face to once again be dyed a shade of black.

That was just how intense the battle had been. Being as exhausted as she was was only natural.

“You still good to go, Fran?”

“Nn!” Fran gave herself a light shake to get back into the zone before glaring at the monsters around her. The overwhelming aura that radiated off her body caused them to momentarily freeze in place.

Again, the monsters were made to recognize that Fran was no pushover, that she was more than what her form suggested.

Whoever was in control of the army seemed to come to understand that it was time for a change in strategy, as the monsters began to fight in a bit of a different manner. I guess they really are watching, then. Hmm.. they might even be somewhere in the middle of the crowd. Or maybe there’s a commander or something that was taught a bunch of different strategies ahead of time. That might be possible too. And just how are all these orders being issued in the first place?

The only thing I knew for sure was that the monsters were moving to support one another. They were working as a team.

“Master.”

“Yeah. Looks like this’ll be a pain in the ass to handle.”

The monsters around us pulled back as would a receding wave as five monsters of an even higher power level stepped forward. These guys are probably this army’s most powerful monsters.

All five were C ranked threats; each was strong enough to fell Grengoat on its own. The fact that there were five of them gathered meant that the country as a whole would have met an unprecedented amount of trouble had we not discovered them.

They would have had to fight a war on two fronts. The Basharians would have been attacking from one side, while this army attacked from another. And it all just happened to occur while the Beast Lord was away. Does that mean that this monster army is something the Basharians put together? Man, I just don’t know. But alright, enough thinking. I need to focus.

The biggest problem was that each of the five C ranked monsters was of a different type. The largest was a multi headed snake known as a Graphite Hydra. Its scales shown with a black lustre, as could be guessed from its name. Each of its six heads were wide enough to swallow Fran whole, and all in all, the oversized snake was at least twenty meters long. It had the ability to rapidly regenerate, but that wasn't all. It was capable of spitting breaths of fire, poison, and darkness.

Beside it stood a Crimson Wolf, a canine with deep red fur capable of casting flame magic. It seemed like it was more or less the same species as Urushi, except that its primary element was fire as opposed to darkness. Its stats were the most well rounded of the five.

Like the second, the third monster was also a type of beast. Namely, a Steel Titan Bear. The ten meter tall mammal had skin as hard as steel covering its entire body. It didn't really have any special skills, but its stats, especially its defenses, were incredible. Its strength sat at a whole 1286, meaning it could output even more brute force than the Graphite Hydra.

Next to the bear was a giant bug known as an Adamantite Beetle. It basically looked like an eight meter long hercules beetle. Its exoskeleton was absurdly hard, and it even had level 8 magic resistance. Its High Speed Flight skill made it look like it would be extremely difficult to deal with.

The last monster was a humanoid with jet black skin, a demon. Its species labeled it a Demonic Baron, meaning it was weaker than the Demonic Earl we'd fought back when we first started adventuring. Its stats weren't as good, but it had skills that seemed to cover all its weaknesses. It looked like it would be harder to deal with than the Demonic Earl we'd fought back then, but only because it didn't need to protect an idiotic dungeon master.

Even just a single one of the five monsters that stood before us was enough to pose a threat on its own. And to make matters worse, the army had once again started to move. It looked like it was planning to advance while Fran struggled with its elites.

Fortunately, I had managed to glean a bit of information. Demons were a type of monster that could almost never exist outside of a dungeon unless

very special techniques were employed. In other words, the monsters were likely the product of some sort of labyrinth.

“This is looking bad.”

“What now?”

“Let’s see... We’re not going to be able to keep the army in check if we’re going to have to take these guys on, so...”

It was just far too dangerous. We wouldn’t have a fighting chance unless we went all out and focused all our resources on the opponents we had before us.

“Then will just win quickly.”

“Yeah, seems like our only choice. Welp. Let’s do this!”

Editor’s note: Hey, guys! Joker here. Another chapter of Sword-bro done and out, and it looks like the big boys are stepping up to play with the little girl that had been making a fool of their entire army. Can’t wait to see Fran (hopefully) mop the floor with them and continue crushing the army. Whoo, the looks on their faces when she’s doing that? Priceless, I’d say. Heck, in Skyrim, I made a character named Fran and made an OP sword using mods and called it Sword-dad, so you could say I’m a fan of this series. XD All right. Not a lot today, I’m afraid. The earlier Jingai Musume (which, if you don’t know, is another series we do here at Cardboard Translations. Feel free to check it out. We picked up the series from the beginning and are working on catching up as we speak. Shameless plug is shameless, yes.) chapter really sucked my mojo. See y’all in the next chapter!

300. A Successful(?) Preemptive Strike

Chapter 300. A Successful(?) Preemptive Strike

A Successful(?) Preemptive Strike

Editor(s): Sebas Tian, Joker

We calmly observed the five C ranked monsters that gathered around us and attempted to look for openings. They had us surrounded, so we needed to remain vigilant. There was a chance that the horde, the army that had continued to advance, would disperse if we sat around for far too long, and it would be much more difficult to annihilate them if they weren't all gathered in one spot.

And if we failed in our extermination, the many villagers, black catkin or otherwise, would be attacked. They wouldn't be able to evacuate all the way to Greengoat.

Letting our guard down and diving right in would be an act of suicide. We wouldn't be able to defeat the five enemies before us unless we remained calm. And so, with my mind restored to a state of serenity, I quickly devised a plan and informed Fran of its contents.

"Urushi. Can you keep the Crimson Wolf at bay?"

"Woof woof!"

Kin to the God of Wolves, one of Urushi's titles, provided him with the ability to intimidate other wolves. Thus, it seemed likely that he would have a paw up on the Crimson Wolf, even if the two were the same rank.

"Fran, focus on the demon. He's going to be the most troublesome of the bunch. Don't hold back if you think it'll get you in trouble. Feel free to use Brilliant Lightning Rush at your discretion."

"Nn!"

I don't really want to deal with any trickery, and its magic lets it support its allies too. Yeah, definitely bringing that thing down asap.

Fran pulled the Phantom Pyroxene Blade out from her inventory and equipped it. While the two of them were holding off their respective opponents, I would be defeating the final three.

The monsters kept us surrounded and stared in anticipation of our actions. Fran's actions, the drawing of a brand new weapon, had caused them to raise their guard even further. It was precisely their excessive caution that allowed me to gather up enough magical power for my next action.

"Let's go!"

"Nn!"

"Kanna Kamui!"

There was a minor bit of delay before the spell activated, in which the magical aura radiating off my body drastically beefed itself up. The monsters reacted to it and immediately launched an assault.

But they were too late.

A giant white thunderbolt larger than even the Graphite Hydra, the largest of the five, descended from the sky and swallowed the jet black snake whole. Its ability to regenerate would be far too obnoxious if left alone, so I'd slammed it with as much burst damage as I could muster. Kanna Kamui's light soon faded. And with it went the multi headed serpent's corpse. The attack had burnt even the very concept of the monster to dust. Not a single bone or scale remained. All that was left was a large crater situated right where it had been just moments ago.

The aftershock, a heavy burst of wind, assaulted the remaining four monsters. The force was so great that it threatened to knock each of the four massive beasts off their feet and sweep them away if they didn't take care to keep themselves firmly planted in the dirt below. That said, all four had

gone completely stiff. Seeing the instant death of their ally had frozen them solid.

Their response, or rather, their lack thereof, proved that they were still unused to combat and its intricacies. Freezing up in the middle of a battle was a huge mistake, one that proved fatal for the Steel Titan Bear that had been by the Hydra's side.

"You're mine!"

"Roarrrrrrrrrrrr!?"

I teleported behind the metallic ursine and drilled straight through its back with a telekinetic catapult. Its inability to react allowed me to land a critical hit; I destroyed its core with a single blow.

If it weren't so taken aback, the bear likely would've been able to detect the attack and, at the very least, move to protect its vitals. But as it was now, the bear lacked the capacity to even so much as fathom that I, a sword, would be able to move on my own and reap it of all it had.

The only one of the four remaining monsters to react, the demon, had been unable to alter the bear's fate. Fran had already engaged it in combat and locked it down.

Still, the bear's heavy defenses were impressive. My intent had been to impale it through and through, but I was only able to barely reach its core, once again showing that it had been no small fry.

And of course, the same trick wasn't going to work a second time. All three remaining monsters already knew that I could move on my own. The sight of me killing one of their allies had practically been seared into their minds. They weren't going to let their guard down again.

I tried to give the monsters yet another shock by shoving the bear's corpse into my magical inventory, but much to my dismay, they didn't freeze up this time. Still, I didn't particularly mind. I had done enough to better our

situation. Two of our five foes were dead. Relieved at my success, I returned to Fran's side.

"Alright, just three left. Let's do this!"

"Got it."

"Woof!"

Urushi provoked the crimson wolf with an attack before dragging it somewhere a bit further away so they could engage in a duel. The scarlet canine seemed to have been paying extra attention to Urushi, which was a given since the two were the same type of monster, so it accepted his challenge immediately.

"And now all we have to worry about is the demon and the bug."

"Nn!"

Fran grabbed me and got ready to fight. She made sure to keep the tip of my blade pointed at the demon in order to cut its obnoxious spells out of the equation as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the black skinned humanoid had already retreated a fair distance away and started to throw spells at us to keep us in check.

Our explosive offenses had made the creature wary, which was unfortunate. I wanted it to draw closer so we could finish it off with a single high powered strike.

We would've been able to quickly eliminate the demon if we had Urushi at our side, but he was stuck in a stalemate with the other wolf.

Urushi was stronger from a magic standpoint, but the crimson canine outranked him when it came to physical prowess. All in all, the two were roughly equal. The black dog lurked about in the shadows and launched darkness magic from afar, while the red one ignored even the very concept of defense and instead focused on rushing in to deliver a single, critical blow with its flames.

It looked like their duel would continue for quite some time; we were on our own.

Both the Adamantite Beetle and demon were extremely fast, and their mobility was only further emphasized by their ability to take to the air. To make matters worse, they were working together. When we chose to attack one, the other would go on the offensive and force us off its partner.

The Adamantite Beetle's attacks ended up being a pain in the ass to deal with despite it not having the best offensive stats. It was able to use its mana as thrusters by firing it out from behind, which in turn allowed it to gain an explosive amount of propulsion.

We couldn't even avoid it just by keeping an eye on it. We had to carefully observe the flow of its mana and put everything into evading the incoming attack the moment it began getting ready to charge.

And of course, the demon didn't allow us to focus as much attention on the beetle as I wanted.

It came at us with a blade the moment we looked away from it, one made from poison magic. It used that very same element to fire a spell as it closed the gap. Watching Urushi fight had allowed the demon to deduce that Fran didn't have the best defenses against poison based attacks. The attack wasn't too quick, so Fran dodged it and avoided damage.

Or at least that was what was supposed to happen.

“Guah!”

“Fran!”

The massive insect charged at Fran the moment she glanced at the demon. She realized the moment the creature began to accelerate, and readied her defenses, but they were easily broken.

It turned out that the beetle was capable of not only using its magic as a propellant, but also condensing it around its horn in order to up its damage.

The force of its blow was able to tear right through the barrier she threw up.

Both her right arm and right leg ended up bent the wrong way. Her head was bleeding pretty heavily as well. But that wasn't even the worst of it. The whole right side of her gut had been wrenched out by the beetle's horn.

I immediately threw out a Greater Heal, but the spell wasn't strong enough to close the wound.

"Fran! Use Instant Regeneration! Right now!"

The only response I got from her was a cough.

"Can you hear me, Fran!? You need to use Instant Regeneration!!"

My second shout got through to her, as she nodded while wincing, her face distorted in pain. Her wound then quickly began to close. Luckily, she had made it just in time.

The only problem was that Fran was a humanoid. Unlike a sword or a slime, her body wasn't made up of a series of simple, easily definable features. To that end, the skill ended up being inefficient as far as cost went. It had ended up draining a massive portion of her mana.

"Are you okay?" I asked her as I put up a barrier.

"Nn..." She managed to squeeze out a reply between ragged breaths.

"What happened?"

"Came out of nowhere."

I nodded my metaphorical head in agreement. She and I had seen the same thing. The attack the beetle had launched didn't feel like something that had caught us off guard because it came from a blind spot. It felt more like the attack had just suddenly appeared out of thin air.

For a moment, I suspected that the beetle had teleported, but it didn't have the skills to let it do so. I was certain of it. It did have the Espionage skill,

but its level was far too low to be of relevance.

“Well, that’s a high ranked monster for you. Damned thing has got a few tricks up its sleeves.”

“But will win.”

“You betcha.”

Though she had been on the verge of death only a few moments prior, Fran’s spirit had yet to wane. She was still all for going in and giving it everything she had. But that was only to be expected. Fran’s resilience had always been her most notable trait.

“Alright, let’s keep our guard all the way up and do this!”

“Nn!”

Editor’s note: Hey, guys! Joker here. Boy, Sword-dad really caused that Hydra to just STOP, didn’t he? But that’s fine by me. Multiple heads and uber speed regeneration is too much of a pain to deal with. Though it seems like he should’ve focused on the beetle over the bear, since it seems to be a sneaky sunuva bitch. I dunno, that beetle’s giving me weird vibes, personally. Especially since it managed to critically wound Fran like that. Damn beetle, who gave you the right? Sword-dad needs to erase both you and your species from this world for what you did to our precious, curry-loving catgirl. I’m sure he can make curry out of beetle meat, provided it’s actually edible. Demon, you just need to surround it and beat it down, I feel. The beetle will be the problem. All right, I’ve gotta head out. Got an appointment to keep with Nintendo. See y’all in the next chapter!

301. The Terror Wrought by an Illusion

Chapter 301. The Terror Wrought by an Illusion

The Terror Wrought by an Illusion

Editor(s): Sebas Tian, Speedphoenix

“Baruooo!” The demon screeched as it attacked us right before we could prepare ourselves for another one of the Adamantite Beetle’s attacks.

“Hush,” said Fran.

The oversized bug once again came crashing into us the moment the demon drew our attention. But this time, we weren’t caught unawares. I used a combination of telekinesis and a barrier to prevent Fran from taking a direct hit, but we were subjected to a powerful shockwave nonetheless. I reflected on the attack and its workings as I healed Fran’s left arm, which had once again been shattered.

We were unable to detect it right up until to the very moment it was about to hit us. I highly doubted that we would be able to avoid its attacks unless we were able to focus on them.

“Sorry Fran, but I’m going to be cancelling the Haste spell for a bit.”

“Got it.”

“You’re probably going to have to manage on your own for a little bit.”

“Nn. No problem. Brilliant Lightning Rush!”

I had been using haste, a space/time spell in order to accelerate our thoughts such that we would be able to better deal with the monsters, as they happened to have high agility stats. While that sounded all fine and dandy, the spell did have its demerits. Slowing down our perception of time distorted the sounds around us. Our sense of hearing wasn’t the only sense

it distorted either. It messed with most other senses and even dulled the effects of Presence Detection.

It did nothing but get in the way in cases like the current one, in which we needed our detection skills to be fully functional. I had wanted us to keep holding Brilliant Lightning Rush for the time being. The skill was more suited to shorter battles than it was to longer, more drawn out ones, but we didn't have much of a choice. We wouldn't have been able to defeat the two monsters before us without Haste if we didn't bolster our agility.

The demon once again began attacking us despite the change in Fran's aura. The catkin raised me in an attempt to block the monster's blade, but it didn't work. The toxic sword slipped right through me and landed a blow right on Fran's body.

It proved itself worthy of its rank by momentarily empowering the blade with additional magical energy such that it could pierce through the barrier.

The wound she received from the attack was honestly not that big of a deal. The larger problem was that she had been subjected to its poison. It was clearly causing her a large amount of pain, as her movements immediately dulled in response. The beetle came in for round three, but Fran had already seen it perform that same attack twice. She wasn't about to let herself just take a third hit without any sort of retaliation.

It came from behind and aimed its horn straight for her heart, but she reacted. She spun her body just enough to avoid a fatal blow. The bug still got her right shoulder and tore the whole arm off, but she bore with the pain and jammed her left hand into the creature's right eye.

A loud crack resounded as she jammed everything up to her elbow into the beetle's eyesocket and retaliated with a spell.

“Lightning Blast!”

“God damn, that thing's resilient!”

The direct attack on its brain caused the insect to screech and writhe. But, although it suffered several heavy burns, the Adamantite Beetle lived on. It was still moving.

“GAGGGGGIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!”

“Uwah...”

“Fran!”

The creature’s violent thrashing caused Fran’s arm, which was still in its body, to be torn straight out of its socket. The hard pieces of its shell had acted like scissors and snipped her limb in two.

“Greater Heal! Antidote! Greater Heal!”

I cast several healing magics on Fran, who’d lost both her arms, while keeping her standing with telekinesis. She facilitated the process by using instantaneous regeneration, so she managed to restore her body to its usual state. But unfortunately, doing so had taken quite the toll on her. Much of her mana had been drained, and her physical stamina with it.

I continued to reflect on everything that had just happened as I healed Fran up. There was something wrong. Neither the Adamantite Beetle’s charge nor the demon’s blade seemed quite... right. There was something unusual going on.

The demon was a caster whose sword arts skill was only level six. It didn’t make sense for Fran to be unable to defend against its attacks, even if she did have to deal with another enemy at the same time. Given that, I decided to appraise the demon a second time.

“Wait! It all makes sense now! That damned thing’s got Illusion Magic!”

The level four skill was likely much more effective than I had been giving it credit for. I suspected that there was a good chance it was messing with more than just our sense of sight.

This was our first time fighting against a foe capable of distorting our senses, so I ended up underestimating just how terrifying the magic could be. That said, I should probably affirm that my hypothesis is correct before jumping to conclusions.

I popped all my detection skills and observed the demon's movements as it moved for another strike and confirmed that my suspicions were on point. The demon had hidden its real arms and produced another set with illusion magic.

The most terrifying aspect was that the demon's real arms were impossible to detect through standard means. I couldn't even feel their presence. And to make matters worse, the fake arms could produce sound. I could hear them carving through the air as the demon moved to attack. It had Fran totally fooled. I, however, was not. I immediately used telekinesis to redirect myself and block the demon's strike.

"Master?" Fran asked, curious as to why I had suddenly started jerking about.

"I'll focus on defense, you focus on offense!"

"Nn!"

We executed the plan. Fran launched an onslaught of attacks while I warded off whatever the demon threw at her.

As demonstrated back in Schwartzkatze, I was no match for either Fran or Urushi in terms of intuition. My instincts weren't nearly as sharp as theirs were. But I could make up for it with my ability to see through illusions like the one we were faced with just now. Things that distorted the five senses weren't nearly as effective on me as they were on my companions, as my senses had been of an inorganic construction from the start. I didn't have eyes to see with, I barely had a sense of touch, and not even I really knew exactly why it was even possible for me to hear. And those were all the senses I had. I had no sense of taste. I had no sense of smell. I could only see, feel, and hear.

“Giiiiiiiiiii” The demon screeched as it went for another blow.

“Nice try, but I can see right through you!”

The demon’s spells were extremely effective at not only creating illusions, but also concealment. And that was precisely the trick behind the beetle that was coming out of nowhere.

Knowing the trick was half the battle. Understanding it allowed me to develop a mechanism by which I could cope. The beetle’s body was shrouded by an illusion. But that didn’t mean it wasn’t there. The air around it would still shift as it dashed. I could detect it, even if Fran remained none the wiser.

I launched a spell in the beetle’s direction the moment it started to move. It had magic resistance, so I didn’t bother with anything offensive.

“Turn Shield!”

I instead cast a spell meant to alter the paths of enemy projectiles.

The Adamantite Beetle was massive. But, by imbuing the spell with as much mana as possible and then combining it with telekinesis, I was able to redirect it just enough to alter its destination.

Of course, I didn’t expect the beetle’s attack to instantly end the demon. My goal wasn’t to have that happen. All I wanted was an opening, which is exactly what we got.

And Fran, being Fran, wasn’t the type to overlook an opening.

“Haaah!”

The demon leapt backwards in panic in order to avoid the beetle’s rush. Fran chased it down and delivered a heavy blow with her blade, splitting its body in two.

“It’s over!” shouted Fran. She then twisted me around and used me to destroy the demon’s core in an instant. The battle had devolved into a

simple sword fight, one in which she held an overwhelming advantage.

The beetle immediately judged that the situation had turned dire, so it charged us down with more speed than it had demonstrated to date. It seemed to have activated some sort of trump card and intended to skewer us alongside the demon's remains. I had to compliment the beetle. Its judgement call wasn't too bad despite it being a literal insect.

But the loss of its support meant that it was no longer a threat. I destroyed the incoming bug by teleporting above it and impaling it with a telekinetic catapult.

302. Of Level Ups and Monster Core Points

Chapter 302. Of Level Ups and Monster Core Points

Of Level Ups and Monster Core Points

Editors: Joker, Speedphoenix

“Alright. All we’ve got left now is the Crimson Wolf!”

We hurried over to Urushi after defeating the Adamantite Beetle and the Demon in hopes of providing backup, only to discover that our help was completely unneeded.

The battle was practically over.

Urushi’s offenses weren’t as great as the Crimson Wolf’s. In fact, he was notably weaker from a physical standpoint, period. However, he had still managed to do his foe harm by slowly using poison to shave away at its health.

The large red dog’s eyes were filled with purple specks. Its fur had fallen off in patches; bald spots were visible all over its body. Its breathing was shallow and it would even cough every once in a while. It was obvious that its insides had been heavily damaged with a fast acting poison.

Urushi was injured too. The entire right half of his body was covered in burns. In fact, his right eye had vanished altogether.

Despite their injuries, both wolves were glaring at each other and snarling. It was clear that each still wished to kill the other.

Although Urushi looked closer to death, he was in fact faring much better than the Crimson Wolf. The latter vomiting blood was a sign that it was already too late to treat him. The poison had won. Urushi had won.

The black wolf made use of the red one's weakness. He cast a spell that led the shadows to bind the other wolf's feet before lunging at it and tearing out its throat.

And so ended the battle. The crimson wolf wheezed one last time before falling over on its side.

Urushi placed his paws atop his enemy's corpse and howled to declare himself the victor before also collapsing on the spot.

I hurried over to the wolf in panic and began to heal him. I managed to fix most of his wounds, eye aside. He had the ability to regenerate, so he was sure to get it back in time, but we were on too tight a schedule to sit around and wait until it did.

And since it was probably best to have him in peak condition, I used one of the high grade potions we had on hand and sprinkled it over his eye, which promptly regenerated over the course of ten odd seconds. Man, are we lucky we managed to get our hands on these.

"There, all better. How are you feeling, Urushi?"

"Ruff."

"Whew. Good to hear."

"Good boy."

"Woof!"

Truth be told, I would have liked to give both Fran and Urushi some time to rest, but we just didn't have any to spare. Thus, I decided to do to Fran as I did to Urushi and had her drink a potion. It wasn't going to help with her mental fatigue, which in fact was much worse than her physical fatigue, but we were going to have to make do for the time being.

"Alright. That took a good bit. We'll have to hit the gas if we want to catch up to that army."

“Nn!”

“But first, I should probably absorb this monster’s core. Assuming you don’t mind, Urushi.”

“Woof!”

It was technically his prey, so I made sure to get his permission before jabbing my blade into the mana-filled stone within the Crimson Wolf’s heart.

Being a C ranked monster, the wolf was worth a wealth of core points. And with me being close to a level as I was...

Self evolution has occurred.

“Boooyaaaah!” Woo! I called it! Man, that’s lucky. Now, I’ve not only got all my mana back, but I’ve also even got a couple self evolution points to work with. This’ll hopefully make all the upcoming battles a lot easier.

Name: Master

Wielder: Fran (Bound)

Race: Intelligent Weapon

ATK: 726

MP: 5500/5500

Durability: 5300/5300

Magical Conductivity: A+

Self Evolution – Rank 14

Core Points: 9133/10500

Memory: 138

Self Evolution Points: 70

“Master? What happened?” Fran asked me curiously in response to my sudden shout. Oops. Let myself get a little bit too excited there.

“I ranked up!,” I said excitedly. “My MP is all the way back up to full, and I’ve also got us a whole 70 self evolution points. Just in case.”

“Woooooow,” said Fran, extending the word to demonstrate that she was impressed.

“Oh and by the way, you’ve both leveled up three times.”

We’d defeated a number of enemies, especially powerful ones, so I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to be complaining that they’d only gain three each, or rejoicing given that levels weren’t all that easy to come by to begin with. I was leaning towards the latter, given that many adventurers found it hard to make their way all the way up to level 40, even in their middle ages.

Besides, levels weren’t all we gained. Fran had gotten a new title: Annihilator of Monsters. Its description read as follows.

Annihilator of Monsters

A title granted to one that has defeated over a thousand monsters belonging to at least 100 distinct species. This title increases the title bearer’s stats when in battle with one or more monsters. The bonus is proportional to the number of monsters and their strength.

“Hmmm... now what do I put points in? Oh wait, this isn’t the time for that. Let’s chase after that army. I’ll figure all this point stuff out along the way.”

“Nn.”

I put the Crimson Wolf’s corpse into my inventory as Fran mounted Urushi.

“Alright boy, chase!”

“Woof!”

We pursued the army, which had already gained quite a bit of distance on us. We talked about my newfound points and the manner in which we would use them along the way.

“Anything you want in particular, Fran?”

“Magic Mastery?”

“Hmmm, yeah, that’s a good one.”

Turning Vigour Manipulation into Vigour Mastery had drastically boosted the power of all our physical skills while shortening their cast times.

It only made sense for Magic Mastery to provide a similar effect. It was sure to be extremely useful if it worked exactly as we expected.

“Master? Want to point anything?”

“I, for one, want mana absorption.”

It was a very important skill, one that would let me sustain myself as I cut through the horde of monsters we were about to face. We had left it at level 9 because we didn’t have the points to push it any further. I was certain that level 10 would come with a boost in functionality worth the expenditure.

Thinking about Mana Absorption sparked a related thought that ultimately led to interest in one of the skills we had just gained in our recent rampage amongst the enemy’s ranks: Life Absorption. It sounded like a skill that would allow Fran to use Brilliant Lightning Rush more frequently and for longer periods of time with greater ease. It seemed like a skill we could put to great use, especially combined with Mana Absorption.

“Alright, we’re running out of time to think about stuff, so I’ll just point everything I just mentioned for now, since we’re pretty much guaranteed to use them as soon as we make contact with the enemy.”

“Got it.”

The first thing I did was dump five points into Magic Manipulation. The skill only evolved a single time, but the effect gained from the change was incredible.

“Amazing!”

“I know, right?”

Fran’s eyes widened as she felt a change occur in the skill’s effects. It not only bolstered our magical offenses, but also increased our ability to perceive magical energy. Drastically, at that. It was almost as if our eyes had finally been opened, or like someone had pulled the plugs out of our ears. The world itself seemed to have become a different, more vivid place altogether. Magic Mastery’s effects exceeded Vigour Mastery’s by far.

“Okay. Next, Mana Absorption.”

Mana Absorption has reached its maximum level. You have obtained the Mana Thief skill.

Oh nice, a new skill. I’ll figure out how to use it later. After I finish pointing stuff.

Life Absorption has reached its maximum level. You have obtained the Life Thief skill.

Huh. So that one got upgraded too. I wonder what it does. Maybe just boost the amount of stuff I drain?

Magic Manipulation had eaten five points, Mana Absorption two, and Life Absorption eighteen, for a total of twenty five points consumed. In other words, I had forty five remaining.

“Now, what do I do with the rest...?”

“Magic to restrain enemies?”

“Hmmm....”

Yeah, that sounds like it'd be pretty useful. But which element should I focus on...?

General Information

Name: Fran

Age: 12

Race: Beastkin//Black Catkin//Black Heavenly Tigerkin

Class: Magic Warrior

State: Contracted

Level: 46->49/99

HP: 557->579

MP: 437->450

STR: 311 -> 324

VIT: 244 -> 256

AGI: 302-316

INT: 215->221

MGC: 256->265

DEX: 214->222

Skills

Espionage: Lv 5

Wind Magic: Lv 4

Court Etiquette: Lv 4

Presence Detection: Lv 7

Sword Techniques: Lv 8

Sword Arts: Lv 9

Resistance to Evil Energies: Lv 1

Blink: Lv 7

Fire Magic: Lv 7

Lightning Magic: Lv 4

Cooking: Lv 2

Disarm Traps: Lv 2

Trap Detection: Lv 2

Undead Killer

Evil Killer

Insect Killer

Vigour Mastery

Goblin Killer

Mental Stability

Demon Killer

Skilled Skinner

Resolute

Sense of Direction

Magic Mastery

Night Vision

Innate Skills

Awakening

Brilliant Lightning Rush

Magical Convergence

Special Skills

Black Cat's Divine Protection

Titles

Undead Killer

One Man Army [1]

Insect Killer

Evil Killer

Lord of Dismantling

Recovery Mage

Sword Lord

Goblin Killer

One Who Slaughters

Skill Collector

Skill Maniac

Dungeon Conqueror

Big Game Eater

Demon Killer

Earth Mage

Fire Mage

Wind Mage

Lightning Mage

Lord of Cooking

(New) Monster Annihilator

Equipment

Black Cat Set

General Information

Name: Urushi

Species: Darkness Wolf (Wolf-type Monster)

State: Normal

Level: 33/50

HP: 764

MP: 875

STR: 416

VIT: 346

AGI: 519

INT: 320

MGC: 549

DEX: 274

Skills

Darkness Resistance: Lv 9

Darkness Magic: Lv 4

Keen Sense of Smell: MAX

Espionage: Lv 7

Fang Techniques: Lv 6

Fang Arts: Lv 7

Shadowdive: MAX

Shadowstalk: Lv 6

Sky Leap: Lv 8

Fear: Lv 4

Vigilance: Lv 8

Presence Isolation: Lv 6

Regeneration: Lv 5

Deadly Poison Magic: Lv 2

Evil Perception: Lv 1

Evil Resistance: Lv 1

Blink: Lv 5

Covert Action: Lv 6

Necromancy: Lv 5

Detect Life: Lv 8

Sound Mind: Lv 6

Claw Arts: Lv 2

Poison Magic: MAX

Echolocation: Lv 8

Roar: Lv 8

Shadowblend: MAX

Dark Magic: MAX

Night Vision

Sovereign Poison Fang

Passive HP Recovery

Passive MP Recovery

Poison Nullification

Shapeshifting

Magic Manipulation

Unique Skills

Predatory Absorption

Titles

Kin to the Sword

Kin to the Wolf God

Equipment

Claw of Capture

[1] Renamed from Match For a Thousand because literal gobbledygook

Editor's note: Hey, guys! Joker here. And with that chapter, the big 5 of that monster army comes to its rather pathetic, and honestly predictable, end. But don't worry, guys. Your sacrifice is not in vain. You gave our heroes some much needed level ups and self evolution points, after all. So don't feel too bad in the afterlife. Haha. And nice. Leveled up quite a number of useful skills. Now they're looking for magic to restrain enemies? Man, if only Rir from Jingai Musume was there to give them Everchanging Chains. I'm sure that magic would come in handy for sure. If not, I'm sure Ice magic would work, if I'm drawing upon all my RPG knowledge. Ice is always good for binding enemies, after all. But I guess we'll have to wait and see what they pick. See y'all in the next chapter!

Chapter 303. Great Wall

Great Wall

Editor: Joker

Fran and I spent a bit of time figuring out which skill to point.

“Flame Magic?”

“Hmm...”

Flame Magic was our second highest level magic, and it seemed rather suited for the situation given that it was great at wiping out mobs of weaker enemies. The only problem was that we were in a wooded area. We couldn't just go flinging flames around willy nilly else risk burning down the whole forest. Accidentally setting the whole thing ablaze and therefore killing the people that were evacuating from it was counterproductive.

“It's not a bad choice, but we'll have to be really careful with how we use it.”

“Then Storm Magic? Large area of effect.”

That suggestion's not too bad. Storm spells do generally seem to have a pretty decent area to them, but I'm not really sure going with Storm Magic is the best idea. There was no doubt that I would pick either Flame Magic or Storm Magic if all we had to do was eliminate a large number of monsters, but our current situation was a little bit different. The whole point of us going into battle was to protect the people escaping the area's villages. Our victory condition was just for everyone to safely reach Greengoat. The number of monsters we killed in the process was completely irrelevant.

We couldn't just carelessly bombard the army with spells. It was possible that many of the monsters we failed to kill would escape and scatter into their surroundings. We had already defeated the more powerful monsters, so we were more prone to letting our guards down and allowing our prey to escape.

It wouldn't be easy for us to chase each and every single specimen down, which meant that there was a good chance that a number of them would end up attacking the evacuees.

"Mmrph."

Fran crossed her arms as she contemplated her options, and I did the same.

Wait, that's it!

"How do you feel about Greater Earth Magic?"

"Greater Earth Magic?"

"Yeah. Leveling it will let us build bigger walls and dig deeper holes."

Marmanno had told us that only one of this country's mages was capable of using Greater Earth magic to keep such a large number of monsters at bay. In other words, there was a Greater Earth Magic spell somewhere out there that made it possible to slow down a large number of foes at once.

"Nn! Good idea."

"We've got enough points to max it, and if we're going to mess with it at all, now's probably the time."

"Okay." Fran nodded to vocalize her consent.

"Alright. Here goes."

"Nn."

I spent four points on Earth Magic, which led Fran to gain the Earth Mage title, and me to gain both Greater Earth Magic and Sandstorm Magic. Oh, I get it. Earth and Wind makes Sandstorm because that's what you get when you kick up a bunch of dust.

That said, I decided to ignore the latter of the two skills for the time being and instead began investing points in the former.

I started by leveling the skill four times. We didn't end up getting the spell we wanted, but we did get a couple other powerful ones instead.

Only after leveling it up another two times did I finally find a spell that resembled the one we were looking for. I only had 25 points left, but it was worth it.

"I think I finally got it!" The level six Greater Earth spell was called Great Wall, and it allowed us to create both giant walls and giant moats, especially if we invested a large amount of our magical energies. "This'll let us slow that army down for sure."

"Nn!"

The army had already started to spread out after entering the forest, likely so that they could assault the villages within it more efficiently.

"Oh no! This is looking bad!"

"What now? Attack?"

But that was all they did. For some odd reason, they suddenly stopped moving and didn't so much as take another step. Only then did I finally remember something that had totally slipped my mind: we had set up a "fortress." The army had moved a bit such that they were more spread out around it. It looked like they were standing by and awaiting the order to assault it. Well, that idea worked much better than expected.

The fortress had more than done its job; it bought us every last bit of time we needed to confine our foes.

We landed behind the building and gave birth to a wall beginning from our location.

“Let’s start with just one, for test’s sake.”

“Nn.”

“Great Wall! Full power! Let’s go!”

“Wooooah.”

“Woooooooooof!” Both Fran and Urushi reacted with surprise. I likely would have done the same if I wasn’t so focused.

The spell had, in an instant, created a wall fifteen meters tall, five meters wide, and fifty meters long. And best of all, it’d used the dirt right in front of it to do so, which meant it was accompanied by a massive pit that shared its dimensions.

At full power, the spell ate over a hundred points of mana. But that was fine. With our powers combined, Fran and I could still manage to make it over a kilometer long. Even the average high level mage should be able to manage something around 300 meters long.

The only downside was that the wall the skill generated wasn’t infused with mana, which in turn meant it was incapable of repairing itself. It was literally just a wall, and anything that could destroy a wall its size would. Powerful mages and monsters were its bane.

Fran and I were both capable of blowing a hole right through its center. At best, it would could maybe hold a D ranked monster. Most of the D ranked monsters came at us when we dove into the army’s vanguard earlier in the day, so there probably shouldn’t be all that many left. The only things this army’s got should be monsters that are more on the quantity end of things than they are the quality end. They shouldn’t be able to break through. Sweet. It looks like lady luck’s finally on our side.

“The monsters are on guard after seeing us make this wall right here, so we’ll have to make a whole bunch of different walls all in one go if we want operation Build a Wall to work.”

“How?”

“We’ll have to use Parallel Processing together with Chantless in order to get a whole bunch of walls to pop up all at once.”

“Got it.”

Chant Condensation is a great skill, but it still requires us to speak the spell’s name in order to cast it. Chantless, however, might make it so we don’t have to do that. Which means combining it with Parallel Processing just might be exactly what we need to get our Great Wall up in time.

“I’m not one hundred percent sure it’ll work out though. You sure you want to try?”

“Nn. Not problem.”

“Then let’s do this!”

I used 10 skill points in Chant Condensation and obtained the Chantless skill, just as planned. Its effect was exactly as I had anticipated. I then invested the last fifteen points we had into Parallel Processing, which promptly evolved into Concurrent Consciousness. The evolved skill far surpassed my expectations. It was ridiculously overpowered. It could allow for ten different simultaneous streams of thought without breaking a sweat. It felt like I could probably even cast several simultaneous Kanna Kamuis with the potential it had unlocked. The only downside was that Fran had an extremely hard time using the skill. Just activating it caused her to immediately crouch while holding her head in pain. It seemed to push her brain way past its limits.

“Mmrph.”

“Don’t push yourself, Fran.”

“Nn...” She reluctantly agreed.

“I’ll build the wall. You keep watch, okay?”

“Got it.”

“Then here we go! Great Wall!”

I activated several instances of the spell at once and immediately created a massive wall and accompanying moat. The structure had no trouble living up to the spell’s name. It was great as great could be.

Concurrent Consciousness had proven overpowered as all hell, but using it even just once had given me a better idea of its downsides. It resulted in a significant drop in my overall efficiency. Each spell consumed more mana than I had anticipated. Their potency had been lowered as well. Moreover, it was impossible to stop any of the spells following their activation. Improper use of the skill would likely lead me to run my mana pool dry.

Great Wall had a few weaknesses to it as well. The spell could only lay out walls that were straight, and none of them could bear any sort of complex design. The whole point of the spell was just to make giant walls. Nothing more, nothing less.

The massive walls, which had appeared out of thin air in the middle of the night, had an overbearing presence to them. I moved around and repeated the casting in order to create a series of walls in the shape of a horn.

My structures extended for two hundred and fifty meters in both the east and west directions for a total length of five hundred meters. At the centre lay a gap only fifteen meters wide. In other words, I had created a narrow, artificial path. A bottleneck.

I was grateful that it was nighttime. The lack of light made it such that it was impossible for the monsters to tell just how far east and west the walls extended. It made much more sense for the monsters to attempt to break through the visible barrier than it did for them to attempt to wander around

until they found an alternate path that might not even exist. They would, at the very least, avoid attempting to find a shortcut right off the bat.

Of course, some of the monsters would be able to see in the dark, and I had no way of knowing their skills' efficacies. However, what I did know was that not even Fran's Night Vision skill allowed her to see as far as where the walls ended. I was sure that I could rely on them to drive the monsters to act as intended. All we would have to do was prevent them from passing, the very same way Zhang Fei had held off his enemies during the battle of Changban. [1]

My backup plan, in the case that the monsters decided to go around the wall, was just to seal our hole off and give chase. There was nothing stopping us from fighting a bit and then just blocking off the hole and giving chase to the part of the army that had left.

The most troublesome scenario would be the one in which the army split into three parts, with one going west, one going east, and another heading straight through the corridor. If that were to happen, then we would have no choice but to go all out and totally destroy either the eastern or western subdivisions.

Oh well, no point thinking about all that now. In the end, it all depends on how the monsters choose to move.

“All the setup is done. You ready to attack that army?”

“Nn!”

[1] Romance of the three kingdoms. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Changban

Editor's note: Hey, guys! Joker here. Well, it's almost 6 in the morning where I am at the time of writing this. Editor hours are killer, no joke. Pls have mercy, ST-senpai. Not to mention this damn cough I have, keeping me up. Probably only had 10-12 hours of sleep in the last 36-ish? I dunno.

Well, another chapter of Sword-dad down, another couple of OP skills added to the roster. Now we get to see what the army will do in response to the Great Wall that just got put in their way. See y'all in the next chapter! I need sleep...

Chapter 304. An Abrupt Change

An Abrupt Change

Editors: Sebas Tian, Joker, Speedphoenix

The monsters were immediately faced with a series of large walls. A few moments of unrest followed, as they looked to each other to determine their next course of action, but they soon picked up the slack and began flooding towards the sole exit we had constructed. I'd been a bit worried that they wouldn't be able to find it, so I placed a small flame next to the corridor's entrance to help show them the way.

Of course, we went above and beyond just the application of petty tricks. Awaiting those that entered the corridor was Fran. We had refrained from having her clean herself up in order to make her appear more exhausted than she really was. It had to seem like the incoming troops had a chance at victory.

I wasn't sure if it was because they saw her in her "wounded" state, but our enemies charged at Fran. The fifteen meter wide hallway we had setup was literally overflowing with them, and every last one was blindly advancing towards its guardian.

The reason the term guardian had remained single was because I was just one of the catkin's equips, and her companion, Urushi, wasn't present. He was off on a different mission: hunting down the monsters' recon unit. Of course, his sudden mission wasn't without reason. Our foes had somehow managed to confirm that our paper mache fort was just a bluff, all while doing nothing but standing by. Based on their actions, it was only reasonable to assume that they had some sort of unit in charge of reconnaissance. The army would've either remained more vigilant of the

fort or just attacked it head on had they lacked troops specialized in gathering intel.

It was always possible for said recon unit to determine exactly how far our walls ran while Fran was busy fighting off her attackers. Hence, it was absolutely necessary for Urushi to take out their scouts and thereby disrupt their lines of communication. Of course, there was always the possibility that such a squad didn't exist. But that wasn't an issue. It was still better for Urushi to be off on his own, as there was a higher chance that the monsters would attack Fran if he stayed away.

Fran roared her battle cries as she decimated the enemy lines. She was unstoppable. The monsters up against her were far too weak to pose any sort of a threat.

Magic Mastery had powered up Magic Perception, which in turn allowed me to scout out the entire army and judge their strength based on their magical readings. I was certain that there were no remaining monsters that ranked in at C or higher. It had seemed like a D rank or two was possible, but I highly doubted it. I suspected that everything we had to fight was ranked in at E or lower.

Still, the angry mob was so large that it was a threat in its own right. There was also always the chance that there were stealthier monsters lurking about, so we needed to remain vigilant, even though we were up against inferior goods. And on top of all that was a need to restrain ourselves. There was a good chance they would just give up on getting past Fran if she totally dominated the battlefield. We had to hold back or else risk encouraging the monsters to search for another path.

To that end, we kept the magic to a minimum. Fran focused on swordplay, while I made sure that there weren't any holes in our defense of the corridor. The only spells I cast were ones that were absolutely necessary for finishing off the enemies that slipped past us.

"Khhhh!" Fran grimaced as she let a goblin land a blow on her armour.

“What the heck, Fran!? I know you’re trying to make it look like they can win, but you don’t have to go as far as to let them hit you!”

“Not a problem!” she said. Fran knew what attacks she could and couldn’t take, so she always made sure she never tanked anything fatal. Everything she was hit with landed on her armour and the resulting bruises could be healed right off. Still, I can’t say I think it’s a good idea...

Despite my suggestion, the catkin continued to repeat the action, taking hit after hit just to cajole her foes into rushing her down. She had no intention of stopping so long as her actions continued to provide the black cat tribe with the time they needed to escape.

Fortunately, both the Mana and Life Thief skills were extremely powerful. They allowed me to absorb both health and magical energy from every creature in an area around me. In other words, they were the AOE variants of the Mana and Life Absorption skills. Their only major drawback was that they were indiscriminate. Everything inside their effective area would be subject to their effects regardless of friend or foe, save for Fran. She didn’t count as a potential target because I was technically one of her equips. Fortunately, we were in a position where that wasn’t much of a concern.

Their effects were significantly weaker than their predecessors, but they proved to be effective so long as there were three or more enemies within their radii. In fact, keeping Mana Thief active had allowed me to restore all of the mana I had expended in building the wall. Each enemy would provide 30 MP at most, but the radius was large enough for there to be a whole 30 enemies in its effective range at a time.

We continued mowing through the monsters for about an hour. I’d expected them to split up and search for clues before long, but they never did. They continued charging at us until dawn broke.

Only after sunrise did they finally come to an abrupt halt. There were only about half of them remaining; we’d killed so many that I had accrued almost enough monster core points for another level up.

“What now?” I suspiciously narrowed my metaphorical eyes, but allowed Fran to continue charging forwards regardless. Wait!

A shiver ran down my blade, so I immediately used Short Jump and teleported us a few feet away.

There was a loud roar; several arrows had nailed themselves into the spot Fran had been standing only a few moments prior.

“Thanks, Master.”

“Don’t mention it,” I replied. “More importantly, we should probably focus on tracking our attackers down.”

The only thing I knew for sure was that the attacks had come from somewhere behind the monsters we were engaging. But it couldn’t have been some sort of support unit. That just didn’t make sense. The arrows had a lot of power behind them. No goblin archer would’ve been able to launch anything with that much force. There was no doubt that they would have broken through our barriers and done some serious damage had we not relocated.

And so, I searched for our assailants’ presences—

—Only to end up gaping in awe.

I had no idea when or how they’d gotten there, but there was a brand new division of monsters behind the remaining forces. Their bodies were radiating with mana. Even the weakest amongst them was an E level threat. More than half ranked in at D or higher.

And there were a whole thousand. All neatly lined up and ready for battle.

It was a veritable army, a well disciplined, well equipped army. Their spotless, silver armour glimmered in the morning sun. Adding to the effect was the way they were standing in perfectly straight lines. A glance at the extent of organisation was enough to tell me that there was trouble. There was no conceivable way they could remain as organised as they were

without a commander, and the fact that they were all wearing the exact same equips made it obvious that they belonged to the same unit.

This new army put the old one to shame. Compared to the well organised troops before me, the monsters we'd defeated had been nothing but a ragtag militia. Had its members not been evil beings, casting my eyes on them likely would've caused me to sigh in wonder and admiration.

And that was the problem. Every last member of the army was an evil being. There were hobgoblins, high orcs, and minotaurs amongst their ranks, but every single one of them was wearing an identical set of equipment.

"You've gotta be kidding me... Come on... This has to happen just when we finally removed enough of our foes for me to think of cutting down the rest as a feasible task."

"Lots of enemies."

"Yeah... Wait. Was everything fought so far just a part of the vanguard? Is the actual main force...?"

"Lots of strong foes."

"You got it. You still ready to do this?"

We'd come so far, only to discover that our progress had been an illusion. A part of me had been worried that Fran's spirit would break. But more of me had been expecting her to reply in the exact way she had. This is Fran we're talking about, after all.

"Point taken."

"Nn!"

We cannot fall. For the Black Cat Tribe's sake.

"Let's..."

“Win!”

Our wills in sync, the two of us once again began to engage our foes.

Translator’s Note: TSKD has been licensed. To that end, this is the last chapter I will ever do. It’s been a good run, and I’m very happy to see Seven Seas pick this up and help show the world what Tanaka Yuu (the writer) can do. I have put a list of answers to frequently asked questions below. This includes the whole “but this is a WN, and the LN was what got licensed” argument and what I’m planning to do next, so make sure to take a peak if you’re curious. And with that, I guess I’m done. I’m finally free to read the rest of TSKD myself since I’ve been holding back to prevent myself from losing motivation. I don’t really have much else to say other than what’s listed in the FAQ. So without further ado: ST, signing off.

Editor’s note: Hey, guys. Joker here. Can’t really be excited right now, since we’re finally dropping TSKD. I’m torn. On the one hand, I’m glad it got licensed. On the other, I won’t see what happens to Fran during this for another 3 years at best. And that’s not even considering the possibility that Seven Seas drops this series since it’s not selling well or something. I don’t know. It’s a day one buy for me, as i’m sure it will be for a lot of you, but I can’t help but worry. It’s been a fun run, guys, even if it ends super early. I guess I can only help out with JM now, plus whatever series the boss picks up. This is a departure from my usual ending, but since I WON’T be seeing y’all in the next chapter, all I can say is this. Thank so much for sticking with us on this journey. I hope you guys are looking forward to our future projects. We probably wouldn’t be doing translating if it weren’t for you all. Thank you from the bottom of my unthieved heart. (Yes, Joker as in Persona 5). See y’all in the next series. Godspeed, Fran. Godspeed. (Also, just putting it out there, if you guys send messages [KIND AND RESPECTFUL PLEASE. I DO NOT CONDONE ANY ANGRY MESSAGES] to Micromagazine begging them to allow us to continue translating as long as we have a link to the official release or something, there is a chance, however small, that they’ll allow it. Just saying. A small chance is all Fran needed to get this far. Who’s to say we’re any different?

[This message is not endorsed by Supreme Tentacle in any way, shape, or form. This is all from Joker]]

Editor's note: Hello to all from Sebas Tian. The series has been pretty fun and interesting so far and I'm glad to have spent my time on it. Hope you all have enjoyed the series as well and that as the LN releases more volumes that you continue to enjoy it. I also look forward to whatever other project ST might pick up later, but if he decides to get caught up on JM first I'd be fine with that. Please give ST and the Seven Seas your love and all that jazz to support the series as it moves forward with the adventures of Sword Dad and Black Cat Girl.

Editor's note: Hey everyone this is Speedphoenix. It's been really fun reading this until here, a shame it has to end. It was especially refreshing to see the evolution in everyone's attitude on the discord channel and in ST's style when translating. Now I just need to learn Japanese... Hopefully Jingai Musume let us enjoy for longer before it gets licensed, we'll see you over there!

F. A. Q.

Q: The LN was licensed. Why are you dropping the WN?

A: All of the rights belong to Micromagazine, who licensed the LN rights to Seven Seas. Yes, this is correct. However, it's very easy for the LN localizers to do this thing called give the people with the WN rights a phone call and ask them to throw out a DMCA or C&D. It's in both their best interests, especially in TSKD's case in which there is very little change between the WN and LN. And even with all that stuff aside, there's the whole matter of respect. Translating something that has been licensed is not a good idea. Period.

Q: Will another translator pick this series up?

A: They probably shouldn't. Like, seriously. Picking up licensed series is a scummy move. The point of translating a web novel is to share something

you love with a broader audience. Translating something that is licensed is effectively scumbagging the author out of sales. It doesn't make sense to harm the person producing the thing you like. So if you see anyone else translating this series, please flame the hell out of them. Unless you hate TSKD.

Q: Will you pick up any other series?

A: Not for the time being. I'm planning to at least fill the JM gap before I consider picking up anything else. And even if I do pick something up, I'd probably prefer something that's never been TL'd into English before.

Q: How do you personally feel about TSKD getting licensed by Seven Seas?

A: Pretty good. I'm hoping that the established fanbase is part of the reason they're picking the series up, because that would mean I've done my job as a fan translator. I've heard that Seven Seas' localizations are pretty decent, so I'm expecting good things from them. My personal favorite localizer is probably JNC though.

Q: Will the existing chapters be taken down?

A: I'm not sure yet. I intend on it, but I'll fire Seven Seas an email or something first and ask whether or not they mind.

Q: Can you translate the rest of the arc at least?

A: Sorry, but no.

Q: Should I send emails asking for permission for you guys to keep doing stuff?

A: Please don't.

Chapter 305. War Maiden and the Headless Knight

Suddenly, an army of evil humanoid beings arrived.

Seeing them standing there lit up our fighting spirit. However, something bothered me.

(“How did they come here?”) – Fran

Right, how was such a majestic army able to come all the way here without us noticing it?

『I didn't feel their presence...』

(Nn.)

『Then again, we were in the middle of a fierce battle with the magic beasts. There's a possibility we simply didn't notice them.』

Or perhaps, it was some kind of art or skill. We carefully observed the army of evil beings.

Hobgoblin Spearers occupied the front row, holding their pikes ready. Behind them, I could see Hobgoblin Archers and Hobgoblin Magicians. Followed by High Orc Warriors, High Orc Shileders, High Orc Bladers and High Orc Snipers. Further behind were Minotaur Soldiers and Minotaur Lancers. These seem to be the main army members.

Hobgoblins are threat level E. Orcs and Minotaurs threat level D. However, situated in a place even further behind were even stronger beings, one might consider to be commander's personal guard.

Minotaur High Magician, Minotaur High Swordsman and Minotaur Axe Masher are supposed to be threat level D, but are much closer to being a C than a simple D level beast.

After all, High Magicians can use high-level magic such as Flame Magic and High Swordsman possess Sword Master Arts.

In the group of minotaurs stood, for a head higher from everyone else, a perfect example of a threat level C – Minotaur Dark Paladin. An incredible skillful opponent that uses Axe Master Techniques, Shield Master Arts and Darkness Magic. It was a spectacular sight witnessing four of them lined up like that.

However, none of them was the commander. Inside the wall of minotaurs was the commander, the one I believed shot from the bow. Next to the commander was what I assumed to be its adjutant. Even though I was a sword, once I appraised them I felt a sensation similar to my back muscles tensing up.

It was already troubling enough that they could lead an army of high-ranking evil humanoids, but to make matters worse, the ability of the two was far above the rest.

Race name: Valkyrie – Killing Archer : Fairy: Tenma Lv 66

(TN – Evil Spirit/Sky demon/Demon from heaven) – courtesy of elephantNo5

HP: 1352 MP: 2387 STR: 682 STA : 563 AGI: 1339

INT: 1002 Magic Power: 1298 DEX: 889

Skills

Coercion: Lv 6; Invisibility: Lv 3; Stealth: Lv Max; Wind Magic: Lv 7; Bow Technique: Lv Max; Bow Master Technique: Lv 5; Bow Arts: Lv Max; Bow Master Arts: Lv 5; Fear Resistance: Lv 7; Vigilance: Lv 4; Presence Detection: Lv 5; Presence Blocking: Lv 7; Illusion Magic: Lv 6;

Sword Technique: Lv 8; Sword Art: Lv 8; Herculean Strength: Lv 6; Confusion Resistance: Lv 7; Regeneration: Lv 8; Commanding: Lv 8; Abnormal Status Resistance: Lv 6; Spear Technique: Lv Max; Spear Master Technique: Lv 4; Spear Arts: Lv Max; Spear Master Arts: Lv 4; Sword Attribute: Lv 7; Drive/Ambition: Lv 4; Light Magic: Lv 4; Magic Detection: Lv 6; Magic Release: Lv 6; Night Vision; Energy Control (tn – known as Vigor); Troops Morale Enthusiasm (tn – basically they get crazy about her); Pain Dulling; Steadfastness; Floating; Footsoldier Support; Magic Self-recovery; Magic Manipulation.

Inherent Skills – War Maiden

Titles – Advancing War Maiden

Equipment – War Maiden's Spear, Bow, Costume.

Race name: Dullahan – Ghost: Magical Beast Lv 1

HP: 1588 MP: 693 STR: 781 STA : 727 AGI: 587

INT: 200 Magic Power: 521 DEX: 714

Skills

Intimidation: Lv 5; Stealth: Lv 4; Flame Magic: Lv 3; Presence Detection: Lv 6; Fear: Lv 9; Presence Blocking: Lv 3; Sword Technique: Lv Max; Sword Master Technique: Lv 2; Sword Arts: Lv Max; Sword Master Arts: Lv 2; Herculean Strength: Lv 8; Instant Regeneration: Lv 3; Abnormal Status Resistance: Lv 9; Shield Art: Lv Max; Shield Master Arts: Lv 4; Shield Technique: Lv Max; Shield Master Technique: Lv 4; Abnormal Mind Resistance: Lv 9; Sword Attribute: Lv 7; Fire Magic: Lv Max; Magic Resistance: Lv 6; Magic Detection: Lv 8; Magic Absorption: Lv 7; Lightning Resistance: Lv 4; Night Vision; Energy Manipulation; Pain Negation; Magic Manipulation.

Titles – Headless Knight (TN – can be translated as Faceless or Expressionless)

Equipment – Evil Stone Knight Sword, Anti-Magic Steel Full Body Armor, Anti-Magic Steel Shield, Barrier Ring.

(TN – evil stone is similar to magic beast’s stone, but from evil beings; weapons get stronger when they are used in the making process)

In fantasies, races such as Valkyrie and Dullahan were considered to be among stronger ones. They both had a status of and surpassing threat level C. Valkyrie is B, and although Dullahan is a bit weaker, he is one step into B category, too. On top of that, they are both very balanced.

Valkyrie’s power was especially terrifying. Her appearance was that of a long, blond haired beauty. Sparkling in the morning sun, her golden armor was giving of a solemn impression. She did not look like a monster at all and I would even say she had an air of divinity to her. Despite her looks, I could feel a great sense of intimidation even at this distance.

In contrast, the Dullahan with his large build was clad in jet-black full plate armor. Unlike how Dullahans were often depicted with their heads held under one arm, this one had its head on its shoulders as every normal person would. Although, I do not know if it could come off or not. I couldn’t discern its facial features nor its gender either, since its entire body was completely covered without a single crevice or gap.

What’s more, they both possessed terrifying abilities. Valkyrie’s inherent skill “War Maiden”, supporting martial arts skills, reaction speed increase could be said to be plain, but are all very powerful skills. Furthermore, her title “Advancing War Maiden” hides a tremendous power.

Advancing War Maiden: a title given to war maidens who have met all the conditions.

Effect: When leading an army of 100 or more soldiers, all skill effects from the stealth and mobility system possessed by the war maiden extend to the whole army. The effects greatly decrease if not under direct command.

This is it, the reason behind why the evil army was able to appear so close without us sensing it. What’s with this broken ability!

Since there's a note about them not being under direct command, that means as long they are recognized as a subordinate, there will be an effect on them even if the army is away. Was there an effect on the magic beast army too? It would seem that we were able to detect it thanks to the effect greatly decreasing. However, if that effect didn't exist at all, perhaps we would've been able to discover it earlier.

Dullahan's "Headless Knight" title provides regeneration enhancement and an increase of the absorption group skill effects. It's simplistic, but makes him difficult to destroy.

I said that Valkyrie was a B threat, and individually that may be true, but taking into consideration the ability to command an army, it may as well be an A threat. Well, it depends of its subordinates, too.

"Hmm. You have quite fast reflexes. Though small fry, you were able to hold back this number of magic beasts all on your own. You also avoided my arrow even if it's the first time you've seen it. "

They must be using wind magic. Valkyrie's voice reached us all the way here.

"Who?"

We also used wind magic in the same manner and tried to ask a question.

"You can also use magic. Well all right. I am Murellia-sama's servant. A war maiden who controls the army."

"Murellia? Is that the mastermind behind this?"

"Well now, who knows?"

"... .. Why are you doing something like this?"

"I really don't know anything. Whatever the case may be, it has nothing to do with the likes of you who will perish here. If you peacefully surrender here, I'll let you die without suffering?"

“That’s my line.”

“You, who is exhausted after fighting magic beasts all night, think you can win against Us?”

“I think. Easily.”

“Fuhahahaha, I like it! It was worth coming out here just for this! It’s great when the prey struggles! Now amuse Us to the best of your abilities!”

I thought she was a battle enthusiast, but she seems to be more of a hunter type, I guess? The type that likes fighting battles that it can win.

“Archer unit! Release the arrows!”

Cheh. I wanted to talk more and get some more information, but that seemed impossible now!

However we did find out the name of their boss, presumably the dungeon master, Murellia.

Following the Valkyrie’s order, the evil beings who held a bow pulled the bowstrings simultaneously in an orderly manner. Then, they released the arrows at the perfectly same timing. And with that, the life or death battle had begun.

『We need to close this up first!』

I entrusted Fran with the defense against the arrows while I plugged the gap in the wall by using Great-Wall. It was impossible to fight off the magic beast invasion while dealing with the evil army. So I wanted to prevent them from going any further, but...

“Hellflame Great Arrow!”

Valkyrie released an arrow that struck the wall a little bit away from us, making a great explosion and leaving a massive hole in it.

『Cheh! 』

“Hahahahah! Hellflame Great Arrow!”

I used the Great-Wall once more to make another wall, but it was just destroyed again by the Valkyrie’s arrow. This is bad, we won’t get anywhere like this.

Magic beast started marching towards that opening. In the meantime the evil beings kept attacking from a distance. No good would come from us defending against their attacks and simultaneously fighting the magic beast. Is there no other way but to give up on the magic beasts.....? No, I can’t do that. It would be against what Fran wishes to do.

Isn’t there something I can do? Anything?

I used simultaneous processing to the fullest and searched for the optimum course of action. As long as the Valkyrie was here, the wall could not be closed. If that was the case, then we should decrease the number of magic beast as much as possible. Annihilating them all might be the best option in the end.

The attack with the widest area of effect that I currently had was Ekato Keravnos (TN –“100 lightning” in Greek) which could summon 100 lightning bolts from the sky. If I were to release them consecutively over a vast area, it would definitely bring down a great number of magic beasts. One lightning can take down one low rank magic beast and also has a paralyzing effect on the surroundings.

However, it is a high tier magic spell. If we use it ceaselessly to destroy over 3,000 magic beasts, we’ll run out of MP in no time. After that, we’d be in a disadvantage against the evil army. Or rather, we’d be insta-killed.

It would be good if I could absorb some magic stones in order to accumulate a bit more magic stone points... A way to absorb magic stones and make a wide range attack...? Such a way doesn’t—.

No, it does. The way I am right now, I should be able to pull it off? I focused and tried using transformation. I was able to manipulate my blade better than expected. This might work!

But before that, let's use up the MP. It will be completely restored when I rank up anyway. I used Ekato Keravnos one after the other.

『Haaaa! Eat this! 』

Nearly 500 lightning bolts rained down on the rear of the magic beast army. I didn't have the time to aim, but with how many of them there were, it was bound to strike quite a few of them. I could see magic beasts who were directly hit being blown to pieces and others being charred by the strikes that nearly missed them.

Furthermore, I shot one on the evil beings, too. It was more to blind them than to do any significant damage. It would be great if it could take down a few though.

I purposely attacked the magic beasts in the back rather than the ones who were near us. I deliberately left them so that they could become my feed.

『Fran, endure the arrows for little while! 』

“Nn!”

Good, I could concentrate fully this way!

『Haaaaaaa! Magic stones, give them to meeee! 』

I activated transformation with all my power. However, I didn't transform my blade as I usually would do, since it would be dangerous for Fran if she lost her weapon. The thing I manipulated were the braids hanging from my hilt. From the very start, I always used my blade when transforming, but both the hilt and the cord were also a part of me. They also get repaired when I use restoration after all. That being the case, I should've been able to manipulate them, too.

Magic Control, Energy Control, Simultaneous Processing. Using them to the maximum, my transformation reached levels incomparable to anything I had previously done.

The braids responded to my will and changed their form into 10 steel threads. Then, they stretched through the sky like tree branches, and kept spreading sideways further and further while ramifying themselves even more. Of course, they devoured everything in the way, piercing right through the magic beasts' stones.

『Kuh, I'm reaching my limit....』

It seemed that the limiter was my processing power rather than magic power. Although I didn't have a brain, it felt like my head was burning. No, maybe it was because I didn't have a brain that I felt that way, anyway it was dangerous.

『But.... It's here!』

It was the second rank up of the day! Because I absorbed a lot of magic stones, the number of magic stone points jumped at once.

Author's note: Since there were already many status notes in the main text, I'll put Shishou's status after ranking up in the postscript.

Name: Shishou

Wielder: Fran (fixed)

Race name: Intelligent Weapon

ATK: 882 Magic Capacity: 6250/6250 Endurance Points: 6050/6050

Magic Conductivity: S-

Skills

Appraisal: Lv Max, Appraisal Blocking, Transformation, High-speed Self Restoration, Self-evolution:

[Rank 15 – Magic Stone Value: 10569/12000 – Memory: 151 – Points: 75]

Self-modification [skill superiorization], Telekinesis, Telekinesis small increase, Telepathy, Attack small increase, Space-time magic: Lv Max; Skill Sharing, Wielder's Status Medium Increase, Wielder's Recovery Small Increase, Heavenly Eye, Seal Negation, Magic Capacity Small Increase, Magic Beast Knowledge, Mage, Memory Medium Increase.

Unique Skill

The Principle of Falsehood: Lv 5; Dimension Magic: Lv 4.

Superior Skill

Sword Technique: SP; Skill Taker: SP; Multiple Body Creation: SP;

Hello,

I hope you were able to somewhat enjoy this translation. I'm not sure how much I'll be able to continue this project, but I intend to finish the fight at least. It might take some time though...

Translation style: since I'm not too fond of localisations, I opted for a more literal translation approach and trying to keep the number of sentences to a 1:1 ratio as much as possible. I wanted it to preserve that "Japanese feeling" when reading a novel, but as a result the text can be a bit clunky at times. Although there isn't much dialogue in this chapter, I also decided to keep all the honorifics (-san, -chan, -sama...). Also, I think I'll leave the sword's name as "Shishou" rather than "Teacher/Master," but I'm not sure about that yet.

About TNs, I could put my in the end if you think that they're too much of a bother in the story. I personally prefer them next to the place where the translator feels the need to clarify something, that way I don't have to scroll

all the way down and lose my momentum. Feel free to inform me if you disagree. I plan to keep the number of them to a minimum, though.

If you have any complaints, suggestions or you simply want spoilers, feel free to leave a comment or contact me here: <https://twitter.com/FShishou>

Chapter 306. Supersonic Arrow

Alternative titles: High Speed Arrow; Arrow of Great Speed

I obtained 75 self-evolution points after ranking up for the second time today. But we still had to exterminate the magic beasts.

『Cheh... it's going to be difficult maintaining transformation any more than this.』

But I'll fire one last shot and blow them up!

『Haaaaaa!』

Going through my thread-like extended braids, I released about 50 Stun Bolts simultaneously. Because of that, even the beasts that weren't pierced by my threads fell to the ground paralyzed.

Ekato Keravnos consecutive attacks, steel-thread attack and in the end, wide range Stun Bolt attack. We defeated nearly a 1000 magic beasts thanks to this series of attacks and another 1000+ fell to the ground unable to move.

『I did it somehow...』

(Shishou, you alright?)

『...y, yeah』

I felt like strength was leaving my entire body. It was a sensation I haven't felt since I had become a sword, something similar to despondency and great fatigue.

Was it a reaction to me exceeding my limits by activating multiple skills and spells? Perhaps I relied on Simultaneous Processing too much and now it was taking a heavy toll on my body. If this was the case, I'd like to inspect the skill a bit more into detail, but...

『But now is not the time to be saying something like that. I have to use everything I have at my disposal, without showing that I passed the limit.』

Otherwise, Fran would be the one to force herself too much.

“GyaGyaUu....”

“Hiinn...”

“BARoOoOo....”

Eliminating the magic beasts from Fran's vicinity left a wide area of empty space. However, the remaining beasts just wailed in fear and refused to approach. They would even start withdrawing the moment Fran would do so much as look at them.

It would be difficult for us to attack if the remaining magic beasts pulled back too far. Was there no other choice but to strike them with magic once more?

“As expected! Even someone as Us is a little surprised, you know?”

Although the beasts were destroyed in one shot, the Valkyrie wasn't fazed at all. Was it because we did insufficient damage to the evil beings? However, she did seem to be a bit enraged. It was just that the rage was directed towards her allies – the magic beasts, and not Fran.

“You weaklings! You are nothing but disappointment! Though mere outriders, your exhibition of cowardice and weakness is a disgrace unbecoming of Murellia-sama's followers!”

The magic beasts shamefully hung their heads after hearing Valkyrie's merciless words.

“No one has any expectations of you anymore! At least, let your deaths not be in vain and oppose this formidable enemy in your last moments with all you’ve got! Do it for the honor of Murellia-sama!”

Those were cruel words demanding of its subordinates to die. However, the magic beasts were not upset, on the contrary, they raised a loud war cry filled with determination. Apparently, it was in reaction to the “honor of Murellia” part. There was an evident change in their presence once they heard those words.

Their eyes were now filled with preparedness to die and bore a strong hatred towards Fran.

“GOOOooo!”

“GyaUUUuu!”

“BRAAaaaa!”

The magic beasts headed towards us all at once. We attacked the vanguards with magic, but their advance didn’t stop even for a moment. Their resolve was so strong that fear wasn’t about to numb their movement and slow them down.

They surrounded us, nearing closer and closer, and then came at us in one go. They were rushing in blindly, perhaps intending to crush Fran to death just with their sheer numbers.

We were cutting them down while using Teleportation and Sky Jump to move around. If it were only the magic beasts, we’d be able to deal with them one way or another, but...

But that’s where the evil beings started their arrow barrage. As expected from superior races, their wave of arrows packed quite the punch. What’s more, they were shooting both Fran and fellow magic beasts. It seems they were trying to use them as obstacles to slow Fran’s movement.

“Haa!” – Fran

『The barrier is weakening—FRAN! 』

“Gaa—!”

While cutting down the rain of arrows coming from the evil beings and mowing down the magic beasts, something struck and blew away both the torso of the beast that was jumping at us and Fran’s left shoulder.

“UGUu...” – Fran

『Cheh!! 』

I immediately used telekinesis to catch her left arm that was blown away and activated teleportation to take us away from there.

『Fran, I’ll heal you right away! 』

(What, was that?)

『The Valkyrie’s arrow! 』

The Valkyrie released an arrow using the beast to blind our view. In addition, the arrow didn’t arch, but flew in a straight line. Despite piercing nearly 10 beasts on its way through the battlefield, the arrow’s speed did not decrease one bit. It was so fast that we were almost unable to react to it.

But Fran promptly managed to shift the point of impact. The arrow that targeted her heart barely missed and hit her shoulder. Shit, how many times has this already happened today!

『That was a good reaction from you! 』

“.....it just happened somehow?”

Fran’s instinct was as amazing as ever. However, this was bad news. If arrows this fast were to be shot in succession, we’d be riddled with holes from a distance unable to even approach them.

While I was diligently activating Dimension Shift and Teleportation to prevent the Valkyrie from aiming at us, I suggested something to Fran.

『Fran, let's raise our sensory skills. If we don't improve our reaction speed, we'll be killed unable to do a thing. 』

“Nn. Leave it you.”

『 You're okay with me deciding which skills to raise? 』

“Do as you wish, Shishou”

All right, as one would expect, maintaining Dimension Shift with its massive mana consumption made it impossible to have a thorough consultation. I quickly chose the skills and spent the required points.

I maxed Danger Sense by spending 16 points on it. That also gave me the Sense Enhancement skill. Then, I spent 12 more points on Vigilance and maxed it, too. They were both skills that detected the approaching danger.

But that wasn't all. I used another 18 points on the Lv1 Reaction Speed Up, the skill I obtained just recently from the Crimson Wolf. I ended up with only 29 points, but was able to get the skills I was expecting.

Ultra-Reaction skill, the same one that appears when Fran uses Lightning Flower Flashes[1]. My strategy to deal with the arrow was to use leveled up sensing abilities and the ultra-reaction skill.

『 I can see it! 』

Immediately after, I used telekinesis and successfully knocked down the Valkyrie's arrow. I still had to focus quite a bit, but it was nowhere near the level of just a few moments ago where I simply couldn't see it at all.

With this, it finally felt like we stood on the starting line.

『Counterattack, commence! 』

“Nn!”

[1] 閃華迅雷: Flash Flower Thunderclap/Lightning

Lightning Flower Flashes – Previously known as Brilliant Lightning Rush. I didn't want to straight up just use the effort of the previous translator so I tried translating it myself. Basically, just imagine a bunch of firework bursts/flashes in the shape of flowers made out of lightning... yeah, I know...

Personally, I'd like to use "Brilliant Lightning Rush" since it sounds cooler and everybody's already used to it. Mention in the comments what you prefer to be used in the future.

Hello again,

Let me first thank you for all the comments and the support last time. Thank you very much for pointing out the things that needed improvement and for a few very interesting discussions. I truly appreciate all feedback.

Feel free to leave any critiques, opinions and thoughts that you might have about the translation and/or story itself.

Regarding my schedule, I think I'll be able to post a chapter every 5-10 days (weekends most likely), but it greatly depends on what happens irl.

I'll post any updates on my side and news regarding the franchise on twitter: <https://twitter.com/FShishou>

For those who can understand some Japanese, there's been a new manga chapter update: <https://comic-boost.com/series/86>

Also, there has been a drama CD bundled with Vol 5 LN and is still up on YouTube if you wanna check it out. The voice acting (especially Fran!) was perfect imo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYjyoG-oksw>

That's all and take care~

Chapter 307. Shield of Iron

「I thought I got you there! You've got guts!」

「Likewise」

「You can still talk like that even after I cut your arm off? I hope you're not just acting like a hotshot. Keep it up! It will be boring if I win unilaterally!」

Valkyrie smugly taunted us, then began to shoot her arrows continuously; not just the Arrow of Godspeed, but also an arrow which would explode on contact, an invisible arrow, and an arrow that could change its trajectory in a large arc. None of these arrows are simple to avoid, and if Fran was hit by any one of these arrows, she would suffer immeasurable damage.

Since Valkyrie only intermittently shot those Arrows of Godspeed, it was still extremely dangerous, but she was able to land a solid hit on Fran or me, but at the same time, I couldn't easily attack her either.

Although neither side was making any progress, if we continued to just defend, Fran would fail sooner or later.

『Sorry for making you wait!』

I couldn't waste the time Fran had earned for me any longer!

『— Devour them! Kanna Kamui』

I didn't originally intend to use a Chant, but I shouted inadvertently. Maybe it's because I am all fired up; I know what I have to do! With all my heart and mind and strength, I attempted a second Kanna Kamui.

However, it seems that two simultaneous Kanna Kamui was still unattainable, and just like when I used Transformation inordinately earlier – No, this cold feeling attacking me now is even more horrible than the last time.

『Ahhg...g!!!!』

Nonetheless, I clenched my teeth—enduring the terrible sensation, and concentrated my consciousness on the task at hand. No matter what, I must release Kanna Kamui. Although the opponent was far away, with the help of Magic Control, I was able to expand my attack range; I believed I would be able to target her from here.

As I succeeded in launching the attack, a massive bolt of lightning rained down on Valkyrie's head. I planned to attack her with the lightning at the moment when she fully drew back her bow, even if it only managed to stall her a little.

However, the Dullahan was behind Valkyrie. Compared to Valkyrie, who was about 5 ft 2 in., the Dullahan was more than 6 ft tall. Because of his height advantage, if the Dullahan raised a big shield over Valkyrie's head, it was more than enough to cover her completely.

But just as the Dullahan lifted its shield to the sky, the Kanna Kamui swallowed them both.

Killing two people in one breath— well, sure enough, it's not at all possible. With the augmentation of the Shield Master Arts, Magic Resistance, an Anti-Magic Steel Shield, Anti-Magic Steel Full Body Armor, and the Barrier Ring, the Dullahan's durability was appalling. What's more, the Dullahan also had the Lightning Resistance attribute, making him a perfect match against us.

The situation now is totally different from what it was in the past; since the martial arts event, my use of Kanna Kamui has improved a lot. I am more familiar with the use of Lightning Magic and also obtained the Magic Control skill. Lightning Magic, the Magic Control skill, and Kanna Kamui have perfect synergy. Plus, didn't I just fire off two at once?

At the martial arts event, when I combined Kanna Kamui with Black Lightning Summoning I was able to defeat Fermus, the user of Strings. Obviously the power this time should have far exceeded that combination. Moreover, before I fired the attack, I was confident that Valkyrie could be killed if it was a direct hit... But now, the power seems to have been diminished by the Dullahan; the damage done to the surroundings was small, and no explosion occurred.

『Damn it! Why was it so weak—』

「Shishou, look.」

『Hum?』

Fran seemed to have noticed something. I looked in the direction she was pointing and saw that the Minotaur · Dark Paladins and High Orc · Shieldsmen were all charred and collapsing. All of the High Orc · Shieldermen were dead; two of the Minotaur · Dark Paradins died, and the remaining two were also on the verge of death.

What happened? The attack was fully concentrated on the Dullahan; why would it affect them? Furthermore, the other Orcs and Minotaur were not harmed at all.

『The damage may have been transferred.』

Although I didn't know what the mechanism was, Kanna Kamui's bolt seemed to have been transferred to some of the Evil Beings. The number of troublesome enemies was cut by more than 100, but unfortunately, the Supreme Magic that I worked so hard to release didn't achieve the desired result.

「Fu, FuHa, FuHahaha. No way, you even used a Supreme Magic technique! How pointless!!」

「... 」

In a cold sweat, Valkyrie cackled, but her mocking laughter seemed calculated to disguise her fear. The Dullahan stepped aside, then reached out to the nearby Magic Beasts.

「Gyo~o? Gaia...!」

「...」

The Dullahan seemed to be absorbing magic power in some way. He continued to reach out to another Magic Beast. Yikes, if the Dullahan has a Magical Absorption skill, then he can use all these Magic Beasts like magic fuel tanks. In my case, if I blindly continue launching Kanna Kamui and use up all our MP, Fran won't be able to continue attacking.

Not to mention it is already difficult to hit the target with Kanna Kamui.

Unlike their previous combat strategy, Valkyrie and the Dullahan were no longer staying put in one spot. The mechanism for firing a Kanna Kamui's consists of the triggering of the operation, stockpiling power, and the final launch. Once Kanna Kamui was released, it would be difficult to evade for any enemies. After all, it was lightning.

However, once I finished triggering the operation, the power stockpiling still took a little time, so it was not impossible for the opponent to escape. Fran and I could do it, so Valkyrie and Dullahan should be able to do it too. Even though Kanna Kamui is a Supreme Magic in terms of power, it was still difficult to hit the small opponents who tried to flee.

『Too far right now. Need to get close; arrows less effective that way.』

(Got it)

Fran began close the distance bit by bit so that Valkyrie would not notice our advance.

Then we charged towards her, using Teleportation to dodge the attacks of Evil Beings and Valkyrie's persistent arrows.

For opponents of this level, they probably have strategies to deal with frequent Teleportation, so I don't want to use it too often. However, it is essential for dodging Valkyrie's arrows while evading the attack of Evil Beings, so I can't completely abandon this strategy.

That said, if we could approach the opponent and launch a melee attack, she shouldn't be able to use her arrows, and even if she can use the arrows, it should not be as dangerous as her ranged attacks. I'm not sure how much chance we have of winning in close combat against an enemy of this level, but we don't stand a chance in a ranged battle so we'll have to pin our hopes on it.

I considered the possibility of using points to acquire some new non-lightning magic techniques, but in this situation, it was really too reckless to use precious self-evolution points for gambling.

If possible, I should probably choose a sword-related skill. No, wait a minute; can't I raise the level of Sword Lord Arts again? I thought it might work, but no dice. When I tried to upgrade it, I heard a stony-hearted announcement:

Apparently a more powerful version of Sword Lord Arts exists, but it seems I'm unable to obtain it. The only other option is Divine Sword Techniques... guess we'll have to go with that.

Valkyrie's previous attack was supposed to be a Divine Bow Technique. If that's true, then Divine Sword Techniques are worth looking forward to.

Fran agreed with my suggestion; she seemed to be thinking about the same thing.

「Okay」

This is it.

Annoucements:

《Divine Sword Techniques has been improved to LvMax. Sword Techniques Enhancement has been acquired》

《Condition requirements satisfied: Unique skill – Sword Lord Techniques has been acquired. All Sword Techniques skills will be integrated into Sword Lord Techniques》

《Sword Lord Techniques and Sword Lord Arts were obtained. Unique skill – Sword God's Grace acquired》

《Fran obtained Sword God's Grace. Class – Sword King was liberated》

With a stupendous vigor, the announcements rang out. Although I missed some of them, the most important one was probably the acquisition of Sword God's Grace.

I could instantly feel that Fran's swordsmanship had significantly improved. It felt like she had become one with the blade as if we were fused at my hilt. Only a sword itself could fully understand the difference, and as a sword, I was confident that Fran's swordsmanship had truly reached the next level.

Sword God's Grace: When holding a sword, the wielder will get blessings related to combat.

Makes sense. Anyway, the point is that this skill can provide enhancements during battle. Although I don't know to what degree, I am still very excited. After all, this is God's Grace, its power can't be too low.

「What happened? Why have you suddenly improved so much?」

「Haa!」

「Everyone, bring down that girl!」

Now it seems that Valkyrie is surprised and starting to panic.

「Divine Sword Techniques · Circle · Impact」

With this skill, we can turn on the spot to attack all the enemies around us. A similar Sword Technique exists, but after being integrated into the Divine Sword Techniques, its speed of rotation, range, and power were all significantly improved.

The Sword Technique Enhancement also made a huge difference. Now I could kill almost 20 Magic Beasts with a single slash.

「Sword · Sonic!」

This is the upgraded counterpart of Sword Technique's Sonic · Wave. It's the same attack, but the range is extended. The shock wave generated hewed its way through the dense Magic Beasts, creating a path. The remaining Magic Beasts rushed over to occupy the clearing, but Fran is faster. Dashing through the gap, Fran broke through the Magic Beast troop in a flash.

The army of Evil Beings stood before us.

『All right, we've got this!』

「En!」

Wielding me, Fran accelerated her charge.

Chapter 308 part1

Translator: Makisima

Unedited

Fran killed HobGoblin, who surrounded her. No matter how powerful these HobGoblin were, they were no match for Fran yet.

Although these HobGoblins were nothing of Fran's opponents, –.

『These guys are so annoying!』

「Gya Gyō!」

「Ge Gya Gya!」

Evil Beings surrounded Fran and started to crow. But the sound was obviously not like that the ordinary Goblin and Orc would make, that was to say, it was not a meaningless crow.

Although I didn't understand why they crow, no matter how I look at that, they were trying to communicate and trying to carry out coordination. Among those evil beings, although the power of each was weak, the dexterity of their coordination was extremely surprising.

Even in the presence of overwhelming Fran, those Evil Beings also felt no fear. And the Evil Beings around Fran began to attack us after they got cooperation. They withdrew when Fran advanced and once the Evil Beings behind us seized the opportunity to stole on Fran, the frontal Evil Beings would assault Fran with their spears. All in all, they never launched the offense alone.

Moreover, at the moment when they judged that they were going to be killed and couldn't be saved, they would jump over in desperation to tackle Fran hard. The reason they did this may be because of the existence of Dungeon Magic Beasts, perhaps because of their dexterity of coordination, or maybe for the effect of Valkyrie's Vigour Rage skill. In order to kill Fran, they seemed to look upon death as going home.

In addition, the attacks of Evil Beings using Spear Techniques and Bow Techniques were extremely fierce, and Fran had to apply the Mana and Life Thief skills to them continuously. As a result, I and Fran's mana were suffering. Since Fran's body continued to suffer from the fine scratches made by the Evil Being's attack, Fran had been in the process of repeated use of Life Thief skills and Heal from the beginning.

「Tsu!」

「Nice avoidance! It seems that the reaction speed is increasing!!」

Despite the small number, Valkyrie's arrows would still be able to attack through the narrow gap. Those arrows were aimed at us from the platform created by Soil Magic. Although we wanted to try to counterattack, Valkyrie was always guarded by Dullahan.

Most of our attacks could be defended by the opposite side. So, we were just doing meaningless consumption here.

「Hum. Slowly, the damage we receive will become more and more awful. It seems that we should really put our whole heart into it?」

So far, I knew that Valkyrie was just passing by. But now it seemed that it finally coming? Valkyrie did not release the arrow but began to speak gently.

「But why, you have to fight till now?」 — Valkyrie

「?」 — Fran

「Even if so many Magic Beasts are eliminated, why do you have to fight cost your life? Who has hired you? But what puzzles me the most is that I don't understand the reason why you launched multiple attacks from the front. Moreover, you still seem to have the intention to make every effort to annihilate us.」 – Valkyrie

「No thoroughfare!」

「Umn?」

「Everything! I protect.」 — Fran

From the short words of Fran, Valkyrie suddenly understood something, nodding vigorously.

「That's it, all is the Black Cat Tribe.」

「...En!」

「In order to buy time for the escape of the consanguinity, you even defy death to stop our offense, it's so heroic and moving! Kuhahaha」

Contrary to what she said, Valkyrie showed a mocking expression. Then, Valkyrie said something even more shocking.

「Naa, although you are a subordinate of Murellia, do you really think that these desperados are all my support?」

「!」

「Kukuku, in addition to the troop I lead, there are another two troops marching south from east and west. Their target is Greengoat. Although their strength is not as powerful as mine, there are still excellent commanders coming through countless fights in charge. Hope they have not caught up with your partners ~ 」

「Tsu!」

「But anyway, the army they sent there are shock troops, whose number of soldiers is small though, it is a Fast Movement Corps centered on the cavalry beasts after all.」

At this moment, I felt Fran's impatience was being conveyed to me from her hand holding the hilt. Oops, what the guy said did cause Fran's restlessness. Once Fran fell into disarray, she would blunder into Valkyrie's trap!

(Shishou, what the guy said...)

『It is true. She did not lie. However, we must calm down now! No matter which side, we can't help! It's better to pray that the national army and adventurers have already arrived there than fall into disarray! On the whole, no matter how fast I am, I am unable to catch up with the shock troops!』 – Fran

(We still have time.)

Anyway, I could only say this to appease Fran.

「Got it. Only I can defeat you in a short time, I'm able to help them then.」

『Fran! That's exactly what they want! It is just to make your attack reckless that she has told you this!』

「Well, it seems that even so, you still want to buy time? Ah, I remember it. If you still attempt to rely on the aid of the national army, perish the thought. Unlike our army, which feeds on magic, your human army needs a lot of things to support your survival. Now, I think your national army should have not started off yet.」 – Valkyrie

「... Kill you, protect everyone!」 – Fran

「Just do it if you can!」 – Valkyrie

Damn, she completely triggered Fran's switch! As thus, it's impossible to stop Fran! To what extent can I support Fran...!

「Brilliant Lightning Rush!」

Oops, Fran was really planning to launch a swift attack on the enemy! But the Mana and Life Thief skills cannot be always out of stock.

(Shishou! Teleportation!)

『Got it!』

Chapter 308 part2

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: Quarn

Then, we teleported right over the group of guys. However, at that moment, Fran was penetrated by Valkyrie's arrow. Can they perceive the fluctuation of space? How could they predict our teleportation destination in advance?

However, as expected of me. Dimension Shift skill was triggered at this time, together with the augment of Crisis Detection, Vigilance, and Reaction Speed Increase.

While facing Arrow of Godspeed that I have not been able to perceive until now, I could handle it with Dimension Shift skills. However, if I used it blindly, my mana would run out soon. This skill cannot be used so frequently, at least if it was a protracted war. But it was just because of Fran's preparation for a blitzkrieg that I could use Dimension Shift without hesitation.

「Haaaa!」

「It is really difficult to deal with opponents who can use Space/Time Magic so freely!」

「Sword Lord Techniques · Sky Broken」

With sword Lord Techniques, I could probably only launch one shot. It should be enough.

Both in speed and power, Sword Lord Techniques · Sky Broken definitely surpassed the godspeed slash. And more importantly, Sky Broken seemed to have a time-accelerating effect. But that's not an effect of Space/Time Magic, More like, because my potential ability was stimulated at that instant, my reaction speed was abnormally increased, so the time-acceleration was triggered.

I didn't use Reinforcement skills yet though, only the power of Sword Lord Techniques had made my whole body tremor.

I could feel that this attack will be a decisive one. I felt Dullahan's line of sight shifted and his arm suddenly moved. Probably, to shelter Valkyrie, he wanted to do something. However, our speed was so fast that they lost the lead.

I had been sucked into Valkyrie's shoulder, cutting off her collarbone and approaching her heart.

「Crack...!」

Easily, I cut the heart of Valkyrie in half. Then, with lightning speed, I slashed diagonally from her shoulder. At that instant, I obviously felt that I had reached her magic stone, but I didn't know why. I couldn't absorb the mana of her magic stone. What was the problem?

After a short doubt, an incredible scene emerged. Somehow, the wounds of Valkyrie, who had been cut down on the ground, recovered in an instant.

Now Valkyrie was unable to use the Instant Recovery skill. In any case, since the heart and the body were divided into two, it was definitely impossible for Valkyrie to recover so fast...

At the same time, two meters outside, the Minotaur Dark Paladins spurted blood. In the next moment, a lot of mana poured into my body. But the mana was not from the magic stone of Valkyrie. Instead, it seemed that I was absorbing the mane from the magic stone of Minotaur.

Apparently just now, Valkyrie used the mysterious magic which could resist Kanna Kamui and transfer damage! And it seemed that not only Dullahan, but Valkyrie could also use that skill. What a hell gimmick it was!

「Ku, Kuhahaha. Sword Lord Techniques! You Have guts! You really scared me! It's so horrible!」

Valkyrie laughed while she distanced herself from us! However, as she said, her face showed a hint of fear. Perhaps it was because she was almost killed, her expression was obviously different from when she was shocked by the power of Kanna Kamui. It seemed that she really felt fear.

However, what kind of skill could make her recover instantly. It's hard to seize such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but in the end, it just scared her a little? Damn it! The Minotaur Dark Paladin was killed though, the game was not worth the candle!

In order to allow Valkyrie to heal her wound, Dullahan screened her and began to retreat, while the Evil Beings began to attack Fran all together.

『If we pulled away, they will attack us with the arrow violently!』

「Get out of my way!」

「GeGyaGya!」

「GyoGyoGya!」

Even under Fran's intimidation, the Evil Beings still did not retreat. They guarded Valkyrie desperately and stood together to form a wall.

The minutes ticked away.

「AhAhAhAh!」

Chapter 309

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: Hylidahlia & Quarn

The battle between Fran and the Evil Being Army has taken on a new meaning

On one side is Fran, who wants to quickly destroy the Evil Beings and rescue the Black Cat refugees, and on the other, Valkyrie, who wants to obstruct Fran.

「Beat it!」

「Gyagya!」

「Gyoaa!」

Fran, who has Sword God's Grace, slaughters Evil Beings with surprising speed while maintaining her course directly towards Valkyrie. With the simultaneous use of Teleportation and Brilliant Lightning Rush, Fran is now much faster than Valkyrie and on several occasions, she got very close.

Although Fran's attacks are usually large-scale and powerful, the Dullahan is successfully blocking most of them. Worse still, as the Dullahan is shielding her, Valkyrie seizes the opportunity to pull away from Fran.

This situation makes Fran even more anxious. To make matters worse, gaining distance give Valkyrie an opportunity to attack. Fran is managing to dodge all Valkyrie's lethal arrows, but the rate is clearly increasing.

「Grr! Bastards!」

『Fran, calm down!』

(Sorry.....But!)

If Valkyrie hadn't used Damage Transfer, this would have been a quick fight...

I still haven't figured out the mechanism of Valkyrie's Damage Transfer. It seems to be triggered whenever Valkyrie takes damage. This mysterious phenomenon may be related to their Shield Techniques.

When appraising Valkyrie, I didn't discern any items or skills to transfer damage, so it must be an effect of her title, or some kind of martial art. If it's a skill that needs mana, it should have shown up during Appraisal.

As far as the current situation is concerned, the Shield Techniques and Divine Shield Techniques are the most suspicious ones. So far, in Valkyrie's forces, Minotaur Dark Paladins using Divine Shield Techniques and High Orc Shielders using Shield Techniques have always been the ones taking damage. Since shield skills can protect the companion, it's little wonder that it can shoulder the companion's damage.

And in fact, Minotaur High Swordsman and High Orc Warrior, who had died from shouldering Dullahan's fatal damage, also held Shield Techniques.

But once the conjecture (about the link between damage-shouldering and Shield Techniques) stands, the battle waiting for Fran will be bound to be a tough long haul. After all, half of the remaining Evil Beings hold Shield Techniques. For them, I don't know what level they need to be able to use Shield Techniques to shoulder the damage, but shouldn't the rest of them can all shoulder the damage? If it's really so, for how many rounds of attacks on earth can we defeat Valkyrie?

Let me put aside the case that depending on ordinary Word Techniques, Fran can kill dozens of Evil Beings at the same time. But it shouldn't have

been so absurd that only one or two enemies who shoulder Sword Techniques damage could be killed as it is now.

Although I had intended to eliminate all Evil Beings, Valkyrie and Dullahan would never allow me to do that. And Valkyrie took every moment we take eyes off them and launched continuous devastating attacks.

We're really being chased by them. And even though Fran has been using Life Thief Skill and Heal to the best of her ability, her HP Recovery is far less than the damage she suffers. Even if giving up using Brilliant Lightning Rush can save her a lot of magic, but it's very likely that the balance between Fran and Valkyrie will be broken once Brilliant Lightning Rush is dismissed now. Overtaxing though, the use of Brilliant Lightning Rush has to be kept.

However, Valkyrie's dad-blasted attacks are becoming more and more violent. Damn, and Dullahan also unfolds his attack to Fran. Worse yet, Dullahan's damage is constantly being transferred to other Evil Beings. But Fran now has been affected by the big explosion caused by Valkyrie's arrows, badly beaten.

From a distance, Valkyrie conqueringly watched Fran, who stands up and square off in a flash.

「Ahahahaha! You are irritated, aren't you? And it's likely that your companions have been killed while you are fighting against heavy odds!」

『Fran, it's a provocation! Don't listen to her!』

「.....Gu」

Gnashing the teeth in anger, Fran scowls at Valkyrie, I could even hear the crunch. If it goes on like this, Fran will really go berserk.

No way out now, I have to resort to my trump card, Skill Taker. Directly deprive their skills. But what confused me is that of which skill I should deprive. After all, the basic specs and skill balance of Valkyrie and

Dullahan are terrific. To be frank, no matter what skills I deprive them of, it can't disable them.

Even so, it might Valkyrie's Divine Bow Techniques and Dullahan's Divine Shield Techniques can still be on the shortlist. Skill Taker can't disable them though, it should be able to weaken them to a large extent. And then Fran can make a final bid for victory in the chaos in which their skills are deprived. As for those Evil Beings who shoulder the damage, we will attack them until they can't do it anymore.

『The problem is... whose skills should I deprive?』

Just as Fran and I were discussing which skills to deprive...

(Shishou, something's coming!)

『Yeah, I can feel it, too!』

At this moment, from the southwest, a shadow with great mana is approaching at a high speed, which seems much faster than Urushi's Sky Leap. Could it be Valkyrie's reinforcements? However, it does not come from the north but from the southwest.

Valkyrie and the others seem to be waiting and seeing, and since the powerful magic captured their attention, they began to grow restless as well. In some way, the shadow doesn't look like her reinforcements.

「Here it comes!」

『Overhead!』

As the two sides paused to attack and assumed a defensive posture, the shadow alights from the sky.

「Kuooo~o~o~on'n!」

「Wyvern... No, it's not. Could it be a Dragon?」

As Valkyrie muttered, that shadow is a Dragon with red scales. Its height is almost 2 meters, and its wing length is about 7 or 8 meters.

In the air, the Scarlet Dragon flutters its wings, looking down on the whole battlefield. Its golden pupils gleams with a sharp light as if it is hunting prey.

At the sound of the dragon's roar, Magic Beasts shrink timidly. And Evil Beings are also caught up in a riot and stops the previous offensive. But even so, they quickly regain their morale and come out with a ground-to-air formation.

The Scarlet Dragon is a little smaller than an adult dragon. And for the status, its threat level is only C. However, its sense of existence is extremely strong. But now, there is something more threatening than it that must be kept on the lookout — Dullahan, and Valkyrie.

However, neither I nor Fran is overly wary of the dragon. Instead, Fran wears a smile on her face.

Because...

「Reduce them to ashes! Llinde!」

「KuOOOOoo!」

The Scarlet dragon spraying flames at Evil Beings and people riding on it seem familiar to me.

「You seem to have a tough fight, Fran! Are there any reinforcements?」

「Mare!」

Author's Note:

I'm sorry that *I Was a Sword When I Reincarnated* is not animated, but I'm really happy to hear that you all hope it can be animated.

If it can be animated, whom do you want to be the voice performer of Fran and Shishou?

As for Fran's, I hope her voice will be cute and pure, but it is a little difficult to find a child's voice.

I think I can only dream and drink. LOL

Chapter 310

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: Quarn

「Seems a tough battle, Fran ! Any reinforcements?」

「Mare!」

The Scarlet Dragon suddenly appearing in the battlefield was attacking the Evil Beings. The people riding on the dragon back were the mysterious girl and her maid follower, Kuina, with whom Fran parted not long ago since they had encountered in the Scorpion Lion Forest. And, the scarlet dragon was called Llinde, a dragon that dwelled on Mare's Monster Weapon.

On Mare's command, Llinde spewed scarlet flame from its giant mouth. And wherever in that fire's power, more than 20 evil beings and magic beasts were burned to ashes in an instant.

At this moment, I saw Valkyrie watching her army suffer losses, she was about to shoot an arrow aiming at Llinde. It seems that she wants to shoot down Llinde, the powerful threat to the Evil Beings.

「Shishou!」

『It will be fine.』

Valkyrie and Fran didn't sense the fact that the arrow couldn't hit Llinde though, I was never doubtful about that.

「Such a grand way to come on stage, but also such a pity! You're exiting now!」

Shouting that, Valkyrie released the arrow, which shot toward Llinde directly. And then, Valkyrie who believed the arrow must hit Llinde flashed a reassuring smile.

To her surprise, however, brushing past Llinde, the arrow flew in the wrong direction, which shocked both Valkyrie and Fran.

「Wh... What?」

(Illusion)

『Yeah. Illusion Magic, Illusion Magic of high level.』

Fran and I used to be tortured by the Illusion, but now it seems more powerful than before. And Mare, using the Illusion, shouted with a triumphant expression:

「Fran! Let me help you!」

「Mare! I can handle the situation here for the time being! You can stop the detached force of Evil Beings!」

Although it's true, I couldn't believe Fran was pleading with Mare. I never thought that Fran would make such a cry. But Mare laughed away Fran's worry.

「Hahaha! Don't worry! If the detached force you said is the two troops going south from the east and west, then I have eliminated one of them! And as for the other troop with a larger number of soldiers, it has been solved by someone else!」

「Really?」

「Yes, just make yourself easy about that! The Evil Being troop in the west has been transformed into my EP. And thanks to that troop, I could improve

my level. Look, and Llinde's figure became larger than before because of that troop.」

「Cool!」

「And we have sent a message to the Lord of Greengoat, asking him to dispatch security force to protect the refugees. They should be joining forces with Greengoat's force soon!」

Hearing what Mare had said, Fran finally gave a sigh of relief. Although it's inappropriate to use the Principle of Falsehood to Mare, I don't think she is lying. Because what she said has inexplicable credibility, or maybe a reassuring power?

So, since Mare says everything is fine, then we can believe that what she said was true.

After all, in such an emergency, there's no reason for Mare to lie. And with Mare's party's power, it's easy for them to eliminate all detached forces.

And meanwhile, on the other side, Valkyrie's triumphant look blanked gradually. She seemed to sense that what Mare said was not a lie.

「No, it's impossible. How could you defeat the Evil Beings troop dispatched by Murellia Sama? Isn't the troop of the west led by Dullahan, a powerful leader, and demons? 」

「So it is. That troop was extremely powerful indeed, but with the joint attack of the two of us, they are still at a disadvantage after all.」

「Two of you?」

「Ah, yes, we two.」

At this moment, however, I happened to find the girl, who was behind Mare with a fearless smile, disappeared. She was riding on the back of Llinde before, but now where has she gone?

「Is this OK? You, the Battle Maiden. How could you be so careless as to be defenseless...」

Valkyrie cried out before Mare finished her words.

「GuGaaaaa!」

No one knew when, a figure appeared next to Valkyrie in a flash, and then, a sudden sting blew Valkyrie. That figure's hand had pierced through Valkyrie's chest.

「I'm Lady Mare's maid, Kuina. Nice to meet you. By the way, it's so mysterious that you can still be safe and sound like this even being pierced through your heart.」

It's Mare's Assassin Maid, Kuina. We haven't even sensed her appearance. But, I knew what she has done. She should have combined Illusion Magic with her Innate Skill — Phantom Dream Matrix. And the one that created the illusion of Llinde and Mare should also be Kuina.

For those who have never seen the illusions, they are not able to recognize those illusions created by Kuina, who is such an adept. A perfect K.O., now it is Valkyrie's turn.

However, I can feel that Kuina's mana is decreasing. Although she looks unruffled, the blow just now should have been a mortal blow. Even if she fails to make a mortal blow, she still stays cool, calm and collected, which shows that she is not ordinary.

No, wait a moment! The scene is the same as when we met Kuina in Scorpion Lion Forest, she looks cool though, she is in panic in her heart now. In the face of this enemy, not only do we not know how to deal with it, but in fact, Kuina is also anxious.

「Haha! You are really worthy of the Assassin Maid! Unmoved by the loss at all! An annoying guy in normal times though, but reliable you are in the battlefield!」

Kuina appears to be calm. No! Totally can't figure out. Even on this occasion, Kuina gracefully saluted Valkyrie and then distanced from her.

「Damn! Don't cause me trouble!」

「Hahaha, so pity! Since you have hurt my rival, I can't let you get away with that!」

「After all, Fran is the only friend of My Lady.」

「"Only" is so superfluous! And, we are not friends! We are rivals!」

「My Lady is still so aggressive... But it's really annoying in the face of Ms. Fran, who has occupied the title “Black Lightning Princess”, My Lady still can not accept the fact that her favorite color, black, is preempted. So, My Lady can't help harboring mixed feelings to Ms. Fran.」

「You shut up! But preempt my favorite color by the Black Lightning Princess title is too cunning!」

「But no matter how hard My Lady try to deny, the title such as White Flame Advent, Rough Beast (White) and White Abarenbo, are all terrific.」

「...Is that a compliment to me? Are you not dissing me?」

「Sorry, My Lady. But it all truly comes from my heart.」

「All pretext! But just forget it. Anyway, I'm the only one to defeat my rival, Fran! I must fight you, troublemakers! 」

「Dares to hold such language!」

「Cut the crap! I'm coming!」

Then Mare jumped down from Llinde.

TL's Notes:

Thank you, guys, my editor is back.

Sincere gratitude to the editor, Quarn.

Chapter 311

Translator:

Proofreader: H W

「I'm going in!」

Mare jumped off Llinde, descending from high above. Although it appeared as though she landed gracefully, her landing actually presented quite a few defensive openings. Fortunately, with the ever-present threat of an attack from Fran, Valkyrie dared not move recklessly.

At some point, I don't know when, Mare's true body had replaced her illusion and, rising from where she landed, she glared at Valkyrie with blazing eyes.

「If you come clean about your purpose there's a chance I'll show you mercy.」

「Don't delude yourself, that's impossible!」

「How unfortunate. But if that's your answer, I'm getting serious! Fran! You ready?」

In the current situation, Fran wasn't so foolish as to try to go one-on-one with Valkyrie. She seemed far more invested in fighting alongside Mare and nodded enthusiastically.

「Kuina, you need to subdue Dullahan now!」

「Actually, I'm not very good at tackling heavily-armed opponents.」

「You need to do it now!」

「Words fail me. Is it really okay for me to tackle such a tough enemy? I just hope I don't cause Miss Fran any trouble.」

Kuina, urged on loudly by Mare, saluted gracefully and launched an attack on Dullahan. Although, at first glance, Kuina appeared to be running normally, her speed was astonishing, it seemed that she was using a unique footwork technique.

「Llinde, you also try to restrain the Evil Beings over there. Remember not to push yourself too hard.」

「Coollll!」

Roaring, Llinde, who was in the air, dove towards the army of Evil Beings. Llinde deftly avoided Evil Beings' arrows while simultaneously spraying flames at them. As a result, the Magic Beasts fled helter-skelter when they saw Llinde coming.

「Next, we two shall begin our attack as well. Valkyrie has brought disaster to my people, does she really think she can leave with a happy ending?」

「Ha? Who do you think you are? Do you think you are a member of the Royal household? How dare you speak like that?」

「Well, it seems that I can only convince you by showing my true power. In that case, I'll show you now!」

With that, Mare twirled her coat, raising her right hand to the sky and jumped up.

「In this moment, I have become The Swordswoman of Beauty !」

I had thought she would do something special, but she just made an extravagant pose. Then, she shook her left arm and changed another pose.

「Now I'm The Girl Who Manipulates the Giant Dragon!」

Next was a pose No. 2, Rider Shapeshift. The forms of Mare's Shapeshift poses were becoming more and more exaggerated. I mean, can't she just say it already? Why does she have to pose over and over again?

「However, my true identity is.....!」

Finally, she puffed out her chest, arms aloft. However, just as she was about to announce it, a torrent of explosive flame burst out of her mouth, as if she was performing fire magic.

「The eldest daughter of the Beast Lord – Rigdis Narasimha, Nemea Narasimha!」

No, wait. In this sudden revelation, Mare is actually the Lord's daughter?

Mare is Nemea Narasimha?

Although my Appraisal has been blocked, I'm sure she's not lying because she hasn't triggered the Principle of Falsehood all this time.

Not only that, but in terms of her behavior and manner, the shadow of the Beast Lord is evident. Either judging from her appearance or from her temperament, it's not in the least bit surprising that she is the daughter of the Beast Lord.

「Let me show you just the tip of the iceberg. Awakening—」

With a fearless smile, Mare released her power.

After Mare's Awakening, much like Fran, her appearance didn't change much. The only difference is that Mare's body has begun to radiate fire. Wait, her hair has gained volume and stands up now? Looks like lion's mane. Ok, fine, I think it just means that Mare is a girl. In addition, her teeth and nails have stretched a little longer.

「Mare, You're so cool!」

「Hahaha! I know, right?」

「So... you are the daughter of the Beast Lord. It's said that the daughter of the Beast Lord is born white-haired, seems the rumor is true.」

「Yes, it's me. I have to keep this secret because my white hair is too conspicuous. After all, people will talk. But even so, there seems to be a lot of rumors about me.」

「Indeed, you certainly do possess pretty wonderful mana.」

As Valkyrie said, I can feel fairly powerful mana hanging over Mare, whose power seems to be on a par with Fran using Brilliant Lightning Rush.

「.....What!」

Shocked by what she saw, Fran stared at Mare in bewilderment.

Mare, hearing Valkyrie's murmur, showed a fearless smile. And then, she leaned back and laughed.

「Kukuku」

「.....What's wrong? 」

「You think this is all my power?」

「What?」

「I said I would show you all my ability, didn't I?」

Howling again, Mare struck another pose. This time, her pose was exactly the same as the normal 3rd pose of shapeshifting.

「Golden Flame of Extinction!」

With that, a storm-like, golden fire burst out from Mare's body. It was the innate skill of Red Catkin's high breed, Golden Flame Lionkin: Golden Flame of Extinction. Mare, now covered by the golden flame, was exactly the same as the Beast Lord Rigdis from before.

It seems that, like Fran and the Beast Lord, Mare has also reached the level of the Ten Original Tribes, which greatly surprised Fran. Because they are both Magic Beasts, Fran seemed to know Mare was evolving immediately and, after witnessing Mare's evolutionary posture, Fran also figured out Mare's race type, Golden Flame Lionkin.

The way I see it, Mare, who is now using Golden Flame of Extinction, has an absolute advantage in both Magic and strength. If an average person faced her, it would probably be impossible for them to stand their ground. Moreover, in the face of such an extraordinary existence, ordinary people would either be prostrate, petrified or may even lose consciousness. Whatever the outcome, it would impossible to maintain one's composure.

「Now, that we've come this far, I won't show you any mercy. Suffer my punishment! 」

In that instant, Mare roared, pouncing on Valkyrie with deafening roars and terrifying momentum. Mare's bloodlust, intimidation and magical force merged into an invisible pressure that made straight for Valkyrie.

「Damn.....!」

Facing oncoming, irresistible pressure, Valkyrie was about to speak up, but then she drew her bow, aiming at Mare and released the Arrow of Godspeed.

「Will you keep coming? 」

Despite being released instantaneously, Valkyrie's Arrow of Godspeed was easily disintegrated by Mare's Golden Flame, it seemed to be how auto-defense of Golden Flame of Extinction worked.

The arrow, containing power strong enough to penetrate dozens of magic beasts' bodies, that tormented Fran and me, was instantly burnt to ashes before it broke the Golden Flame barrier of Mare, despite containing no less malevolence than before.

Despite its power, however, Mare wasn't left unscathed, there was a shallow wound on her face. Sure enough, Mare isn't as powerful as the Beast Lord, but even so, I've no doubt that Mare's power is comparable to Fran's. Mare certainly is an invigorating reinforcement.

「Get ready to suffer my punishment War Maiden!」

「En!」

「Fran, you come and support me!」

「.....Roger that!」

Fran seemed to understand Mare's intentions. She breathed a sigh of relief and discharged Brilliant Lightning Rush. This was because Mare, who belonged to the same skill system as Fran, had understood that Fran's use of Brilliant Lightning Rush was beyond her limits.

Thank God. If Fran had continued to push her limits, then I would have had to discharge the Brilliant Lightning Rush myself.

And so, the fierce battle between the two girls and War Maiden began.

Author's notes:

The Publishing House decided to republish the cartoon of the Magic Sword.

Thank you for your encouragement and support!

Gee, I've been worrying, is it really okay to print so much at first? What if it can't be sold out.

I'm so glad, however.

Express my thanks to Mr. Maruyama again!

Chapter 312

Translator:

Proofreader: H W

「ToAhaaa!」

「Haa!」

「Ku!」

Raising their swords aloft, Mare and Fran charged towards Valkyrie. Defending with her spear, Valkyrie frowned and retreated, giving ground. Although Valkyrie's spear technique was excellent, she couldn't hold back the simultaneous charge of both Mare and Fran.

Gradually, the damage Valkyrie suffered became more and more serious.

Meanwhile, the other Evil Beings that had, thus far, been suppressed by Llinde, and Dullahan, who had been tied down by Kuina, also attracted my attention.

From my vantage point, I could also clearly see Llinde's combat abilities, it certainly was fortunate for us that he was on our side. His airborne combat speed was amazing, not produced by his wings but rather his mana and skills. Thus, as he was flying through the Evil Beings, his acceleration and deceleration totally ignored the laws of physics.

After flying at top-speed for a time, Llinde suddenly halted, then produced another sudden burst of acceleration, seemingly with no warning whatsoever. The ability initially appeared to be performed using Flame

Magic as a propellant, but it was more than that, the key to it seemed to be that the magic was released from his wings.

Also, due to Llinde's substantial intellect, his actions were planned out strategically. He never stepped into the attack range of an Evil Beings' pike, instead just sneaking up on them and only breathing low-level flames to provoke them. In addition, in order to avoid being targeted by arrows, he never stayed in one place and was always moving unpredictably to avoid being surrounded and becoming a sitting duck. Not just this, but whenever the Evil Beings and Magic Beasts tried to recover, he would roar and sow chaos in their ranks.

Despite the relative infrequency of his attacks, the guerilla tactics he was employing were excellent. His objective wasn't to kill enemies, just to support his allies and allow Mare and Kuina to be the main force.

Now, thanks to Llinde's support, Fran and Mare could focus on Valkyrie without being bothered by the Evil Beings.

「Flame Sword!」 – Mare

「Quartet Slash!」 – Fran

「You damn little girls!」 – Valkyrie

「Fine, I'll show you true fear, War Maiden!」 – Mare

「Fuck!」 – Valkyrie

「Humph, too late!」 – Fran

「Damn it...!」 – Valkyrie

Little by little, the converging attacks of Mare and Fran had cornered Valkyrie. Although most of the damage Valkyrie had initially suffered had been transferred to the Evil Beings, it was gradually being transferred less and less frequently. This was because Valkyrie was constantly taking damage during the battle. This, in turn, caused the damage she could

transfer to be far outstripped by the damage she was taking, causing the wounds she suffered to become more and more serious.

「Haha. I was thrown off by her wound recovery before, but it looks like she was just using a strategy based on Shield Techniques.」 – Fran

「What do you mean?」 – Mare

「Shield Techniques is a skill which allows the user to assume a portion of the damage that is suffered by allies. However Divine Shield Techniques is a skill which can transfer the damage the user suffers to their allies.」 – Fran

「Oh, I get it.」 — Mare

As we had reasoned out, Valkyrie had indeed been using Divine Shield Techniques. But now that her allies, Dullahan, and the Evil Beings, were caught up in the fierce battle, she could no longer use the skill to its full potential.

For now, we decided to give up on using Skill Taker. This was because in future battles we would likely need the skill to deal with the mysterious figure pulling the strings behind the scenes, that of Valkyrie's boss, Murellia, so we had to conserve skill usage as much as possible.

What's more, Valkyrie's arrow had already proven it couldn't pose any threat to Fran and Mare and Dullahan's Divine Shield Techniques had also been completely blocked by Kuina. So, in circumstances like these, there really was no need to use Skill Taker.

During the continuous offensive, I found that, compared to Fran's thunder skill, Valkyrie suffered more from Mare's flame skill.

「It looks like, compared to your powerful but fleeting thunder, Valkyrie is more afraid of my relentless, destructive flames.」 – Mare

「Oh I see!」 – Fran

「You even have the time to chat!?!」 – Valkyrie

「Of course, we have!」 – Mare

「Indeed, we do!」 – Fran

「Damn!」 – Valkyrie

Valkyrie couldn't hold back her anger anymore when she saw Fran and Mare were even chatting while avoiding her attacks. What she didn't know was this was also a part of Fran and Mare's tactics.

It seemed as though the two were planning to repay all the damage Valkyrie had inflicted on them, with interest. Moreover, because of their provocations, Valkyrie's attacks had become rushed and messy out of anger, presenting easy openings for Fran and Mare to avoid them. Because of this, neither of them had any intention of stopping the provocation.

「Hora Hora! Weren't you oh so confident before? Why have you gone all quiet!?!」 – Mare

「If you're having a hard time, just let me know!」 – Mare

「Fuck, shut up!」 – Valkyrie

Now that the tables had turned in our favor, we could afford to talk amongst ourselves. Valkyrie, however, had been pushed to the extent where she couldn't even stop to talk.

「It's time! Go in now!」 – Fran

「Gaaaaa!」 – Valkyrie

Finally, one of Fran's slashes broke through and cut off Valkyrie's left arm. This time, the wound made by the slash didn't recover and the detached arm flew through the air.

「I did it!」 – Fran

「KuA–Ga!」 – Valkyrie

Then, with a lunge of her Flame Sword, Mare cut at Valkyrie's body. The fire wrapped around the sword and charred the wound, instantly turning it black.

「Well, now! Changed your mind? If you tell me what I want to know, I'll give you a painless death!」 – Mare

「...」 – Valkyrie

Valkyrie knew very well that she couldn't turn things around. Disarming herself, she got up slowly. Even though she didn't have a skill like dimensional storage, it seemed as though she could still use some sort of ability to arm and disarm herself.

「So d'you feel like talking now?」 – Mare

「AhAh, I give up, I will tell you everything I know ——」 – Valkyrie

Muttering, Valkyrie began to pull out an object, it was a black spear from which waves of black magic arose. I had seen the same kind of magic wave long ago, it was the same sort of magic used by the Master of Evil Arts Rynford and the Half Evil Being Zerrosreed. After using Appraisal, Valkyrie's spear was displayed as [Evil Stone Imbued Spear].

「—— Impossible! I'll never tell you anything!」 –Valkyrie

Still being forced back by Fran and Mare, Valkyrie suddenly lost all semblance of control. She roared and veins throbbed on her forehead.

「UGaaaaa! Unforgivable! I will kill you all right here, right now!」 – Valkyrie

Then, from the spear in her hand, an evil specter burst forth.

「Even I can't control it! It will destroy everything until it completely devours my soul!」 – Valkyrie

In her rage, Valkyrie's face had now lost its previous beautiful façade. Her expression had turned distorted, almost demonic.

Chapter 313 part1

Translator:

Proofreader: H W

Rising from the Evil Stone Spear in Valkyrie's hand, the evil specter almost equaled the size and ferocity of the gigantic Master of Evil Arts, Rynford.

『Fran! Stop her before she can make her move!』 — Me

「En!」 — Fran

「Not if I can help it!」 — Valkyrie

In the instant when Valkyrie, holding the Evil Stone Spear, moved to attack, Fran and Mare leapt forward. However, their swords were blocked some sort of barrier surrounding Valkyrie. The barrier seemed familiar to me and looked somewhat like Rynford's but I wondered whether there were differences between the two, despite appearing to be the same magic.

「I had planned to release the power of my spear in Greengoat, but now it doesn't matter! Your country would suffer an even greater loss if I kill the two of you! At least you'll get to die together!」

While she roared, Valkyrie's wounds started instantaneously healing in a manner quite different from when she was sharing her damage with the Evil Beings.

Roaring, Valkyrie's wounds were healing in an instant. But it was not in the previous way that when her damage was shared with Evil Beings.

'Squelch.' Something was squirming, bursting out from inside Valkyrie's open wounds and filling them with new flesh. The reborn flesh seemed to be covered in rugged, black nodules, showing that the new exterior had been regenerated into Goblin skin.

'Bogo Bogo,' something were squirming and bursting, then her wounds were filled with new flesh. The reborn flesh seemed to be covered by some rugged black nodules, which appeared that only that part was regenerated from Goblin skin.

After an Appraisal by Fran, we found Valkyrie's race had become "Half Evil Being", and "Evil God's Slave" was newly added to her titles. In addition, every one of her statuses was improved and Evil Arts had been added to her skill column.

This was probably caused by the Evil Stone Spear, right? Due to the vague description Appraisal provided, it wasn't possible to learn any further details about the Evil Being or the Evil Stone Spear itself.

That probably caused by the Evil Stone Spear? Due to the vague description in Appraisal, however, any details about either the Evil Being or item of Evil God System was unknowable.

「Evil Stone! Devour my soul and destroy everything!」 – Valkyrie

Magic rose from Valkyrie's body, gradually becoming contaminated by the evil specter. Eventually her magic had been completely replaced.

「Damn it. Fran! We've got to give it another shot!」 – Mare

「OK!」 – Fran

「——Inferno Burst!」 – Fran

「Ha!」 – Mare

This time, Mare and Fran cast their Flame and Lightning Magic from a middling distance however, once more, the attack was reflected by the barrier.

「UGaaaaaaa!」 – Valkyrie

Valkyrie charged us in a flash, her eyeballs dyed pitch black and an ominous, groan-like roar leaking out of her mouth. We could no longer feel any sanity from her whatsoever, it seemed that her evolution into an Evil Being was progressing all too rapidly.

「Gaaa!」 – Valkyrie

「Damn you!」 – Mare

Using her sword Mare stopped the, now markedly more powerful, stab of Valkyrie's spear and retreated a large step backwards.

With her sword, Mare stopped the spear stabbed in full swing by Valkyrie, whose power had improved a lot, and retreated a large step back.

「Mare!」 – Fran

To support Mare, Fran also joined the attack. It looked like Valkyrie's barrier didn't have the ability to auto-guard so Fran, positioned behind her, easily broke through by slashing at Valkyrie's back, cutting into her spine.

Fran's slash had shattered her backbone and cut deeply into the underlying flesh, however her opponent's recuperative abilities had drastically improved. Any wounds were rapidly filled by squirming black skin and, worse yet, Valkyrie seemed to be completely unperturbed by the damage and didn't slow down her movements one bit.

「Gaa!」 – Valkyrie

「Watch out! 」 – Fran

Valkyrie's front kick broke through the Golden Flame's defense and Mare was blown backwards. However, as one would expect, Valkyrie's lower leg from the knee downwards had been charred by the searing flame. Moreover, the impact had completely smashed the charred limb to pulp. However, no sooner had the damage been done, with a strident "Guju Guju" sound, new flesh began jutting out from her knee and the leg regenerated. After several

instances of this healing process, Valkyrie, who had once had a beautifully feminine appearance, became covered with patches of melted, ugly Goblin flesh, the sight becoming increasingly grotesque with each passing second.

At that moment, Valkyrie quickly spun the heavy spear around in her hand and switched her grip, attempting to stab Fran who was behind her.

「UGaaaa! 」 – Valkyrie

「Damn! 」 – Fran

『Fuck! 』 – Me

Chapter 313 part2

Translator:

Proofreader: H W

While simultaneously attacking my opponent, I used Telekinesis to ward off the spear. At the same time, Fran used Divine Sword Techniques to counter Valkyrie, who, leaning sideways to dodge, lost her balance. Throughout the exchange, Mare's flames continually burned Valkyrie's body, however Mare herself had barely managed to stop Valkyrie's front kick with her sword. The situation had quickly become alarmingly dangerous.

「She's so tough to deal with! Our attacks don't seem to be affecting her at all!」 — Mare

With a grave expression, Mare bemoaned their desperate situation. Even if we attacked Valkyrie, she couldn't feel pain and any wounds we inflicted would recover straight away.

「GuRooooo!」 — Valkyrie

「Shit!」 — Mare

Mare, who was once again hit by Valkyrie's fist, saw that the burnt flesh began to regenerate, just as it had done before. If we continued like this, there really was no hope of victory. There was just no end in sight.

「Fran! I want to try a more powerful technique! Could you keep her busy for a while?」 — Mare

「OK!」 — Fran

「Right!」 – Mare

Mare retreated while Fran drew Valkyrie away. Despite not using Brilliant Lightning Rush, Fran tried her best to keep Valkyrie at bay by herself. With the improvement of Valkyrie's status, her fighting power had spiked considerably, however this was balanced out by the absence of Dullahan and the Evil Beings' assistance.

『Haa!』 – Me

「Fu!」 – Fran

Fran fought valiantly against Valkyrie and, little by little, backtracked until she circled back to Mare.

Although Valkyrie's fighting power had definitely increased, her intellect had all but disappeared. Thanks to this, Fran and I had a very easy time baiting her in. What was most worrying, however, was that Valkyrie's movements were getting faster and faster.

Did this mean she was previously in some form of incomplete state resulting from her forced transformation into an Evil Being? Was this why now, as her changed body and newfound strength began to align, she was so improved? If so, she has the potential to become even more dangerous. I suppose we can only hope that the technique Mare has up her sleeve is enough to put her down for good.

「Impact Slash!」 – Fran

The next instant Fran blocked Valkyrie's stab with her Divine Sword Techniques, using the force of the collision to put some distance between them.

Using this opportunity, Mare came forward. Despite it being the first time they had worked together, Fran and Mare managed to cooperate through eye contact, even their breathing seemed to be the same. Although she had appeared behind her, Mare's presence had provoked no meaningful response from Valkyrie.

「Haaaaa! Golden Interception Flame!」 – Mare

Mare now carried the Dragonblade Llinde, the sword she had previously been using, sheathed on her back. Instead in her hand was a shining sword. The iridescent sword she held seemed to be formed from the tight compression of her own Golden Flames. It was probably a technique that could only be used when the Golden Flame of Extinction was active, similar to Fran's Black Lightning summons.

「Nuooo!」 – Mare

「Ga...Ga...」 – Valkyrie

Mare's burning sword ran straight through Valkyrie's back, charring her body from the inside. Valkyrie's eyes and mouth began to erupt with a torrent of searing flames.

「GuGiaOOOoooo!」 – Valkyrie

Valkyrie was gradually enveloped by the inferno, forming a golden pillar of fire that rose straight up into the sky. Without the dark shadow screaming and struggling at its center, it would have been quite the picturesque spectacle.

「GuGaGaaaa!」 – Valkyrie

(ShiShou!) — Fran

『Finally!』 – Me

Now that Valkyrie was submerged in the intense flames, Fran had the time to release a major attack. I thought that Fran would use her Sword Lord Technique, Broken Sky, but it seemed that it wouldn't activate in her current state. Without Brilliant Lightning Rush, Broken Sky seemed unable to launch.

『UOooooo! 』 – Fran

Fran used Godspeed Slash and swung me at near light-speed, cleaving the air while using Transformation to explosively enlarge my blade to a gigantic size.

The moment I touched the Golden Flame, my blade began to dissolve. Fortunately, Flame Resistance prevented me from evaporating instantly. Only by combining Instant Recovery with Godspeed Slash could I bear the flames. Sure enough, the Beast Lord's Golden Inflammation could not be so casually touched. Nonetheless, before I even had time to react, I had already lost part of my body's blade.

In spite of everything, the moment I cut into Valkyrie, I finally felt her magic stone being absorbed. Strength flowed into me; this time, we'd really done it!

『I felt it work this time!』 – Me

Our relentless determination had finally paid off!

Chapter 314

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: Brandon Duran

The golden flame from Mare's Golden Interception Flame gradually died down.

By the time the flame had completely disappeared, the previous Valkyrie was gone, all that remained was her charred and blackened body, cut in half from her head down.

Gazing at the remains, I confirm the skills I acquired by devouring the Valkyrie's magic stone; Devine Bow Techniques, Divine Bow Arts, Resistance to Madness, Light Magic, Morale Boost, Troop Assistance, War Maiden, and other skills, all of which are fairly rare.

I was able to acquire a lot of skills this time, but the battle was the most dangerous so far. Right now though I don't have the time to go through them all, ill just have to count them once the battle is over.

The only problem is Evil Arts, it can't be helped if I obtain a bad skill, all I have to do is not equip it and hide it. Is what I thought...

『I can't find Evil arts anywhere. 』 – Me

Valkyrie possessed Evil Arts, but I did not inherit it. Could it be because I don't have the title of Evil God? If so, that's a relief!

That being said, there is another problem. I swallowed up Valkyrie, but I got very little Magic Points. In Valkyries case, I thought I could get more

than 300 Magic Stone points but... The result was only 5 points. Even the Magic Stone Points of the evil being was much higher than that. Was Valkyries Magic Stone consumed by the fierce fighting? Well, there are still a lot of things I don't understand.

「We... did it?」 –Fran

「En...」 – Me

That isn't the only problem either, burned by Mare's flame, Magic Stone being swallowed up by me, the Valkyrie surely died. However, black smoke is still rising from her body.

Mare, who just reversed from her Awakening state, did not relax her vigilance and kept staring at Valkyrie's body.

『No, it's impossible. But I do feel specter from Valkyrie's body...』 – Me

『No, that can't be, but, I do feel an evil aura emanating from Valkyrie's body...』 — Me

No, something's wrong, the source of the aura is not Valkyrie, it's from the long spear that she still clutches with a burnt hand. A powerful evil aura flows from the spear into Valkyrie.

「——Fire Javelin ! 」 –Mare

『It's the spear!』 – Me

「Mare, Spear!」 – Fran

「Indeed! I see!」 – Mare

『Devouring!』 – Mare

「——Fire Javelin ! 」 – Mare

「Haa!」 – Mare

Lightning Magic released by Fran & I and Flame Magic released by Mare hit the Evil Stone Spear, but are blocked by its barrier, not able to destroy it.

Then, the Evil Stone Spear radiates a strong black light that begins pulsing faster and faster.

From the split halves of the Valkyries body, tentacles begin to gush out. They intertwine with each other, working to mend the two halves, and Valkyrie's body begins to wobble and stand. Fran and Mare look with disgust as the body twists at the joints into impossible angles.

「Fire Arrow」 – Mare

「Haa!」 – Fran

Sure enough, Fran and Mare's Magic is repelled by the barrier.

「GaGa.....Ga.....」 – Valkyrie

Valkyries open mouth begins to emit a harsh radio static, and then her body starts to swell from inside, as if a monster was writhing within her, suddenly a part of her body begins to protrude rapidly.

Conversely, the body begins to emit a strong evil aura, and it is so fierce, only the leaking part even makes me feel horrible.

Fran frowns and Mare turns deathly pale as they resist the evil aura and stare at what had once been Valkyrie. This is not just an evil aura, it's more like a miasma.

Appraisal confirms that it is no longer Valkyrie, but an Evil Stone. It's race being the Evil God Beings, and currently, it's in a state of evil deification. The title is now 'The one endowed with the power of evil god.' Exactly the same as Rynford, the giant Master of Evil Ats who fought with Barbra.

The evil aura within the Evil Stone grows stronger and stronger.

「GaGaGaGa——」 – Evil Stone

It's dangerous to let it continue, we have to do something now.

『Fran, don't be merciful! Do your best to eliminate it!』 – Me

「En! Mare, do it now!」 – Fran

「Copy!」 – Mare

Mare agrees with us, and together with Fran they take some distance from the Evil Stone and begin to focus. Without knowing the structure of the barrier they can only attempt to break it with their most powerful attacks.

「Brilliant Lightning Rush!」 – Fran

「Pale fire.....!」 – Mare

『Ooo——! 』 – Me

Mare has just removed Awakening status by using the Golden Interception Flame. She isn't able to trigger it again in a short span of time. But she seems to have other tricks.

Unlike the previous golden flames, Mare's body is engulfed by pale flames unlike any seen before. She emits a distinct atmosphere that is accompanied by a sense of authority and sacredness.

Is that the power of Golden Flame Lionkin? Or is that just Mare's skill? Well, judging from the enormous magic I feel, it's really a very powerful skill, I'm looking forward to it.

『Charge! Haaaaa!』 – Me

I prepare Kanna Kamui in a chain, to be honest, even now a bitter cold attacks my spirit, threatening my sense of awareness. This is too much for me, however, I am in a scenario where I have to continue.

「Black Lightning Summoning!」 – Fran

「Destroy my enemies! Pale inferno!」 – Mare

My Kanna Kamui and Fran's Black Lightning, plus Mare's Pale Flame, hit Evil Stone directly.

Indeed, even Evil God's Barrier seems unable to defend against such a powerful attack. Although Kanna Kamui was briefly blocked, the Barrier was immediately swallowed up by Black Lightning and Pale Flame.

A huge explosion erupts from where the attacks connect.

「WTF?」 – Fran

「En...!」 – Mare

Despite their distance, Mare and Fran were almost blown away by the blast. They used multiple wind walls in succession to avoid being hit by the ensuing strong blow and debris.

Where the evil stone had once been, there now was a huge hole. The strike zone created a crater, more than twice as large compared to when I used Kanna Kamui alone.

「It's really a terrible explosion...」 – Fran

「En」 – Mare

「Such a power, even I was scared.」 – Mare

Fran and Mare stepped close to the edge of the crater.

「How about it?」 – Fran

「Where is it?」 – Mare

『I can't feel it.』 – Me

It seems that our attack succeeded. It's great to kill the Evil Stone before it rampages.

「What the hell, such horrible magic..... I got goosebumps on my skin.」 –Fran

「Probably from the Evil Stone Spear」 – Me

「Evil Stone... was it related to the Evil God?」 – Mare

When Fran and Mare were discussing, something suddenly came to my mind.

『The sword Dullahan had was called Evil Stone Sword...』 — Me

「Danger!」 – Fran

「What's wrong, Fran?」 – Mare

「Help Kuina now!」 – Fran

「Yes, indeed. Although I don't think Kuina will lose, It'd be better to get rid of Dullahan as soon as possible.」 – Mare

Kuina and Dullahan are still fighting. For now, it seems that Dullahan's Evil Stone Sword has not mutated... Anyway, it's better to go early to help Kuina.

『Is it all right? We have to deal with that broad-edged sword.』 – Fran

「En!」 – Me

Original translation from

If fond of I Was a Sword When I Reincarnated (WN), follow it in discord:

Chapter 315

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: B.D.

Fran and I appraise Dullahan as we rush towards Kuina, who is currently engaging her in fighting against Dullahan. Dullahan's weapon is indeed the Evil Stone Sword but his race is that of Ghost, unlike Valkyrie who was Evil God in name and race.

According to what Valkyrie said, it seems as long as one holds Evil Stone, it will devour their soul. Isn't it like a state of berserk? Well, not just the Evil Stone but, most times, Evil God-related anything can make the wielder go berserk. So if that's the case then we have to approach the Evil Stone Sword with caution.

But now, Dullahan doesn't appear to have gone berserk [2] at all. He's been fighting Kuina in complete silence, most likely due to the fact he is a Ghost now but... is he really going berserk?

No, something's wrong. Dullahan is a Ghost so perhaps the Evil Stone can't absorb his soul, after all, Ghosts are soulless creatures.

If I recall back in the floating island dungeon, the necromancer Jean talked about Ghosts. During that time, I knew little about soul-related things then.

Anything related to the soul is classified within the realm of God, and tends to be impossible for humans to manipulate them. If a creature dies, its soul is recalled by divine will. In layman's terms, it ascends to heaven.

At first glance, the Ghost Magic seems to manipulate the soul, however, it is not. The thing, that is manipulated by either the intense resentment rose from the remnants of magic or the magic stone controlled by the remnant spirit of the dead magic beast, is nothing more than a corpse, therefore, the Dullahan we are facing now should be soulless too. As for why the magic stone can manipulate the corpse, I think it must have something to do with the soul-like stuff created by the necromancer.

For that reason, the soul that can be devoured by the Evil Stone never been there, so Dullahan should not have gone berserk.

『So... if Fran and Mare are cut by that sword, wouldn't that be disastrous?』 – Me

That kind of weapon was able to turn Valkyrie just by her holding it, if Fran or Mare is cut by it, its aura would flow into their body. If that happens, wouldn't it swallow their soul up?

Even so, as long as the Evil stone's aura doesn't enter the body, the host's soul won't be dominated, right?

No, perhaps I'm too optimistic.

(ShiShou...)

『Fran, did you notice something as well?』 — Me

Around Kuina, an evil aura is perceived. The appraisal about Kuina showed that she had been infected by the evil aura. And on her shoulder, the extremely small wound is beginning to stain black.

I tell Fran what I just discovered, and remind her to be careful.

『Fran don't let the Evil Stone Sword touch you, otherwise you might be eroded from within like Valkyrie!』

(Understood!)

I don't know whether Recovery Magic or Purification Magic can clear the evil aura. Fran lets Mare know what I passed onto her and reminds her to be careful, but as I was contemplating whether to tell Mare about Kuina has been influenced by the evil aura...

「What! Kuina has been... by that sword? NuOo! I'm coming now, Kuina!」 — Mare

『Ah-, she's off.』 — Me

Well, can't be helped, we just have to help.

『Fran, as you saw, Mare's power is enormous. Let's leave the offense to her and in-turn we will provide support.』 — Me

Brilliant Lighting Rush will be needed for the final blow against Dullahan's the Evil Stone so I want to avoid using it right off the bat.

「Got it!」 — Fran

Mare has already cut into the battle between Kuina and Dullahan.

[Kuina! I've come to help!] — Mare

[My Lady, be wary of that sword, everytime it cut me, I could feel my body being affected by something.] — Kuina

[I know, just act as support!] — Mare

[Yes!] — Kuina

Upon hearing Mare's words, Kuina steps back obediently. This is not just a master-servant relationship between a princess and a guard, I can clearly feel Kuina's trust in Mare, She has no doubt as to Mare's ability to protect her.

「It's a Ghost, it can't feel pain. Now, my illusions can't affect it. It's different than fighting a person.」 — Kuina

「Yeah, you are quite incompatible with Dullahan.」 — Mare

「Didn't I say that from the start?」 — Kuina

「Nevermind that, just give me some support!」 — Mare

「Understood!」 — Kuina

Just as you would expect, their coordination is excellent. Mare releases her flame, while Kuina moves to Dullahan's blindspots to attack. Mare's attack never gets in the way of Kuina, and similarly, because of Kuina, Dullahan's balance is off, unable to attack Mare.

「Dorya!」 — Kuina

「——」 — Dullahan

Kuina sneaks behind Dullahan who is too busy with Mare's flame to notice her, then, unbelievably, she manages to grab and swing Dullahan with just one hand, effortlessly.

Dullahan's body rises in the air shortly before crashing back down, and without missing a beat, Mare unleashes a flame explosion, blowing him away again.

Kuina skillfully evades being caught by the explosion and retreats out of its reach. What flawless coordination.

Dullahan slowly rose, unable to determine whether he took damage. Even though he was much weaker than Valkyrie in terms of fighting, his durability was still formidable and he is wielding the Evil Stone Sword. It would be best to team up with Mare and it seems like she has the same idea, already she's begun to cover herself with the pale flames, all-the-while instructing Kuina and Fran.

「We have to go all out again, can you handle it Fran?」 — Mare

「Un!」 — Fran

「Kuina, you block his shield!」 – Mare

「Understood!」 — Kuina

Everything plays out like last time, Mare uses Pale Inferno, Fran uses Kanna Kamui, and I use Broken Sky from the back. As I'm thinking the tactics...

「Fran!」 – Mare

「En?」 – Fran

「Is it okay to let me destroy this guy? You killed Valkyrie last time, didn't you?」 — Mare

Come to think, Mare is also improving her EP to get stronger. Just like Manticore, Mare is more interested in EP than materials (refers to magic stone).

「Will the one who strikes the final blow get EP?」 – Mare

「I don't know! But the winner will obviously get a lot of EP.」 – Fran

「Then... I'll give you the magic beasts and evil beings, can you leave this one to me?」 – Mare

「What? You such a greedy fellow! Fine, I'll give you, no point arguing over it.」 — Fran

「Thanks.」 – Mare

「Don't mention it, as the older one, I have to act the part.」 – Fran

Seems like it's easy to pull her strings if you bring up acting like a senpai.

While Fran and Mare were talking, Kuina was able to rid Dullahan of his shield. She created an opening with illusion magic, grabbed the shield, and threw it far away,

「That's it! Destroy the enemy! Pale Inferno!」 – Mare

「Haaa!」 – Fran

Following Mare's Pale Inferno was Fran's Kanna Kamui. Fran strained to release and as such was only about half as powerful as my Kanna Kamui.

Still, since the Evil Stone we fought before required a lot to defeat, in fact, this kind of attack would be overkill for normal ordinary enemies. And even though we agreed to let Mare finish it off, I'm still hoping the magic stone isn't evaporated.

Going all out was the right choice. The Evil Stone Sword, persistent to the end, unleashed a barrier to protect the shieldless Dullahan, but even then, the combination of Kanna Kamui and Pale Inferno crushed the barrier and struck Dullahan directly, resulting in an explosion.

Before the explosion and flames could settle, Fran rushed straight towards Dullahan, raising me above her shoulders.

『Sword Lord Techniques · Broken Sky』

「——」 – Dullahan

Mare's flames engulf my body as I cut through Dullahans armor. I slice through the thick armor easily, as easy as cutting tofu, ripping Dullahan apart. Is this the power of the Sword Lord Techniques?

However, after killing Dullahan, spider web like cracks began to appear on my blade. Sword Lord Techniques seem to cause a tremendous load on it. But I could heal instantly even while I was melted by Mare's flames, so this damage is just a piece of cake. If I was a normal sword, however, I would've turned to a fine powder before even hitting the rival with that technique.

The impact of this time totally can't be compared to the time when Fran used Broken Sky on Valkyrie. The previous attack is at best half as durable as it's now, but this time's attacking power almost gets me into a devastating

crisis, Maybe it's due to the fact that I'm not very proficient in the Sword Lord Techniques. Still, it's strange that only Fran can exert my actual strength.

The terrible splitting and cracking sounded, and the fissures on my blade expanded. Even so, I did feel the feeling of shattering Dullahan's magic stone. The magic power was flowing.

The terrible sound of metal splitting and cracking resounded, and the cracks on my blade expanded into fissures, but even still, I felt the shattering of Dullahan's magic stone while the magic power was flowing into me.

『Gotcha! Magic Stone!』 – Me

TL's notes:

[1] Ghost: The Japanese word is '死霊' – Shiryo, which means the soul of the dead.

[2] go berserk: In Japanese, it is '暴走' – ぼうそう, go ballistic or out of control.

Original translation from

If fond of I Was a Sword When I Reincarnated (WN), follow it in discord:

Chapter 316

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: B.D.

My name is Kuina, I serve the Beastkin's Country as a palace maid.

When I was two, I was brought to the nursery for maids within the palace but I can't remember anything before then. The nursery gathered orphans for education, those qualified would be chosen as maids while those who could not meet qualification by a certain age would be assigned to other departments.

The training was so harsh that it was not uncommon to die, but even with poor performance, as long as you stayed alive, you wouldn't be abandoned. If it was an orphan shelter, it would be considered kind.

The qualifier to become a maid is combat power, and thanks to my talent in fighting, I was chosen to become one. I trained with my predecessors until the age of 14, whereafter I was introduced to my lady. I will always remember the first time I was introduced to the newly born lady.

The feeling I felt was indescribable. It wasn't just her loveliness nor the feeling of nervousness that I felt, although those were present.

It is well known that the children of the Red Cat Tribe have gold or red hair and yellow-tinted skin, and their eyes are mostly gold, silver, cyan, and brown, this includes members of the Royal Family.

However, my lady's hair and skin are snow-white and her eyes red. When we first met, I couldn't tell her race for a moment. It was surreal.

I didn't know at the time, but my Lady was a rare variant called **White Shrine Maiden**[1].

Everyone present was happy while gazing at the newly born girl. Those born White Shrine Maiden gain special skills or abilities at birth, and the white flame held by my lady is a strong unique skill bestowed by the gods. According to scholars who came to study the skill, it surpasses the golden flame in power.

With such power came high expectations and annoying people. There were those who wanted her to use that power to destroy the Kingdom of Bashar and others who want my lady to use the power to help themselves.

Those with malicious intentions began to spread bad rumors about the Kingdom of Bashar in hopes to infect my lady, but the Beast Lord, despite being a muscle head, thought of my lady's happiness and came up with a plan so as not to crush my lady with expectations.

In response, my Lord arranged **Bodyguards**[2] for my lady and also granted her freedom outside the palace. I was the only one entrusted to accompany her outside and despite the dangers, my lady gained freedom, and a life better than being stuck inside the palace.

Here, she grew up healthy and my lady who had been spoiled when she was born, turned out to be an exceptional fighter. By the time she turned 13, she had become strong enough to crush a dungeon.

When it happened, I was amazed. My lady was still not proficient in controlling her skill and accidentally made the skill go berserk. That E-rank dungeon, in just a short time, was annihilated.

This all happened in a dungeon near a small town. The local adventurers guild discovered Magical Beasts preparing to stampede, and my lady, who had been taught it was the nobles duty to protect her country, rushed to their aide.

Upon entering the dungeon, we encountered a stream of magic beasts rushing to exit, here my lady unleashed her skill. I told her she could

withdraw and leave it to the adventurers, they could have handled it, but she was still in a rebellious phase at the time.

Just a bravado, my lady unleashed her skill, which spread and swallowed the entire dungeon. From the entrance, all the mid-level magic beasts inside were engulfed by the white flame, and the size of the dungeon worked to my lady's advantage as the corridors were tight. In the face of the White Flame, even beasts ranked E and D could do nothing to stop her.

Although all adventurers survived in the end, the dungeon core was ruined, completely dead, so it was all in vain.

Through this event, my lady earned a lot of experience and gained her evolution, and with it a new title; Not Dungeon Traveler, but Dungeon Tyrant. You could feel the gods' influence in that.

My lady's eagerness to help would sometimes cause trouble for people, but at the end of the day, things turned out ok.

The only problem I could see was that she didn't have friends her age. Well, to begin with, she's too powerful when compared to those her age and her royal status would make those around her treat her with a sense of dignity.

Despite all that, my lady finally found someone who could be her friend.

We came across the rumored Black Lightning Princess in our travels. Since hearing the rumor, I had been wondering if she would become my lady's friend. Ah but to suddenly start fighting... my illusion of my lady with a friend began to crumble and it was a little hard to take in.

Fran was as fond of fighting as My lady and they got along well, but when I brought up that they were friends, they got angry and called themselves rivals instead. Honestly, it's hard to know what goes on inside the brain of a meathead.

After parting ways from Fran, we headed south to join the war against the Kingdom of Bashar but were rejected. Well, that was to be expected, with the Beast Lords' absence, they could not afford to send someone from the

royal family to the front lines, lest they were prepared to bear full responsibility.

Since we couldn't join the front lines, we ended up helping around at a supply base near the back.

My Lady's mood gradually deteriorated and I did my best to appease her, but the moment I brought up following Fran, she instantly lit up. What a simple girl, perhaps I can use this in the future?

Although we immediately headed north, there were no signs of catching up to Fran. It was during our journey we found out she had been involved in a riot for unknown reasons but when we arrived, we only heard that she had already left.

Finally, once we had a clear idea of where they would be next, we sped up, and even triggered Awakening, however, Fran's **Demonic Wolf's**[3] speed surpasses what we expected, and just as we were catching up...

We found something terrible at the location.

The place, Greengoat, was in a major panic with its people rushing to leave. According to the lord, a large number of Magic Beasts were approaching from the north.

Could it be a riot? If so, perhaps the Kingdom of Bashar is involved, it seems like Fran and other adventurers had been attacked by assassins so perhaps the two are linked. I wouldn't put it past them to send out assassins but if that's the case, shouldn't the adventurers be heading south not north?

Most of the adventurers in this country are battle-hungry and would take the double payback to the enemy. As a result, most of them were heading for the Kingdom of Bashar, leaving the rear undermanned.

Well, no matter, My Lady was in high spirits and after we learned that the remaining adventurers headed north, we set out immediately as well.

Along the way, we discovered two more groups apart from the one we were aware of.

One of the groups had already been intercepted, it seems there were some powerful foes, but the adventurers were good as well. We could join but would that be overkill? Instead, My Lady and I headed towards the last group that was a bit smaller.

The most shocking thing we encountered was the large number of magic beasts and evil beings riding them all wore similar equipment and were led by their commander, Dullahan. They were even able to properly follow orders and form battle tactics, however, even with all that they were no match for us. After we took out their Dullahan, the rest of the forces were easily dealt with.

After we finished wiping the remaining magic beasts, we continued north, trying to investigate the source, and as we proceeded, My Lady grew along with Llinde, and things became easier.

However, what was supposed to be a simple investigation turned out to be something more urgent. What we found was Fran surrounded by a large number of Evil Beings, holding them back on her own.

Of course, My Lady wouldn't be content with just investigating, and she would not let Fran fight alone so we joined the battle.

But, why did my opponent have to be the heavily armored Dullahan? To be honest, the kind of enemy is hard to beat with my skills. The main problem is that I don't have a way to end the fight. My fighting style revolves around assassination and pinpointing the enemies weakness, but that doesn't due to well against tanky ghosts.

However, since My Lady told me to do it, there is no reason to refuse.

「My lady has requested me to stop you.」

「——」

「Ok, fine. This silent ghost is so boring.」

「——」

「Whatever, guess it can't be helped, maybe I'll take this chance to learn to fight quietly.」

My life's motto is cut corners whenever possible but, in order to live up to my lady's expectations, I will go all out.

TL's notes:

[1] White Shrine Maiden – original text is '白神子'(Shiro Kami Ko).

Shiro – 白, means white, here it refers to the skin and hair color of Mare is white.

Kami Ko – 神子 (ふじょ), are women who mainly serve the gods of Yamato (Japan).

[2] Bodyguards – original text is '影武者' ('Kagemusha'), means shadowy bodyguards.

[3] Demonic Wolf – Fran's demonic attendant, Urushi, According to Ch. 51, Urushi is 'A Highbreed Wolf Demonic Beast capable of manipulating the Darkness attribute. Its Status is low compared to other Demonic Beasts of the same rank, but its Skill and Magic diversity is top-class. With many Skills related to stealth, especially the ability to hide and move within shadows, these Demonic Beasts are very difficult to find. Their existence has been confirmed, but there have been very few discoveries. Threat Level C.'

Original translation from

If fond of I Was a Sword When I Reincarnated (WN), follow it in discord:

Chapter 317

After devouring Dullahan's magic stone, I receive a huge number of points. I think this confirms that the reason Valkyrie didn't have a lot of points was that her soul had been consumed and the result weakened her Magic Stone.

I was able to get enough points, enough so that I was almost at another evolution, and I also got a lot of skills. Most of the skills came from the evil beings and I was able to get Mental Abnormalities resistances.

「Well then, let's take care of the remaining enemies, Fran, this time let me provide support.」 — Mare

「Copy that!」 — Fran

「Alright, I'll leave it to you.」 — Mare

「En!」 — Fran

「I can't awaken anymore, but these kinds of small fries will still be a piece of cake.」 — Mare 「1」

「My lady, use this.」 — Kuina

「An Awakening Potion?」 — Mare

「Yes, I Figured something like this might happen so I came prepared」 — Kuina

Kuina hands Mare what seems to be a magic potion, just where did she pull that out from?

If I'm not mistaken, she took it from under her skirt, that thing is so mysterious.

「What's that?」

「An Awakening potion.」

Looks to be a potion that allows one to use Awakening again. Normally, Awakening in exchange for power forces a heavy strain on the body, using it multiple times is tough, and it's even tougher if one is already physically tired, but that potion removes the strain caused by Awakening allowing one to use it again.

However, sounds fishy to force Awakening, I wonder what other side effects there might be.

「Does it has any side effects?」

「It's ok to drink it once. The only thing that happens is your sense of smell deteriorates for a few days.」

I guess if you were a Magic Beast that would be kinda bad, but then again, the upside is being able to Awaken again, so I guess it's actually a good trade.

「The Magic Beasts are scattering.」

Just as she said, the Magic Beast have begun to flee, despite that, the remaining Evil Beings are still willing to fight. If possible, we should wipe them out here before they can escape.

Even if a security force has been sent to protect the refugees, their power is still not enough to take care of that many Magic Beasts. 「2」

『We can't let them get away.』

The Ramparts we built with Great Wall are still relatively intact, there are a few holes that were made by Valkyrie but those can be repaired, and once that's done, we can use the wall to destroy the Magic Beast.

Using magic, we drive the Magic Beasts and Evil beings into the walls we build to restrict their movement. They rush towards the bottleneck, trying to break through, but of course, that's blocked.

Magic beings get pushed to the wall and a large number of them fall within a ditch. Before they can climb out, we bury them inside with earth magic. So far, things are going as planned.

In the first place, the Magic Beast has fallen into utter chaos. They have been attacked by Fran and me, pressed by Llinde, and saw their commanders slain.

And now, driven by Mare and Frans magic, the Evil Beings also fall into chaos and join the Magic Beast in ramming the wall.

「Good job Fran! This way it's easier to deal with all of them!」

Thus, Mare begins her slaughter.

Those within her reach she slashes with her sword, and for everyone else, she uses Fire Magic. Llinde also provides support from the air, similar to how Fran and I coordinate.

「KuOoooo!」

『What shall we do.....』

(Just be Mare's support)

『Of course but can't we kill a few?』

Mare would probably get angry if we go too far, but the Magic beast's stone is so tempting. Ok, destroying all the Magic beasts is a top priority, for now, besides, we can't be sure of victory yet, there's still that Murellia who commanded Valkyrie, so best save our strength.

We erect another Great wall, further pinning and surrounding the Magic beast who are trying to escape. I'm a little reluctant to use magic, but it's more important to destroy the current Magic Beasts.

「Haaaa!」

『Transformation!』

Fran and I kill those Magic Beasts near us and use Mana and Life Thief Skills to recover, then we continue caging the remaining Magic Beasts.

『Okay, that's it!』

「En!」

It took some time, but we manage to enclose the Evil Beings and Magic Beasts with Great Wall, now all that's left is to help Mare finish them off.

However, that may not be necessary as I can sense a large source of magic gathering inside the Great Wall.

Mare seems to be using the Golden Flame of Extinction, but there are also traces of white and gold enveloping her body so she's probably also using pale fire.

『Looks dangerous...』

「Think it will hit us?」

Fran and I stand above on the Great wall looking down on the Magic Beasts when Kuina rushes past us and warns us to run away.

「It's going to hit everyone! We have to get away!」

It seems even Kuina, who has been fighting alongside Mare, is wary of the powerful technique. Above, I also notice Llinde retreating high in the air.

『Fran, we have to run away now!』

「En!」

We follow Kuina in a hurry, then....

From the other side of the Great Wall, a huge pillar of fire rises, from far away, it resembles a volcanic eruption.

The wall itself can't sustain the level of power and heat from Mare's attack and with a 'Buku Buku' sound, it begins to crumble and melt.

『Waa.....』

If we hadn't moved, either the explosion would engulf us or we would be swallowed up by the Magma from the wall melting.

「Mare is really energetic today. Such an attack is beyond imagination.」

「She went too far.」

Fran Kuina and I managed to get away and are now watching the gold-white pillar of fire continue to rise. A Maelstrom of heat ravages the wall, and neither Magic Beast nor Evil Beings are likely to survive. Truly there is no better word than 'Annihilation'. What should have still been over 1000 Magic Beasts have been wiped with one blow.

「Will mare be ok?」

She'll be fine but may become a bit tired. Her flames cannot harm her but that's what led her to be a bit careless. Since she can't hurt herself, she has little disregard to her vicinity and has caused problems, perhaps I should properly "educate" her later.

That's seriously scary, I sure hope Kuina's "Education" gets through to Mare, but for now, the battle ends at last and finally, we can take a moment to relax.

TL's Notes:

「1」 In Ch.314 – Evil Stone, Mare had exhausted her Awakening status through her use of the Golden Interception Flame and so wasn't able to reuse it again.

「2」 In Ch. 310 – Mare and Kuina Join the Battle, Mare has sent a message to the Lord of Greengrass, asking him to dispatch security force to protect the refugees.

Chapter 318

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: B.D.

「My Lady, do you have any excuses for getting us involved?」

Kuina complained quietly to Mare, who rushed to Fran triumphantly after wiping out magic beasts and evil beings with her overpowered flame attack. Well, preaching is also fine.

「Well, that... I knew you would make it out. You aren't hurt anywhere right?」 — Mare

「We almost got swallowed by the wave of lava.」 — Kuina

「Er, that...」 — Mare

「To begin with, was it necessary to launch such a powerful attack? Ms. Fran took the trouble of trapping them, wasn't there a more efficient way to annihilate them?」 — Kuina

「About that...」 — Mare

「Besides, please look here」 — Kuina

Kuina pointed gently to her cheek.

What! It still the same as usual. Mare also had no idea what Kuina was talking about, tilting her head.

「Hmmm?」 — Mare

「Please, take a closer look.」 – Kuina

「Yeah, I'm looking...」 – Mare

「There's some dirt!」 — Kuina

「Who cares! Isn't it natural to get dirty in battle?」 – Mare

「The fact that it was caused by an ally and not the enemy makes it worse don't you think?」 – Kuina

「Alright fine, what a sensitive person! Let's discuss how to move forward.」 — Mare

Mare tries to change the topic, and Kuina, seeing Mare properly flustered, seems satisfied and goes along.

「Well, tea first.」 – Kuina

「Hey! Ain't this a battlefield?」 — Mare

So quick to adapt! Rather, why tea within this battlefield? That even took Mare by surprise, but Kuina still responds calmly.

「I believe you should take a break whenever you can.」 — Kuina

「Hmmm.....makes sense.」 – Mare

「Yes.」 — Kuina

She was convinced?! Kuina pulls a table from nowhere and lines up several teacups with grace. Then, she pours hot, black tea from a teapot. Mare takes a seat and relaxes on a chair that also appeared out of nowhere.

「I expected something like this might happen, so I prepared Beast Flower Tea. Its magic effect will alleviate the burden of awakening.」 — Kuina

「Ahm that will help greatly. As expected.」 – Mare

「Ms. Fran, won't you join us? We have scones.」 — Kuina

「Sorry, I've got to deal with the detached force.」 — Fran

Fran turned back after rejecting the offer, but after a few steps, her body began to shake, showing signs of collapsing.

『H-Hey! Fran, are you all right?』 – Shishou

「En.」 – Fran

Although Fran nodded to affirm she was alright, she looked pale. The tension of the battle and her willingness to save her people caused her to forget fatigue, and her body is approaching its limits. I should have noticed.

「If you fight like this, you won't be able to exert your power.」 – Kuina

「The tea is imbued with fatigue recovery effects, and it will also lessen the necessary time before you can awaken again, please give it a try.」 – Kuina

『Fran, take a break. Even if it's just 10 minutes, I myself feel a little tired as well, don't you?』 – Teacher

「.....En. Alright.」 – Fran

Fran complies with my proposal reluctantly, and Kuina brings out a chair for her. Once settle to take a break, the black tea and snacks catch her attention. She sniffs the sweet scones with great interest.

The scattered remains of charred magic beasts surround us, and the ground is still smoking from the lava in this battlefield, yet here is a tea party. Am I the only one who finds this crazy? After all, Fran, Mare, and Kuina all hold their tea cups as if it's natural.

Not only that, where did the tables, chairs, and black tea come from? I saw it with my own eyes they came from her skirt but... that's not where the potion bin came from. There is no space to even put these.

「Kuina, how did you get this?」 – Fran

「It's a skill. An innate skill of talented maids, 『Maid's Prudence』」 – Kuina

A skill similar to dimensional storage, however there are limits to what can be taken, those being only items that are indispensable in the line of work of a maid. Moreover, that has to be judged by the person themselves, but if one believes it is relevant to the work of being a maid, then it may be taken in. A good skill to have, but Dimensional storage makes it unnecessary.

Despite the drawbacks, it also has its advantages, one being that its a system skill rather than a Space/Time Skill. This means one can use it even when Space/Time Magic is being blocked.

「Among the royal maids, being able to store items is the first sign of mastery for a maid. Being prepared for all kinds of predicaments is what is the measure for a maid, and their reason to live.」

Their reason to live... The dedication of a maid is clearly evident.

「I almost forgot, I haven't formally introduced myself yet. My name's Nemea Narasimha, Princess to the country and an adventurer rank D. and the Golden Flame Lionkin.」 – Mare

「En. I am Fran, from the Black Cat Tribe. Adventurer rank C, and the Black Heavenly Tigerkin」 – Fran

「And this is my follower Kuina, and my companion Llinde.」 – Mare

「KuOOO!」 – Llinde

Llinde floats down, and looking closer, Llinde is really big. Even though his body is smaller than Urushi, his Wingspan makes him larger.

For the Dragonblade Linde to create such a huge dragon, it can't be a normal magic sword. It seems Mare had similar thoughts about me.

「By the way, Fran.」 – Mare

「En?」 – Fran

「What kind of sword is that?」 – Mare

Mare's bright eyes focused on me behind Fran.

「It's not just a magic sword, is it? What's the name?」 – Mare

「En.....」 – Fran

「Is it a divine sword?」 – Mare

What should we do? We could make up a lie but, I would like to be honest with someone who might become Fran's friend. Fran hesitates to answer and Mare continues speaking.

「Ah, hold on, It's not fair if only you tell me your secret, so I'll share mine as well. Then you can tell me yours, how about that?」 – Mare

「Secret? About you being a princess?」 – Fran

「Not that, something more amazing.」 – Mare

(ShiShou.....) – Fran

『Even if you ask me.....』 — ShiShou

Fran seems to want to tell Mare, but if Mare finds out, her being a member of the royal family might pass the information to the Beast Lord....

(Shishou, can't I?)

『.....Haa. It can't be helped.』

(Thanks)

How could I say no if she pleads like that? Well, I was hiding my identity to protect Fran from being targeted by others but if she feels its better to tell her, then theres no reason for me to object.

「Got it. Deal.」 – Fran

「Oh! Thank you very much. Well, first of all, start with my secret!」 – Mare

「My lady, Is that really okay?」 – Kuina

「Of course, Fran is trustworthy!」 – Mare

「Well my lady's intuition has always been spot on, so I have no objections.」 – Kuina

Kuina let out a sigh as she finished speaking, and I can't help but feel a little sorry for her. The secret of Mare being a princess is not something one would just tell freely, so I doubt she doesn't mind.

「As for the Dragonblade Llinde.....」 – Mare

「En」 – Fran

Mare's sword also holds a secret so I'm also curious, she takes it from her back and places it on the table.

「The original name of the sword is Violent Dragonblade · Llinde Wurm. It is one of the swords whose fame resounds throughout the world.」 – Mare

「!」 – Fran

And just like that, Mare tells Fran her secret.

Original translation from

If fond of I Was a Sword When I Reincarnated (WN), follow it in discord:

Chapter 319

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: B.D.

「Violent Dragonblade · Llinde Wurm is the sword's true name. Its fame as one of the Divine Swords is known throughout the world.」 — Mare

「!」 — Fran

「Ha ha. Surprised?」 — Mare

「En!」 — Fran

Fran nods enthusiastically, how could one not be surprised? Appraisal only shows Dragonblade Llinde, however, that might be because it is such a high-rank item that Fran can't detect it. So, naturally, appraisal can't work on a divine sword and Mare is brimming with confidence.

「It's true. However, due to a lack of ability from the user, the true power of this divine sword can't be fully released.」 — Mare

A divine sword is not something that can be wielded half-assed. That's probably why Mare can't fully exert Llinde Wurm's true power.

But still, it's so unbelievable. I mean, that's a divine sword, a superweapon, a legendary sword that can destroy a whole country and now said the sword is in front of my eyes. It's still unbelievable.

In the first place, the ability isn't as shocking. Well, compared to a magic sword, it's on another realm, but not the same realm I imagine a divine

sword. It just looks very adorable at the moment.

「It's true. I've had the Divine Blacksmith take a look at it.」 — Kuina

Kuina added. Her words remind me that this country has its Divine Blacksmith, so that means this sword is indeed a divine one.

『Really? It's a divine sword?.....!』

(Awesome!)

Truly this secret trumps Mare being a Princess. This information would affect the balance of the military balance of the world. It's surprising she would tell us so casually, guess that shows how much Mare trusts Fran.

『If that's the case, we have to be honest with you too.』

「Hm? What's that? Whose voice was that just now?」

Both Mare and Kuina appeared shocked upon hearing my voice.

「It was Shishou who spoke just now.」 — Fran

「Shishou? Do you mean your Shishou? Where is your Shishou now?」 — Kuina

「Are they invisible? I can't feel his aura at all.... What an astonishing skill」 — Mare

「Shishou is here.」 — Fran

Imitating Mare, Fran pulls me out and places me on the table next to Llindee, then begins my introduction again.

「This sword is Shishou.」 — Fran

「The sword your Shishou?」 — Mare

「Shishou is an Intelligent Weapon. A super sword.」 — Fran

『Nice to meet you. As the introduction goes, my name is Shishou. Just think of me as a talking sword.』 – Shishou

「Ooooo! Is the sword in front of me really talking?」 – Mare

「Amazing!」 – Kuina

Mare stood up in excitement, while Kuina remained calm as usual but still showed interest.

『Well, how's it going?』 — Shishou

「I'll be! Kuina, it's amazing! Is it truly an intelligent weapon? Ha ha ha!」 – Mare

『Well, I'm glad you're amazed but aren't you too surprised for the holder of a divine sword?』 — Shishou

「What do you mean? An intelligent weapon is something straight from a fairy tale you know?」 — Mare

『Yes, yes, but aren't divine swords the same? Besides, it's a mythical superweapon despite appearances.』 — Shishou

「It is true that divine swords are very powerful. However, while we don't know the exact amount, there are 26 confirmed in the whole world, meanwhile, an intelligent weapon is something that hasn't even been confirmed yet!

Original translation from dreampotato

Even if you say that it's hard to say I'm "Rarer" since divine swords surpass me in performance.

「En. Shishou is amazing.」 — Fran

「Yes. Even Kuina was shocked.」 – Mare

「Yes. To be honest, I am more surprised than when I first met Miss Fran.」 – Kuina

Her face remains expressionless, but Kuina's cheeks are a bit red and she seems excited.

「So what's the story behind your encounter with each other?」 — Kuina

「It was when I was a slave——」 – Fran

Fran begins recounting how we first met, and Mare seems touched. She uses a handkerchief Kuina hands her to wipe the tears and snot on her face.

「I see, I see! Fate brought you together. *Zubi*!」 — Mare

Note: Zubi – original text is 'ズビー', the sound of nose blowing.

Since the cats out of the bag, I also tell Mare about how I grow stronger by absorbing magic stones, how I don't know my origins, and that perhaps that Divine Blacksmith might know more about me.

「Know it all makes sense! I was wondering why Manticore's magic stone disappeared completely.」 — Mare

「Shishou absorbed it.」 — Fran

『Exactly!』 – Shishou

「But it's a really intelligent weapon. You even can grow.」 – Mare

「Llinde grew, too.」 – Fran

「Llinde was able to access more of its power as I got stronger. Technically, I'm the one who grew, but Shishou is truly getting stronger. You're so powerful now, becoming a Divine Sword is just around the corner.」 — Mare

The divine sword is the goal, isn't still too early? For that, we would need to annihilate the magic beast several times stronger than today's foes. Fran

answers back confidently to Mare, however. If fond of I Was a Sword When I Reincarnated (WN), follow it in discord:

「Of course. Shishou is the best sword. And one day it will be the strongest.」 – Fran

「Ha ha ha! Let's see who comes first then. Me fully exerting Linde's power or Shishou growing to a sword that surpasses a divine sword.」 — Mare

「Huh! Of course, I will be the winner.」 – Fran

「Don't count me out yet! One day, as the legend tells, Llinde will grow to the form of a giant dragon capable of smashing a whole castle.」 — Mare

A whole castle? Its gotta be a dragon hundred of meters long. A water dragon just bigger than a ship is already threat level B, I would imagine a dragon hundreds of meters long must be above A. The amount of power required to summon such dragon must be amazing, truly deserving of its status as a divine sword.

But Fran believes I can surpass said sword. If that's the case, I can't give up before it starts. I will meet her expectations, this will be my new goal!

「Where did Mare obtain Llinde?」 – Fran

「I'm not like you. Our encounter wasn't very dramatic.」 – Mare

「Simply in testing my own power and exploring an excavated remains, I happened to find a hidden room that had not yet been discovered, where Llinde was.」 – Mare

「After that, because I thought it was a special sword, I asked the Divine Blacksmith to appraise it and found out that it was a divine sword.」 – Mare

Surely Mare was called out by the sword. She may think it was luck but maybe she was chosen? Kuina seems to agree, meanwhile Mare proudly recounts her story to Fran about how she got the divine sword.

Original translation from

If fond of I Was a Sword When I Reincarnated (WN), follow it in discord:

Chapter 320

Translator: Makisima

Proofreader: B.D.

Kuina faces Fran while Mare is recounting the time she met the divine sword. Kuina who was recently under the Evil specter's influence now appears energetic.

『Hmm? Oh, wait a minute. Is Kuina okay?』 – Shishou

「What's wrong?」 – Mare

『Just now, shouldn't Kuina still be in the evil specter's drunkenness?』 – Shishou

「Oo! That's right, I almost forgot about that! Are you okay?」 — Mare

「I'm all right, no problems. This evil specters drunkenness, I've heard of it before, but it's my first time experiencing it.」 — Kuina

Kuina seems to know the evil specter's drunkenness.

「The evil specters drunkenness is an abnormal status that occurs when one engages in a long battle with a powerful evil specter opponent, like those who are Kin to the Evil God. It's like having a hangover, but I'm not a heavy drinker so is this what a hangover feels like? Why people would bear onto themselves this state of pain is beyond me, drinkers are indeed fools.」 — Kuina.

It's not that everyone who drinks gets hangovers! Alcohol is just so delicious that some people drink a tad bit too much.

「Although its bad if left alone, now the source has been cut down, it will leave on its own. In fact, after my lady and Miss Fran took down Dullahan, its effects disappeared.」 – Kuina

As a matter of fact, when we used Mare's white flame and Frans Kanna Kamui to wipe out the evil stone sword I felt something. However, compared to the evil stone spear, the evil stone sword seemed much weaker in its effect, perhaps it was because it didn't absorb the soul of its host?

Just as I was thinking about the mystery of evil stone, Mare suddenly said.

「Speaking of which, why was Shishou left in that place, seemingly in the middle of a forest right? Did the blacksmith who created you place you there?」 – Mare

『No, it's not.』 – Shishou

I made sure to tell Mare and Kuina about my time being immovable and waking up within a pedestal inside the forest of exhaustion. I also told them how I used telekinesis to overthrow magic beasts until I fell back into the forest of exhaustion after tiring, but it's hard to explain being a reincarnator, besides its no more strange that what I am now, and I doubt its believable.

「As for the pedestal on Maookami Plains...」 – Kuina

『Do you know anything?』 – Shishou

「Dunno!」 – Kuina

So sad. Although Kuina has heard a little, she still doesn't know much about that. She had never even been to the Kuranzeru Kingdom, so it was reasonable for her not to know that place.

「By the way, Mr. Shishou is still very human as you even put yourself in a vegetative state due to your complacency.」 – Kuina

Ooops, Kuina is really sharp. Well, if one thinks about it more, they would come to that conclusion no? While I am inorganic as an intelligent weapon, I am able to think and communicate. And while I am not exactly the same as a human being there are similarities.

And if I evaluate myself objectively, I think I am very similar to human beings. Then, I can't help but wonder, was it really necessary to be forged like this?

「Shishou was a former human, so of course, he would think like one.」 – Fran

Fran, excuse me? Telling them even that? However, the thing about being a reincarnation would be too difficult to explain so let's leave it as the soul of a human sealed in a sword.

Nonetheless, the truth still surprised Mare and Kuina. Mare was struck dumb with astonishment and even jumped out of her chair in surprise.

「Is that true?」 – Mare

「En.」 – Fran

「The soul belongs to God's jurisdiction. That is to say, it is impossible to seal human souls in swords unless it is the god or the existence of god's level.」 – Mare

「Hmm! It seems Shishou is more than just a magic sword!」 – Mare

Really!? Well, we can't count that out. After all, I was reincarnated from another world, but could it really be the will of God? Well, if it isn't, it would be disgraceful to say it happened by accident. And if it is the case I would feel self-conscious.

「Well, Shishou can bestow skill onto Fran, and still use them, right?」 – Mare

『Why do you think so?』 – Shishou

「I've heard before about the so-called skill was just the power of the soul. So since Shishou possesses the soul of a human being, you should also be able to use your human-soul skills besides the Telepathic Communication and Telekinesis attached to the sword.」 – Mare

『Ma, I can use them indeed.』 – Shishou

「As expected! I can sense that the time gap of Fran's magic and skill use is unusual. I've been wondering if there's any secret in it.」 – Mare

Actually, the fact is that during the interval between Fran's launch of Sword Techniques, I kept releasing magic without a chant.

Without Accelerated Thought and Parallel Processing — No, even if one sued that, it would be impossible for a human to do it. Mare took note of that during the battle and assumed it was a special skill.

「So the flurry of blows was a result of multiple magic techniques right? Were those your skills Shishou?」 – Mare

『Ah ah.』 – Shishou

「That's so amazing! At first glance, it appears that only Fran is moving, but in fact, its both Shishou and Fran using Supreme Magic together. To be honest, even now you could be considered a quasi-divine sword...」 – Mare

『Ah, but I didn't do it in the mock battle with Mare. She just borrowed my skills.』 – Shishou

「I knew that. We (Fran and Mare) are two of a kind! Even if Shishou offered to help, Fran would not agree.」 – Mare

Mare knows! Is that so-called common sense between two battle junkies?

「After all. We are very similar. Our age is close, we are Lion and Tiger, and we both hold powerful swords and crave for battle, don't you agree Fran?」 – Mare

「En. Yes.」 – Fran

「Well, there you have it, it is that!」 – Mare

「En?」 – Fran

Mare was a little confused and began to talk about something inexplicable. And she suddenly began to be flushed. Faced with Mare now, Fran turned her head askew, at a loss.

「You know, that!」 – Mare

Fran is confused. What on earth did Mare want to say?

「My lady, I know you're embarrassed. But Ms. Fran won't understand you if you don't make it clear. Since you are very close to each other, it would be better yo just come out and say your friends.」 – Kuina

「What! What are you talking about!?!」 – Mare

Aha, Fran and I get why Mare was getting bashful. Despite our short time together, we knew that Mare's tsundere would get in the way of saying such things. So, Kuina definitely said that on purpose.

So Kuina was just teasing MAre to help her expose her intention. The ratio is 6:4 with Kuina mostly teasing.

But before Mare opens her mouth again, Fran spoke first.

「We fought together so that makes us friends.」 – Fran

「F, Fran...!」 – Mare

Friend or comrades? Well, comrades-in-arms are also kind of friends.

「So that's it? We are friends?」 – Mare

「En.」 – Fran

「Ah ah, my lady finally graduates from being a loner.」 – Kuina

Mare and Kuina appear touched, well, it's our pleasure as well, its good for Fran to have one more friend.

Original translation from

If fond of I Was a Sword When I Reincarnated (WN), follow it in discord:

Chapter 321

CHAPTER 321

The New Evil

“Now then, our strength should be about recovered. Shall we get moving?”

“Nn. Will go to the detachment force.”

“I agree that they shouldn’t be left alone, but wouldn’t it be better to check out where the monsters appeared to the north?”

But Fran shook her head.

“Will do later. Everyone’s safety is first.”

“Fumu. Then we’ll deal with the detachment first.”

“Then, please wait a moment.”

Kuina stores the table in her skirt like some sort of magic trick. If the skill is similar to Dimensional Storage, shouldn’t she be able to store it on the spot?

“Why do you go through the trouble of putting it up your skirt?”

“As a maid, it’s a matter of taste.”

I don’t get it. But I do know there’s something weird about that.

“Shall we get going? Come, Linde!”

“KUOOOOOOOOO!”

“If it’s at your current strength, you should be able to carry 3 people!”

“KUO!”

If we ride on Linde’s back, who is capable of moving at high speeds, we should be able to cover a lot of ground quickly.

“The battle is over, isn’t he acting kind of weir- !?!”

“Nn!”

Immediately after being summoned by Mare, Linde cried out in alarm. We all simultaneously turned our gaze to the northern sky. A huge magical presence. A magic signal so strong we understood exactly how ridiculous it was even from this distance was heading straight towards us. It’s moving at least as fast as Linde.

“Somethings coming!”

“Nn!”

This ridiculous presence is going to reach us in no time. This aggressive and intimidating magic power was strong enough to prick our skin.

“Hey, hey... seriously?! This presence makes the Valkyrie seem adorable....”

Fran and Mare are practically breathing in magical energy at this point. But in that moment, the magical presence instantly changed. The magic that was so strong it scared us shitless was suppressed to a bearable level.

It’s as if the gods of evil themselves had appeared, such a deeply frightening evil. The Evil Lord was there, standing in the sky. To its left and right were multiple shadows, which seemed to be followers.

Though, the most surprising thing wasn’t the overwhelming evil presence. This angry Evil Lord was a pretty girl. And besides that, don’t they look kinda familiar?

“... A black catkin.”

Yep, just like Fran, the mysterious girl that was bleeding evil had the distinct characteristics of a black catkin.

“If you are so weak as to be defeated by a mere 3 people you are useless to me. No matter. At least serve as my sustenance.”

As the girl declared such with a strange sounding voice, the corpses of the monsters around began to shine. Strangely enough, the light given off by the corpses didn't cast a single shadow.

As it turns out, a huge amount of magic began flowing into the girl. Apparently, she was using some sort of method to absorb the magical power from the monsters and Evil Beings. I could feel that her magical power had increased slightly.

It's important to note, I say “slightly” because she had an immense amount of magic power to begin with, but to us it was a huge amount of magic power. If you have 10 billion yen, you might not think much of getting another million, but for most people it's a ton of money. Such is the comparison.

It seems the magic stones I absorbed and the materials we put in Dimensional Storage weren't absorbed. That was the only good news.

The girl began to descend from the air as if she was on an invisible elevator. On both sides of her, two beautiful women of an unknown age materialized, and behind them are two huge knights wearing full armor. The girl's magic power was overwhelming so it was hard to notice, but her followers also had tremendous power. As I looked closer, I can see that the two women are Valkyries and the two knights are Dullahans.

I was struggling with the appraisal results. Because they were actually stronger than the Valkyrie we fought. The Dullahan's ability is almost equal to it. Numerically speaking, compared to the army we just destroyed, they were far fewer. But in terms of power, the army couldn't even compare.

Fran typically never talks. Unless she is prompted to, she usually never even speaks a single word. But it can't be helped. The enemy is too strong.

“ ... Who?”

Even if she isn't yelling, I'm still on edge. It seems like the encounter with the Beast King gave her resistance to fearing the strong, the cat girl in front of us is on a whole different level compared to him.

“Ohoho. My name is Murellia! You didn't know?”

“Nn, knew.”

“Oh? Is that so?”

As Fran says so, Murellia smiles happily. Murellia was the name of the master named by Valkyrie! Is this her? I tried appraising her, but didn't receive a result.

“Ufufu. Isn't that a bit rude? Could you stop trying to Appraise me? It's no use~”

Damn, she has Appraisal Detection and Appraisal Block at a level that invalidates my Eye of Empyrea? Really, who is this girl?

“I wonder where you heard my name from~?”

“Heard from Valkyrie.”

“Ah... so that was it.”

Apparently, Fran's answer wasn't the one she wanted. She was clearly disappointed. However, Mare seemed astonished and stared at Murelia.

“Murellia the black catkin??”

“Oh? Has that young lady over there heard of me?”

“Are you telling the truth?”

“Well now, I suppose that depends on which Murellia you’re talking about~”

“ ... the princess obsessed with the Evil God.”

“ Bingo!”

“Mare, who?”

There’s no other asshole it could be. When I heard Mera’s explanation, I knew beyond a doubt.

“She’s the one that caused the black catkin tribe to be punished by the gods 500 years ago.”

Chapter 322

CHAPTER 322

Murellia and the Royal Family

“She’s the one that caused the black catkin tribe to be punished by the gods 500 years ago.”

Did she just say 500 years ago? In that case, this girl has been alive for all this time? Even if she’s awakened, her lifespan shouldn’t be anywhere near that long...

“Ah, if you know my story, please regale her with tales of my greatness!”

Murelia sucked in her chin as she said so.

“... I’m not sure how much of it is legend and how much is truth.”

Mare mutters, and tells Fran and I the story of Murellia. Apparently the story was passed down in the form of tradition, so she was unsure how much of it was accurate.

Even if she says that, almost every tradition and book related to the Black Catkin Tribe were erased by the previous Beast King, so the credibility of anything remaining would be quite low.

“Do you know why the Black Catkin Tribe was punished by the gods?”

“Tried to use Evil God’s power.”

We haven’t heard the whole story, but we at least know that the tribe tried to get the blessing of the Evil God.

“That’s right. But, there’s more to the story; It’s said that the only reason the Beast King at the time drove the Black Catkin Tribe to do such a thing is because Murellia pushed him to do so.”

500 years ago, when the Beast King that was ruling the Black Catkin Tribe at the time tried to harness the power of the Evil God, it seems that he wasn’t actually trying to grant its power to the whole tribe in the beginning. At first, they only intended to harness its power solely for the royal family in order to further solidify their rule.

During this period, it was Murellia that ignited the king’s ambition. At the time, she was a B Rank Adventurer known as the Thunder Emperor who gained power that was in no way inferior to an A Rank as a result of gaining the blessing of the Evil God. Though, it was said that her abilities went far what ought to be capable of a mortal.

The Beast King, who bore full witness to the fruits of Murellia’s transformation, became obsessed with bestowing the same abilities to others in the Black Catkin Tribe. With the backing of the Beast King, Murrelia wielded her authority to force countless Black Catkin into accepting the power of the Evil God. At the same time, she executed Black Catkins that spoke out against the royal family and began to actively suppress the other beast tribe races.

“As a result, the name of Murellia has been cursed and despised, and has been passed down through the royal family as a dangerous person for generations. That’s all I can say for certain.”

In other words, she’s the one who pushed the royal family into invoking the wrath of the gods, and who left legends of various misdeeds and atrocities. Why the hell is such a person here in the first place?

Murellia listened attentively as Mare recounted her legend. Despite all the slandering and bad mouthing involved in it, she actually doesn’t seem to care that much. However, partway through the story her expression dropped. Soon after Mare finished, she opened her mouth.

“My version of the story is a bit different, but no matter. Rather, are you a Red Lionkin tribal chief?”

“Indeed I am.”

Mera seemed to feel something in the tone Murellia used, and answered carefully. No, if you think about it, it's a given that Murellia doesn't have benevolent feelings towards Mare.

After all, when the Black Catkin Tribe earned the wrath of the gods and were wiped from history it was the current royal family, the Red Lionkin Tribe, that erased their existence and took their throne.

There isn't a reason in the world for the two of them to get along. Rather, if this goes on much longer they might go for each other's throats.

“I guess that's true... Fufufufu.”

“Are you really the Thunder Emperor Murellia?”

“Of course. Indeed, I am the second princess of the Beast King, the Thunder Emperor Murellia.”

“I'm afraid you're wrong there. The time has long since passed when you were royalty.”

“Wrong. The Krishna family still retains its royal standing. Rather, it's you throne-snatching imposters that have overstayed your welcome.”

Well, I figured it'd be like this. While Murellia and Mare enthusiastically exchange insults Fran asks Murellia a question.

“Why did you do this?”

“You, has anyone ever told you that you don't use enough words? Well, I know what you were trying to say. It goes without saying that my goal is to get rid of the usurpers, and restore the prestige of the Black Catkin Tribe! And to once again create a paradise for our kind!”

I have to admit, I was a little thrown off when I heard her say that. Didn't the legends regarding her write her off as wicked and malicious? I could've sworn she was an enemy of ours...

Is she trying to save the persecuted members of the Black Catkin Tribes? Sure, she forced the residents of Schwarzkatz to evacuate, but we don't have any proof she was planning to attack it to begin with...

It seems that Fran is thinking along the same lines, and asks Murellia more questions.

"You want to help Black Catkin? But, now Beast King and Black Catkin are allies."

"What do you mean by that?"

The answer comes from Mare.

"The persecution of Black Catkin among the beastmen is coming to an end. And, thanks to Fran, they now know the method to evolve."

"Hmm..."

Even as the two of them explain it, Murellia only tilts her head.

"So?"

"You did this to save Black Catkin?"

"Oh, I get it. You're wondering why I tried to attack the Black Catkin Village."

"Nn."

"Ufufufu. It goes without saying that the worms that have lost their pride and fell to living with the other tribes have no right to call themselves Black Catkin any longer."

"Wh-"

She said something like that. The only comparison I can think of is going out of your way to exterminate pests that have already left your house, where's the logic in doing that? No, besides being an enemy, it seems like she has a few loose screws flying around.

“B-But, no point in paradise if you kill all Black Cats?”

“Gahahaha! Something as trivial as that, as long as you use the power of the dungeon, you can do anything!”

Come to think of it, we did hear that there was a dungeon involved somewhere in this mess. But using a dungeon requires tremendous resources. Exploiting one would be no easy task.

“... Really tried to attack everyone?”

“Yes, yes! But you are different!”

Murellia exclaimed as she pointed at Fran.

“You managed to evolve marvelously, and you're still growing! If you follow me, I will guarantee your safety and your life!”

Even though the lives of Fran, Mare, And Kuina were all just threatened I don't feel the slightest bit upset. I don't feel like we can lose here. Rather, my sight is rather clear right now.

In reply to Murellia, who believed with full confidence Fran would take her hand, Fran offered these words.

“Sorry, die.”

Chapter 323

CHAPTER 323

The Difference Between Us

“Sorry, rather die.”

Fran flatly refuses Murellia’s friendly offer with a cold voice. As soon as those words were spoken, Murellia’s face changes completely.

“Haa? Do you understand what you’re saying? I’m saying I’ll let you become my slave. You’d refuse that? Are you sane?”

Even in the face of Murellia’s wrath, Fran didn’t budge an inch. Right now, we’re up against an angry opponent with an unbelievably overwhelming amount of power, there’s no one who’d blame Fran for being scared right now. Even so, after being told that Murellia planned to kill the entire village, Fran was far angrier. Even if she didn’t appear frightening, at this moment Fran’s anger could swallow Murellia’s whole.

The Valkyries flanking Murellia began to react to Fran’s fury.

“Quite a feisty little cub, isn’t she?”

“She certainly seems to be struggling with her feelings quite a bit.”

“Really. There’s nothing quite as unsightly as the struggling of a small fry.”

“Girl. Shouldn’t you be begging for your life right about now? If you struggled against our talentless little sister, there’s no way you can beat us.”

“That’s right! If you beg for our forgiveness right now, I’ll forgive you after only 3 days of torture!”

3 days of torture, huh... If these guys are serious, it might actually be better to just die, like Fran says. These women are absolute sadists.

But, talentless little sister? Are these two related to the Valkyrie we fought earlier? Fran’s questioning confirms my thoughts.

“Mm, that’s right. She wasn’t even worthy enough to receive a name from our lord.”

“Being the sister of someone like her though, it’s kinda embarrassing...”

“Can you believe that she got destroyed by this tiny runt after complaining to Lord Murellia and leaving the main army? Talk about shameful...”

“Aren’t we three sisters such a mess?”

As they said while they were bantering, these Valkyries not only had racial names, but individual names as well. Sigrun and Rossweiss. It’s quite similar to Urushi’s circumstances. If they were named by someone as powerful as Murellia, their power would be equivalently raised to new heights.

That should be the case, but when I appraised the two of them earlier I only briefly glanced at their status and some of their skills. My memory isn’t good enough to compare the difference between them and Valkyrie we fought earlier. I really want to check it again, but Murellia has appraisal detection. I can’t carelessly appraise or I’ll get caught...

All I remember is that they seem to have higher stats and skills than the one we fought, and I confirmed that they have that troublesome War Maiden skill...

“I wonder if this brat can even comprehend the difference between our power? I wouldn’t want to make such a small fry one of my servants.”

“No, Lord Murellia. It seems that, unfortunately, she refused your offer in spite of knowing the gap in power between you two.”

“Huh? Then why?”

“I am unsure. Normally, if Lord Murellia made someone such an offer, it would be only natural for them to shed tears and be happy...”

As expected as one of the Valkyries, she’s dead serious. It seems that their loyalty towards Murellia borders on fanaticism.

“Hmm, then, maybe I should show off some of my strength? Fufufu, girl! Gaze upon my terrifying powers and tremble!”

Upon saying so, she began suddenly chanting. It seems that she at least doesn’t have Chantless or Silent Casting. But that aside, I know this spell. It’s one that I’ve cast many times. Which is exactly why I couldn’t ignore this.

[Fran! Mare! Stop her! She’s casting Kanna Kamui!]

“Nn! Hah!”

“Ku-!”

It seems that Fran noticed and started taking action even before I sent out the warning. Mare was also moving to cut down Murellia.

“Oh~? You’re familiar with this spell?”

“It seems that they have a better knowledge of magecraft than we thought?”

“Though, that doesn’t mean we’ll let you disturb our Lord.”

Fran and Mare jumped out towards Murellia, but were immediately intercepted by the Valkyrie sisters and the Dullahans. As we suspected, we weren’t going to be able to get through them instantly.

But that isn't a big problem. While we occupied her escorts, Kuina slipped behind us and was approaching Murelia. This was a surprise attack that used Illusion Magic at a level that I couldn't even detect her movements.

"Tch, a barrier."

However, Kuina wasn't able to penetrate the barriers surrounding Murellia and was repelled. It seems that, as I thought, we weren't going to be able to go straight for the boss from the get-go.

At this moment, the chanting that was being woven from Murellia finally reached completion.

"-Kanna Kamui!"

In response to her invocations, the heavens split open and poured out a screaming white light... Wait, isn't something a bit strange?

Normally, it would make sense to think that she would such a spell quite a bit away away from us. After all, she was using it as a threat.

The problem was that the white lightning was... strangely underwhelming? There's no doubt that she used Kanna Kamui, but isn't it completely different from the one I cast?

For starters, when I use Kanna Kamui, a thick white bolt of practically living lightning descends from the sky and rampages in the surrounding area. But Murellia's Kanna Kamui is less than half of the size of mine when I cast it.

At first, I thought the difference in magnitude is because she didn't put that much magic energy into it. But as I thought more about it, that didn't make any sense. There's no reason she would threaten us with it if she was going to make it seem so weak. Furthermore, rather than a distance far away from us, the white lightning stabbed into the ground 15 meters from where we were standing, confusing me further.

DOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!

The deafening sound of the explosion snapped me out of my train of thought.

[It's completely different from mine...]

As I thought, it's not a difference in magical energy. I can see that now that I've seen how its impact performs. Even though the spell landed in such close proximity to us, the explosion was overwhelmingly smaller than I expected. If you were ready for it, you could definitely take steps to avoid it. But that didn't mean it was weak at all.

The white thunderbolt looked thin as a result of Murellia converging multiple Kanna Kamuis as tightly as she could. As the lightning bolts struck, it drilled straight into the ground as opposed to forming an impact crater. The hole it formed then served as a funnel, which channeled the explosive energy of the strike straight back into the sky.

If you were to compare it to my Kanna Kamui, it covered less than a tenth of what mine was able to. However, conversely, any enemy caught in the path of Murellia's Kanna Kamui was likely to suffer several magnitudes more damage than if they were caught in mine.

It's impossible for me, who has their hands full just casting the spell. We're using this magic at the lowest possible level, while Murellia is capable of adjusting the number and power of the lightning strikes. Who the hell does she think he is? Is this what mastery of magic is? This has to be rigged...

What Murellia just did is completely different from something like converging Fire Arrows in order to increase the power behind it. Even more difficult than simultaneous activation. It's impossible unless her control of magic power is several magnitudes higher than ours, not to mention her proficiency with thunder magic.

“Well? How was it? Do you have a grasp at how different we are now?”

Even after accomplishing such a thing, Murellia stood before us, calm and undaunted, with a condescending tone.

Translator's Note: I've decided that, due to the irregularity of my update schedule, I'm going to put estimations on when I'll be done with the next chapter at the end of all future updates, pretty much in the same location that this note is. Furthermore, because I know how heart-rending it is, I'm also going to try to refrain from leaving large gaps in updates if a chapter finishes with a cliffhanger.

Lastly, I've been reading the comments on the previous chapters, and I am deeply thankful for all the positive feedback you have left. Thank you for all your kind words.

Next chapter in 4-6 hours.

Chapter 324

CHAPTER 324

Failed Negotiations

Fran takes a shocked breath, seeing Murellia's perfect control of Kanna Kamui.

"Fufu. It seems you're wise enough to understand what I did just now."

"..."

"Well? Will you die here, or will you become my slave? Ah, the girl from the clan of usurpers and her maid will be killed here no matter what you choose. Don't do anything unsightly."

Although she's laid back while speaking to Fran, as if another person, she shoots a murderous gaze at Mare and Kuina. The speed at which she switches faces is just creepy... Even if she's over 500 years old I guess she still has the spiritual youth and instability that comes with being a kid.

Although, there's no doubt we'll be given the same murderous look if we reject her offer again. It'll be just as furious as the look she's giving Mare, if not more so.

Fran knows that too. But her answer doesn't change.

"Nn, said earlier, but would rather die than accept."

Yeah, even it earned us time to act or some opening for an attack... acting is really annoying.

As soon as Fran gave her response, Murellia's eyes narrowed. We were instantly bathed in her murderous intent. It seems she's finally recognized us as a proper enemy.

"I see... then die."

Upon her command, the Valkyrie and Dullahan immediately advanced towards us. It seems they were infuriated with Fran's attitude with Murellia, and wanted to kill her before Murellia even gave the order. Especially from the Valkyrie sisters, there was a clear aura of fury leaking out from them.

It's pretty clear they had a plan of attack in mind to kill Fran. They were way too quick to attack her. Well, since we're confirmed enemies now, I can fire off appraisals!

"You denied Lord Murellia's generosity! I'll kill you!"

"Die in regret of your foolishness!"

Y'know, I thought Valkyries had a much more noble image... You sisters are giving off a totally different vibe than you should. Well, in the end, they're both monsters, and Murellia's their master. I guess it can't be helped.

Both Sigrun and Rossweiss' status names them as 『Valkyrie · Nemesis Lancer』. Their levels are 67, only one level higher than the previous Valkyrie. But all their stats were over a 100 points higher, especially their agility stat which was over 200 points higher.

They don't have any archery skills, but they have Lv6 in both Divine Spear Techniques and Divine Spear Arts. They also both possess Storm Magic, and the level of their Light Magic is higher. Overall, they seem to be more specialized versions of that Valkyrie that have eliminated all unnecessary skills.

In regards to titles, Sigrun has 『War Maiden of Punishment』, while Rossweiss has 『War Maiden of Annihilation』. Each of them seems to raise individual fighting power, and causes ones subordinates to go mad.

In any case, are these guys really so overwhelming superior to that Valkyrie from before? Yeah, their personal fighting power is pretty high, but their archery skills are pretty low level, and their army commanding abilities aren't that great either. Depending on the circumstances, they may not even be able to make use of their full abilities.

In the Dullahan's case, they seem to be pretty much the same as the ones we fought before. However, instead of a shield, they used an axe and a sword respectively. It seems they're much more attack-oriented than the one we fought before was.

The battle matchups seem to be that Fran and Mare are fighting the Valkyries sisters, and Kuina and Linde are facing off against the Dullahans. It seems the most dangerous one of the mix, Murellia, is just watching from the sidelines. I guess she doesn't want to dirty their own hands by disposing of us herself. Or rather, maybe she's taking measure of our abilities?

It's a bit underhanded, but we may be able to take advantage of the fact that she's not participating. Frankly, we have no chance in hell of beating Murellia as we are now. So, we need to get the hell away from her. We can steadily gain some distance from her while fighting the Valkyrie. Then, in the middle of the fight, if we can Dimensional Gate away and hop on Linde, we should be able to make a clean getaway.

Or at least, that's what I was thinking...

"Ah yes. I suppose I ought to ensure you won't try to run."

So Murellia says and slightly waves her hand. Out of the air, a semi-transparent black dome with a radius of around 100 meters materialized around us.

"It would be rather awkward if you were able to escape with Space-Time Magic. Ah, but rest assured. It only blocks transitions with magic, and so..."

She materialized a spear from thin air and lightly tossed it. As the spear made contact with the barrier a deafening roaring sound reverberated

through the air as the spear broke through the barrier and disappeared into the distance. I guess the barrier is a type of monster?

“Well, as you can see, it doesn’t obstruct physical objects. So, if you desire, you can attempt to break through it and run away.”

That’s all well and good, but why did you bother to create a barrier that only prevents magical transitioning? Is she looking at our status? If so, does she know I’m an intelligent weapon? I try to watch Murellia’s expression, but I can’t tell where her gaze lies.

If she could see my status, there’s no doubt she’d be looking at me... I guess I’m being too self-conscious, aren’t I?

[Anyways, we need to escape the Valkyrie and get out of this barrier somehow. And it really doesn’t seem like there’s any escape option other than teleporting out of here...]

If we all stick to our one-on-one battles, and Murellia chooses not to interfere, there is a very good chance for escape. In fact, Fran and Mare have already started to gain the upper hand against the Valkyrie. Fran is more skilled than her opponent, and she has me for support. She was handling the Valkyrie’s spear well, in fact, she’s been able to deal quite a few decent hits to her opponent.

Mare seems to be somewhat disadvantaged in terms of skill with her weapon versus her opponent, but her Golden Flame and White Fire defense is melting the Valkyrie’s spear whenever it approaches her. Apparently the Valkyrie is able to regenerate the spear, but it just melts whenever she tries to attack again. In such a situation, Mare has an overwhelming advantage.

Kuina seems to be more than equal to her opponent. Linde is struggling a bit, but since he can fly it doesn’t seem like he’s in trouble yet. It should be fine.

“Keh! What is this amazing amount of skill!”

“My spear-! You little brat!”

Apparently, this wasn't the outcome Murellia was anticipating. She was watching each battle with arched eyebrows. However, she's wearing an invincible smile on her face.

"Hoh? Isn't that something... Even though Rossweiss' spear is flame-resistant. And also... my cute little cousin's sword, please permit me a closer look."

I got a bad feeling hearing that, and sure enough, magic power began concentrating in Murelia's eyes. She's definitely using some kind of skill.

I can feel it. Something is watching me. A sharp and deep-seeing eye observing my entire being, as if it was seeing through my very existence.

To the bottom of my soul.

Chapter 325

CHAPTER 325

Kin of the Goddess of Chaos

Murellia concentrates magical energy in her eyes and probably activates some kind of skill. As she was staring at me, I began to feel something strange.

“Ufufufu! This is amazing! What in the world is this? An Intelligent Weapon? And it’s not just Space-Time Magic, but Dimensional Magic?”

What the hell are you doing Appraisal Block! Apparently all of my disguisal skills have been seen through. Murellia, with her eyes shining with a brilliant light, pushes her wicked palm towards us.

[Fran! Murellia found us out! She’s trying to do something! Stay sharp!]

“Nn!”

We probably won’t be able to escape anymore. We’ll have to rely on Fran’s superhuman reaction speed. However, what happened next was beyond any of our imaginations.

“Come.”

[Wh-?]

The next thing I knew, I was in Murelia’s hand instead of Fran’s. I tried to figure out how she could’ve done it. Maybe some skill? I don’t think it was magic since she has already demonstrated she doesn’t have Chantless or Chant Annulment.

“! Master!”

“Master? Ah, this sword’s name. Isn’t that a strange one.”

Fran, who had me swiped out from under her nose, was furious.

“Fran! Don’t show an opening!”

“Keh-”

Fran was blown backwards by Valkyrie’s kick. She didn’t suffer much damage because of the defensive barrier she has up, but it was a big hit, I’m still worried.

[Fran! This is your chance!]

Murelia, who possessed immense power, drew me.

[I’ll let Murellia equip me, you have to attack in the opening that creates! Don’t worry about me!]

[... Understood.]

I managed to convince myself of my words, and Fran took out another sword and turned to face the Valkyrie.

“Aw, what’s wrong? Your movements suddenly got a lot worse! Can’t fight without your magic sword~?”

“Shut up!”

The number of hits Fran landed started to decrease and the amount of hits she took began to increase. Skill sharing is still active, but I can’t offer any support, and I can’t afford to make a careless move right now. That being said, I can’t miss this opportunity. I choose to believe in Fran for this chance to land a serious blow on Murellia.

“[Sigh], well then...”

Ding dong!!

The moment Murellia attempted to do something, and electricity enveloped her body. If I had to guess, she probably tried to equip me. This is what I've been waiting for! The moment you show any weakness, I'll assault you with magic and a telekinetic catapult!

However... that opening never arrived. Murellia is still holding me as if nothing happened.

"Hm? What was that tingling?"

That's it. There's no way that's it, right? She's not awakened, and thunder damage is still neutralized? No, as long as she's a Black Catkin, it wouldn't be strange for her to have high resistance against thunder damage. Or is she strong enough for it to not work at all? Both are equally likely.

In any case, the fact remains that she tried to equip me. In other words, she has some sort of interest in me. When it comes to this high leveled of an opponent, no opportunity should be passed up. Even if it's a shitty bet, you should take it if you can.

[... Are you going to equip me?]

"Ahaha! This is amazing! I got one! It's not like a person at all! I could've sworn I saw a soul, but I didn't think it'd actually have one! I want it! I want this sword!"

She's like a kid when she's frolicking like this. However, this sort of personality means she may take the bait.

"Divine punishment awaits if an unworthy person attempts to equip me. This time around was the Punishment of Lightning. Though, if you endure the punishments, you become worthy to equip me."

Encourage equipping me while tickling her self esteem. Casually tell her about the punishment for equipping me. If Murelia tries to equip me at this point, the punishment will surely be far worse. Although the lightning

strikes were prevented, the god's death punishment can't be prevented by Murellia. In the worst case scenario, it'll do an incredible amount of damage to her.

"... Heh? Divine punishment? You don't say. Well, you don't have to be equipped then I suppose!"

Tch. You were thinking more calmly than I thought... I thought you would equip me to keep the momentum going. I guess I have to switch strategies.

"Are you afraid? How disappointing. I guess I was wrong. I should've figured you wouldn't be able to equip me."

This time, I tried to provoke Murellia. She seems to be strangely prideful, and there's a chance she could get provoked into equipping me.

"I've already received divine punishment. I hate the gods, but I don't underestimate their power any longer. But even so... divine punishment you say?"

[... Indeed.]

"Hmm, perhaps you are a sacred sword, or are affiliated with some god? No, I wonder if talking about divine judgement is just some sort of defense mechanism, as I was just talking about how our tribe was cursed... I'm sure it's something interesting. My goodness, is it alright if we talk a bit more? It's my first time speaking to an intelligent weapon."

Ah. The provocations failed. But there still might be a chance for her to equip me. Let's see if these words will do it.

[You wish to speak with me? Of what?]

"I wish to know who made you. Was it a divine blacksmith? Or was it another human?"

[I don't know. I do not possess memories of that time.]

"Is that so, well then`"

[If you please, it is my turn now.]

“Oh? Isn’t this interesting? What do you want to know?”

[Are you a dungeon master?]

“I am not.”

[What? Then, what-]

“Stop. Isn’t it my turn now?”

[... Go ahead.]

It looks like Fran has regained her composure and is still fighting with the Valkyrie. Then, maybe I should start gathering some information. Since we’re on the subject of asking each other questions it should be a good opportunity to do so.

“You mentioned that you don’t remember when you were created, but how far back do you remember?”

“My memory only begins recently. From just before I encountered Fran, my wielder.”

I didn’t want to take a chance lying, as Murellia may have some kind of skill that sees through lies. It was highly possible that she possessed some sort of lie-detecting skill as she accepted it without question when I said I didn’t remember being created.

It’s risky to give this information, but if I get caught in a lie, she might not let me continue asking her questions. In that case, it’s better to accept new information even if that means I have to give up knowledge in return.

“Hmm, does that mean you were only recently built? Or is that the seal on your memories was only recently unlocked...”

[It’s my turn now. You said you’re not a dungeon master? Then who are you? I recall you earlier saying that you could use the power of the

dungeon...”

“Do you really want to know? Well, it’s because I’m a dungeon sub-master. This allows me to spend the master’s points.”

[Sub-master? Points?]

“Let’s remember the order. Next is me. What’s with your name?”

Is she making fun of me... Well, it can’t be helped. I’m used to it now, and I’m actually rather attached to it, but at first I thought it was a strange name.

[It is the name given to me by Fran. I previously had no name.]

“Just a moment, you had no name?”

[It’s my turn now. What does ‘point’ mean?]

It was a word that Murellia used, so I’ll pretend I’ve never heard it. Though, I still use self-evolution points.

“Why do you want to know that? It’s okay, but you can’t tell anyone, okay? They are points given by the Goddess, so-called GP. As they are bestowed by her, you can use points to extend the range of the dungeon or to summon demonic bea- Huh? What’s going on?”

Murellia, who was in the middle of an explanation, was surprised for some reason. After an awkward moment, she continues her conversation.

“Well, anyways, there are many ways to get points. For example, killing creatures that are inside your dungeon. And the stronger and more experienced a killed individual is, the more points you get from them. There is the option of drawing magic from the ground to convert into points, but it is hardly efficient.”

As Murellia explained this to me, she opened her eyes as if she was surprised. No, wait, she actually is surprised.

“I knew it! I can talk about it after all! Hahahaha! Why?”

Murellia suddenly exclaims with a joyful expression. I'm having a hard time understanding.

"Hey, you have something to do with dungeons, don't you?"

[What?]

"Hmm, it might not be surprising if you turn out to be a Godblade... Are you kin with the Goddess of Chaos?"

[Well, that's something I would like to know as well.]

I was told that I was related to the Goddess of Chaos before, but I didn't receive any further explanation.

[Why do you think I am?]

"People who are affiliated or bound by dungeons are restricted in their actions. One of these restrictions is the ability to speak of the dungeon to other people."

Now that she mentions it, Rumina was saying something along the same lines. But she's able to talk about it normally with me. Maybe it's that she didn't reveal anything of a level worth omnining? But her description was quite detailed.

Rumina wasn't able to talk to me about the details of a dungeon. But now that I think about it, Fran and Urushi were also there, maybe she was restricted for that reason?

"I wasn't originally a member of a dungeon. A few years ago, a combination of the power of a dungeon and a human sorcerer named Linford summoned and bound me to his will with the permission of the Evil God. Linford, that annoying geezer! That wicked man ruled over me as a maiden of the Evil God, and then forced me into being a Dungeon Submaster! He made me dedicate myself to the hateful gods that destroyed us! I can't rise up against that usurping small-fry's clan just by being a dungeon submaster, but I also can't resist the dungeon's contract! However,

I can talk to you about it for whatever reason! If I can understand why, I might be able to worm my way out of the dungeon's contract!"

Woah woah woah, I might be crazy, but a name I definitely can't ignore came up! Did she just say Linford? He's an old sorcerer, and his name is Linford, this can't be just a coincidence.

"Is your sorcerer named Linford Laurencia? He possessed monstrous powers and was over like a hundred years old?"

"Oh? Do you know him?"

"Pretty sure the guy you're talking about died after we fought him on another continent."

"Aa! I knew it! Fairly recently, the power that tied me to the world suddenly weakened, I knew I wasn't imagining it! Ahahaha!"

I didn't expect to hear Linford's name in this country. In other words, I guess that means he was scheming in this country before coming to Barbora.

[If you don't mind me asking, what exactly was Linford trying to do?]

"Ufufu, since I'm in an especially good mood right now, I'll enlighten you!"

Author's Note: They talk bout how typing has started to hurt their fingers, so they tried writing this chapter using speech-to-text, and apparently that's why this chapter was so long (he goes on to say that even this lengthy chapter was heavily summarized and cut-down compared to it's original length).

Translator's Note: I'm fairly confident in this chapter's translation up until Murellia's long paragraph near the end about Linford, as it was somewhat

difficult to translate. Apologies for any errors in translation.

Chapter 326

[If you don't mind me asking, what exactly was Linford trying to do?]

“Ufufu, since I'm in an especially good mood right now, I'll enlighten you!”

Murellia starts talking, clearly in a brightened mood. I checked back up with Fran, but her situation hasn't changed too much. I'll probably have time to chat with her for a few minutes.

“The beginning of this story can be drawn at the time Linford came to this place. Apparently, that crusty old geezer knew that there was a fragment of the Evil God sealed away in this country.”

[What? Is there really?]

“Mm. It is the same piece that I used on my tribe. Linford aimed to reach that fragment in order to communicate with the Evil God.”

Though, of course, he didn't find it. The Gods probably sealed it even tighter than it was before after Murellia had her way with it. But this didn't mean that Linford gave up. A kingdom known as the Bashar Kingdom which occupied the area adjacent to the Beastman Empire, was being crushed.

“Linford was unable to find the fragment of the Evil God, though he did find something else.”

[Something else?]

“Indeed. He found a new dungeon that had appeared on the Bashar Kingdom's side of the Boundary Mountains.”

Linford and his subordinates were, of course, able to conquer this newly formed dungeon.

“Upon arriving in the boss’ chambers, they threatened the Dungeon Master and forced it to obey them. The purpose of doing so being to use the magical power accumulated by the dungeon.”

Even if this dungeon was basically a newborn, it was still a dungeon, and so it had a fair amount of magic power accumulated within it. Twisting this energy towards his own ends, he used the power within the dungeon to initiate a ritual, a certain summoning ritual. There exists a certain summoning technique known as Hero Summoning that calls past heroes and binds them to the summoner’s bidding for a certain period of time. Even things like evil spirits and wicked beings are able to be summoned through such a technique, as apparently even followers of the Evil God are counted as followers of a divine being.

“During this ritual, the one summoned was yours truly. Though, my body was incomplete.”

It seems that during this summoning, only a fragment of Murellia’s consciousness was summoned, as Linford didn’t believe he had the capabilities to control a completed Murellia.

Through the information extrapolated from the summoned Murellia, Linford was able to locate the seal that bound the fragment of the Evil God. Even so, he was unable to break it. Though I’m not sure how he thought he could unravel a divine seal.

“Though, Linford was horribly stubborn.”

Then, Linford had an idea. By sacrificing a huge amount of souls in the name of the Evil God, Linford would be able to give the Evil God enough power to somewhat weaken the seal. By doing so, the Evil God could summon enough strength to speak to Linford by using Murellia as a medium, as she was technically a priestess of the Evil God.

[... So that’s the reason the war.]

“Indeed. War is by far the fastest way to gather a significant amount of souls.”

Conveniently, the Beastman Kingdom where the fragment of the Evil God was hidden and the neighboring Bashar Kingdom were in the middle of a tug-of-war. Moreover, when Linford examined the politics of the Kingdom, he discovered that though King Bashar was an open-minded moderate, behind the scenes of it all he was a member of the beastmen exclusionist group. He contacted the political heads of the Kingdom, and established cooperation with them.

“Contrary to what you’d believe, many more people were willing to work with Evil Beings than they were to do so with beastmen. Though, if you think about the history between the two countries, that’s only obvious.”

No matter what they felt in their hearts, Linford’s group and the Bashar Kingdom came together to join hands.

“A pincer attack using the joined forces of the entirety of the Bashar Kingdom and the forces of the dungeon discovered by Linford. Such was the plan.”

If what Murellia is saying is true, then this war had been in the works for years. Apparently the reason that the Bashar Kingdom decided to ride on Linford’s coattails is because they weren’t even really a threat to the Beastmen Country otherwise.

The only reason that the King had decided to adopt a moderate policy as opposed to an aggressive one, despite the fact that he was part of the beastmen exclusionist’s group, was because their force’s military power were so vastly contrasted that even a skirmish could lead to the kingdom’s downfall. On the inside, the people of the Bashar Kingdom felt over-repressed, and the buds of the anti-beastmen movement had been long blooming.

“Now, I certainly hate the other beast tribes, but their human supremacy has gone way too far. It has become a bit of an awkward situation for me.”

As such, the possibility of finally razing the Beastmen Country delighted the nobles of the Bashar Kingdom. After many years, their desire would finally come true.

“It was also around this time Linford fully summoned me using the remaining energy in the dungeon and the souls of the slaves provided by the Bashar Kingdom.”

Although it is true that Linford normally wouldn't be able to control Murellia's vast power, a complete summoning that was powered using the sacrifice of hundreds of souls allowed Linford the ability to control her, to an extent. Even though Murellia's power wasn't as perfect as it had been, it was nearly so, and so she was still incredibly powerful.

Since the power of the dungeon was also used to summon Murellia, the percentage of control that wasn't afforded to her by the sacrificed soul was achieved by binding her as submaster of the dungeon. No matter how strong Murellia was, she couldn't escape the contract of the dungeon which was sealed by the Goddess of Chaos.

[In that case, Mistress Chaos Goddess, please descend and smite this girl again...]

So I wished, but I doubted it could be done. In the first place, the gods' punishment was imposed, and the Black Catkin who became corrupted by the Evil God's power were completely destroyed, including Murellia. And now, she's bound by a dungeon submaster contract by the Goddess of Chaos. It's not like all evil beings are subject to being destroyed by the gods, if that was the case, Rumina wouldn't have been able to spawn Evil Beings like Goblins and such in hers. It seemed unlikely that the gods would descend and wipe out Murellia again.

“And because I'm a dungeon submaster, I'm unable to resist either Linford OR the true dungeon master.”

Oh? Apparently she had to obey not only Linford, but the dungeon master too? Though I doubted they had more control than Linford. Nevertheless,

this also allowed Murellia to use the power of the dungeon to create her Black Catkin paradise.

“It’s incredibly frustrating, but the power of the dungeon, I can create the dream I’ve longed for.”

And so, Murellia begrudgingly cooperated while having no small amount of hatred towards Linford. And that was Linford’s plan in its entirety. In essence; start a war, collect souls, sacrifice them to the Evil God. With that, he would be able to contact and receive the blessings of the somewhat re-empowered Evil God through Murellia.

Though, the power of the dungeon had been basically spent by using the energy to summon Murellia. The next stage was to extend the dungeon’s reach to include part of the Beastmen’s Country, and to regather the strength that was expended in the summoning.

It seems that summoning monsters and controlling them outside of the dungeon consumed points. Though, if you don’t need to specify it, you can set it up so that a magic circle will summon a random monster at regular intervals.

To achieve that, it was as simple as killing hundreds of slaves from the Bashar Kingdom while they were inside the dungeon and absorbing their power. The dungeon master was a former young bandit who was unwilling to oppose either Linford or the Bashar Kingdom, and followed this strategy to the letter.

Linford continued to research a way to weaken the seal of the Evil God’s fragment, letting Murellia manage the war’s progress as he traveled to do so.

And the rest, we already know. As Linford was conducting his research in Barbora, Fran and I eventually destroyed him. Is it possible he didn’t even want to keep the Evil Beings he created in Barbora for as long as he had, and had eventually wanted to relocate them to the Beastmen Country as forces for the war? If he had, it would’ve been no joke, this war would’ve gone a whole lot worse.

“Kufufufu, I thought it might of been possible because of how weak that slug was, but he really went and died! Hahahaha!”

Although I’m glad that we defeated Linford, it gives me complicated feelings that doing so pleased this woman...

Even before Linford died, the dungeon master rarely gave orders to Murellia, and now that Linford was dead, and his power over her gone, it seemed that she can even move around quite freely!

“The binding of that pile of manure has been lifted. His power over that accursed dungeon is lifted. And soon, even the rule of that Goddess of Chaos will be lifted!”

Next chapter in 1-2 days.

Chapter 327

Chapter 327

Rule of the Evil God?

Murellia shouts with ridicule.

“Now that I’m no longer being controlled by Linford, all I have to do is seize control of the dungeon, and I’m basically free!”

[What do you plan to do with your freedom?]

“Naturally, I will use the power of the dungeon to create my true paradise! Unlike what I’ve been limited to doing so far due to that shitty Linford shoving me away in the corner of the dungeon!”

So it was that after all. I was really hoping that she would disappear quietly but... Like I thought, this woman should never be free.

“And so, allow me to use your power, I won’t let you refuse.”

Damn. What should I do? If I specifically refuse her here, Murellia will immediately attack me and Fran. Maybe I should try to employ a bit of subtle implication here? Maybe there’s still a chance that she’ll try to equip me-

As I was pondering the dilemma, she began to move. Black viscous magical power escaped from Murellia’s body with incredible speed. Like a jellyfish tentacle, it slowly began to worm its way up my hilt and blade.

“Fufufu!”

[Dammit!]

I tried to fly out of Murellia's hand with all my might, but it wasn't enough. What monstrous strength...

[Get away from me!]

“Ahahaha! It's no use, no use~!”

I quickly activated a bunch of lightning magic, though it's nullified once again. Seems she has immunity to lightning damage after all. I also tried out Flame Magic, and used 『Inferno Burst』, but it still isn't strong enough to Murellia's Barriers.

Space-Time magic isn't any good either. Considering the fact that I could still use Dimensional Storage, it seems that only the activation of transportation type Space-Time magic is hindered by the barrier made by Murellia.

[God dammit!]

“Ufufu. Is it frustrating?”

Murellia taunts my futile attempts while making a sadistic smile.

“Is it painful~? Is it scary~? Do you want me to stop~?”

...Huh? No, it's not particularly painful or scary. My durability value hasn't changed after all. Though I was confused, Murellia didn't wait for a reply and kept ranting with a smug face.

“Don't you want to be freed from this pain? If you ask me to, I can't refuse~! Kukuku. No one with a soul can escape the rule of the Evil God!”

Huh? What does that mean? Is something supposed to be happening? I'm pretty sure she's referring to the evil tentacle things but... But nothings happening, you know? Or rather, have I lost control of my body?

“Now, submit to me!”

[...]

No, it seems like I still have control. I can refuse just like normal, and I don't really feel like my soul has been hijacked...

“What's wrong? Submit to me!”

I don't really get it but... I guess I'll pretend she's taken control of me?

[Uhh, Master Murellia?]

“Is that it? Even if it has a soul, I suppose a sword is still a sword. Well, I'll be flying now, fly by yourself.”

[Understood.]

As she commanded, I tried using telekinesis to move around a bit. Yeah, there's really nothing wrong with my body at all. I'm moving around as expected. I moved left and right, and I even allowed myself to fall for a few moments.

I'm not really sure why, but it seems that the 'Rule of the Evil God' that Murellia tried to impose on me really did fail. Though, Murellia herself doesn't know that, and orders me around with a confident look on her face.

“It seems like you were trying something, but I suppose you can't disobey now that you're my servant? Ah, it seems that you have a Control Immunity skill, but it's useless in the face of the Evil God's power! Fufufu, I wonder what kind of face that girl will make when she's attacked by her own Intelligent Weapon? Now, pierce that eyesore!”

Murellia commands me, as she points towards Fran. It was a crystal clear order, but I didn't really feel compelled to do it after all.

Though, Murellia isn't wary at all against me since she thinks that she's completely subjugated me. This is a big chance! I simulated different attack patterns to see if there was a way I could take advantage of this. Do I simply attack Murellia while her guard is down, or do I pretend to be controlled and return to Fran?

However, even if I go back to Fran, I'll just be stolen back by whatever ability she used to take me away in the first place. Rather, maybe this is the first time I've had an actual opportunity.

Then, how should I go about this? I obviously can't use one of my most powerful attacks, 『Kanna Kamui』 since she clearly has Lightning Nullification, or something extremely close to it. I don't know if I'd be able to finish her off with Telekinetic Catapult either. I've been trying to figure out where her magic stone is, but I haven't been able to figure it out yet. Actually, I'm not sure if she even has a magic stone in the first place.

She was originally a Black Catkin. She may be an Evil Being now, but it's entirely possible she doesn't have a magic stone. If she does, the head and the heart are possible targets, but even if they were there, would I be able to pierce them? Even that was doubtful.

What do I do! Think! I take full advantage of Accelerated Thinking and Parallel-Processing. Murellia will become suspicious if I take too long to complete her order. I need to decide now! What is the best way I can take her down!

What spell can I cast other than Lightning Magic that can be optimally boosted with Sorcery? In the end, doing this is probably the best option I have that can deal decent damage to Murellia.

Since we don't meet certain conditions and therefore can't evolve Swordsmanship skills, I think I can safely take physical skills off the table. I don't have the confidence that I'll be able to get past her defences without Fran's help.

In the end, it has to be magic, but I only have 11 Self-Evolution points left. The candidates are either Flame Magic or Earth Magic. I double-checked to make sure these were the only choices, but it seems I also gained not only Light Magic, but Nature Magic and Sandstorm Magic in our battles today as well.

Actually, wait a moment. Is there a possibility that I'll be able to take out one of the Valkyries by pretending to attack Fran? If I try to use the logic

that being dominated also increased my ability to reason, it would be within possibility that my attempt to attack Fran ‘accidentally’ got the Valkyrie involved as well. I’m pretty close to gaining a Self-Evolution level, so killing her might be able to get me the points I need. If I get enough, I’ll have more options for being able to attack Murellia.

Though, if I took this approach, I’m not sure whether I’d be able to get this close to Murellia again. And I’m pretty sure if I started attacking indiscriminately Murellia would probably decided to intervene and make the whole thing fail anyways. If that’s the case, should I just attack now?

Damn, what should I do?

Then, I figured it out. While I was desperately skimming through my skills to see if there was anything that could help, I found something miraculous.

It was one of the skills that was added to my list of skills that I can buy by spending points, like my Appraisal Block and Demon Beast Knowledge. Maybe I got it because I reached Self-Evo Rank 15. It seems that I unlocked various other skills at that time too.

『Smite Evil』 : Doubles damage against the Evil God and its subordinates. A skill used to banish Evil.

[『Smite Evil』 ... an Evil Being specialized skill?]

Rather than raising the level of some magic skills, this was clearly a better candidate!

TN: Very sorry for the wait, please enjoy the next few chapters.

Next chapter in 1-3 hours.

Chapter 328

[This skill... is obviously the best choice!]

I've decided on the skill I need to break out of this situation. Get this skill, attack Murellia, get Fran and the gang, and then get the hell out of here!

Rather than invest in some random magic skill and hope for the best, it's much better to invest in a skill that I know will definitely be of use. I spend 5 Self-Evo points and gained the skill.

《Skill: Smite Evil has been acquired.》

Next, it's important to see whether I can evolve this skill further. If I can, it will become a surefire powerhouse.

《Self-Evolution points will be consumed to increase the level of Smite Evil. Please confirm.》

Yes! It looks like the skill can be leveled up to Rank 5 at the highest. I pumped all of my remaining points into the skill in order to max it out!

《Evil's Bane has been acquired. Fran has earned the title Evil Slayer.》

Evil's Bane: The power to defeat and seal the Kin of the Evil God.

What? The explanation of this skill seems really vague... No, thinking about it, most Unique Skills have weirdly fluffy descriptions like this. I think it was the same way for Sword Lord. Kinda the opposite of what you'd expect.

“... Hm? The sword has a weird feeling all of the sudden...”

Uh oh. Murellia was able to sense the acquisition?

“Oh? I can no longer see its status?”

Maybe it was an Appraisal skill, but some Evil God-like spell that Murellia was using to look at my status. Just looking at these immediate effects, I’m already praising Smite Evil in my heart.

While she still isn’t totally suspicious of us, we have to launch our attack!

[Fran! Mare! Kuina! Linde! I’m launching an attack on Murellia, use the chance to get out of here!]

They aren’t going to have a lot of time to process it, but it’s better than nothing. After shouting the plan at Fran’s group I immediately spin my blade’s tip towards Murellia and used my Telekinetic Catapult. I invoke the full power of Evil’s Bane and weave it into the attack.

[HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!]

“Huh? Did my domination fail? To try and attack me again even though you know it’s useless~!”

Moments before I make contact, Murellia puts up a full-powered barrier. If it was before, I would’ve just bounced off without even rattling her. But now...

It was so easy that I was shocked. I flew right past the barrier like it wasn’t even there.

Murellia’s proud look is immediately replaced by agony. I buried my blade deep into her stomach, and the concentrated power of her Evil God’s energy drastically decreased. This is probably the sealing effect of Evil’s Bane.

[Take this!]

“Geh-! You dare-!”

In order to do more damage, I released flame magic inside of Murellia's body. Though, it seems like the power of Evil's Bane isn't as strong with magic as it is with physical attacks. Even though the amount of power she had decreased in comparison from before, she was still able to mitigate the harm I could do. I burned some of her wounds, but I wasn't able to do much damage otherwise. Though, regardless of that, Murelia doesn't have the chance to speak. She was too busy mitigating said damage with her remaining evil power.

"Y-You... You still had a hidden ability up your sleeve...? Ghaa!"

[Surprise!]

This time, it was my turn. Murellia grabbed my handle and pulled my out with her monstrous strength. Then, she flicked her fist into my blade. Even though Evil's Bane was protecting my entire body, it wasn't enough to stop such an attack. My blade was broken in the middle, now half length.

"This... This damn sword! You will submit to me!"

Murellia flew into a rage after being wounded by me. She wasn't paying attention to her surroundings. Without catching her notice, I was secretly lengthening the decorative chain that dangled from my hilt.

[Whoops, sorry about that!]

"GYAAAAAA!"

My chain splits into countless thorns and stabs into Murelia's back. They aren't as powerful as my earlier attack, but under the effects of Evil's Bane each one cleanly pierces her body, ignoring Murellia's barrier.

Arching her back, Murellia screams with pain. Was her concentration broken due to the severe pain? After all, Immediately after I initiated the attack, the dome-shaped barrier that inhibited transportation magic practically melted into the air.

Alright! This should be enough to escape! I instantly return to Fran's hand with Short Jump.

"Master!"

[Fran! We're getting out of here!]

"Nn!"

Though, as we were preparing to escape, multiple shadows rushed towards the battlefield faster than we could flee. Apparently a large group had been hiding their presence just outside of the barrier. There were about 30 of them. My first thought was that they had been with the enemy, but I could detect the presence of the Evil God with them.

The figure at the front of the group released a burst of magic power and accelerated to a speed that even I couldn't catch. They ran straight at the Valkyrie that was fighting with Mare, leaving an afterimage of black lightning.

"Haaaaaa!"

"Wh-? Where did y-!"

Caught by surprise, the Valkyrie turned towards the figure dashing straight at her, but it was too late. A sword pierced cleanly through the Valkyrie's chest, and released an incredible burst of black lightning into its body.

"This can't beeeeeeeeeee!"

Such were the last words of the Valkyrie named Rossweiss. Only black charcoal was left behind.

"Hmph. Careless."

"M-Master Kiara! What are you doing here!"

Mare screams in half surprise and half joy. The identity of the mysterious figure was apparently, Kiara, who seems to have evolved!

The tall, masculine facial expressions are all the same as they were when we met her at the capital. However, if you looked closely, you could see a change in her hair. Her long gray hair from before was gone, and was now striped gray and black, like a tiger's stripes. Indeed, it was a testament to inheriting the power of the Heavenly Black Tiger.

I appraised her status and... it's tremendous. Originally, Black Catkin obviously become stronger than their unevolved state due to becoming a Heavenly Black Tiger, and also because of learning Brilliant Lightning Rush.

However, even Fran, who's stats were raised from my assistance were a far cry from Kiara's current power. The difference was such that it couldn't be understated. Kiara, the source of all that power, whispered to us with a subtle smile.

"Sorry, Mare. I ruined your duel."

Next chapter in 1-3 hours.

Chapter 329

Our ally appeared and charged into the battle as soon as Murellia's barrier disappeared. Valkyrie, who was fighting Mare, was quickly defeated by the newly Awakened Kiara.

But Kiara wasn't the only help that came along. Everyone else that had been fighting individually received reinforcements too.

For Kuina who had been fighting the Dullahan received the assistance and support of Kiara's maid, Mia.

"Kuina, I'm lending my support."

"Is that Mianoa? Well then, I'll be depending on your support."

"Understood."

The two maids begin their cooperation with no change of expression or pace. Mianoa is a small girl who's main charms are fluffy and curly pink hair and dull, sleepy eyes. However, as she joined the fight, she changed into an impactful figure.

"Awakening."

The tips of her elbow are enlarged in an instant, as if the arm of a huge, different creature had been attached there. The surface of the skin is covered with large gray scales with an arrowhead shape, the tips of her fingers are sharp with thick nails resembling the horns of a bull. Since the other parts of her body remained human, the unusualness of her arms stood out. I was surprised when I appraised her.

Mianoa belongs to the Gray Mountain Tribe. Their awakened form is probably something like a pangolin beastman form. Her arm strength and defensive power are high, and her inherent abilities are increased to about double, giving her an instant boost to her strength. It's a completely physical-specific ability apparently.

While Mianoa directly attacks the Dullahan, Kuina sneakily weaves in phantom attacks in perfect synch. Due to the nature of their strategy, the Dullahan was unable to make any moves against them.

While the Dullahan's arms were grabbed from behind and twisted up, it also receives a kick to the back of one knee, making it kneel down. It was a textbook subjugation. Even if the undead don't feel pain, the forces exerted on it's joints inhibited it by controlling the flow of its movements.

Then, with pinpoint accuracy, Mianoa drove a nail with full force into the Dullahan's torso.

“Haa!”

“..”

The sharpened nail drove right through the Dullahan's armor and body both, creating a large hole in its body.

The nail that went straight through the Dullahan stops short just before Kuina's body. Despite almost being skewered, Kuina doesn't move. They clearly had each other's full trust.

Kuina, who is proficient in mostly trickery and disturbing the opponent's flow while having low attack power, and Mianoa, who isn't the fastest, but makes up for it with enough power to score a one-shot. They make a pretty good team.

“Mianoa, you got some blood on me.”

“Senior, please don't tease me.”

“I suppose your arm must be getting dull.”

“That is surely not the case.”

Supporting Linde was a familiar large figure. The skin peeking through the gaps in their armor is gray, rugged hard skin.

“Shockwavee!”

This was the samurai beastman, Guendalfa, who had also evolved at some point. Compared to Goldalfa who we fought at the martial arts tournament, he’s pitiful, but he’s much stronger than when we said our goodbyes at the capital.

Guendalfa released his Innate Skill 『Shockwave』 which releases waves of force from his entire body, and in combination with the bombardment of blows with the blackiron sword finished by an upper swing, knocked the Dullahan into the sky.

“KUOOOOOOOOOOO!”

Linde mercilessly barrages the Dullahan, who is unable to evade while in midair. After blasting it with a breath of flame, Linde uses its tail to smash the Dullahan back towards the ground with his tail.

The Dullahan had already taken significant damage from that attack, but Guendalfa didn’t give it time to recover and immediately followed up.

“HOOOOOOOOO!”

“KUOOOOOOOOOOOOO”

Guendalfa struck downwards with his swords as the Dullahan smashed into the ground while Linde descended from the sky with incredible speed and delivered the finishing blow with its tail.

“Tch, I’m going to be the one to crush it!”

“KUOO!”

Guendalfa and Linde continuously rain down blows on the without stopping, and finally manage to finish off the Dullahan.

You can really feel the difference in level from Mianoa, who managed to defeat their Dullahan in a single blow. Although Guendalfa has indeed evolved and gotten stronger, they haven't quite reached Mianoa's level yet.

“ALRIIIIIIIIIIGHT!”

“KUOOOOOOOO!”

And after a long battle, Fran also received her long-awaited help.

“Garuru!”

“Urushi!”

Rushing out of Fran's shadow, Urushi bit deeply into Sigrun's ankle, who finally returned after leaving the scouting unit.

“Tch, that damn wolf. From where-”

“Got you.”

“Dammit!”

Though I thought I had perfectly penetrated her magic stone, Sigrun vanished without a trace.

“It's troublesome for me if I lose your strength.”

“My apologies, Master Murellia...”

Murellia had teleported Sigrun beside her. It seems that she's recovered from the damage I dealt from my attack. Still, her Evil Power has reduced a ton in comparison to before.

“Woof!”

“Welcome home, Urushi.”

“Woof!”

Urushi rushed to our side as we stared at Murellia. Apparently Urushi had also had his hands full fighting when he was away. A painful-looking scar runs the entire length of his body, telling us how intense his battle must’ve been.

With how much the wound has closed, Kiara’s group probably used a ton of healing magic and potions on him. But his wounds were so deep that they weren’t able to heal them completely.

In particular, the scar that ran his entire body on the right side of his stomach was so large that honestly I was surprised it hadn’t been fatal. The scar can be clearly seen since the fur at its location has been peeled off. He also had several other wounds that could be spotted due to scarring, so I was able to get a very good idea of the seriousness of the injury.

[Hang on a second. Greater Heal!]

“Here, little extra.”

My magic and Fran’s healing potion began to heal Urushi’s visible scars. Although a bit of it was still visible, Urushi was much more recovered compared to before.

Though, there was one wound that we weren’t able to get rid of.

[Wow, Urushi got a cool one.]

“Nn, looks strong.”

“Woof!”

From between Urushi’s eyebrows to under his left eye ran a cool-looking scar. Seriously, it looks like it’s straight out of a movie. The power of Urushi’s scary face has reached new heights for sure... Before this point,

only kids cried when they were scared by Urushi, but at this point, even adults might not be safe anymore...

Maybe the scar was made by some sort of special attack? It seemed that even advanced potions and healing magic weren't able to get rid of it.

"So, you're making light of me, are you..."

Murellia roared and glared at us with infuriated eyes. Although it's been diminished, she still has a huge amount of evil aura that far exceeds us. Even so, when we were faced with her wrath, we were prepared.

Even if our reinforcements didn't know who she was, they were probably able to understand how dangerous she was in a single instant. Kiara looks up at Murellia with a serious expression.

"Well now, you're a bit more than I expected."

Even if she's intimidated, the fact that Kiara and our friends are still standing here, ready to fight is impressive. In fact, all of the adventurers that came to the battlefield as reinforcements with Kiara seemed to be running away, and it wasn't long before they had all disappeared.

Next chapter in 1-3 hours.

Chapter 330

“Hahaha, I hope you all don’t think you’ll be going home today~”

Even as she laughs, Murellia releases a wave of pure intimidation and anger. It’s an overwhelming force that even me, with Evil’s Bane, can feel. Looking around, I can see even Kiara and Mare changes their expressions ever so slightly.

All of the beastmen adventurers that showed up with Kiara were sobered up by her terrifying power and are standing on the sidelines. It’s not that they were weak, all of them had strength superior to a D rank adventurer. But they were all under no illusions. They knew they didn’t have the strength to so much lay a finger on Murellia.

All of the reinforcements that were still here - Kiara, Mianoa, Guendalfa - all enter their awakened state. It reminded me of a certain prince’s quote, “Super #aiyan Bargain Sale”, but retracted that thought when noticed that some of the people that were supposed to be strong weren’t evolving.

“Hey, aren’t those women maids of the royal palace?!”

“No way, two gods of death are over there?”

“Outside the royal palace?”

“Why are such top tier fighters here...”

A lot of the adventurers are fighting to get a look at Kuina and Mianoa. Gods of death, huh. And top tier fighters besides that? Apparently the palace maids are more famous and feared than I thought. I suppose it’s only natural if all of them are as strong as those two?

“I’m going to tear all of you people to shreds, but I’ll let you go if you pass me that sword right now.”

“...”

Looks like Murellia is still obsessed with me, but Fran only looks on silently.

“Mm. You’re a passionate little girl, aren’t you.”

Murelia changed her face a bit and held out her right hand. At that moment, something glinted on the surface of my blade.

“Huh?”

[Careful, she just did something.]

“Why are you...! I’m telling you to come here!”

Murellia pushed out her hand again, clearly irritated. But once again, a bit more clearly this time, my blade shone black for a short moment.

“What in the world...?”

It looks like she tried to steal me again. However it looks like the effect of Evil’s Bane is demonstrating its usefulness now. Murellia squints and me and makes a frustrated face.

“No matter I suppose, I’ll just take it from you.”

“Don’t say whatever you like.”

“Hah... That sword already belongs to me. I’ve decided so.”

“Won’t give to you.”

Fran’s grip on my hilt tightens.

“Fufufufu. Then, I suppose I’ll just take it by force! Sigrun, you watch from up here.”

“Understood!”

“Will regret that.”

Murellia extended her arm towards Fran and a black bullet formed from her power and shot out towards Fran at a high speed. It’s abnormally fast, probably as fast or faster than a bullet. I guess she prioritized speed over power.

However, Fran easily intercepts its trajectory and simply swats it away with my blade. Even if she prioritized speed over power, it should still pack quite a punch, but there isn’t a single scratch on my blade.

Everyone else in the group immediately kicks into high gear.

“--Fire Javelin!”

“White Blaze!”

“KUOOO!”

“AWOOOO!”

“We’re going too!”

“Yeah!”

Kiara begins chanting with no hesitation. I’m not sure whether she chose fire magic by chance, or if she already knew that lightning magic wouldn’t work against Murellia.

Mare and Linde’s attacks quickly followed, with a myriad of spells and arrows barraging Murellia shortly after.

“Ku!”

Murellia puts up her barrier with a strangely impatient expression. However, she made an obviously relieved expression when she saw that the barrier had invalidated all the attacks. Murellia instantly puts her proud face back on.

“Oh, hahaha! Useless!”

Apparently, she had been worried that her power was weakening because of my successful attacks against her earlier. Though, I guess blocking 20 attacks simultaneously had helped her to regain her confidence.

However, Murellia’s defense had been foreseen by Kiara. From the beginning, we had been aiming to limit her sight.

“Rolling Black Thunder”

Kiara’s body immediately blurred as she disappeared and reappeared behind Murellia, as if she’d teleported. To those watching, it’d probably looked like she’d teleported. It was only me and Fran, who’d barely noticed, that she had overcome the gap with sheer speed rather than transfer magic. Kuina and Mianoa might’ve noticed too, but I couldn’t read their unchanging expressions.

Just how fast has she become now? Rather than the black lightning wrapping her body, it was as if her body had become black lightning itself.

Even if Fran uses Black Lightning Advent and increases her speed with skills and magic, she wouldn’t be able to get anywhere near that speed. Plus, “Rolling Black Thunder”?

Maybe it’s a technique that can only be used while in an awakened Black Heavenly Tiger state, similar to Black Lightning Advent? But we’re not able to use it...

Murellia’s reaction to Kiara was delayed since she was focused on me and Fran.

“Hah! Impact Slash!”

“Gah! Now you’ve done it!”

Amazing! Kiara combined a sword skill with her fire magic and successfully injured Murellia. I guess no matter how strong you are, if you’re attacked without any protection, you’ll take damage regardless of the gap between you and the attacker. For Kiara though, it seems that her full power strike was only a scratch to Murellia.

“Well well well! Isn’t this amazing! Hahaha! There’s three Black Heavenly Tigers here! This is amazing! It’s been 500 years since a meeting like this!”

“Hmph, it seems you’re one as well.”

“Indeed I am. A Black Heavenly Tiger and Kin of the Evil God! In other words, I’m as strong as both of those combined!”

“I see. Rolling Black Thunder!”

“Tch.”

There’s that technique again! But seeing it makes me sure. As far as Black Heavenly Tigers, we still have a long way to go. Just as I have a long way to go to master Kanna Kamui, it seems Fran still has a long path of mastering Black Lightning ahead of her.

Kiara may have only just evolved, but she’s already accumulated a ton of battle experience by killing and battling every day, and she has an amazing enough battle sense to receive the blessing of the God of Fighting. Taking that into account, it wouldn’t be strange for her to be able to acquire and properly use the abilities she’d only just acquired.

“Haah!”

“You-!”

The two of them were locked in a fierce one-on-one, to be honest, Murellia had an overwhelming advantage. Neither of their Black Lightning techniques are nullified due to the nature of Black Heavenly Tigers, and

Kiara's attacks only inflict negligible damage. But if Murellia's attacks land even once, it's game over.

Though, that doesn't stop the battle-crazed Kiara from trying to cut her opponent to pieces.

[Fran, I'll assist you!]

“Nn.”

Even in the middle of her fight, Murellia has been wary of Fran and I on the sidelines. Even Fran slightly increasing her grip on me increased the tension to new heights. Despite that, Fran jumped into the fight.

You'll probably get mad at us later, but first, we need to take care of Murellia.

Once again, sorry for the wait on these chapters.

Next chapter in 1-3 days

Chapter 331

[Let's go!]

“HAA!”

Fran propelled herself with a jump with the intent to kill as she slashed at Murellia. Normally in such a battle, Fran would have the advantage due to her ridiculously high skill with the sword. However, in this battle where Murellia had the ability to fly, the odds became less clear. In this scenario, it resulted in a battle in which each attack towards both sides had been prevented. However, Murellia's ability to fly is pretty shabby in comparison to before I poked her with Evil's Bane. I guess that confirms that I managed to seal away some of her evil power. There's a clear delay in when she invokes skills and when they activate. This is our chance.

She can probably already tell from my earlier attack that her barriers won't stop me. As such, Murellia began to completely ignore Kiara's attacks and set her attention solely on Fran. Even though Kiara had managed to penetrate Murellia's barriers, I guess the latter had decided the damage was negligible.

“HA!”

Before we knew it, Mare had jumped into the three-person battle alongside us. Sparing a quick glance at the ground, it looks like she was thrown by Mianoa. We just didn't notice her approach until she was right on top of us because of Kuina's illusion magic.

At first, Murellia just ignored Mare, but it wasn't too long before she adopted a defensive posture. It seems that any Danger Detection skills she had were firing all cylinders. Looks like we're finally getting a bit of an

edge in this fight. If Murellia starts trying to prevent Mare's attacks with her barrier, she'll inevitably begin to fail at preventing Fran's attacks. Suddenly, Murellia's figure disappears and reappears more than a dozen meters away.

Ah, she's running.

[She's running!]

"Geh. Annoying!"

We immediately give chase and continue our assault. Most of our attacks are going to be prevented, but that's part of the strategy. While Murellia is busy trying to stop my barrier-ignoring blade, if Mare is able to get in a good hit it might be able to decide the battle.

"What, running already? 『Flare Cannon』!"

Shooting straight out from Mare is a beam straight out of a sci-fi movie. Apparently, if she utilizes both her golden and white flame and condenses it, she can even do something like this. If her golden bonfire that destroyed the Valkyrie from before was her ultimate melee attack, this would for sure be her ultimate ranged attack.

Murellia, with her focus on Fran and I, wasn't able to respond to the attack in time. As the platinum swirl of energy completely destroyed her lower body.

"Geh-"

That was an attack with all of Murellia's power behind it. I guess even Murellia's barrier hadn't been enough to stop such a thing. She visibly trembles in pain from losing half of her body. I guess she doesn't have Pain Resistance.

"You piece of shit! I'll tear you into shreds!"

Murellia's power immediately pulses as muscles and flesh almost seem to worm their way out of her wounds and regenerate her. At the same time, an evil mist-like aura begins to seep off of her. As we approach it Danger

Detection begins blaring. It looks like she's trying to salvage her power and protect herself with this fog. But sorry, it's not enough to stop us.

Fran raises me above her as we approach. Upon contact with the mist, everything around us appears to slow to complete standstill as Fran unleashes her attack.

『Sword Lord Technique - Broken Sky』

As she invokes the technique, Fran calmly takes a deep breath; our surroundings slow to a crawl as her concentration increases to the breaking point.

And as she swings my blade, the evil energy in front of us fragments into countless pieces.

“Y-YOU!”

Through the aftermath of our attack, we catch a glimpse of Murellia's figure. Her body, or what remained of it, had been torn from her left shoulder to her right side. Her organs begin spilling to the ground beneath her, as unlike Mare's attack ours didn't cauterize her wounds.

Though to her credit, Murellia is truly the toughest enemy we've had so far. She's already started regenerating her freshly received wounds. But Kiara was there to capitalize on her weakened state.

“Can't ignore me now, can you?”

“You old hag!”

Kiara instantly cuts into Murellia with 『Rolling Black Thunder』. Her blade cuts cleanly through all of the Evil Being's barriers, Murellia herself, and - with an incredible roar - straight through the earth.

Although she dealt a decisive blow to Murellia, unlike Murellia and Fran and I's combined mana pools, there's no way she should've been able to use Brilliant Lightning Rush without a tremendous burden on her body.

Immediately after unleashing her attack fell to the ground, probably exhausted, and drops her awakened state.

[Kiara's in trouble!]

“Nn.”

Fran begins to rush towards Kiara, but gets a scolding instead.

“Gah, I'm fine. Shouldn't you be focussing on the battle?!”

“...!”

Kiara's glare seals the deal. Fran immediately changes her momentum towards the downed Murellia. Even if she's used up her entire mana pool, it's Kiara, I have no doubt she'll be able to manage.

Sigrun, finally understanding that her master is in serious danger, rushes to separate us and her mistress. Upon inspection, she has a jet-black stone in a tight grip. It's probably one of those Evil Magic Stones, though strangely it appears that she's retained her reason, with the only noticeable effect being her black-stained eyes.

Her movements are incredibly more refined compared to the battle from before. It seems she's using the stones to not only boost her stats, but probably even give her skills a few extra levels. I can't even tell since she's become saturated with the Evil God's power though.

[Hey, aren't they supposed to go berserk when they use one of those stones?]

“... Why still in control?”

The Valkyrie answers Fran's question.

“Fuhahaha! Unlike my inferior sisters, I was born as a Kin of the War God! Now that I have the Evil God's power as well, there's no way I'd go insane from something like this!”

I see, so there's still some kind of relationship from when the Evil God was still considered one of the actual gods? Through her genealogy from the War God, it somehow makes her resistant- No, maybe it gives her some affinity to the Evil God?

I guess it's somewhat like the Beastmen's tribes inheriting the power of the founding beast?

“Hah!”

“Tch”

Each time Fran and Sigrun clash, the stone that's enhancing her will become a little less powerful due to Evil's Bane. Likewise, as the stone weakens, the bonus that the Valkyrie gets to her stats gets lower and lower. This is basically a countdown until Fran and I win, but we're in a rush.

After all, the more time we spend on this fight, the more Murellia recovers.

[Let's finish this up Fran!]

“Nn!”

[Alright, here we go!]

「Kanna Kamui!」

『Kanna Kamui!』

Up to this day, I don't even know how many times we've used this spell. But this is probably the first time we've used it at minimal power. Or so I say, but even though that's the case, Evil's Bane is incorporated into the attack, so it'll still do pretty decent damage. Though even saying that, with this amount of power, it'll only trip up our opponents for a second. That is, that would be the case if that was the end of the story.

I stretched my little decorative chain, slowly lengthening it until it was long enough to form a loose net. The goal here is to try and mirror Fermus' attacks against us in the 3rd round of the martial arts tournament: a tsunami

of threads that attacks from all directions at once. Or so I tried, but I'm not quite there yet, at only being created a fine wave.

The disadvantage of this technique is that I don't have anywhere near enough threads to do any meaningful damage. Unless the target is an Evil Being, that damage this would do is pretty much negligible. On the upside though, is that it's very tricky to avoid. In a word, this is an extremely effective technique against Evil Beings.

Sigrun, who has made every effort to prevent our Kanna Kamui, has stopped dead in her tracks. Not wanting to miss this obvious opening, Fran and I attacked.

“GYAA!”

After our strike the threads did their work, shredding her body apart into tiny pieces. It probably looked really cool to those watching, as it looked like our single slash had resulted in over 100 cuts.

[Tch, her magic stone was barely worth anything!]

Even if she didn't go insane just from using the stone, it looks like using it had the same effect on her stone as it did to the first Valkyrie we fought. It's a shame!

Murellia watches as her subordinate is shred apart and grinds her teeth together. It seems her regeneration has just finished restoring her.

“Oho, now... now you've done it!!”

[Fran, she's in terrible shape, this is it!]

“Nn!”

Fran rushes in to cut down Murellia as she begins to take flight... just as another figure bars her way.

“Uoooo!!!”

“Who?”

[Is that a human?]

It was indeed a human. A man dressed as a knight takes a fighting stance as he assists Murellia. Apparently he had been skulking around while hiding his presence. Is he a friend to Murellia or something?

“Murellia hasn’t done anything wrong, leave her alone!”

Next chapter in 3-5 days.

Chapter 332

I try appraising the idiot that jumped out in defense of Murellia.

Name: Johan Magnolia

Age: 45

Race: Human

Occupation: Covert Knight

Level: 53/99

HP: 457 MP: 209

Arm Strength: 238

Physical Strength: 198

Agility: 192

Intelligence: 110

Magical Power: 97

Dexterity: 99

Skills:

Assassination Lv. 6

Acting Lv. 5

Lie Detection Lv. 3

Stealth Lv. 6

Detection Lv. 6

Court Etiquette Lv. 2

Attitude Detection Lv. 3

Archery Lv. 3

Swordplay Lv. 7

Swordsmanship Lv. 8

Social Skills Lv. 5

Shield Techniques Lv. 4

Shield Arts Lv. 6

Covert Actions Lv. 3

Poison Resistance Lv. 5

Poison Techniques Lv. 6

Paralysis Resistance Lv. 3

Water Magic Lv. 1

Speechcraft Lv. 5

Power Control

Painless

Unique Skills

Danger Sight

Titles

Murder

Vice Knight of Bashar

This guy isn't half bad. Although he's nowhere near as strong as Fran, he'd still put up a good fight in a physical battle. He's not so much a violent killer as he is a guy that slinks around in the shadows and quietly takes lives.

Plus, his title is the Vice Knight of Bashar. Although I don't know the ranks of knights in the kingdom, chances are he ranks pretty high. Murellia had an alliance with the Basharian Kingdom, so it's not really strange that he's here.

Johan deflected our attack and shouted towards Murellia.

"I'll be supporting you!"

"What in the world are you doing here? Your job doesn't involve helping me!"

Even though he's helping out, Murellia yells at him furiously. Murellia has a look of rage on her face, though Johan laughs it off with a refreshing smile.

"Hahaha! My job may only be to monitor you, but you've done far too much for our country to simply watch as you're slain in battle."

"... Do whatever you want."

Murellia closes her eyes and concentrates on recovery.

"Won't let you!"

“Too eager, aren’t you.”

This guy easily keeps up with Fran’s movements. Each time she attempts to charge Murellia she finds the knight’s shield waiting for her. This is probably the effect of his unique skill. From the name, it probably simulates the effect of danger detection except displays the danger visually.

“HAAAAA!”

[Eat this!]

Even if you can see it, it doesn’t matter if you can’t prevent it! In order to throw off Johann, I start throwing out wind and flame magic in sync with Fran’s strikes.

But somehow, Johann is even able to stave this attack off. Utilizing both sword skills and shield skills, he scatters our wind magic with flicks of his sword while simply dodging the flames. This unique skill is a hell of a lot more useful than I thought.

However, it seems that his sword hand has gotten exhausted due to neutralizing all of the wind magic. Spurred on by my annoyance at Johann’s persistence, I unleashed a telekinetic catapult at Murellia while he’s distracted. The purpose being to put pressure on Murellia with ranged attacks while keeping the knight occupied with melee attacks.

“Dammit, dodge this!”

Johann put up his shield just in time for me to slam into him, though he’s pushed back several feet by the impact. Fran jumps forward and reclaims me, twisting to slam me once again into the knight’s shield, and he’s blown away to the side from the impact.

We don’t pursue him any further, since our aim is Murellia anyways, but magic gets shot at us from somewhere to interrupt us.

『Air Slicer!』

Nearly 20 blades of air come hurtling out of the sky around us. Each of them is quite powerful, probably nearly enough to slice a limb off. While dodging the rain of attacks, we spy the man likely responsible for attacking us, a man dressed like a magician surrounded by some knights that seemed like his subordinates. Where the heck were these guys? Right after Johann showed up I scanned the surroundings just to make sure there wasn't going to be any more surprises... was it some kind of skill?

“We'll protect Murellia!!”

“You'll never lay a hand on our lord!”

“Fuhaha! Are you trying to hide behind our benefactor?”

“If you're hiding away, it'll bring shame to the knight's name!”

The name of the sorcerer man who was screaming is Sanhawk Goldie. Appraisal says he's a 43 year old Storm Knight. Although his swordmanship is worse than Johann's, he has Storm Magic at level 4 and Chant Reduction at level 6, and he also has a good balance of offense and defense. He also possesses a skill called Group Stealth. This one is probably why I didn't notice them.

As Sunhawk began to cast again, he turned his sharp eyes towards Fran. These guys are probably ready to become shields for Murellia.

“First, eliminate the escorts.”

“WONWON!”

Guendalfa and Urushi launch themselves at the group of knights. Kuina and Mianoa are probably both exhausted, and as much as I'd like for them to help keep back the knights, I don't expect them to join in. It can't be helped.

“Let's go! We can't sit here and be useless!”

“Ou!”

“We're going to take that man's head!”

Our adventurer escorts were... pretty much useless. They must've saved their stamina and watched for an opportunity to attack. They quickly realized that they couldn't win even if they fought conservatively and waited for a chance to strike. Perhaps it would've worked if they were up against rookie adventurers, but their opponent was too strong.

“Stop! You people! Those knights are-!”

Guendalfa called out to stop them, but the adventurer's paid no heed. Before they were even able to reach the knights, black bullets shot out and pierced through the adventurers, shot from Murellia. They don't instantly die from the attack, which suggests that she only aimed to knock them out to begin with.

But, this is an opportunity. With the attack she just threw out, Murellia probably barely has any evil energy left. She's probably barely conscious right now. As soon as the knight group is distracted, we dash through the center of them. The knights probably noted something shot past them, as many of them looked back with wide eyes, but it was far too late. We were already one step away from Murellia.

[We made it!]

“HAA!”

At the moment Fran strikes out, a newly recovered Johann jumps in to intercept the attack. Apparently he sensed the attack with his unique skill. How many times have we been interrupted now?!

“Guhaa!”

“So persistent!”

Fran's thrust that should've hit Murellia pierces Johann's chest instead. But it's too soon for us to stop. Fran puts even more strength behind the strike in Johann's chest.

“I. WON'T. LET. YOU!!”

“Don’t overdo it Johann!”

Murellia cries out, but Johann doesn’t heed her.

“Nugaa!”

Johann doesn’t hesitate to stab the sword deeper into his body, just to take a step closer to us. We’re probably only a few feet away from Murellia at this point. Johann grabs the blade in his chest, hurting his hand but trying to keep the blade from moving anywhere else.

“You’ll die here.. With me!”

There is no hesitation in his words. The group of knights behind us surrounds us and dash towards Fran.

[Tch.]

We escaped for the time being. Johann sunk to the ground in a bloody heap after receiving the attacks meant for us from his friends. The attack failed but it looks like that was enough to take care of the Vice Knight for a while. We’ll reach Murellia for sure with this next attack. Fran was probably thinking along the same lines, as she readies me in her stance again.

But before we’re able to advance, we are attacked from behind from an unexpected opponent.

“Gaa!”

“Hyaaa!”

“Gaoo!”

It was... the adventurers that fell to Murellia? Their skin is a sickly color, and they’re clearly in an abnormal state.

The adventurers rush towards Fran, one after another. It looks like they’ve turned into undead.

“Ahaha! Just even if it doesn’t work on that irritating sword, the rule of the Evil God still reigns supreme!”

I see, those bullets she shot must’ve been laced with the Evil God’s influence, and now they’re under Murellia’s control.

“As of this moment, you all are--?”

Murellia, who was just starting to get back in her regular haughty attitude, apparently sensed something and turned away. Following her gaze, she seems to be looking at the to the northern skyline.

“Hang on, what are you talking about? I still have Johann of the 3rd Knights... Intruder?!”

Huh? What the hell is she on about?

“Hold on! You want me to withdraw...! Do you even see what’s going on? That’s --- Dammit!”

It seems that she’s talking to someone... And that she’s going to be withdrawing.

“My apologies, I’m going to have to withdraw. I expect you to be following behind me.”

“Haha! Please don’t worry about me!”

“Is that so.”

“This is my job after all.”

“Your job should be monitoring me! I won’t to die yet, Johann.”

Murrelia uncorked and sprinkled a life potion over Johann. We watch in awe as the knight’s flesh weaves and stitched itself back together. That must’ve been a top tier potion!

[Fran, Murellia’s running!]

“Nn!”

We immediately dash up to Murellia, and Fran unleashed a slash at her.

“Haaa!”

“Gaa! This little brat! Next time we meet will be the end for you, remember that!”

[Dammit. She’s teleporting!]

Murellia vanishes from the spot, even though her arms were cleanly severed by Fran. I can’t sense her presence anywhere around me. It seems she really did escape.

“Where did she go?”

[Listen Fran, I want to pursue her as much as you do, but we need to take care of the knights and adventurers first.]

“... Understood.”

This is going to be the trickiest part, we need to subdue these guys without killing them.

TN: Really sorry about the wait, seems like I'm having less and less time free time that I need to do these. As it's kinda obvious that the chapter estimations aren't really working out, I'm going to stop doing them as to not give you guys false hope. As on the projects page; updates may be anywhere from several times a day, to once every two weeks, though I will do my best to at least do an update a week.

Apologies again.

Chapter 333

Murellia has officially escaped the battle. All that we have left to clean up is the Bashar Knights and the unfortunate adventurers that were possessed by the Evil God.

[Kuina, Protect Mia and Kiara!]

Right after I send the warning, I blanket the entire area with lightning magic. Well, with opponents of this level, it really is just that easy. The adventurers-turned-evil probably would've run away if things had looked bad for them, but by using lightning magic we were able to paralyze them and stop that altogether.

“Guuuuuuu!”

“Uggghhh”

“Shut up.”

We finished tying up all the adventurers, but once the paralysis wore off they started screaming and moaning, trying to break free of their bonds.

“ ... ”

On the contrary though, the knights have remained completely silent this entire time. What a troublesome bunch both of them are.

“I want to return our adventurers back to sanity, but I think there's something wrong.”

“It doesn’t seem like it’s something that’ll be dispelled easily.”

Mare, who’s recovered from her exhaustion, and Guendalfa stand above the restrained adventurers with their arms crossed and worried looks on their faces. Actually, I’d already tried casting purifying magic on them, but it seems like there’s either no point, or my skill level is too low.

Actually, maybe I’m going about this the wrong way.

(Master, kill them?)

[Hmm... I’d kinda like to save that as a last resort, but I have something in mind.]

(Nn.)

[Can you touch my blade to one of them for a second?]

(Understood.)

This might work better than purifying magic. Thinking along these lines, I request Fran to put me in direct contact with one of the possessed adventurers, taking care not to hurt them. Needless to say, I wasn’t expecting it to be so effective.

“GYAAAAAAAAAAA!”

[Woah!]

The adventurer screamed and began writhing in his bonds. I watched closely, and slowly but surely, a strange black energy bubbled to the surface of his skin and boiled away into nothing. Evil’s Bane might be a whole lot more useful than I had even anticipated.

I mean, sure, the adventurer freaked the hell out. But other than that, it looks like the energy has completely. I was a bit worried about the scream, but I checked out his status and his health hasn’t decreased at all, so is it safe to call this experiment a success?

“Hey hey, what did you do to that guy?”

“Purified evil.”

Guendalfa, who doesn't understand the situation, makes a face at Fran. From his perspective it probably looked like Fran just hit the guy in the shoulder with my blade and caused him to scream in pain. That would certainly be a cause for worry.

Guendalfa walks up to the adventurer and taps his cheek.

“Oi, you alright?”

“Ugh... Where...”

Huh, looks like he's returned to sanity. He's responding well enough, and it looks like his memories cut off at the point that he was struck by Murellia's black bullets. Hopefully, this means it's safe enough to perform on the other adventurers. The screaming is a bit... unsettling though.

“Higyaa!”

“Raaaaugh!”

“What in the world...”

Guendalfa, the only one who doesn't understand what's happening, is baffled by the sight that is taking place before him. Though this time around he knows Fran doesn't mean any harm, so he's not stopping us.

Around five minutes later, all the previously brainwashed adventurers were waking up, sanity newly restored. All I had to do is touch them to expel the evil energy, pretty simple. Even then it's Fran that's actually touching me to them, so I'm doing even less work!

But anyways, Evil's Bane is amazing! To think that it was as simple as touching me to snap possessed people out of the stupor. I didn't think that such a panic spreading force such as the Evil God's influence could be

banished with just a tap. This will surely be an incredibly useful skill for dealing with Evil Entities in the future.

I entrust the adventures to a very confused Guendalfa. Fran and I head over to the knights group to see if we can't get some useful information out of them.

"Alright fellas, we can either do this the easy way, or the hard way."

The knights look at Mare without even a hint of fear or intimidation in their eyes, in fact, it's almost like they're looking at her with contempt. In their eyes, we can clearly make out the gleam of determination, making clear their hatred against beastmen.

"Look, I know that you people are from the Bashar Kingdom. What is your relationship with the evil being Murellia?"

"..."

"What were you trying to accomplish here?"

"..."

Geez, tough crowd. If they're this stubborn about giving up such basic info, these guys are gonna be a pain in the ass to get anything out of.

"Can't help it. I really didn't want to do things this way but... Kuina."

"Understood."

The interrogations begin in earnest. They start by simply asking questions, then threaten them before moving to actually hurt them, and then hurting them even more. Even this wasn't enough. There isn't even a hint of one of their mouths budging.

They tried a bunch of things. They tried to say they're only trying to help reduce casualties. They claimed that they don't want to hurt the knights. They threatened them. Tortured them. Nothing worked, the light in the

knight's eyes shined just as brightly as it did in the beginning. It's hard not to be impressed.

"This is the last time I'll ask. What is your relationship with Murellia?"

Even if they singled a knight out and asked questions while slowly bending all of his fingers back, one by one, they only silently screamed while violently clenching their teeth.

"Hah... These guys are the real deal, I doubt we're going to get anything out of them.

"Unfortunately, that seems to be the case."

Kuina agrees with Mare's statement, taking her hands off of the man's fingers.

"I guess we don't have any other option. Kuinda, please."

"I understand."

"What are you doing?"

"Kuina's going to go question that guy."

As I watched, Kuina walks up to a knight that's been singled out from the rest. The knight's identity is Johan Magnolia, the leader of the knight group. He was severely injured by Fran and I's attack when he used his body as a shield for an attack meant for Murellia, but he's since recovered from a potion Murellia gave him along with Fran and I's healing magic.

Still, he's not completely recovered, and he's currently lying on the ground, but that's better Kuina's purposes.

"This will go smoother if the target is not at full strength."

Kuina said, and begins activating her Inherent Skill, Phantom Dream Matrix. In addition to having Illusion effects mixed in, it also appears to have a slightly hypnotic effect. Since the main effect is the illusions, the

hypnotic effect is weak. It seems that Kuina had to use every bit of MP she could in order to successfully put him in a hypnotic state.

“Now. Look into my eyes.”

“Geh-”

Johann lashes his sore body away and looks away from Kuina.

“Fufu. I lied. I don’t need your gaze to apply this technique.”

It seems the purpose of that was to split Johann’s attention away from the fact that he was being hypnotized for a brief moment by making him concentrate on something else. Johann, focusing on looking away, showed a small gap.

A considerable amount of magical energy erupts from Kuina and shoots towards Johann.

“Hmm, let’s see if it took. What is your name?”

“Johann Magnolia.”

“Success.”

Chapter 334

転生したら剣でした

Reincarnated as a Sword

Author: 棚架ユウ

Raw:

334. Murellia's History

Thanks to Kuina's Phantom Illusion Matric, Johan is hypnotized. However, this effect doesn't seem like it will last for long, which means I need to quickly find out what I want to know.

"What is your affiliation!?" Kuina asked.

"Johan! Snap out of it!"

"Vice-captain! You scum!"

"Release us you wretches!" In loud voices, the other knights tried to disturb Kuina.

Kuina tried to question Johan, but the other knights interfered. From their point of view, they could understand that Johan was being manipulated.

"Shut up."

"——!"

"——!"

With Fran's Wind Magic, any sounds from the knights were cut off. No matter how much their mouths moved, their voices were unable to reach us. With this, we can comfortably Johan for information.

"I'll ask you again. Which place are you affiliated with?"

"The Bashar Kingdom."

"What is the relationship between you and Murellia?"

"Miss Murellia is the benefactor of my country as well as my home."

"Let me know more about that. Tell me what you know about Murellia."

Johan then began to tell us about Murellia's relationship with themselves. It was a story about Murellia from 500 years before, that was completely different from those told in the beastkin country.

In that time, 500 years ago, Murellia was steadily accumulating fame whilst acting as an adventurer. She bore her honor as a member of the royal family, and although she was prideful, she did not seem to have a twisted character. Rather, she was actually concerned about the beastkin supremacists and their rejection of humans, which was the mainstream ideology in the country at the time, and she even desired to regulate this discriminatory behavior towards humans. However, despite her status as royalty, Murellia had little actual influence due to being an adventurer. As such, she began to Party (team-up) with humans and endeavored to improve her public image more.

Shortly after, she had a fateful encounter, and, of all things, fell in love with a human in the same Party (Adventuring Team). Unfortunately, love between the princess of the beastkin and a human, whom were treated as slaves or worse in the beastkin nation at the time, could not be tolerated.

Murellia, who refused to give up despite these sentiments, instead decided to change the very nature of the people around her and her country itself. Retiring as an adventurer, she returned to the Royal Palace to gain status and voice amongst her people.

However, due to her human lover, the backlash towards Murellia was severe. She had become an affront to the pride and honor of the beastkin. A fool who had gone mad over a mere human. Worse, she opened herself to be exposed to even worse rumors, such as that she was a prostitute, a fallen princess, or as scum to even humans. To put it kindly, there was no beastkin around who would take her side.

In the end, Murellia and her lover were separated by the King, as the shame of the ruling beastkin tribe. That was not all. In order to sever any lingering attachments Murellia had for the human, the King arranged a female human slave for her lover and forced them to procreate. In front of Murellia.

It seems that the lover was threatened using Murellia as a shield, and had no choice but to obey....

To begin with, Murellia was only infuriated with the beastkin who were conducting unreasonable acts against humans, but after being deprived of her lover, it had become a profound and terrible hatred. It was to such an extent that one could say nothing in this world held value to her anymore.

Immediately after this, Murellia made contact with the Evil God. At that time, the royal family was managing the seal, but Murellia broke it in order to destroy the beastkin nation. However, because of the many years in captivity, she failed to immediately resurrect the Evil God. Instead, the Evil God empowered Murellia and ordered her to gather souls for itself.

It seems that Murellia had the ability to resist Evil Magic, and even with the power of the Evil God, she did not lose her reason and rampage. Murellia continued to resurrect the Evil God and take revenge. The first thing she did was to take control of the beastkin royal family. She did this simply by manipulating them with the power of the Evil God.

With the political power she gained from this, having obtained the power of the Evil God and the Black Cat tribe as tools, Murellia began to politically purge any factions which would discriminate against and oppress humanity. It was a two-bird one-stone strategy that would both exterminate the beastkin races she despised, and offer up souls to the Evil God. Unfortunately, that did not mean discrimination against humanity would

disappear from the country. Rather, the resistance to Murellia, who forcibly pushed for human protection, became even more critical of humans by the day.

At that time, assassins were frequently sent to kill Murellia, as well as her lover, who many believed to be a fiend that had driven Murellia mad. As such, Murellia kept her lover, the female slave, and the newborn child born between them close to her side where she could protect them.

However, as the pressure from assassins increased with each passing day, it came to a point that Murellia finally resolved to have her lover and his family escape. The destination was the neighboring Kingdom of Bashar, a country founded by humans. That being said, they were uncertain if they would be accepted as officials of the beastkin royal family. For this reason, Murellia gave them confidential information on the southern nobles' plan to invade the Bashar Kingdom.

The Bashar Kingdom of that time was not even half the size of what it was currently. Furthermore, they had to deal with the beastkin nation, which was highly aggressive towards them. In addition, they had been defeated in the war the previous year, making preventing another beastkin invasion into their land difficult.

It was to this kingdom that they brought the military intelligence Murellia had given them. While initially doubtful, they acted on the information nonetheless, and managed to successfully defend their country. At the same time, one of the other decisive factors that lead to their victory was Murellia, who lead the Black Cat tribe and attacked the invading army from behind.

Thanks to this, Murellia believed she could offer up a large number of souls to revive the Evil God, exterminate the beastkin, and regain her lover at once. However, this was not the case.

In the end, her lover, the female slave, and the child born between the two, spent the rest of their lives in the Bashar Kingdom. The lover revived the Magnolia family with the child born from the female slave as heir, whilst the female slave became a mistress of that time's king.

In other words, the prince of the Bashar royal family and the heir of the Magnolia family became half siblings. The Magnolia family, under the protection of the royal family, continued to retain its name since, and was now known as a family of warrior masters.

"What a ridiculous story.... I don't know anything about it." After hearing Johan's story, Mia thought with a troubled expression. Of course, the fact remains that Murellia is a sinner attempting to revive the Evil God, but this story implies that her character wasn't originally broken. Of course, that was only if Johan's story was true.

"Does Murellia still intend to revive the Evil God?"

"I don't know."

"Murellia said she would create a paradise for the Black Cat tribe, but why? From what I heard from your story, she should have despised the Black Cat tribe..."

"Using the power of the Evil God, it seems she intends to recall the souls of the Black Cat tribe from 500 years ago and grant them eternal torment. She said that she would then use their power to destroy the other beastkin tribes." Johan responds to Mary's muttering in an emotionless voice.

Apparently, the story about Murellia was passed on through the Magnolia family and the Bashar royal family. Therefore, he accompanied Murellia in order to repay his ancestor's debt towards her. In addition, the king decided to ally with Lynford and Murellia as well. All this makes the likelihood of the story being true high indeed.

Not only that, but the invasion of the beast nation is, in fact, more meaningful to Bashar than territorial acquisition.

In recent years, a large gap has formed between the beastkin's military power and other countries, making even light skirmishes impossible. As a result, many misunderstand and think 'peace is coming', but the truth is the opposite. Within the country, underground beastkin discrimination groups were forming, with many among their number being nobles.

As a result, the number of young people instigating hate against the beastkin from the shadows were increasing, and the movement to reject the beastkin was quietly spreading in the country. At this rate, it was possible that civil wars or riots might erupt. However, if a war was started with the beastkin country for the sake of letting out their stress, there was the fear that they might be destroyed as well. Although the current beastkin king is moderate, Bashar's leaders were fundamentally unable to trust in the beastkin.

That being said, what if they accepted Lynford's invitation? With their combined power, it might even be possible to win the war and achieve their long cherished wish of colonizing the country of the beastkin. Even if they lose, they could still send the extremists belonging to the radical underground organizations to be disposed of. They could also make the excuse that the beastkin Murellia had used the power of the Evil God to manipulate them as well. Even if they were forced to make reparations, their nation would not be destroyed. And, of all things, the one to propose this was none other than Murellia herself.

"If we put all the responsibility on ourselves, the beastkin nation shouldn't be able to bring all their strength to bear, is what we were thinking."

"Is that the benefit of having saved the country twice...?"

"That is correct."

The knights present here are among the members of the Magnolia family who are particularly patriotic, and who also seem to have great obligation and adoration for Murellia. Their nation had given them the role of a watchdog, but in reality, they were more like Murellia's escort instead.

"Even if we are wicked, we shall not forget our debt to her."

Still, this is pretty troublesome. I don't really care if the other person has stuff like justice or circumstances. To begin with, everyone has their own form of justice. Even the enemies we've cut down so far all had their own reasons to fight our justice. It was just incompatible with our's. If there's

someone worrying about things like that at this point, they shouldn't have started fighting in the first place.

I don't really know how true the story just now is anyways. In the end, it's no wonder that the story of the Bashar kingdom, which favors Murellia, is different from the beastkin nation. Both stories should be taken with a grain of salt. Though, I do think it's more likely that the Bashar kingdom, where the information remained intact, has the more accurate story.

What I found to be the most awkward part of it all was Murellia's motives. This is just what I think from my previous live's experience, but there's nothing more terrifying than the grudge of a woman's love. What's this 30 year old virgin saying, you might ask. Yeah, I personally don't have much romantic experience, but I've seen it enough at work and at school.

A girl who lynches a friend just because the boy she was in love with likes said friend. Or, a certain senior female employee who saw their love interest show kindness to a new employee, and, believing herself betrayed, curses them out of misplaced resentment and attempts to commit suicide in front of their eyes. Or, a colleague who began stalking the person their boyfriend was having an affair with, and murdered their pet cat. Truly terrifying. And they all have in common that, even after doing so many illogical things, they're still smiling and going about business as usual.

Just like them, Murellia also looks calm on the surface. However, she's someone who no one can understand what destructive actions she might take. Ordinary women might swing their kitchen knives around, but what if it were Murellia? She's someone who might cause dungeons to spiral out of control or even revive the Evil God.

To make it worse, those with emotions such as delusions and grudges don't know how to give up, even to the very end. Fueled by negative emotions, they can continue on without end. And now, she's the Evil God's Miko (Shrine Maiden). I have no idea just how twisted and insane her spirit might have become.... In that respect, Murellia is really troublesome.

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Chapter 335

転生したら剣でした Reincarnated as a Sword

Author: 棚架ユウ

Raw: <https://ncode.syosetu.com/n6006cw/336/>

335. Off to the Dungeon

After hearing the story about Murellia's past, we continued to interrogate Johan.

“To where did Murellia disappear?”

“The Dungeon Master called her back to the Dungeon.”

“I see. Then—”

Over the course of the subsequent interrogation, one of the most important questions we asked were the location of the Dungeon and its strength. Originally, it was a dungeon with an entrance to the Bashar Kingdom side of the Border Mountains, however, an entrance was also created on the side of the Beastkin country. As this latter exit was meant for the army of Evil Beings and demonic beasts, it seems it is quite large.

The entrance is cave-shaped, but the interior is practically a fortress. Fortunately, Johan says there are few traps set. The Dungeon Master is a male ex-human, but he seems to be an exceedingly vile small fry type character. His personal fighting power is nothing to be worried about though. As for the strength of the dungeon itself, Johan didn't know very much. However, it seems that a considerable number of monsters still remain.

“The dungeon, is it...? I can barely wait.” Kiara muttered on the side with an excited expression.

“Lady Kiara, your body isn’t fully recovered. Please don’t strain yourself.” Mianoa scolded Kiara, who had only just recovered enough to walk.

“Yet Murellia may not be allowed to go free, no? Neither am I able to call in reinforcements. We have no choice but to go.”

“That may be so, however....” Neither Kiara nor Mia sound confident. With a worried look, I can’t help but agree.

“What, she is the sub-master of the Dungeon, is she not? If need be, we can split into groups to destroy the labyrinth.” Kiara said.

“I do not think it will be so simple.” Mia.

“Even so, it must be done. An old woman of my station, over the fate of the Beastkin Empire? To compare the two would be impudence.” Kiara.

“.... I will accept Teacher’s resolve.” Guendalfa.

“I just wanted a reason to fight, don’t worry yourself.” Kiara.

Kiara laughed mischievously, but Mia remained solemn. Despite Kiara’s attitude, Mia probably knows that Kiara’s words were completely serious. The only one with a faint expression is Guendalfa.

“What’s wrong? Don’t make such pathetic faces.” Kiara scowled, noticing his face.

“No, Teacher, if you heard that story, then—” Guendalfa.

“Are you feeling sympathetic? How foolish.” Kiara cut off Guendalfa.

“Don’t let yourself worry about the genuineness of such stories. Besides, if you call yourself a warrior, then be more thankful.” Kiara.

“Wh-, what do you mean?” Guendalfa.

“Your opponent is a legendary figure, you know? If you’re going to fight anyways, then it might as well be a worthy fight.” Kiara.

“The only one that thinks that way is you, Teacher.” Guendalfa remarked, stunned. In this case, he’s in the minority, as almost everyone here are battle maniacs.

“Mia and Fran think so too, right?” Kiara.

“It’s more fun to challenge strong opponents than to bully weaklings.” Mia agreed.

“Nn.” Fran nodded as well.

Battle maniacs are simple. But I agree as well. Anyways, Murellia is clearly Fran’s enemy. In that case, we should just defeat her. Guendalfa, who is naive and young, seems to find it the hardest to swallow; although, Quina and Mianoa also look like they agree with Kiara.

“Don’t be so naive. Thanks to them, the Beastkin Empire is in an unprecedented crisis, isn’t it?” Kiara.

“....Yes.” Guendalfa still looked uncomfortable, but this is something he has to overcome himself. Though it might be okay to leave it be.

“Well then, next I will have you tell me about the aim of the Bashar Kingdom.” Mia turned to Johan. As it turned out, Murellia and the Bashar Kingdom have some connection with each other. I don’t know how much of it is based on truth or not, but it’s there. However, does that make it alright to work with the wicked? Even a 500 year old debt should be nothing compared to politics.

“What is the king of Bashar thinking, joining hands with such evil? Although it is aimed at clearing domestic resentment towards the Beastkin Empire, I can’t believe a sane man would do this. Is there perhaps some other reason for this?”

“His Majesty the King said he was acting upon the debt of 500 years ago.”

“Do you believe that?”

“Naturally.”

“... There’s no way a king would endanger his country for the sake of some obligation. He must be plotting something else!”

“You animals may be that way, but this is to be expected of my people in Bashar.”

Do they think nothing wrong of this king who joined forces with evil? It sometimes makes me think that these people are willing to throw their lives away to protect Murellia, so it’s kind of scary. I get the feeling that their loyalty to her is way too extreme, or maybe too blind or something.

Not all of the Bashar Kingdom’s knights are like this, right? In the first place, do the other knights know they’re working with Evil Beings? When we asked this, we found that only those of the highest authority were permitted this knowledge, much less have the chance to meet Murellia. Just as I thought, they wouldn’t let just anyone know about this matter... There isn’t any evidence anyways, so even if it’s leaked, no one would believe it.

Later, the hypnosis technique applied to Johan eventually faded and no further information could be acquired. Mia and the others looked like they wanted a little more information, but it can’t be helped.

“Shall we chase after Murellia now?”

“Yes. However, we only heard the rough location of the Dungeon. How will we get there? Not everyone can ride the Linde...” Mia put her finger on her chin and muttered in thought.

Certainly, it would take too long on foot to reach the Border Mountains. Kiara and Mia have recovered and should be able to run on their own, but that would also leave them exhausted again. Ideally, we would take a carriage, but unfortunately, we don’t have something like that lying around at the moment.

“Fufu. I thought something like this might happen, so I brought this just in case.” Seeing Kiara and Mia looking troubled, Quina reached into her skirt with her hand.

“Don’t act cool in a situation like this.” Mia.

Ignoring Mia’s retort, Quina took out a canopied carriage with a flip of her skirt. It even had a horse made of stone attached to it....

“It’s a six-seater golem carriage.” Quina.

“Senpai is amazing. To say that line in a situation like this!”

“That is because I am a maid.” Quina.

I understand Quina’s expression now. It’s a perfect doyagao isn’t it? Guendalfa and the other adventurers looked at Quina with shocked faces.

Though, it’s apparently nothing special for Mia and Kiara. They’re already getting into the carriage...

(Aren’t you surprised too, Fran?) I asked her.

(It’s the same as Dimensional Storage that’s why.) Fran responded telepathically.

(Well, yeah, but...) I trailed off. The collapse of common sense is inevitable, it seems...

“That being said, not everyone can ride. Master Kiara should—”

“I am definitely going.” Kiara.

“I already know. Will Quina, Mianoa, and Fran go as well, or shall we ask others to escort the knights?”

The captured knights can’t be left alone after all, and there’s surely more information we can get from them too. It seems that Mia intends to leave the escort of the knights in the adventurers hands. I also agree with Mia.

Even if there's more people than Murellia, if they can't resist her, they will only end up being manipulated. A small but elite force would be better instead. As for Guendalfa, bringing him along or not is a difficult choice to make, but a person struggling with hesitation will only be a burden.

"Please wait! I will go too." After we told him that, Guendalfa hurriedly replied.

".... You want to go?" Kiara.

"Of course!" Guendalfa.

"If it looks like you will become a burden, we will leave you behind though?" Kiara asked him in a warning tone.

"Naturally." Guendalfa nodded solemnly.

"Understood. Very well, then." Kiara

"Teacher, is that alright?" Mia asked Kiara. At any rate, even if he wants to go, Guendalfa's fighting ability isn't anything special.

Kiara shrugged her shoulders and sighed. "Persuading you otherwise would take too much time. In that case, you would be more useful coming along with us in place of a shield."

"Then please use me as a shield, or whichever way you like." Guendalfa.

"You damn idiot! Who would use a beanstalk like you as a shield!?" Kiara.

"No, wasn't it Master who just said so...?"

"That was a figure of speech! Can you wipe your own ass, or not? Get it?"

"Yes!"

Anyways... the ones headed into the Dungeon are Fran, Mia, Quina, Kiara, Mianoa, and Guendalfa. Also, Urushi, Lind, and I are going in as hidden

members. This team would be reassuring normally, but the opponents this time are Murellia and the Dungeon. I can't let my guard down.

Chapter 336

336. Sleep

Raw: <https://ncode.syosetu.com/n6006cw/338/>

The golem carriage headed north towards the Border Mountains. It was shaking more than I thought it would, considering it's a golem made of stone, but in hindsight it's obvious. It's running out on the unpaved wilderness without any suspension. The carriage shaking is inevitable.

Still, it doesn't seem to be affecting the common sense here. Guendalfa is looking at the carriage with an impressed face. This is a carriage reserved for the royal family, after all. Apparently, it is also equipped with a magic tool devised to release the vibrations. It's still vibrating a lot, though.

In retrospect, the carriage I rode earlier might have shook this much while running along the highway. This carriage must be amazing after all.

(Fran, you alright?) I asked her telepathically.

"Nn.... I'm, fine..." She said, not looking 'fine' at all. Her eyes were blinking blearily, and her head was shaking back and forth. Come to think of it, we've been in battle since last night. She hasn't had a wink of sleep.

It seems that the vibration of the golem carriage induces sleepiness. The vibrations aren't periodic though. However, the feeling that your body is constantly swaying might be making her drowsy.

The usual Fran is the type that sticks closely to a regular sleeping schedule. Or rather, she sleeps a lot more than normal people do. Staying up all night like this must be difficult for her. She should definitely be exhausted. Fran struggled with drowsiness while rubbing her eyes incessantly.

(You don't have to push yourself. Just go to sleep.)

"Nn...."

I would prefer it if she just went to sleep, but Fran stubbornly continued to fight off drowsiness.

(What is it?)

"Kiara... talk..." Fran did her best, even though she was so sleepy her speech was broken. Apparently, she wanted to talk with Kiara in the carriage.

"Fran, we can talk later. For now, just sleep."

"Mmh... but..."

"Allowing one's body to rest is also one of the jobs of a warrior."

"Al... right..." Fran collapsed asleep.

At Kiara's admonishment, Fran nodded and collapsed into the world of sleep.

"Hm, she fell asleep."

"Th-, that was fast." Guendalfa remarked in surprise. Guendalfa seems like a sensitive person after all, so he probably has trouble sleeping. I understand him well, because I was the same when I lived on Earth.

"Even though she possesses such fighting power, she has a surprisingly innocent sleeping face."

"Well, she certainly is strong, but she is still a child."

Fran breathed deeply in her sleep, with her head resting on Kiara's lap. Kiara gently stroked Fran's head, causing a happy smile to float to her face.

"Mu!" Out of nowhere, Kiara suddenly groaned.

“Is something the matter, Master?”

Mia and the others, thinking something had happened, looked to Kiara who had suddenly raised her voice. However, Kiara’s expression was rather calm.

“No, it was just Fran’s drool.”

“Please don’t surprise me because of that.”

“Kukuku. It’s just been decades since a kid drooled on me.” Kiara smiled from the bottom of her heart.

“You don’t have to be afraid to ask Master Kiara for a lap pillow.”

“I would be happy to do so as many times as you want, you know?”

“... No, I shall refrain.”

Kiara sighed, and said, “Very well. More importantly, the rest of you should rest as well. I can keep watch.”

“Master Kiara, that would leave you tired as well, wouldn’t it?”

“At my age, the time I sleep is too short to be a problem.”

“That’s unrelated to this. There’s no need to worry. Quina is of a species that requires little rest to function, so a lookout is unnecessary with her as the driver.”

Apparently, Baku sleep less than normal people. They aren’t just about putting others to sleep, it seems. Still, I’m not sure if she will be alright with all this accumulated mental exhaustion. I should help here as well. Moving closer to Quina, I opened up a Telepathic Communication channel to her.

(Hey Quina, I can create a humanoid Clone. Do you want me to be the coachman? Even if you don’t need to sleep, you must be tired, right?)

(Ah, Shishou... was it? I'll be alright. If I take a nap later, there won't be a problem. Also, any fatigue can be taken care of with a Potion.)

(Even so, how do you deal with the mental exhaustion?)

(To begin with, I am half asleep, and half awake. Even in the driver's seat, I can rest sufficiently, and the golem carriage only needs occasional instructions, so it doesn't take much effort.)

(I see. Still, I will be on guard as well.)

(Thank you very much.)

I'm glad I was finally able to tell Kiara and the others that I am an Intelligent Weapon, but it's something I should only talk about after consulting with Fran. Though, I think Fran would easily share it if asked.

"Rest is also a warrior's duty, is it not?"

"Hm. That is what Mia said. Still, to be advised by that sleepyhead who always pissed herself..."

"Wha-.... Why are you bringing that up all of a sudden!?"

"Kukuku..." Kiara chuckled. "It's true, isn't it? Right, Quina?"

"Yes. I didn't want her to be upset, so I planned to change the bedding in secret, but in the end, it was discovered by Her Majesty. I remember it well."

"Stop!"

"Milady, Fran will wake up if you speak so loudly, you know?"

"Ugh...."

After that, everyone except Quina went to sleep. They had fought all throughout the night, talking about one thing or another, so they were tired

out. I was keeping guard while recovering my physical strength using my recovery magic.

Chapter 337

Four hours after leaving for the dungeon. The golem carriage, traveling north, was approaching the Border Mountains much faster than I thought it would. Although its travel speed is slow, it can run tirelessly on any terrain, without the need for breaks.

"It's, giant!"

About one hour ago, Fran woke up from a deep sleep, and, peeking her head out of the carriage hood, looked up at the approaching Border Mountains and shouted. I would have liked her to sleep longer, but it seems she was unable to because of all the excitement. Still, it seems she's fully recovered from her fatigue, so the rest was worth it.

(It really is huge, isn't it.... I can't even see the top with all those clouds.)

It might even be taller than Everest. Though, I can't get a good grasp of the size from this distance, so I don't know the exact altitude.

The height of the mountains along the mountain range was striking.

Moreover, unlike normal mountain ranges, there are almost no plains at its base. From a distance, it just looks like a giant vertical wall. It was almost like it was a waterfall of stone, flowing through the clouds from the sky and pouring down to the ground.

Looking closer, one can see that the slope is just extremely steep. Still, it certainly looked more like a cliff than a normal mountain.

"We will be arriving at our destination soon. Kiara-shishou, how are you doing?"

"I am alright now. I drank the potion. All things considered, we arrived faster than I thought."

"Nn. In the blink of an eye."

"It's because those two spent the entire time talking, isn't it?"

Just as Mia says, Kiara and Fran have been talking since she woke up. Though, it wasn't a conversation between an elder and a child, or about fighting or how to use Senka Jinrai. Instead, it was a brutal conversation in which Kiara talked about Magic Beasts and warriors she had defeated in the past, and how to use intimidation to efficiently break the opponents spirit. I was foolish, expecting a warm-hearted conversation between a grandmother and grandchild from these two.

Still, it turned out to be an intense conversation. Senka Jinrai really does have a further level to it, just as expected. Just as Fran instinctually grasps the Black Lightningstrike, Kiara can use the Rolling Black Lightning freely. The reason Fran can't use it, is that Fran lacks sufficient combat experience, it seems. Even when I tried to show her using myself as an example, it didn't work.

"Difficult."

"It's nothing to worry about. At your age, you've already achieved it. If you don't neglect your practice, you will be able to use it before you know it."

"Nn. I'll do my best."

The topic is brutal, but Fran seems to be having fun. It seems conversation between family really is special.

"Ojou-sama." Quina, who was in the driver's seat, called out to Mia. It sounded like her normal voice to me, but it seemed that the tension in her voice was properly picked up by Mia.

"What is it? Did something happen?" While immediately preparing herself for battle, Mia asked a question of Mia in return.

"There is an abnormal situation."

Hearing that, Mia and Fran poked their heads into the driver's side of the carriage.

"That..."

"Wha.... What happened....?"

Quina is pointing in shock, and for good reason. Ahead of the carriage, a large number of magic beast remains littered the ground. That was several hundreds of magical beasts, atrociously rendered into corpses, and scattered across the land.

"Magic beasts from a dungeon? But, the way they were defeated...."

"Yes, it's abnormal."

As Quina said, the magical beasts were abnormally killed. Every last one of them was squashed flat, as if crushed from above.

Weak small fry, visibly powerful dragon-like creatures, and evil beings were all similarly pressed into the ground and crushed. Furthermore, it was over a vast area. Looking over the wilderness, everywhere else seems to be in a similar condition.

We disembarked from the carriage and began investigating the area. It wasn't just the monster corpses that were unusual.

"The ground is too flat."

"Nn."

As Mia said, the entire area was flat, as if the ground were flattened by a road roller. No, this would be overwhelmingly flatter than a highway. It would be shameful to even compare.

Examining the surroundings, I was able to spot the flat parts and the border where it meets the usual wilderness. It looked exactly like a boundary. The

normal wilderness past the boundary suddenly stopped, and became a step more than one meter deep.

How should I put this....? If a giant iron box 100 meters in length and width were pressed against the ground with enormous force, something like this might be the result.

Furthermore, as I walked around, I saw many similar steps. Apparently, the creator of this spectacle performed the compression of the iron box many times. At each time, depending on the number and quality of the magical beasts to be crushed, the degree of power may have been changed slightly. Because of that, the areas where the steps overlap each other look like stairs.

Thinking there might be some materials or magic stones I could use, I started searching seriously, but there was nothing decent enough left. Everything was crushed so flat they couldn't be used, and the magic stones were shattered altogether.

Slowly lifting a large dead body, I examined it closely and found it was a lizard monster. It was almost like a cracker. Most of its adamant scales were shattered, and the remaining scales were cracked through.

When Fran knocked on the ground as a test, she found that it was compacted and as hard as rock. Even Fran or myself could do something similar, if it was over a much smaller area. However, just how much power would be needed to compress such a wide area at once?

"Just who... could have done this...?"

"You don't know either, Mia?"

"Mm. I cannot think of any common technique which could do this. Quina, do you have any idea what did this?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Kiara-shishou! Would you know what happened here?"

"Yes."

Neither Mia nor Quina seem to know, but Kiara seems to have an idea. As expected of one who has lived so long. Mia is surprised as well.

"Eh? You know what could do this?"

"Yes, there's just one person I can think of."

~~~~~

**Note from the author 棚架ユウ:**

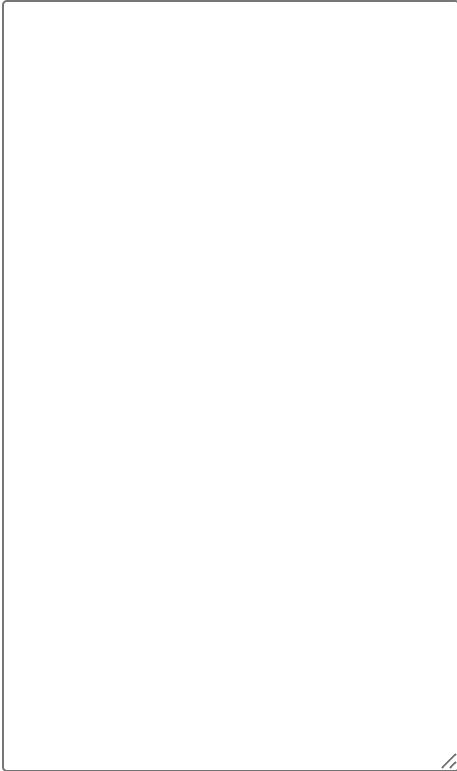
The total evaluation has finally passed 100000 points! Thank you very much. Moreover, when I looked at the ranking after thinking it's been a while since I checked it, just who do you think was in the top 100? Well, it only just made it, lol. This is also thanks to everyone who supported this. I'll do my best in the future, so I hope you'll continue to read this work.

By the way, another serialized work, "The Tamer who Started Late's Daily Life" is, incredibly enough, the number one in the VR game category right now (**TL Note: this is from a previous release, so it may no longer be applicable now.**). I can't believe it....

Thank you for supporting Reincarnated as a Sword again.

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Thanks!

# Chapter 338

"Eh? You know what could do this?"

"Yes, there's just one thing I can think of."

While looking around at the disaster to the surroundings, Kiara opened her mouth and spoke seriously.

"The Rank S adventurer known for friendly fire, Asura."

"Friendly fire? Are you sure about that!?"

"I am not. However, I cannot think of any others who could do this."

Mia is shocked. They seem to be rather famous. No, that's to be expected if they are S-Rank adventurers. Anyways, why are they fighting each other? They have a rather dangerous name attached to themselves as well.

"Who? Friendly fire?"

"S-Rank adventurers. You don't know of them? The Asura of friendly fire."

"Nn. Why the strange title?"

Fran tilted her head in confusion, leading Mia and Quina to explain to her.

"It's an old story, but I heard that when they participated in wars on other continents, they would attack their allies along with their enemies."

"The enemy was exterminated, and it seems the allies also suffered enormous damage."



"That's not all. I have a number of similar stories as well."

"The reason he still hasn't been punished is because he's overwhelmingly strong, and is constantly making more money than he can waste."

"There are many rumors mixed in with the facts, so I don't know how much is true."

Even if those stories are only half true, it still paints a bad picture. After all, regardless of whether you're an ally or an enemy, one has to be careful just being closeby.

"Well, it's not that he's a bad person."

"Kiara-shishou has met this Asura?"

"Ah, a couple of times. It's just, though I say he's not a bad person, he's the type that loses sight of everything around him when he ramps up. That's why he is always wandering alone. If we encounter the Asura and I tell you to run away, you absolutely must run. Absolutely."

Kiara warns Fran and the others with a scary expression on her face. From what Kiara says so far, this sounds like a seriously dangerous guy.

However, even if we stay cautious, if we don't understand this person's ability, we won't know what to be cautious about.

"What ability does he have?"

"Oh, that's right. You didn't know. Since he's so famous, I just assumed that you knew." Mia said, scratching her head.

Is he that famous? Just what is it?

"He's a Godblade wielder. Asura-dono is known to be the owner of the Earth Sword Gaia."

Of all things, he turned out to be the owner of a Godblade! And it is the Earth Sword Gaia, as well... I sort of understand just what caused this

disastrous scene to happen now.

Earth magic possesses techniques to manipulate gravity. I have become able to use several of those techniques myself, thanks to raising my level in Earth Magic to master [Great Wall].

In addition, there's also a technique to drop rocks. A Godblade that bears the name of the Earth Sword is highly likely to be able to use those abilities. I don't know if it's just gravity or being able to use rocks as well, but it's possible that these abilities could be used to crush a large area all at once.

"I've seen him create the exact same scene as this before. Through some unknown means, he created beautiful cubic boulders and used them to crush some bandits once. When I heard the screams of those being crushed, as to be expected, even I felt chills."

Apparently my prediction was correct. Still, for a guy able to spread this much destruction in battle, becoming unable to see his surroundings over the heat of battle? That's already at the level of a disaster.

"The user of the Earth Sword Gaia, friendly fire Asura. Memorized."

"I don't know if he will be up ahead or not."

Well, certainly. I don't know if he is heading to the dungeon. I was thinking about things like that, but——.

10 minutes later.

"He's definitely heading North, isn't he?"

"Nn."

After continuing onwards for some time, we came across exactly the same scene as before. The only difference, if any, is the difference in the strength of the magical beasts. This time, there were no small fry included in the dead monsters. Only mid-level and high-level monsters had been crushed and died. it

No, there was one other difference. This time, some kind of giant rock wall had been created around the flattened area. The wall was 15 meters tall and 5 meters thick, but when we looked closer, we found that instead of being one solid rock, it was made of two rocks that were stuck together. Furthermore, there was a dark red liquid flowing out from between the two rocks.

It seems that between the two rocks, there was a magical beast that had become trapped there and died. Probably, like being stuck between a pair of shears, it was sandwiched between the two rock walls. There were also eight rock objects standing by quietly, sandwiching the dead monster.

".... This is definitely him. I have seen the Asura fire off this same attack before."

It seems there's no mistake that these monsters were exterminated by the Asura. Does that mean the Asura and the Dungeon are fighting each other? If this many monsters had appeared in this place, then they'd definitely be related to that Dungeon.

"Could the reason Murellia was called back be this?"

"I see, there is that possibility. Ojou-sama, how unusually clear sighted."

"You didn't need to add 'unusually'! More importantly, we need to hurry to the Dungeon. If we are fast enough, we might be able to expect Asura-dono's assistance."

Are we going to get the Friendly Fire's help? If possible, I don't really want to get involved with that person... But if he doesn't have blood rushing to his head, he isn't likely to attack without warning.

"However, from the rumors I heard about Asura, I don't believe he will just quietly agree to help."

"We just need to hire him! In the case of emergencies, we have no choice but to do whatever is necessary, even seduction."

".... Seduction?"

"Wha-, what's with those looks!? The Asura might be a pervert that likes flat chested girls!"

"I suppose so."

"Don't look at me like that!"

It seems Asura is known to be free spirited, and won't obey others if he doesn't like them, regardless of whoever that person might be. In fact, he's even picked fights with entire countries. On the other hand, if he likes you, he will accept even dangerous requests easily. The only thing is, he seems to charge a very expensive commision. And in advance.

"I cannot pay the request fee, you know."

"Take out that money you're hiding away. I know that you're storing it with your maid."

"This is saved in case of an emergency you know? I can't use it in a place like this."

"This is an emergency, fool!"

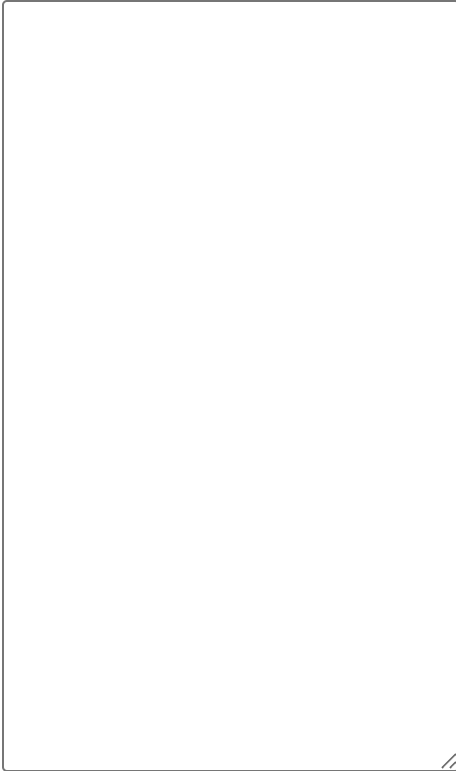
The longer I listen, the more uneasy I feel.

"At any rate, let us hurry to the dungeon."

"Right."

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# Chapter 339

The golem carriage continued to move North, past the abandoned monster corpses left behind by the Asura. Along the way, we encountered three more magic beast massacres. However, the situation in these massacres was different from the previous ones.

"This place looks terrible as well."

Mia muttered, and no wonder. The whole area was a sea of blood. The earth is covered in dark red blood, and the stench fills the battlefield. For the beastkin who possesses good senses of smell, this must be terrible. Along with Mia, Fran and Guendalfa were also frowning.

Here the appearance of the corpses is different from before. Rather than being crushed by a mysterious power like earlier, these magic beasts were clearly slaughtered by something sharp; this likely scattered large amounts of the evil beings' blood around, polluting the surrounding area.

"Asura?" Fran.

"I'm not sure. The Godblade Gaia he wields certainly is shaped like a greatsword, however... I don't think he would go through the trouble of killing like this." Kiara.

Kiara tilted her head in thought at Fran's murmur. The Earth Sword Gaia seems to be a greatsword. However, why change fighting styles all of a sudden? It's possible he wanted to move his body, see blood, or some other reason to suddenly fight directly.

More realistically, it's possible something besides the Asura slaughtered the evil beings. Well, that just leaves us the question of what other things could imitate the Asura like this.

"I think weapons were used here...."

"If it was a magic beast, they might be able to do this with their claws instead of weapons."

"Ah, that's right. Also, look at this corpse. I can't see a human doing this."

In addition to the butchered corpses, there were beheaded corpses and corpses which looked like something forcibly tore them apart from crotch to chest.

The way they were defeated really is different from the magic beasts thought to have been killed by the Asura, just as I thought.

"These aren't mere small fry."

"Nn. There's a Goblin General. That's a Goblin Sorcerer."

Apparently, whether it was a human or beast, whatever created this terrible scene wasn't interested in anything after killing. As such, valuable materials were left untouched without being dismantled and harvested or eaten.

Not just that, the magic stones were also left behind. I had Fran pick up the Goblin General's magic stone, and then secretly absorbed it. Though, I was only able to obtain one point from it.

(Why is this...?)

Although it's a Goblin, if it's a high ranking species like this Goblin General, I should be able to absorb a magic stone value of at least three to ten points....

(Fran, could you get some others?)

"Nn."

Fran then picked up the magic stones which looked like ones which would have reasonably high magic stone values, such as those from the Orc Mages and Goblin Sorcerers. I then obscured Fran's body, pretending to be a



Dimensional Storage, and absorbed the magic stones. However, the magic stone values were still just one point each.

(Strange.)

(What's wrong?)

(I absorbed too few magic stone points from the magic stones.)

(Like the time with the Valkyrie?)

That's right. It's the same as that time with the Valkyrie, where the Evil God's Stone Spear went out of control. Is the power of the Evil God involved here, after all?

Or, the Evil God's Stone Spear could have eaten their soul. If the power of the Valkyrie's magic stone was weakened by that, it's possible that evil beings can eat souls as well.

(Fran, don't let your guard down.) Shisho.

"Nn." Fran.

I searched the surroundings, however, I was unable to find anything suspicious. Whatever did this must have moved from this area already.

"Everyone, proceed carefully from here on. There's no telling what might be lurking." Mia.

"Indeed." Kiara.

It seems Mia and Kiara have also determined that the perpetrator of this slaughter was not Asura. While scanning the surroundings with frowns, we started the golem carr again.

The opinion that we should have Quina scout came up, but we don't know what might be lurking. We decided to travel with the carriage concealment function turned on from here on out.

I remained on guard for a while, but we haven't yet been attacked. Much less the perpetrator of the slaughter, we haven't even been attacked by normal magic beasts.

Did the dungeon monsters run away last night after detecting a strong being like Asura fighting? At any rate, it was fortunate for us to avoid exhausting ourselves.

"Everyone, over there." Quina.

Quina stopped the carriage again, and called to us from the driver's seat.

"Mn? Did you find something?"

"That, isn't that the large boulder landmark that we heard about from the prisoner?"

Quina pointed at a strange rock that seemed to pierce the heavens. It was a pointed boulder that looked like a twisted dragon horn.

"In other words, that means that there must be a cave leading to the dungeon up ahead."

"Yes. I believe it is beyond that forest."

Certainly, it looks just like the landmark to find the entrance to the dungeon that we heard from Johan. According to Johan's information, there should be a dungeon beyond the forest at the end of the rock.

"Let's walk from here on." Quina.

"Right. Kiara-shishou, could you please lead?" Guendalfa.

"Leave it to me." Kiara.

"Quina will be the rearguard."

"Understood."

It makes sense to have the two experienced and battle tested people at the front and back. It's a good decision.

We walked through the forest sprawling at the foot of the Border Mountains while erasing our tracks. We advanced without becoming lost. Although there is no road, the path left by traces of many traveling monsters kept us on track. By following it, we could advance without hesitation.

However, by this point, I should have been able to sense the magic energy from the Dungeon, but there was no sign of it.

It seems to differ depending on the dungeon, but if the dungeon master is intelligent, it seems that it is more common to hide the magic energy. It seems that dungeons have various facilities and functions, and there are ways to prevent magic power from leaking out. Whether to conceal the dungeon or not depends on the purpose of the dungeon master, but this time it is definitely the purpose of hiding.

After a while, Kiara suddenly stopped and hid in the nearby bushes. As expected, Fran and the others followed suit.

"Kiara-shishou, could this be...?"

"Yeah, we found it."

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# Chapter 340

## Chapter 340

Master Kiara, could it be that...?”

”Oh, I see it . ”

When we reached the foot of the mountain range through tall, but thin trees forming a dense forest, peculiar to the area around the Boundary Mountain Range and unsuitable for lumber, it emerged suddenly out in the open .

A large number of corpses of evildoers are scattered in front of us . And beyond that as well . A huge cave with a gaping mouth could be seen on the surface of the Boundary Mountain Range .

“I don’t feel any magic around here . ”

”Mmn . ”

It’s a pretty huge cave . The entrance alone is more than 15 meters high . It must be more than 40 meters in width . If it was near the entrance, a small village would have been able to create it .

Sometimes, with the caves like this one you have to go down the cliff to the entrance just to get in, but here is a gentle slope, I was able to approach it on foot . If it were Earth, it would make a great setting for a little exploration special .

We crept closer to the entrance to the cave . Huge mossy boulders stand near the entrance and huge stalactites hang from the ceiling in a row .

At first glance, it looks like a natural cave, but the placement of the rocks and such seemed a bit awkward . Obviously, there is a route that would be the way to go .

There are signs of quite a large army coming and going . In addition, there are some rather large footprints of magical beasts .

Kiara snorted and lightly touched the ground in front of the cave . At first glance, it looks a bit trampled, but when you're at Kiara's level, you'll be able to tell what kind of people have passed through, and how many .

"I'm sure this is the entrance to the dungeon . "

"I see . Let's go in quickly then . "

"Oh . They said there were no traps or anything like that, but watch out for them . "

"Yes . "

And so, with Kiara at the front of the pack again, we carefully steered our way through the cave .

"Mmm, that's... . "

"It's a light..."

"It smells like blood . "

Kiara stopped, and Mea and Fran each responded . Indeed, the end of the cave had been altered . The limestone cave breaks off and suddenly turns into a stone structure . The walls were set up with what looked like lamps, and it really looked like a passageway for a fort or something .

What's more, there was once again a large amount of demonic beast corpses . Over here, the evil people were crushed to death . And it's not just the floor, it's the walls and the ceiling that were covered in those spattered corpses .

This must be the work of Lord Ursulath .

”Oh, this is amazing nonetheless . Normally, a large scale attack would be difficult to conduct in a narrow passage within a dungeon... .”

Mea and Kiara looked at it and groaned . If you have a wide range of attacks, there’s a good chance you’ll get yourself involved . However, with gravity control, there is less damage to the surroundings . It must be hard to blow oneself up . If you think about it, earth magic may be easier to use within a dungeon than fire, water, or wind .

”Earth magic is strong in dungeons?”

But at Fran’s words, Kiara tilts her head .

”I wouldn’t say that in general . ”

”Why?”

”There are many places in the dungeon where there is no dirt . Unless you’re in a cavern or something . ”

Even if the dungeon walls and such are of stone, they are still under the control of the dungeon . It seemed to be very difficult to manipulate . I’ve tried it, but the skill of turning the ground into a needle consumes a lot more magic than usual .

It would be difficult to use a technique that uses the earth to attack an enemy, let alone a technique that fires a mass of earth created by magic .

If you think about it, it may be difficult to use the earth attribute unless you’ve cultivated the earth magic that allows you to learn gravity control techniques .

I don’t think it was this bad in Urumut’s dungeon, but I guess it’s different in each dungeon .

”Mmm!”

”What was that!”

”Hmm, great magic . ”

As we passed through the site of the slaughter caused by Ursulath and tried to go further, we felt a huge magic power, so massive that Fran and the others had to brace themselves . At the same time, a resounding vibration shook the walls .

”Someone’s used some big magic on you . ”

”Lord Ursulath, is it?”

”Maybe . We’ll make haste, too . ”

Along the way, as Johan had said, there were no traps at all . But halfway through, there is a sudden dead end and a staircase leading downward appears .

”Hmmm... didn’t the Beastmen Nation side say it was a single road for a while?”

”Yes, it should be . ”

To begin with, the main part of this dungeon exists on the Bashar Kingdom’s side . The part that was extended to the Beastmen Nation’s side was only treated as an underpass to invade beyond the Boundary Mountains .

”Why are there stairs like this..... . Besides, a demon beast can’t get through in this tight space . ”

Kiara was right, that staircase was completely human-sized . I think a Minotaur could pass through . It would be tough if it were an ogre .

But it’s weird . It is certain that a large army of demon beasts used the exit of the cave we used to enter as a way in and out . If so, where did they come from?

Or can it be transposed if it's in a dungeon? Then you can transfer it to the entrance side . It was strange that there were a lot of traces of magical beasts marching around here as well .

"There are so many things I don't understand..... . . But we can't turn back here, either . Quina, do you think you can take the lead?"

"Yes . I'll be with you in a moment . "

Lead the way? As I was watching to see what was going on, Quina used phantom magic to create a dwarf-like object . It looks like a kindergarten-sized mannequin .

By the way, Quina's visionary magic is as terrible as ever . I can feel the presence, even the heat . Well, let this one lead the way . I don't know if you can deceive a trap or not with it, but if it's a lurking monster, you can probably fool it well enough .

"You're as good as ever . "

"I'm ashamed . "

"All right, let's go . "



# Chapter 341

## Chapter 341

### Beyond the Labyrinth

The structure of the interior of the dungeon was truly worthy of the name of a labyrinth . A maze of narrow, branching passageways stretches on and on . Esoteric demon beasts and traps are also plentiful .

Well, the demon beasts were mostly carcasses, although the traps had been lifted quite a bit . No, it's better to say they were disabled or activated .

Apparently, all the people who were ahead of them were trapped . Earth Wrath is a Rank S adventurer, right? I'm sure you have the skill to disarm it . Or did you create a little lead like we did and disarm it on purpose?

“That guy's way of doing things hasn't grown up at all . Maybe they sent a golem or something to kamikaze them . ” Kiara .

It seems to be a way to deactivate the suicide bomb by using the leader . Well, it's easy .

”That said, I'm sure there are some types that can detect heat... . Well, it doesn't matter if it's Earth Wrath or not . ” Kiara .

In the end, we didn't fall for one of the traps . Moreover, if you follow the Demon Beast's crushed corpse, you won't get lost .

”Even so, it's funny . I have never heard of such a great labyrinth in the information the man Johan has given us . ” Quina .

”Were you not hypnotized?” Fran .

Fran tilts her head, but Quina shakes her head in denial .

”No, it was not an act, it was fully into it . There were a few scenes along the way where emotions ran high, probably because they were asked questions about the beastmen they hated . A trance doesn’t mean that you lose your emotions . ” Quina .

”So does that mean that man didn’t know about this labyrinth, too?” Fran .

”Maybe, maybe not . I think they weren’t informed about this place . ”  
Kiara .

Quina nods at Kiara’s words, but I’ve been thinking of another possibility . That being said, the dungeon may have been expanded to coincide with the onslaught of Earth Wrath .

He hastily creates a labyrinth full of traps in order to hold back the strong enemies who have invaded . It’s a common development in light novels with a dungeon master as the main character .

If you think about it, however, it also explains why Johan didn’t know and why the traces of the demon beasts were suddenly cut off and the human labyrinth suddenly appeared .

Thinking back to Murellia’s description, she said that she would use points to expand the dungeon . Plus, I’ve seen Lumina create a room in an instant in the dungeon in Urumut . Wouldn’t it be possible to build a labyrinth in an instant, depending on the points you pay?

Well, it’s only in my imagination, and even if I knew that, there’s still no development in the battle .

One hour later .

After wading through the labyrinth, the end was finally in sight . Ahead, I saw a huge door with a clearly different atmosphere than ever before . If it were a normal dungeon, you’d think it was a boss room .

Even so, I had only fought a few demons and traps along the way, but it took this long... . If everything was perfect, it would have taken many times longer than this .

While moving, there were a few times when he sensed powerful magic . It seems that someone is fighting somewhere in the dungeon . And we could sense the same magical wavelengths from the huge door in front of us .

”In a normal dungeon, other adventurers are often not allowed inside while fighting the boss...”

Kiara and Quina approached the door and examined its structure .

”There are no traps, sir . ”

”You can’t open this one if you touch it . ”

Apparently, it opens easily .

”Let’s go! Now, you may still be able to join Lord Earth Wrath!” Mea .

”Join forces? Don’t be ridiculous . He doesn’t need that . All right . I’ll tell you one thing, don’t approach the Earthers carelessly . Not until I say it’s fine . ” Kiara .

At Mea’s words, Kiara nails it with a look so serious that it’s scary . Hearing this, Guendalfa must have become afraid of Earthrath once again . Buruli and his huge body shook .

”Master Kiara . Is he such a horrible man, that he should be killed by his own people?”

”It’s a given . I’ll tell you who to be on the lookout for in this dungeon . It’s not a dungeon master, nor is it a Murellia . He has lost his way, Earth Wrath . Remember that . ”

Kiara announces in a low voice, as if to frighten everyone . No, it’s not a threat; it’s probably the truth . There was a strong sense of tension from Kiara .

”I understand . ”

”Hmm . Okay . ”

” ..... ”

Mea and Fran also nodded their heads with a mysterious look . As far as Guendalfa is concerned, he is at a loss for words . She swallowed her breath and grunted as she nodded . The maids are great here as always . It’s truly the power of the iron spirit .

”But can’t we just sit here and wait with anticipation?”

“I know . It’s not like it was decided that it was Earth Wrath inside in the first place . ”

”Well then!”

”We’re going to have to go . ”

Then, Kiara touches the door .

Gogo-go-go-go...

Beyond the earth-shaking, open door was a large circular hall . My first impression is of the Colosseum . Well, the ground is cobblestone, although the ceiling is domed .

The reason why this place reminded me of the Colosseum is because of the tense atmosphere of a huge man holding a large sword in the center of the hall, and a triceratops-like demon beast nearly 20 meters long facing him .

The demon beast had already lost three of its five horns, and its six legs were also reduced to four, with blue-black blood dripping from severed legs . Clearly harder than iron, the armor-like shell that covered its entire body was carved with several lacerations, and flesh was visible through the gaps .

On the other hand, the big man with the horns sprouting from his forehead was unscathed . On the contrary, he wasn’t even breathing heavily . It was

obvious that he overwhelmed a demon beast that would be a rank C threat .

The demon beast let out a roar of anger, but did not move . No, it couldn't move . It's probably because of the exhaustion of the battle so far and also because of the deep fear of men instilled in it . His snort was also rough, and although he turned his murderous gaze on the man, he did not try to step forward from the spot .

The man who had been observing such a demon beast for a while, carried the large sword he was holding on his shoulders . Then, I point my left hand towards the demon beast .

The man muttered as his magic rapidly increased .

”Crush it . ”

”Boh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh!”

Immediately afterwards, I saw the demon beast being crushed from the left and right, as if it was being wrapped in an invisible giant hand . There was no movement, only the demon beast's pitiful screams echoed in the hall . Eyeballs and tongues pop out from the powerful pressure, and blood spurts from wounds all over the body . The bodily fluids are eventually blocked by an invisible wall and can only accumulate in the same spot .

A few seconds later, the beast had been brutally crushed to death by some kind of attack unleashed by the man . From the front, it only looks like a piece of wood .

I quickly examined the man – Earth – and found him to be a monster .

The status of the Earth as appraised by the Master is listed in the postcard .

Name: Earth Wrath Age: 148 years old

Race: Demon, Evil Demon

Occupation: War Demon, Warrior

Status Level: 82/99

HP: 2987 MP: 1009 Strength: 1519 Stamina: 1228 Agility: 599  
Intelligence: 436 Magic: 499 Dexterity: 418

### skill

Intimidation: LvMax, Transportation: Lv6, Stealth: Lv5, Dismantling: Lv7, Recovery Speed Increase: Lv7, Mysterious Force: LvMax, Fighting Ability: Lv6, Martial Arts: Lv6, Environmental tolerance: Lv7, Presence detect: Lv6, Spirit Control: Lv9, High speed regeneration: Lv7, Strength: LvMax, Regrowth: LvMax, Abnormal condition resistance: Lv9, Instantaneous movement: Lv6, Mental endurance: Lv4, Sword compatibility: Lv8, Great Sword Art: LvMax, Broadsword: LvMax, Grand Sage: Lv8, Grand Sword Technique: Lv8, Earth magic: Lv6, Leap: Lv6, Soil Manipulation: LvMax, Bending: Lv3, Ambition: Lv6, Felling: Lv7, Physical barrier: Lv6, Magic Endurance: Lv6, Magic perception: Lv4, Cooking: Lv6, Trap Disarming: Lv5, Trap detection: Lv5, Arise From The Dead, Energy Manipulation, Muscles of Steel, High Spirit, Earth Strengthening, Intuition, Pain Resistance, Dragon Slayer, Magic Power Manipulation, Grand Strength Increase

### Unique skill

Evil Killer, Chaotic Force, Demon Qi, Demon God's Blessing

### Extra skill

Divine sword release

### Specific skills

Mad Demonization, Dark Demon

### Title

Evil Killer, Slaughterer, Sword of God, Earth Mage, Dungeon Raider, Dragon Slayer, Companion Slayer, Battle Mania, Destroyer of Demons, Rank S Adventurer

## Equipment

The earth sword, Gaia, the bowl of the Earth Dragon horn, the great armor of the Steel Dragon shell, the battle suit of the Cloud Dragon skin, the coat of the Mirage Dragon, the Armor of Tranquility, the Ring of Dissipation of Anger .

# Chapter 342

## Chapter 342

I was sure it was Asura . He is a true monster . He has a huge amount of first-hand skills and a lot of fancy titles .

“Well, his ability is right up there with the Beast King . ”

Crushed from left and right by an unseen force, the corpse of the flattened demonic beast slowly fell to the ground . The ground shook, bringing Mea and Guendalfa to their senses .

From their point of view, what happened in front of them was shocking . So shocking that even though it was only a matter of seconds, they had exposed themselves defenseless in the hostile territory of the dungeon .

Kiara grabs Mea’s shoulder tightly as she tries to advance . Seeing the serious expression on her face, Mea remembered what the other person was like .

“I-I’m sorry . ”

“It’s fine . But you’re going to stay here for a while . ”

And only Kiara steps forward .

Fran and her team lowered their weapons to show that they don’t have any hostilities toward him . Meanwhile, they lightly tipped their center of gravity forward so that they can move at any time . The only one thing to do is to avoid antagonizing him .



Apparently, Fran and the others became more aware of how dangerous the situation was when they saw the man who had mysteriously crushed the huge demonic beast to death with his mysterious power . Kiara hides her nervousness and speaks to the demon in a carefree manner .

“Asura, long time no see . ”

“Haa? Are you —— isn’t this Kiara? You’ve become a hag!”

“Hmm . You haven’t changed . ”

“Wahahahaha! It’s because I’m a demon . ”

“Hmm, okay for now... . . All of you, come here!”

Seems like Asura is not in a situation where he is losing sight of the situation . Kiara beckons Fran and the others to join her .

“What is this? Are you leading a field trip?”

“They may be little girls, but in their own way, they’re promising little girls . Well, I’m sort of like a chaperone for them . ”

The great sword on the back of Asura, who was conversing with Kiara, was unusually large . The crimson pattern alone might be nearly a meter long . The sword was about to scrape the ground even when being strapped at an angle on the two-plus-meter tall Asura’s back .

I couldn’t take my eyes off that sword . It’s not just big . It has a colossal presence and an intimidating feeling that radiated from within . I had to struggle to keep myself from trembling .

” ..... . This is that sword huh.....”

Name: Earth sword · Gaia

Attack Power: 2000

Magic Power: 6000

Durability: 10000

Magic power conductivity: SS

Skill:

Grant Holy Land, Earth Magic Strengthening, Earth Magic Granting, Earth Disabling, Maximum Magic Recovery, and Magic Power Control .

Without realising it, I already appraised it, and it was astounding . Even if you were to compare just their simple offensive power, it would completely overwhelm others . Moreover, as he specialized in the power of manipulating earth, with the boost given by the power of his sword, his ability soared tremendously .

Is this what they called a divine weapon? I'll admit its strength is immense . But I had a feeling that with a few good sorcerers, I could compete with it . But how did it become ground sword • Gaia? Wasn't it the earth sword? No, like Lind, his power may not have been fully released . I'm suspicious of the divine sword release that was in Asura's extra skill . If that's the case, then it will be even stronger than this when it is released .

As I was thinking about this, Asura's eyes turned to me .

“Did someone appraise it?”

I was impressed . How do you know that if you don't even have an appraisal detection skill?

“It's— It's making me feel sick . My gut tells me what to do . And I feel like I'm being watched . ”

“I'm sorry . We teach them to be vigilant in dungeons . ”

Mea and Guendalfa are surrendering to Asura's words . However, Asura's laughter, which rose immediately afterwards, softened the hard atmosphere of the place .

“Hahahahahaha! It’s fine! I’m not mad at you . I was born with this face so it can’t be helped . But I was simply checking . But still, I’m more surprised that that mad dog – no, that mad tiger-like Kiara – bowed out for someone else! You’ve become so well rounded!”

“I don’t need to hear from you, who has never grown up . ”

“You said it! Well, it’s true! I’m just saying, we don’t change that easily . ”

“Haaa... . . ”

There’s something about Kiara and Asura that makes them understand each other . I wondered what kind of monster he was, since he look so threatening before, but he was just a regular old foul-mouthed guy . Maybe it’s because he is also a demon, but it somehow reminds me of Donadrondo from the Alessa Guild . Well, Asura has a bigger body and horns than him though .

Mea ask a question after the tension has been released .

“What do you mean by “never changed”? What does Lord Asura mean I wonder?”

“Well . I’ve been doing a lot of digging to break the curse . ”

“A... . Curse...?”

Mea tilts her head . I appraised Asura first, too, and I don’t think there was any particular notation of a curse or anything like that in the state .

“Oh, it’s a blessing and a curse . I have certain unique skills .

“Demonization” . I’ve been going around the country trying to shut these skills down . ”

“What skills are those?”

“When activated, some abilities and skills rose several times, and resilience is increased by an order of magnitude . In terms of combat power alone, I’d say several times that . ”

“Eh?... . Then”

“But do you think there’s no downside to such powerful skills?”

After Asura says that, he sits down with a thud on the platform he made by raising the floor . It was Kiara who continued to speak in place of Asura, who continued to smile to himself . There is an air of pain in her eyes as she looks at Asura .

“It’s automatically triggered by repeated combat . What’s more, you can’t choose when to activate it, and when it’s activated, you will go berserk and lose your mind making you unable to distinguish between friend and foe . And yet, his wisdom on combat stays without a problem, spreading destruction . It’s definitely a curse for this guy . ”

Still, after years of experience, he can sense when it was nearly time and he acts as if he is retreating to go to the frontier where there are no allies, so he could rampage around unnoticed .

It is indeed a curse . No matter how great the skill is – no, it’s too great . But that... Just seeing his title... . It just too painful... . It’s just a reminder of how much he has killed his fellow member . But this skill, I can make it go away, can’t I?

I can take it away with a skill-taker skill . But then I have to equip it... If it turns out I can not un-equip it though, that would be the worst .

But you’ll soon see that my thoughts quickly turn out to be useless .

“Wasn’t there an adventurer who could obliterate a skill?”

“Oh . Rank A adventurer, Maleficent the Black . It has a skill called Skill Eraser, which eliminates the opponent’s skills . Of course I tried . ”

“Was it... no good?”

“It worked . His skills have been disabled for a year or so, but my unique skill, “Demonization,” is gone for... . two days . ”

“Eh?”

“Inherent skills are the ones that are most tied to a person’s existence . Whether it’s erased or taken away, it’ll come back to life over time . I’ve tried skill-eliminating skills and the ability to take away skills and stuff like that but the results are always the same . Which means it’s only a matter of time before it came back to me . ”

“I got this skill when I was an ordinary demon warrior, but for some unknown reason I was mutated into an evil demon . ”

“A mutation? Isn’t that an evolution?”

Asura answers Fran’s question . He still looks like a good-natured old man .

“Evolution is about advancing to new heights when you reach your maximum level . A mutation is when something other than the level is met and changes into something different . Well, they’re both similar, but it’s generally accepted that the mutation has a smaller pretense of ability . ”

“But the evil demons are a bit special . They are a phantom mutant whose existence has been questioned even by demons . A demon of misfortune who loses reason and destroys everything . I never thought I’d be the one to acquired it . However, considering my ability to become a mad demon, I guess that means the lore was right . ”

Moreover, he is now the owner of the divine sword . The rumor that the army had been eradicated was rather cute . Because the country could have been destroyed .

“Well, that’s why the mad demonization doesn’t go away even a little bit . In a way, it’s a skill that’s like the very definition of the existence of a demon of misfortune . You can also use the method of mutating again to erase the skill . Unfortunately, demons can only mutate once in a lifetime . So I’m looking for a way to lock in my skills . Of course that only works for a short period of time . But what I’m looking for is a way to permanently seal your skills . ”

“Did Lord Asura come to this dungeon in search of that method?”

“Well, dungeons are places that are out of this world’s way . So It is possible . I’ve been to dungeons all around the country, not just here . Besides, I am doing a request . ”

“What do you mean, Asura?”

Kiara asks back . It is a request? In other words, you came to this dungeon at the request of someone? But who?

“Well, if it’s Kiara and her friends, I guess it’s fine . It’s the gods . ”

“What?”

# Chapter 343

## Chapter 343

Kiara asks back . Is it a request? In other words did you come to this dungeon at the request of someone? But who?

“Well if it’s Kiara and her friends, It’s god!”

“What?” Kiara asks in disbelief . Apparently even Kiara can’t agree to those words . As if that was funny, Asura chuckled and continued to say more .

“Kukuku, Apparently, the gods have a peculiar obsession with divine swords . They are supposedly always being watched . ”

It is possible that depending on how the divine swords are used, they could become more dangerous than evil gods . That could be why they’re being monitored .

“And if something goes wrong, he’ll send the oracle flying . Well, I guess it’s just a matter of time before you start using it . ”

“Does that mean that you are commanded by God to do some kind of mission?”

“No it’s not something that big . This time it’s just a one way trip to the location of this place”

“Then, is it an order?”

God is sending me information about the place directly as if he wants me to go there, so it certainly seems like an order just like Mea says . But

apparently, that's not the case .

"I've only ever received a proper order twice now . Besides, I've ignored your request a few times in the past, but I haven't been accused of anything before . "

"Y- You ignored him! The oracle!"

"Well, I was in the middle of some important work that I couldn't take off otherwise . But they didn't punish you, so I guess that means they're not angry . "

You're a brave man . Even if it wasn't an order, it's a request from God that you ignored . Even Kiara looks anxious as she listens back .

That's unusual for someone from this world . No, now that I think about it, I'm being made to struggle with a skill I don't want, so maybe I'm taking a surprisingly slanted view of God .

"Is it really that there is no punishment? Isn't it simply that there is no punishment yet to be meted out?"

"Hahaha, like the Laurentian tragedy?"

"A,aaa..."

"What is... the Laurentian tragedy?"

Huh? "Is the Black Cat Lady from another continent, perhaps?"

"Yes"

"Well, then I guess it's no wonder you don't know . "

The tragedy of Laurencia was apparently an incident that took place about 150 years ago on this continent . The story goes back another 50 years – or 200 years from now .



At that time, there was a small nation called the Laurentian Kingdom to the south of the Beastmen Nation . Due to their geographical position, they were always standing in the downwind of the Beastmen Nation and were treated like a vassal state . The king was too young and too patriotic to endure it .

‘What should such a king do?’ Foolish people with power would think the same anywhere . The King of Laurencia then invited an evil magician to summon an evil god by offering his soul to the evil god through that man . From the beginning, the king did not intend to summon evil gods, but rather to bring chaos and exhaustion by unleashing a large number of fecund goblins into the Beastmen Nation . The King of Laurentia, who imposed heavy taxes on his people, used the money he collected to buy slaves for sacrifice, and sacrificed the people who couldn’t pay their taxes for the shortfall .

But then the people who rose up to overthrow the king plunged the Laurentian kingdom into civil war and the king was eventually captured .

We don’t know what kind of negotiations took place at this time, but the king was not executed . The royal family was dismantled and the country shifted to a parliamentary government of the people . However, the former royal family was condemned to slavery and driven to the frontier, where they were ordered to cultivate the untamed wilderness .

But the royal family didn’t just die out . The former king started to make amends and set about cultivating the land . It was said that he worked hard, cultivated at an incredible rate, and contributed greatly to the productivity of the Laurentian Republic . Not only that, but he also did charitable work, such as running an orphanage and reemployment for the injured and sick .

By the time fifty years had passed, there were fewer people within the Laurentian Republic who spoke ill of the former royal family . Then, by unanimous consent of Congress, they were freed from slavery . Well, it seems like there was a lot of political talk involved, but it’s not relevant here, so we’ll skip that . What’s important is that the Laurentians were truly converted and accepted within the Republic . The former king and others were considered eminent persons by then .

However, there was a being who had not forgotten their sin . Namely, the gods .

Suddenly one day, divine punishment was handed down to the Laurentian family . The charge was that he used a large number of people to summon an evil god . Everyones must have thought, “Why now?”

However, the former king’s family, who were completely reformed and even revered by the people, were tragically killed by divine punishment . It was said that the only ones left were those who were of not direct descent or were from the branch family . This is the famous Laurentian tragedy of the Crome continent .

“Well, what this story shows us is how leisurely the gods are . ”

“Leisurely?”

“The God who originally existed in eternal time and us humans have different perceptions of time, I guess . For us, it seems like the punishment came after 50 years . But to the gods, 50 years isn’t that much, I guess . If you do something really bad though, you might get punished in an instant .  
”

Well, it does make sense, somewhat . For example, if you compare a person to a bug, their perceived value of time would be completely different . I guess the same thing can be said of God and man .

“But then again, maybe Earthers just haven’t been punished yet?”

“Hahaha! It’s okay . After all, I checked directly with God’s apostle!”

“What? You’ve seen the apostle of God?”

“Yeah, I met him twice when he came to tell me his command . It’s no wonder when God commands them the Apostle will come down . I asked him if he was okay with me ignoring him, and he said he was okay with it .  
”

“But why would he give you such a vague oracle that he doesn’t mind being ignored?”

“I don’t know . I don’t get it either..... The Apostle says it’s a personal thing, you know what I mean?”

“What do you mean?”

Asura tells his conjecture, based on what he heard from God’s apostle . Apparently, the gods will leave it at that if it’s some kind of incident . However, when evil people are involved, they’ll get involved .

It’s not something we absolutely have to fix, but if we can get our hands on it, let’s do it . Anyway that’s where the Divine Swordsman comes in . In addition to regularly monitoring them, it was easy for them to immediately send down oracles through the Divine Sword . In other words, it seemed that the idea was to use it as a surveillance tool as well as a communication tool .

“Well, as I said before, the gods are leisurely . Wouldn’t it have taken decades just to find someone near the place where the incident is likely to happen who could receive the oracle and solve the case and give the oracle? That’s why I thought I’d make a divine swordsman who can be contacted immediately . ”

It takes 50 years for God to punish you . If that’s the case, it might even take decades to make the oracle .

“This time around, it seemed like there was a dungeon involved . I figured I’d make a move . ”

“Hey Mea, have you ever received an ordainment, too?”

“An ordainment? No, I haven’t . Perhaps I am not yet recognized as the true owner . Not from the sword, not from God . ”

I see... . He looked surprised to hear the story, so it bothered me a bit .

Well, it seems like he still hasn't been able to unleash the true power of the Divine Sword, so I guess that's why .

# Chapter 344

Chapter 344

Editor: Makoto

Side Kraug

I am the gray tapir Kraug . I am the best of Gringot Intelligence . Well, even though it may sound like I am part of an intelligence organization, we never actually did anything spectacular like infiltrating enemy territory and bringing back important information or the like . If anything, our main role was to keep an eye out for enemy agents who may have infiltrated our city .

Not long ago, we managed to catch the mastermind behind the assassins who attacked the Black Thunder Princess . Speaking of the Black Thunder Princess, she's the current most popular local hero, having broken through conventional wisdom that the black cat tribe which was said to be incapable of achieving evolution . Upon usurping that deep rooted belief, she could even fight with Goddarfa to a stalemate . Hence, it would be unforgivable for anyone to even think of taking away this budding hope of the black cat tribe .

Although it took a bit of time, we managed to apprehend them in the end . On the other hand, however, it was much easier than expected for us to force them to speak up . No, it seemed to be that their mission was to leak this information in the first place .

“The Krishna royal family? The royal family that ruled the Beastmen Nation before the Narasinha family, right?”

“Yes, that's right... . We will only bow our heads to the rightful royal family . ”

Then I remembered a rumor . It was said that the current Beast King family has a dark history that people here no longer talk or even know about . One of the reasons for this is the lack of people working in a certain profession . There were only a handful of people of this specific profession or title in the Beastmen Nation . This profession we are referring to is a historian .

Despite our country being more militaristic and combative than others, it does not mean that only barbarians live here . There were also sorcerers, scholars, and in fact, my father used to be a biologist .

Yet, even though we did have all these knowledge classes, there were sadly still an extremely small number of historian students, historians, and archaeologists in this region . As a matter of fact, it's safer to say that there were almost none of them . One of the biggest reasons for this was that we didn't really have proper historical documentation left behind from before, and hence there are no old records left to be studied or kept . Apparently, it was the Beast King family of the past that destroyed the old documents . Therefore, this situation led to the fact that there wasn't really a need for this kind of occupation .

Another reason was that this profession was heavily cracked down upon by the Beast Kings a few generations ago, and most of the historians of the past have either been imprisoned and executed . As a result, the profession itself has disappeared .

Having been so thorough in their actions, it's obvious that there was a big secret that the Beast Royal Family did not want any of its citizens, or anyone else for that matter, to know . While the current Beast King was very lenient with regards to this incident up to the point where we are even able to learn about the situation, until a few decades ago, it was apparently forbidden to even mention anything of it .

What if that secret was the existence of a former royal family called the Krishna family? Moreover, what if the current royal throne came to be not from a regular regime change of successor inheritance, but instead an usurpation of its predecessors?

I wanted to know more about it . But regardless of the past, I am not dissatisfied with the current Beast Royal Family, which is currently running a good government . Rather, they are doing a fairly good job and are honorable leaders of our country .

But what about the politics behind all of this? What if a person, a survivor of the Krishna royal family, with whom the Bashar royal family is said to be cooperating with, was planning behind the scenes for a reinstatement and restoration into kingship? In some cases, they may be able to claim legitimacy .

At the very least, they may not be able to one-sidedly assert that Bashar Kingdom was evil . Regardless, even at a glance, it was a messy situation .

According to an agent of Bashar's Kingdom, the authorities of the kingdom were indebted to the Krishna royal family of the past and were unable to refuse their request . That's one thing for certain . But there's no country that can be driven to action just from gratitude alone . Instead, you can give legitimacy to your actions by appearing to be working in favor of others . In other words, this time, the war was not just a skirmish, and the Bashar Kingdom's side, anticipating this, should have been well prepared .

Half a day later . We had been sent north to scout the neighborhood . Then, near the Schwarzkatzte, we encountered a group of adventurers . They were the skillful men who marched with Master Kiara to intercept the evildoers . They also said that a knight of Bashar was amongst those that were captured .

It seemed that the knight was very loyal and wouldn't budge to any form of interrogation or extortion . But she had managed to put them in a trance and extracted information from them . Under normal circumstances, it's hard to force them to do what we want them to, and even I myself am not strong enough to make them do what I want . But apparently, he was put into a trance and it made it easier for him to fall into hypnosis . Well, even so, it was limited to just about a minute .

The knight also mentioned the name “Myrelia” . To repay the woman’s debt, the Bashar Kingdom was apparently lending a helping hand .

That Myrelia woman, she’s got some serious guts . By impressing upon one’s self-respect or patriotism, it was possible for a person to instill a favorable feeling from another to oneself . It was similar to a prostitute’s modus operandi for hitting on a man .

However, there is a high probability that the knights have already taken into account the information leaked to us, and have given only convenient information . It seemed that these knights may have already been brainwashed in the first place . In essence, the earlier testimony was not very credible .

“What’s the real purpose of this Myrelia woman? No, it’s not my job to think about this . In the meantime, I must report this to my lord... . .”

Side Rigdalfa

“Excellent work, as ever . To build such a wall in such a short time .”

“Oh, Lord Rigdalpha . You too, thank you for your hard work .”

In front of me, the young man who was smiling is of the human race, Lysius Laurentia . A member of the branch of the Laurentian royal family that perished in the famous Laurentian tragedy, he is one of the court sorcerers of our beastmen nation . Speaking of Lysius of the Great Wall, he is also known as one of the best earth magicians on this continent .

It’s unthinkable that this softly smiling figure could raise the earth and bury hundreds of enemy soldiers in the blink of an eye . However, I know that behind that smile is a strong fighting spirit . He is the same age as me, and he is also a friend who has also fought on the battlefield with me many times since the first battle 30 years ago .

”I think you’ve gone through quite a lot, haven’t you?”



I'm sure they're using the art of the Great Wall to build these walls, but I've heard they use quite a bit of magic . Furthermore, if he is to battle, his consumption must be tremendous .

“How can it be hard? I am merely doing this for the sake of protecting my place in this world . The Laurentians are now famous for being descendants of evil masters . It is a mockery in every country . It's only here in the beastmen countries that people dare to fully accept me . ”

“Is that so . ”

“Yeah . And I think you're reckless too . The White Rhinoceros' heroic breakthrough was visible even from the top of the city walls . I didn't think we'd go into the enemy lines with hundreds of infantry . ”

“Fu ha ha . Because I can't show my brother a pathetic fight now that my brother is gone . ”

My name is Rigdalfa . I am the brother of Goddarfa of the Vajra Wall, the chief of the White Rhinoceros tribe and a close associate of the Beast King . And I am also the second-in-command for this battle against Bashar Kingdom . It is my natural duty to take the lead and inspire my allies .

“So, how can I help you? It's not like you would bother to visit us on the battlefield just to warm up old friendships, right? So, is there a problem?”

“You're sharp . Take a look at this . ”

“This is.....”

Lysias looks over the letter sent to the command center . As he read on, a strong sense of bewilderment and a slight feeling of impatience appeared on his face .

I know how you feel . Because it was the same for me .

“The Krishna royal family, was it? I'm afraid I've never heard of such a name . ”

“It seems to be a royal family that reigned over our beastly kingdom 500 years ago . But it says in this letter that they’ve suffered a rebellion from the current House of Narasingha and have been usurped from the throne . ”

I’ve also spoken to my commander, the general, but I don’t care if this story is true or not . Or rather, it does matter, but it’s useless to argue further on that point right now .

Of course, I don’t think it’s an outright lie .

There are certainly some dubious aspects of the situation at the time of the Narasingha royal family’s ascension to the throne . However, he is a good King for us now, and to be honest, I don’t want him to step down now .

But in wars between nations, it was routine for such past events to be brought to light and be used as justification for vindictive actions . And that’s what you can’t fool around with . Post-war processing and so on will have a creeping effect .

I don’t know if 500 years ago is short or long . It’s definitely a time long past for us beastmen but to some of the long-lived species, it’s possible that they may still consider it as a recent event that it wouldn’t be surprising that some of them might still remember it .

However, if the Kingdom of Bashar really had at least one person from the Krishna royal family with them and they were planning on bringing that person out of the shadows, it is almost certain that they will raise complications in post-war negotiations and such . Depending on how the Bashar Kingdom intends to play out their story, there’s a substantial chance, one that we will be unable to ignore, that the surrounding nations won’t be on our side of this conflict .

“What’s more, it says that she is now an evil person...”

“Yes, that’s right . It seems like the former head of Krishna family, facing the dire situation in the past, turned to the evil god for help . Thus, as she was helpless against the onslaught of the usurpers, she had no choice but to

dedicate herself to the evil god and has since become the evil god's maiden..."

"They plan to thoroughly denounce the Narasingha royal family as usurpers and are content with emphasizing the play of a woman of Krishna's blood being made into a sufferable victim of the circumstances . "

"It also says that they have no choice but to lend a helping hand because they were indebted to the Krishnas' in the past . And they also say that it is their duty as neighbors to denounce the usurper royal family and to restore the rights to the rightful royal family . "

It is tempting to question whether Bashar's kingdom is sane enough to join forces with an evil person, but it may be that the odds were stacked against them . Besides, it seems that this letter has been distributed not only to our country, but to other countries as well .

A number of inquiries have been sent from our neighboring countries, which were addressed to the Commander . We'll have to take care of that too . Each country seems to want to gauge the wind and take a careful look at the situation before doing anything else . Apparently, the same story has been circulating to other countries through channels other than the letter, and so far none country seems to think that the letter is complete bullshit, or rather, they couldn't simply brush off this news as a complete joke .

"To meddle with the power of an evil god would be nothing but a foolish thing to do, in my opinion . "

"It's very empathetic . "

"Well... that's..... I've been struggling with it since I was young . As a child of an evil mage, there wasn't a day that went by that someone didn't throw a stone at me . "

"Linford, the wizard huh?"

"He disappeared before I was 10 years old, so I don't remember much about him . Now that I think about it, he must have been mentally ill . He was an

old man who always had a creepy grin on his face . I was picked up by the Beast King, but my father was despised for decades as a descendant of an evil mage, so maybe I can't help it, but..."

"You still can't find him?"

"Yes . To begin with, I'm a child from my father's old age, and if he were alive, he would be nearly 100 years old . Maybe somewhere... . he already... ."

"I'm sorry . I've been rude . "

"It's okay . The reason I'm looking for him in the first place is that I'm going to hand him over to you . Instead of talking about him, let's consult on that letter now . "

"Oh, yeah . "

It's really annoying when they just say that they have the upper hand on the war .

# Chapter 345.1

Chapter 345.1

Editor: Makoto

After the explanation, Asura stood up from the chair he created .

“Now, are we done here? Well, if so, you should go home now . ”

“Ha?! What are you saying?!”

“I’m fine being on my own in this place . Kiara, take them home . ”

Mea screams in surprise, but Kiara just shakes her head .

“Asura, It’s about time, isn’t it?”

“Yeah . Probably . So if you don’t want me to kill you, you need to get out of here . ”

Does that mean that Asura’s transformation into a mad demon is about to take effect? If so, it was certainly dangerous . He was already strong enough in his current state, but this change was definitely going to be a few more steps stronger and things will most likely spin out of control too . It’s no wonder that Kiara nodded honestly .

“Mea, let’s go . ”

“..... . I understand . ”

“Fran too, let’s go . ”

“..... . . mhm”

Both Mea and Fran nodded reluctantly . Mea’s sense of obligation towards her mission was so strong that she was not happy with the idea of leaving everything to Asura alone . The fact that she couldn’t do anything at this point also seemed to be a source of irritation to her . She seemed to be frustrated that she wasn’t recognized as the Lord of the Divine Sword earlier as well .

It’s a shame that Fran didn’t get a chance to witness how strong Asura is . But right now, it’s not exactly an option . At any rate, it would be bad if we got caught up in Asura’s outburst later .

“Come on, Fran . Let’s go . ”

“Mhm”

Kiara, in a somewhat impatient voice, also gave instructions to Quina and the others .

“We have to hurry . Quina, open the door . ”

“Yes, my lord . Meanoa you will take care of the Lord . ”

“Yes, sir . ”

With Quina in the lead, we hurried to the entrance . I supposed the reason they made Meanoa last was to see to it that Mea didn’t stupidly plant an imitation of herself . Well, I don’t think it’s possible, but if it is, I would have went back to Asura by myself .

“Wha . . ?”

“What’s the matter Quina?”

“It won’t open...”

“What?”

“When we entered this room earlier, I made sure it could be opened and closed . ”

I wondered if it was made so it couldn't be opened from the inside, but apparently Quina, unlike us, was already making sure it could be opened and closed securely before .

Isn't this bad? I tried using Dimension Gate . It didn't really matter even if we can't get out of the dungeon at the moment, as long as we all could escape this room as soon as possible .

“—That, what do you mean?”

But the magic didn't even kick in . When I tried to activate space-time magic, my magic power did not materialize as expected .

(Master?)

“Metastasis is blocked . ”

I knew this feeling all too well . The teleportation-disrupting barrier Myrelia had put up . That was the moment I came to that realization .

“Hahaha! That door is closed, you can't leave now, you know? I've set up a barrier so teleportation is useless you know, it's futile!”

“That voice!”

“Myrelia?”

A voice suddenly echoed in the room, and the younger group consisting of Mea and Fran braced themselves for it .

“That's right!”

Myrellia teleported to the opposing side from us, with Asura standing in between both parties . As it was a barrier put up by the power of the evil gods, only Myrellia, who had obtained their blessings, would be able to use teleportation .

She's still smiling and laughing, it's obvious that she was truly enjoying this . However, the evil spirit emanating from her body seemed to have weakened slightly . Was it the aftereffects of breaking evil manifestation? Well, regardless, she was still strong enough to not be underestimated, though .

"I didn't expect a divine sword user to come along . I also didn't realize the labyrinth we built to slow them down could be breached so quickly . "

"You are..., the dungeon master?"

"You're wrong . But well, in a way I am related to the dungeon . "

"I see... . . "

It looks like he was able to sense the evil spirit emitted by Myrellia and discerned at a glance that she was an enemy . Asura pulled out his divine sword, Gaia, and braced himself . However, that gaze was not only directed at Myrellia, but also at us . Asura opened his mouth with a serious expression .

"..... . Kiara"

"I understand"

"Look, you...,you just protect the kids . And when the time comes, don't hesitate, okay?"

"Yes . "

What should we do? As long as we can't escape this place, aren't we going to have to be stuck running around and getting out of Asura's way?

Or do we want to take care of Myrellia as fast as we can before Asura goes out of control? That might be possible with this group . If Asura was going to run amok in this space anyway, it would be the end of our adventure . If that's the case, I feel that it's better to end the fight as fast as possible and part ways with Asura .



Asura seems to think so too .

“We’re gonna crush that bitch as fast as we can . Let’s get on with it . ”

“I understand . We all must follow Asura’s command . ”

“Of course!”

“Yes!”

Mea is somewhat happy about that . Quina and Meanoa nodded silently .  
Fran was ready to fight too .

“Fran’s sword in particular has the power to break the cycle of evil and reveal the truth . It is effective against the evil one . ”

“Oh? Well, that’s encouraging . ”

I’ve decided to reveal that I’m equipped with the skill ‘Breaking Evil Manifestation’ . After all, it’s a trump card against Myrellia .

“Black cat lady, don’t get carried away and get caught up in my attacks, okay?”

“Mhm!”

“Well, it looks okay . How do you get to be that strong at your age anyway? I’ve heard that the black cat tribe is weak, but Miss and Kiara, you guys are just awesome . ”

Well, both Fran and Kiara are a special case . They were probably the number one and two in the black cat tribe at the moment . While we were talking about this, Myrellia didn’t attack us . For some reason, she stood there with a wry smile on her face .

“Are you guys done talking, I wonder?”

“With all these people, you still dare to act so relaxed?”

“That’s not true you know~ to a certain degree that is . Anyway I want to ask you one more question, it’s fine right?”

“Haa?! What is it?!”

“You seem to be already on the edge of transforming, though? Are you sure you can fight in that kind of condition?”

# Chapter 345.2

## Chapter 345.2: - Rematch II

“You seem to be already on the edge of transforming, though? Are you sure you can fight in that kind of condition?”

“Tsk!”

Asura clicks his tongue loudly upon hearing Myrellia’s words.

“The urge for destruction is growing within you. The Great Labyrinth was breached in a flash, but it wasn’t entirely in vain, was it? Ufufufu... I wonder if the more you fight, the faster you change? I hope you don’t completely lose it and get your friends implicated...”

“Then I’m going to kill you before I go mad!”

That cry from Asura was the signal for the opening of the war. Asura ran towards Myrellia. There wasn’t to be any preemptive, discerning strikes. Instead, he went all out right from the beginning. Although Myrellia avoided it by teleporting away, the attack, which hit the ground, sent a loud vibration throughout the room.

It’s indeed difficult to teleport without chanting. But that doesn’t mean Myrellia is at a disadvantage. After all, just being able to teleport is already a huge advantage.

“Haaa! Flash Thunder!”

“Ahahahaha, impatient now are we!”

“Hmph!”

I would read the destination of the teleportation, while Fran was ahead of me. Even if the teleportation itself was interfered with, I could still sense the fluctuations of space and read the other's position.

“Haaaaaaa!”

“Sh!”

Fran used a flash of lightning to slash at high speed. It was a move that favored speed over blows. I've got it. Thanks to the skill, 'Breaking Evil Manifestation', if the attack connects, it will chip away at the evil spirit. Rather than just continuously bombarding Myrellia with regular attacks, this attack instead would put more pressure on her.

At the same time as I was attacking her, I was also making an imaginative steel cord. As I got more and more used to it, the transformation became smoother and smoother.

“Oh, that's not very nice.”

“You let her get away!”

Myrellia didn't retaliate and easily teleported away from us.

“What? Are you really that wary of the 'Breaking Evil Manifestation'?”

“Oh, scary, scary~. It's going to be a tough fight indeed. But how long will you be able to keep it together~? Struggle as much as you can.”

It's true that it would be an advantage for one person to be able to use teleportation while the others can't, but was that sufficient for her to have that much confidence? That was awfully over the top. Does she still have something else hidden?

But even after that, Myrellia rarely fought back. She would do nothing more than a light attack while running away from the attacking Kiara and Mea.

“Hey hey! What’s wrong? You can’t take me down with an attack like that, can you?”

We tried provoking her with words. By now, I’ve definitely noticed she was stalling for time. I’m sure everyone here was aware of that too. Regardless, we still couldn’t land a decisive hit.

This place was too small to unleash a wide range of high-powered attacks as it would definitely indiscriminately attack all of our teammates too. Having said that, it’s hard to keep up with the ever-evasive Myrellia. She hasn’t made that move yet, but if it comes down to it, Myrellia had the ability to just teleport out of the room if she really wanted to.

The only way to counter her teleports would be to unleash a wide range attack and detect which area she teleported to based on that. From what I’ve seen, the only people who could do that were Asura and Fran.

Quina and Mianoa specialized in close combat, so they don’t have attacks that spread over a wide area. Mea and Kiara have no way of detecting and following Myrellia’s teleportation.

In the end, it came down to either me, to detect the teleportation through space-time magic, or Asura, who can detect it through intuition. But I’m honestly worried about letting Asura do it.

The reason why Myrellia was stalling for time was probably because of Asura. All I could think of was that she was waiting for Asura to run amok. If that’s the case, I’m afraid to let Asura shoot a powerful technique so easily, as the more he involves himself in combat, the greater the danger of him running amok.

Then, I had no choice but to do it. We’ll have to settle this fight before Asura’s outbursts began. I can’t sense Asura’s destructive impulses yet. However, I could see a bit of impatience beginning to show on his face. Maybe Myrellia was right about the change being close. There was no more time. We must defeat Myrellia by any means necessary.

“Fran”

(Mhm)

“I’ll stop her! Don’t miss that moment. The only way to bring her down is to cut her yourself.”

(I understand)

“Good!”

Immediately after Myrellia avoided Mea’s white fire by teleporting, I activated the form transformation at full force. Thinner, sharper, and wider. I could control my own sword blade more perfectly by unleashing simultaneous operations at full throttle.

That’s not all. The power of ‘Breaking Evil Manifestation’ spread through every corner of the thread, and on every single strand. Otherwise, there would be no way to catch Myrellia.

“Ugh!”

The same – or even more painful – as when I used simultaneous arithmetic to activate multiple magic operations assaulted my spirit. As I used simultaneous magic attacks at the same time, the magic operations added up to give me the same amount – or even more – of pain to my spirit. Yes, I was supposed to be an invincible sword, but I was definitely feeling pain. Is this my sword? Or is it my spirit? I thought I heard something crack. But we can’t cut corners here.

I used not only the imaginative steel cords but also the sword blade, and like a giant spider’s web, my sword blade, which had turned into a steel thread, covered half of the hall.

“Gah! Even until here!”

“Gotcha, I got her!”

The prey that hung on the spider’s web was Myrellia, just after she made the teleportation. A sharp thread hugged her body, and her right arm and left leg were cut off halfway through. Lacerations were carved all over her

body, and we could see the evil spirit fogging away. I manipulated the string further, tightening its encirclement to keep Myrellia from escaping.

“Ugh!”

At the same time, I’ve paved the way for Fran. Now it was her turn to play her part. Even though there were gaps in the threading, the steel threads would still damage Fran. However, Fran ignored the pain as she thrust me towards Myrellia, sprinkling red blood everywhere as she made me as thin and small as a dagger.

“Haaaaaaa!!”

“Ugh...!”

But I didn’t make it in time. Myrellia pushed the tangled threads away for a moment with compressed evil energy and escaped by teleporting.

A large hole has been drilled on Myrellia’s body, and a large hole has also appeared in the center of the hall, but there was still no sign of it repairing itself. On top of that, the evil spirit in her has been reduced to less than half of what it was at the start. She must be cornered for sure.

(Master, are you alright?)

“That’s my line.....”

(Mm. It will heal soon. But Master pushed herself too hard.)

“Aa.....”

I want to be strong, but that is not enough. Now is not the time to rest.

“I won’t stop”

(.....mhm!)

# Chapter 346

## Chapter 346: - Myrellia's Unfortunate End

Myrellia's evil spirit was greatly reduced by my and Fran's attack. But there was a smile on her face, along with anguish.

“Hahahahahaha! I knew you were strong!”

“Well, thank you.”

As if to warn Myrellia, who is laughing with her face contorted, Asura replies with a blunt word.

What is with this confidence from Myrelia?

However, it's still an opportunity. We'll stop her here before she gets away with teleportation again. I pushed down my mental fatigue and increased my focus to attack again. Asura seemed to be going for something, too.

The tension between us rose quietly. Myrellia should have sensed the atmosphere, but she remains as relaxed as ever.

But then, right when we were about to move, something happened. I could feel the magic power radiating through our feet from nowhere.

“What is this? What is this strange magical power?”

Immediately after that, a tremendous vibration coarsed throughout the dungeon. It's as if they were pushed up from the earth itself. It wasn't just Fran, who was lighter, but even Asura was floating for a moment. This is exactly what I was thinking about. I thought there had been a major earthquake.



Myrellia's smile deepened as she saw Fran and the others surprised by the shaking. That piece of shit Myrellia! I didn't feel any magic or evil spirits, so how in the world did she do it? Is it the power of the dungeon? Anyway, this occurrence gave her a chance.

"It's coming!"

(Yes)

Fran, still separated from the shaky ground by an aerial leap, focused all her attention on Myrellia's movements. As long as she had the trump card against the evildoers, Breaking Evil Manifestation, Fran would always be targeted by her.

"....."

(.....)

But Myrellia didn't make a move. On the contrary, she began to laugh loudly on the spot.

"Hahahahaha! Finally!"

It's not just Myrellia who is acting strangely. Asura and Kiara also stared at Myrellia, who was laughing, with an astonished expression on her face.

"Was that ... a dungeon scream?"

"Why are you laughing at that?"

"A dungeon scream?"

A dungeon scream is apparently an earthquake-like vibration that occurs when the dungeon master is defeated and the dungeon goes dormant. In some dungeons that have just been built, it may be barely perceptible, but in the case of older, larger dungeons, the tremors can be so great that you can't even stand up.

They say that the wavelength of the magic emanating from the core is unique, so anyone who knows about it can easily recognize it. I see. So what we felt before, the vibrations, in other words, was magic.

But why is Myrellia smiling? When the Dungeon Master dies and the dungeon goes dormant, everything that belongs to the dungeon, like monsters and other things should disappear. In other words, Myrellia would also disappear.

“Hmmm. I’m free now!”

“What do you mean? Didn’t you say you were involved in the dungeon? If that’s the case...”

“Extinguished?”

“Yes.”

“Too bad! I’m only half in control of the dungeon, so I’m not going to disappear right now. Well, you’ll have a few days to spare, isn’t that good? But it’s only for a few days, okay?”

“You’re right. But I don’t need a few days to kill you. A few minutes is all it takes.”

“You are talking bullshit now”

“Well, it’s certainly not going to be a normal win. He has a divine sword user and a breaker. Everyone else has evolved as well.”

Myrellia is calm while saying that. I have no idea what she’s thinking.

““But I can at least let my remaining strength run amok and self-destruct, you know? I’m going to be gone in a few days anyway, so why not self-destruct here? What would happen if I blew myself up as fast as I could in this small space? Even if you survive, the blast might trigger that mad demon to start running wild, you know?”

Even though Myrellia's evil spirit has been halved, she still accumulated an enormous amount of power. Besides, it was entirely possible that Myrellia's self-destruction would trigger Asura's outburst.

Was Myrellia desperate? But the way she spoke earlier, it was as if she was waiting for the Dungeon Master to be killed. Funny when you think about it, wasn't it? If she was going to self-destruct, it should have been before the dungeon master dies.

"Hey, would you like to make a deal with me?"

"What did you say?"

"If you're willing to do me a favor, I am willing to let you kill me here without making a fuss. No resistance. I promise."

It's not a lie — it's more like you can't discern it. When I think about it, it always felt strange to me. The illusionary theory has never concluded that Myrellia's words were lies. But that was unlikely. In fact, it should be more natural to lie all the time.

Perhaps, just like appraisal, the reasoning of falsehoods is not as effective as it should be against the words of the evil one.

"Fran, do you think she's telling the truth?"

(Mm. Those eyes are telling the truth.)

Fran has better intuition than I do. Therefore those words were believable.

"I don't get it. What do you, an evil woman, want? The Resurrection of the Evil God?"

"Don't be ridiculous. That's not the kind of shit I want to hear."

Hearing Myrellia's words, Asura was also crestfallen. The evil woman called the resurrection of the Evil Gods as a trivial matter. That was surprising.

“I’m only asking for one thing. I’m sure It’s not that hard for you guys.”

“...say it.”

“There is an aristocratic family in the Kingdom of Bashar called the Magnolia family. Could you rescue the recently born, legitimate son and put him in a safe place?”

“Haaa???!!!!”

“What did you say?”

Asura and Kiara ask back. I mean that was natural. I too don’t know what she meant. Rescuing a trueborn son of House Magnolia? What do you mean by ‘rescue’? Why not do it yourself in the first place?

“Whoa, whoa, whoa. What are you up to?”

“I’m not planning anything. To elaborate a bit more, I want you to take the heir son of the Magnolia family out of the kingdom of Bashar before he gets brainwashed and take him out of their reach. All I’m asking is that you let him live a normal life, okay? If possible, take him to an orphanage run by a rank A adventurer on the next continent. That’s all I want.”

“Why don’t you do it yourself?”

“If they know I’m obsessed with that child, the Dungeon Master will surely take that child as a hostage. I’m finally free, but I don’t have time anymore. That’s why I want to leave you guys to it.”

Neither Kiara, Asura, nor Mea said anything. No, it’s more like we can’t. We can’t believe it. In the first place, she was an evil and aggressive person, and she was a person who brought destruction wherever she went. Is that not enough already, and now you want us to save your child?

But as Fran says, her words don’t seem to be a lie. The look in her eyes were even sincere.

Fran opens her mouth to take over from Asura.

“What about the others guys? What about those knights?”

“You should just leave those guys alone. Being there is not worth anything other than being Romeo’s parent.”

“What did you say about the revival of the royal family or the black cat paradise?”

“Oh, I don’t care about it, the Krishna royal family is just a relic of the past. And about the paradise for the Black Cats? What’s the value of that stuff? This is all a diversion to hide my true intentions. Afterall you don’t know where you’ll encounter the ear of Bashar’s kingdom or the Dungeon Master. All I really want is for Romeo to be happy. Hey, please. Get that boy out of the kingdom of Bashar and out of the spell of Magnolia.”

“What the hell is—“

Asura was about to ask the question again, and that was when suddenly..

“Enough of this farce.”

“Gah!”

A figure suddenly appeared behind Myrellia, thrusting the sword in his hand from his back towards her heart. I could see the evil spirit flowing towards the figure from Myrellia, who was vomiting blood and looking in anguish. He is absorbing Myrellia’s evil energy. This guy looked familiar to us.

“Xellos Reed. You.... Betrayed me.....?”

“Well, don’t let me miss my chance to eat more power!”

“Guh!”

Xellos Reed shoved Myrellia away. Myrellia fell in front of us, and by all accounts, she was dying. I could barely feel the evil energy that had been stored up in her for so long. The wound she just received did not even begin to regenerate.

“Hey....Please ... That child ... please make that child... please make Romeo happy... please...”

She tried to reach her hand out to us, even though she was running out of breath.

“Hmm, you poor woman. You’re a family member of the evil gods, but you’re wishing for a human child to be happy. So no matter how crazy you are, in the end you’re still just a woman huh?”

“Aa.....”

Then her hands lost their strength as she crumpled to the ground.

TL Note : Hi, everyone I am the new translator (and a newbie at being a translator) for this novel starting from chapter 342 I've been reading your comments and I realized that I've a lot of flaws in my translation, like translating the skill or the status of the character wrong or even sometimes the sentence doesn't quite make sense. Therefore I hope if you guys saw errors in my translation please do tell me and I'll change it from the next chapter, although I may not be able to reply to your comments I do read all of it! I really appreciate you guys pointing out my mistakes. I hope I could translate better and I hope you guys enjoy my translation. Have fun reading everyone ! >w<

On another note, guys, you can join us now on our discord server. And get a chance to chat with your favorite translators and editors. Meet more like-minded people and have a fun time with real-time novel updates and much more.

# Chapter 347.1

## Chapter 347.1: - Side Story Myrellia I

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## Side Myrellia

The last thing I remember was a white light covering my vision. A divine and abominable light. It was the light of divine punishment that took my life away.

It's strange. It felt like that happened a long time ago. But it's not unreasonable. Five hundred years have passed since then. In other words, I failed.

What a mess. I was so close to achieving my dream... My mind coated with despair, I feel the reign of the Evil Gods strengthening. Still, I was able to remain conscious without being completely controlled by the Evil Gods because of a slight glimmer of hope.

I was told by Linford that the Magnolia name is still around today. And that even my name has been passed down. I couldn't contain my laughter when I was told about the myths which were full of mistakes.

The love between me and my lover quickly cooled off. He abandoned me for fear of the beasts around him, and I wasn't so vigorous enough to continue loving the man who abandoned me either.

It was around that time that everything in this world became indifferent to me. Losing motivation, I began to live a self-degrading life. Supposedly in the myths, I ended up as a wife of a certain noble. What a dull life!

However, in reality the story didn't end there. I have met my destiny. It's a boy born between my former lover who abandoned me and a prostitute who was enslaved to a marriage fraud.

I was captivated the moment I saw him. Is that what motherhood is? The fact that the image of my beloved man remains, albeit at such a time, maybe it's one of the reasons why I was interested. Anyway, I wondered how could there be such a sweet, cute and lovable being. It's strange that I didn't think about such a thing when I saw other children.

From that moment on, only the child's happiness mattered to me. So I didn't kill those two. I heard that children needed both their parents. Otherwise, I would have already killed my former lover and that prostitute who was afraid to earn my disgrace and tried to kill that child.

But things didn't work in my favour. My father had clearly begun to run amok. Apparently, my request to marry a human caused the beastmen in the country to distrust the Beast King family. He tried to hold it down with force as a civil war was on the verge of breaking out.

Eventually, my father turned to a forbidden power to protect his position. He tried to unlock the seal of the wicked god's tomb, which was under the control of the royal family, and use that power as his own. However, ironically, it was I who ended up endangering the beast royal family as the priestess of the Evil God. Dedicated to the Evil God as a sacrifice, I was revived by the power of the Evil God and for some reason ended up becoming a shrine maiden of the Evil God.

Whether or not I was still myself. Whether I was just a puppet controlled by the Evil God or not. Even if I ask myself the question, I can't get an answer. And then, I suddenly realized. That I gained power. It was the power to fulfill a great desire. That one wish still remained, smoldering in my chest.



Then, what is there to hesitate about? I decided to harness even the power of the Evil Gods.

First I offer my father a deal. Instead of wielding the power of the Evil God for the Beast King family, he asked for the elimination of all the human exclusionists so that that child could live happily in this country. Eventually, my father conspired with me to thoroughly suppress the anti-humanists in the country. The other black cat tribes easily changed sides when I gained power. It was hilarious to see those who previously accused me of being a filthy woman who had mingled with so many humans, and yet they didn't even try to hide their filthy desires, and they all wanted to shake my hand in order to gain power. Don't they know which one was dirtier?

But I was betrayed again. My former lover fled to the kingdom of Bashar with that boy. Behind the scenes, his kingdom seemed to be pulling the strings. And then he held that kid hostage and came at me. He asked for help in weakening the beastly nation.

I had no choice but to obey. Instead of wishing for the child's safety, he set up his own army and carried out all the pro-war movements who were planning to invade the army and invade the Bashar Kingdom.

At the request of the army from the beast kingdom, he sent the army of the beasts to attack and annihilate the army from the Bashar Kingdom with a pincer attack.

We also gave them everything they wanted, including rewriting the borders of the other side through post-war reparations and such. By that time, my father had already been brainwashed by me, so I could do whatever I wanted about it.

But perhaps because of their injuries, the human exclusionists were greatly reduced in strength, and I, who had given my soul, gained more power through the Evil Gods. All that was left was to get that child back from the Bashar Kingdom, and my wish will finally come true. If that white light hadn't taken my life, it would have happened.

It seems that all of the people who had even the slightest trace of the Evil God's factor entering their lives were also eliminated by divine punishment. Ha ha ha, good grief! The one that hit us the hardest was the black cat tribe, who were supposed to be our own people. Everyone, adults and children alike, called me vulgar and threw rocks at me. I should have destroyed them all anyway.

And 500 years later. I would be awakened and dominated by Linford. It was a humiliation to be used by such a man, but he certainly piqued my interest when he said that the descendants of that child remained in the present Bashar kingdom. I can't see that child anymore, but what of it? But the moment I saw that child's descendant, I lost interest.

Their spirit was so distorted that they looked only like puppets. Originally, the Magnolia family had been educated to instill patriotism. But now they've gone too far and it was nothing but pure brainwashing.

In the end I met that child again. His appearance was not similar, his hair and eyes different. But, the moment I saw him, I had the same ticklish feeling as when I met that child. Romeo, the just-born son of the Magnolia family. Did the blood of that child flow through his? That was the moment when I found a new purpose in life.

And I noticed. As it was, this Romeo would eventually become a puppet of the Bashar kingdom just like Johan. That was the only thing that must be stopped.

I've fallen into the role of Linford's servant, but I've been granted a modicum of authority. I began to take action to achieve my own desires, despite Linford's wishes.

The first thing I did was to negotiate with the current king of Bashar. I cooperated with him for the good of his country, and we made a promise that Romeo would be handed over to me when his wishes were fulfilled. No, if I designate Romeo, the country and Linford and others could take that kid hostage.

Instead I told the King that I wanted Magnolia's bloodline to summon my former lover's spirit. And since an innocent soul was better, I would like to receive Romeo intact if possible. It seems that the shrine maiden of the Evil God was likely to say that. Thanks to that, King Bashar seemed to think that I was trying to sacrifice Romeo. Well, it will be great if they misunderstood until the end. It's just a matter of time before I get my hands on Romeo anyway.

The wishes of the Kingdom of Bashar. It's a way of subduing the beastly nation, our sworn enemy, and rising above it. For the Bashar Kingdom, which had always been frightened by the shadow of invasion from the Beastman Nation, it could be said to be a long-cherished wish of the Bashar Kingdom.

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To those poacher (𐄂𐄃𐄄) / Here you can eat this table! (𐄂𐄃𐄄) 𐄂𐄃𐄄  
𐄂𐄃𐄄( / 𐄂𐄃𐄄) / 𐄂𐄃𐄄

On another note guys, you can join us now on our discord server. And get a chance to chat with your favorite translators and editors. Meet more like-minded people and have a fun time with real-time novel updates and much more.

The king apparently used my notorious lore, which was of course full of misunderstandings, to get the upper echelons of the Bashar Kingdom to approve an alliance with the wicked while flirting with profit. Most of them wouldn't believe in such worldly rhetorics as ingratitude towards me. However, the king seemed to have found a solution and that he didn't mind a little nuisance as long as he could get the Beast Country.

Also, ironically, because of historical evidence of me, an evil being, being used to depose the rule of the Beastman Nation five hundred years ago, he seemed to have little resistance to the idea of utilizing the power of the evil god. After all there is a precedent that an evil person can be used.

But we also had to think about what would happen if we lost. Of course, King Bashar also considered that possibility.

Even if someone put you in the line or in a fire and tell them that you are threatened by an evil person, you would not be able to avoid the Beastmen Nation's pursuit. After all we've caused so many wars of aggression, and if we lose, of course we'll be pursued by the beast nation. The least they would do was exiling us.

But no matter how bad the odds were, no matter how much of a losing game we played, we could still turn the tides. In other words, we could use the souls gained in the war to summon a large number of powerful and evil people. As a shrine maiden of the Evil God, I could control the evil people. And after causing chaos to some extent inside the beastmen's country, we would let the Bashar Kingdom Army invade the beastmen's country in the name of subjugating an evil person. Since the beast's hands would be tied with internal trifles, the subjugation would be simple. After that, they could effectively control it in the name of disaster recovery or subjugation. After all, there would be no power left to oppose in the Beastman Nation.

Nevertheless, we also need an excuse for our neighboring countries. Win or lose, we wouldn't want the nations around us to say that we were an evil nation in league with the Evil Gods. Hence, it was necessary to give the impression that I was in charge of the war.

I was no longer interested in the royal family, but one of my public reasons was to give the rights to the throne back to the Narashinha family from the Krishna family. I told him that my actual wish was to gain the paradise of the Black Cat. I tried to make Johan Magnolia and his allies feel like I cared about the 500-year old relationship. The truth was, I didn't care what happened to anyone but Romeo.

The whole thing was a prelude to taking the argument that this conflict is an extension of the Beastman Nation's internal strife 500 years ago and that the Bashar royal family was involved. Of course, I didn't intend to really kill the princess and her servant there. However, it made sense to spread words of hatred. Each country would be spying on the Beastman Nation, and I wouldn't know where or what any person would hear. That's why it was important to appeal to them consistently in a variety of situations.

By doing so, we could make the form of the conflict between the Krishnas and the Narasinha family more visible. In fact, I had sent a letter to each country saying that the usurper royal family was to be put to death in my name. All in order to make post-war risk as low as possible. Even if the nations don't believe it, as long as the Beastman Nation was destroyed, it was a matter that can be excused in any way possible. Because the truth was created for the convenience of the survivors. Just as how my lore was full of mistakes.

The best thing to do would be to win the war head-on in a big way and rule the beastly kingdom by the power of Bashar Kingdom alone, but that would be difficult. However, a pincer attack with a dungeon force should have a good chance of working.

I didn't want to use the power of an Evil God if I could. Without a doubt, the heavens will send out punishment again. Fufufu. Yes, I knew and so did King Bashar, that if you used the power of an evil god, you will surely be punished by heaven. That's why King Bashar kept the plan to summon the evildoers deep inside his heart. Perhaps he was going to focus the divine punishment on himself alone. I didn't know if it would work.

But, as was the case 500 years ago, there must be some time for leeway. In that little moment, King Bashar would nominate a successor, and I intended to let Romeo escape from the Bashar Kingdom. I also had an idea of where to leave Romeo. Although it would be on another continent, there was an orphanage run by a Rank A adventurer. I had it checked out, but it was a perfectly straightforward orphanage with no other side to it. If I left him there, he would be a few times safer than if he were to remain in the Kingdom of Bashar.

However, I thought all those plans were likely to end in vain. Thus, it was such a surprise that an irregularity such as the Divine Swordsman appeared.

Even though I knew I couldn't win against my opponent, I could never run away from a fight because of the force of the order that compelled me to keep doing so. Even I didn't think I could beat the Divine Swordsman. Therefore I knew that my life would end here.

The only bright side would be the appearance of Xellos Reed. Apparently he betrayed Linford. I'd eaten all the evil people here. But, traitorous though he is, he was willing to negotiate. What I presented to him was my life. In exchange for giving that power and my life, I decided to have Xellos Reed do three jobs.

The first was the killing of the Dungeon Master, the only person who could order me around. As long as that thing was watching us, we couldn't take any chances. However, at any rate, challenging the Divine Swordsman would just end in death. Thus, it would be better to get a little freedom at the end. Well, I told them I could move for a few days, but that was a lie. It will be an hour at the most. I don't have time to get to the child, I'm afraid.

The other thing I asked for was to kill me at the perfect time. Specifically, right after I asked the Divine Swordsman and the princess to protect Romeo, Xellos Reed will take my life miserably.

Why? People like them were susceptible to sad story developments. How could they refuse? After all, it was the last wish of a dying, poor woman. They wouldn't be able to refuse it. I've seen that the Divine Swordsman and the princess were particularly vulnerable to such stories. There is a higher chance though it's still a small chance, but the probability that Romeo will be saved increased. That was the last struggle I could make.

As a matter of fact, I've asked Xellos Reed for help too. It's just, I don't know how far he'll go to keep his promise, so I'd be grateful if the princess or the Divine Swordsman would protect him if possible. Although they were my enemy, the princess and the Divine Swordsman are much more reliable.

“Hey....Please ... That child ... please make that child... please make Romeo happy... please...”

“Hmm, you poor woman. You’re a family member of the Evil Gods, but you’re wishing for a human child to be happy. So no matter how crazy you are, in the end you’re still just a woman huh?”

When the princess and the Divine Swordsman heard Xellos Reed's words, a look of anger appeared on their faces. They felt sorry for me.

“Ah.....”

Thank you, Xellos Reed, for the greatest help.



# Chapter 348

Chapter 348: - The One Who Keeps On Eating

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“Hmm, you poor woman. You’re a family member of the evil gods, but you’re still wishing for a human child to be happy. It seems like no matter how crazy you are, in the end you’re still just a woman huh?”

“Ah.....”

“Hm.”

The indifferent man stared coldly, at Myrellia who collapsed and disappeared like a black mist.

I had no idea what the hell was going on.

Myrellia said something incomprehensible, such as wanting me to help save a child in Bashar Kingdom.

The Krishna royal family and their attitude toward the knights were all actually ways to hide their true intentions? What she really wanted to do was to save a boy named Romeo from the Kingdom of Bashar? Indeed, Johann Magnolia was brainwashed. The boy named Romeo is likely to end up like that if left alone.

I can see why it would be difficult for Myrellia to rescue the boy on her own, with Linford and the Dungeon Master in control.

But was it the truth? It didn't look like she was lying, but it's hard to believe that, that Myrellia would make a move like that. Moreover I am worried about Xellos Reed's sudden appearance.

And suddenly all the worries I was thinking about were blown out of my head. It seemed to be the same for Fran, Kiara, Asura, and, well, everyone here.

“Hey, hey.....until when will you....”

The evil energy emitted by Xellos Reed had become so powerful that it was incomparably stronger than before. That's about to measure up to Myrellia's. No, if he used the power properly, it might even be beyond that.

It used to be possible to read some statuses and other information in the appraisal. But now I couldn't see anything. In other words, it meant that the evil spirit has strengthened so much. From a glance it was the same as before, but now it gave off an even more frightening aura than before.

Even Asura frowned and showed caution. Kiara lightly braced herself, and as for Fran and the others, she quickly distanced herself from them and readied her weapon with a pale face. I could see the goosebumps on Fran's arms. In other words, Xellos had become just that much more powerful.

Perhaps he has been killing and killing and killing all the evil people and kept absorbing their power with his cannibalistic skills. I thought before that it would be good for the world in a way, but I didn't expect him to be able to nurture the evil spirit to this extent in such a short amount of time.

“What?”

“What the hell is Xellos Reed?”

“Are you a follower of the Evil God? You seem strong.”

“I am honored to have the Divine Swordsman say that! Kuhahaha!”

The evil spirit blew up from Xellos Reed's entire body with a tremendous amount of force as he laughed. The vibrations were scattered randomly and

turned into a storm that blew around us.

This is seriously bad! Just when we were about to fend off Myrellia, another monster appears again!

Even though we have a trump card against evil, I seriously didn't want to interact with such a monster. The crisis of Asura's going berserk has not yet passed. I think running is the way to go here.

“-Chii!”

The Dimension Gate was not activated. I don't know if it was maintained even though Myrellia was dead, or if Xellos Reed had re-established it, but the teleportation containment has not yet been lifted.

“That little guy over there looks familiar. He was the one in Barbora...”

“...”

“How is that one boy?”

“...”

“Why are you not answering?”

It's not like I was trying hard to ignore him, or that I kept my mouth shut to avoid giving him information. But, I can't speak. Xeros Reed took his gaze off Fran as it was, as if he had lost interest, and looked at Asura with an epic smile on his face.

“You have a divine sword..... I wanted to go at it with you once..”

“Battle Junkie”

“Hey, you're just as crazy as I am, aren't you?”

“I don't want to be put at the same level as you, but I guess from a human perspective it's similar.”

“Moreover you have such a terrific skill set of enhancement! Ka-ha-ha! Nice!!”

Killing intent emanated from Xellos Reed, as if he had identified Asura as his prey. From his point of view, it might just be a greeting, but if the current Xellos Reed did it, it was no different than an attack. If it were an ordinary person, this killing intent alone would stop his heart.

Even Guendalfa unconsciously backed up and surprised himself by hitting his back against the wall. Apparently he hadn’t realized he was retreating. He was shaking with a sweaty face.

“Chi”

Looking at Xellos Reed who looked energized, Asura also got agitated.

“Oi, Kiara!”

“No! You can’t!”

Before I knew it, Kiara approached the entrance door and was looking into it. However, as I expected, it didn’t seem to open.

In the meantime, the killing intent emanating from Xellos Reed was rising tremendously! I found that even Quina, who normally didn’t show her expression, frowned.

“Hehehehehe, wanna get at it?”

“Oi you guys! Don’t get involved in this! Kiara, hurry up!”

Then the battle between the monsters began. Of course, the first one to make a move was Xellos Reed.

“Ora!”

Xellos Reed took out from nowhere a huge sword comparable to Asura’s earth sword Gaia. It’s name had become the Great Sword of the Evil God

Stone. I see, it might be a suitable weapon for this guy to use. Both in name and strength.

The great jet-black sword that was swung down was intercepted by the divine sword raised by Asura.

Dooooooooooooo!

The pair of great swords were struck together, causing a roar and a loud shockwave that reached Fran and the others who had taken shelter by the wall. From there, a bizarre scene unfolded as two giant men struck each other with great swords.

The attacks were offset by opposing attacks, and the two fought each other with even more attacks without being able to defend against the blasting shockwave. I couldn't imagine how powerful a single attack could be, but I didn't think I wanted to mix in there at all. However, it seems that Asura's swordsmanship was superior to Xellos' skills.

Every ten or so times, Asura's attack caught Xellos Reed. It would regenerate quickly, but I could see that the evil spirit was greatly diminished. But Kiara looked restless. Asura too.

"This is bad..."

"What's wrong?"

"Look at the corner of Asura. The color has turned red. It's a sign of a berserk. Soon, his demonization will be activated!"

Things seemed to be moving in the worst direction possible.

Every time he hit Xellos Reed with his sword, the horn that grew from Asura's forehead dyed a deeper red. At the same time, a red magic power began to rise from his body like a heat haze.

"Red is the color of madness..... The fact that he started to wear that aura meant his skills have already been activated!"

I've heard that it's just barely in control due to equipment and other effects. It was only a matter of time before the Demonization fully activated. That awareness was already fully focused only for the battle with Xellos Reed.

“Oraaa!”

“Chi! You are a divine swordsman indeed!”

Asura's attack becomes more intense. The earth sword, Gaia, was struck against the floor of the dungeon, causing a large depression, with a crack in the form of a cobweb surrounding it.

I was frightened when I saw it. Was this dungeon destructible in the first place? Maybe the strength of the dungeons varied. In the Goblin Dungeon, the floor was casually gouged by Fran's attack.

But this dungeon was mostly unscathed by Asura's rampage. Although he was manipulating it with earth magic, the dungeon itself wouldn't get hurt by a normal attack. That's why it was impossible to destroy the dungeon and escape. However, that common sense was overturned right now.

That casual blow probably contained a huge amount of magical power as well as physical strength.

“Graaaaa!”

“Uraaaaaa!”

The Great Kaiju War! Not only Asura, but Xellos Reed's attacks have also begun to destroy the dungeon!

“Aside from Kiara and the others, Guendalfa looks pretty bad!”

We still have plenty of time to dodge the aftermath of the attack, but Guendalfa already looked like he long reached his limit. He was desperately running away.

However, the battle between the two became even more intense. I mean, Asura didn't seem to care about his surroundings anymore. He began to use

a wide range of techniques without hesitation, and the corresponding Xellos Reed was also releasing a wide range of techniques.

“Quina! Is it still not open?!”

“I’m sorry. I’m avoiding it while trying to open the door, so it will be a while yet.”

“Mea, Fran, Mia! Protect Quina!”

Ever since Asura's outburst began, Quina has been trying to open the door. She took position in front of the door and examined something, but it seems to be slow going as she was dodging the aftermaths of the battle along the way.

We all put up wards and barriers to protect Quina. Guendalfa needed to endure a little more.

I kept an eye on Asura and Xellos during that time, but they were moving faster and faster. In addition, the magic power in their attacks kept increasing. They were getting serious about each other.

Finally, Asura made a big move. He lightly distanced himself from Xellos Reed and raised the earth sword Gaia high in the sky.

“Divine sword release, ooooooooooooo!”

# Chapter 349

## Chapter 349: - Madness

TL Note : this series' update schedule are : Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Though if we got 6\$ on Ko-fi we will upload a bonus chapter (1 bonus chapter per 6\$). You can join RNF's discord so you could get notified whenever a new chapter is updated.

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“Divine sword release, oooooooooo!”

Immediately after Asura shouted that, a light blasted up from the divine sword. Along with that, magical power started pouring out from inside the divine sword and surrounded Asura with light. The scene was as if a pillar of light was swallowing Asura.

Although they were far apart, a shock wave struck Fran and the others. At the same time, a cloud of dust and stone debris billowed everywhere. It was as if a dynamite had exploded at a close distance. Everyone was stuck in place and simply had to withstand the raging forces.

On top of that, a tremendous presence and magical power engulfed the entire room, rendering magical power sensing and presence detection useless.

“So this is the power of the divine sword!”



From the sound of that scream, he must have released the power of the divine sword. Furthermore, the magical power emanating from the divine sword was so intense anyone under its influence would feel as if oppressed by an unstoppable force.

Is it really the same weapon as me? I couldn't believe it. No, I guess this is why the Divine Sword is called a weapon.

“Fran! Are you okay!”

(Hmm!)

Like this, if someone were to approach us through the dust, it would be too late for us once we actually notice them. With maximum vigilance, we waited for the smoke to clear. A few seconds or so passed, although it felt like many times more.

After the smoke cleared, the figure of Asura, who was at the center of the force, came into view. There is no change in the appearance of Asura himself. But the divine sword in his hand had been greatly altered.

“That's the true form of the divine sword...? That's no longer a sword... right?”

How do I say this? It's a strange sight. The sword didn't seem to belong to any proper category of weapons. Before its power was unleashed, it was a greatsword with a straight blade, but now the blade is warped like a curved sword. In addition, five sharp and large spines, like spikes, grew at regular intervals along the curve, with the tip having transformed into a peculiar shape.

There was a huge block of iron on the end of the blade, just like a hammer. The part of the warped blade facing inward is sharp and pointed like a pickaxe. The other side is shaped like a flat hammer. Moreover, it is tremendously big. The thick blade alone is more than two meters long, and the hammer portion nearly twice as tall, wide and long like a drum.

It doesn't look very much like a weapon for personal use. It was probably closer to say that it was a kind of a siege weapon, like a battering ram.

Even after looking at the weapon and appraising it, I still could only see the name Earth Sword Gaia and a few abilities. The fact that it evolved to its true form must have raised its level to the point where I cannot appraise it at my current level.

Name: Earth Sword, Gaia

Attack Power: 4700

Magical Conductivity/SS+

Unfortunately, these were the only things I could confirm. However, this alone was enough to show that it was no longer just a regular divine sword.

“Oraa!”

Asura, who regained his true form, slammed the Earth Sword Gaia into Xellos Reed, faster than before. It was most likely the effect of its status being raised.

Xellos Reed tried to counter the attack with his greatsword, but he was easily pushed away. He still tried to twist his body to dodge, but it was to no avail.

Despite avoiding Gaia, an invisible force smashed half of his body.

Xellos Reed appeared to have suffered a fatal wound, with the entire left half of his body appearing as if cut off, but then he stood and still managed to balance the remaining half of his body. Normally, people would have died from that attack, but he was a person harnessing evil spirit power.

Immediately, the right half of his body began to regenerate and regain its original form.

“Oh shit! As expected of the divine sword!”

“Gah!”

“Hahahaha! Come! Come! I’ll kill you, you bastard, and I’ll take your divine Sword!”

Xellos moved even faster. Every time he swung his sword, he spread a vicious evil spirit around. Just a scratch and you’ll be damaged by the evil spirit.

Every time Asura slammed Gaia, the dungeon caved in and the ground underneath Fran and the others shook. Sometimes the wrecked dungeon floor would turn into torso-sized projectiles from the impact and come at them at super speed.

“Uu... ugh... gahhhh!”

In the midst of a fierce grinding contest, Asura held the divine sword on his shoulder. Then he poured his magic power into the divine sword and jumped out with even greater speed than before. It was the fastest he had been so far.

“Wha!”

The next thing I knew, Asura was right in front of Xellos Reed. Xellos must have realized he couldn’t defend himself. He seemed to have put up a barrier in a hurry, but the entire barrier was smashed by the divine sword.

The biggest roar and blast of the day hit the room as if we were at the center of an explosion. The barrier I set up was easily penetrated by the flying debris. Quickly, I equipped Physical Damage Nullification, but before I could, several shots gutted Fran’s body.

“Are you okay?!”

(Hmm)

Even though the barrier had been breached, its power was greatly reduced because of it. Thankfully, the wounds weren’t deep. As I healed Fran’s wounds with my [Heal], I checked on everyone.

“Are the others okay?” I ask Fran.

“Are you guys okay?” Fran asked the others.

” We are alright but.... Guendalfa is hurt because he defended us!!”

“I’m coming!”

It seems that Guendalfa used his huge body as a shield to protect everyone who was at the door. When Fran rushed and ran, I saw countless rubbles of all sizes were stuck on his back. His life was in danger.

“This is bad Fran!”

“Hmm!”

With me and Fran using Greater Heal in rapid succession, we managed to get him out of critical condition. However, he won’t be able to move for a while. If they keep attacking like that repeatedly, the rest of us will be in danger.

In the first place, given the performance of the divine sword, it seemed that even with the current attack, its power still wasn’t fully utilized. If a more widespread and high-powered attack was unleashed, even Fran would be in danger.

“Quina?”

“Sorry. I can’t open it yet.”

When asked by Kiara, Quina shakes her head.

“Is there no other choice but to risk it? I don’t want to bet on it but....”

“Bet on what?”

“Asura’s Demonization will be cancelled after a certain amount of damage is taken..”

“If so, Then we’ll all—”

“But! If it is not undone, he’ll turn against us! He’ll change his target and attack all of us!”

So that was it. Certainly it’s a bet. If we fail, we will be on the receiving end of that sword’s attacks. Then we had a slightly better bet.

“Fran. Let’s try that one.”

(...Skill Taker?)

“Hm. That’s right.”

Did Fran also notice? I’m thinking of trying to get rid of Asura’s mad demonization. However, I was hesitant for several reasons.

First of all, does taking away the skill after the demonization has begun will stop any further demonization? Also, won’t he lose his ability to compete with Xellos Reed? That’s what I thought. However, it was certain that we will not continue to be safe in this state. Then we should just give it a try.

“Stop Asura.”

“What? What will you do?”

“We could do something, maybe.”

Fran explains quickly. We might be able to erase Asura’s skill, which might stop him from running berserk. But we weren’t sure.

“I mean, it’s unclear what will happen, but is it possible?”

“Hmm...

“Let’s do it. It’s better than nothing.”

Kiara’s decision was instantaneous. I guess she knew it wasn’t a good idea to continue fighting as is. Even now, Mea is still protecting us from the

occasional flying debris!

“Well then, Let’s do it!”

“Hmm...”

“Skill Taker!”

“Gugaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Immediately after I activated the Skill Taker, Asura stopped moving. Soon, he began to writhe and suffer.

“Guaaaaaa!!”

“Oi Oi, What’s wrong?”

Xellos Reed also stopped attacking, staring at Asura, who screamed as he knelt on both knees. After a few seconds, Asura stopped moving and came to a still, and silence enveloped them.

“What... the hell happened...?”

Asura didn’t seem to know what happened. He was looking around. Kiara approached him and tried to protect Asura.

(Now all we need is for Master to remove the mad demonization.)

“.....Aaa”

“Master?”

What is it? Someone said something. No, not someone, it’s Fran. My wielder.

“No, no, no-”

A sudden urge of rage and destruction overcame me. Both my eyes and my thoughts turned bright red.

In the first place, what was I doing here? Why am I resting in such a place? Why am I not fighting?

No! Fight! Destroy all enemies!

“Gaaaaaaa!”

Fight! I must fight! Destroy all Fran's enemies!

# Chapter 350

## Chapter 350

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## Side Nemea

It was abrupt .

Fran said she could block Lord Asura's mad demonization skills . I don't know if that will work, but Master Kiara said to give it a try .

And as Fran held her sword and started concentrating, Asura gradually slowed down and eventually stopped moving . They've really succeeded in calming the demonization!

“We did it!”

The worst that could happen has been avoided, although there was still the creepy evil villain, Xellos Reed . I thought as such and tried to run towards Fran, when all of a sudden...

“ ”  
...

“Fran, what’s... .”

“Master?”



“Gaaaaahhhh!!”

Suddenly, a shrill scream resounded throughout the dungeon . Wait, actually, it’s as if the sound was directly transmitted into my brain . No, it probably was as such .

“Was that the master...?”

The moment I muttered that, the magic sword in Fran’s hand suddenly left her hand and took flight . The sword vibrated violently in the air . I could hear the scream emanating from it . It sounded as if it were the roars of a raging beast, but at the same time also sounded like a painful scream, one filled with anguish .

“Graaaaahhhh!”

A lightning bolt emanates from the sword and strikes at Xellos Reed . Although it was easily dodged, the sword moved on its own and rushed at Xellos Reed .

I looked at Fran, who was just standing there, looking stunned . After a moment, she ran after her divine sword, her face turning blue .

“Master!”

“It’s not taking action under Fran’s orders? Is your master running amok?”

“Hey Mea! Do you know anything about this?”

Seeing the situation with the sword suddenly moving by itself, Master Kiara also started feeling anxious . She took a look at Fran’s condition and understood that what was currently happening wasn’t as Fran intended .

“Um, well, the master...”

“Huh? What about me?”

“No, no! Not Master Kiara, but Fran’s Master!!”

“What are you talking about?!”

No! I’m not allowed to give out information that it’s an intelligent weapon . This is information that Fran trusted me with to keep after all . If I exposed her secret, isn’t it the same as me betraying her?

Just as I was overwhelmed by my dilemma, Quina interrupted from the side .

“Miss, please calm down . I’m sorry, the young lady seems to be getting confused . ”

“I see . What does Quina know about it?”

“I don’t know the details, but as for the one she referred to as master, I think it’s actually Fran’s sword . I heard it’s named “Master” . Fran-san’s sword seems to be out of control for some reason . That sword is a fairly high-ranked magic sword . Perhaps, one of the abilities of that sword is Skill Taker? And maybe, we are currently seeing the effects of taking away Lord Asura’s skills as mentioned earlier?”

“I see . And you think it was affected by the madness of the demonization and went out of control?”

“I can only assume as much . ”

Good, Quina explained it well . Nonetheless, as we talked about it, the master continued to run amok, its screams endlessly resounding .

“Gaaahhh!”

Once again, a tremendous lightning bolt descended towards Xellos Reed . More accurately, it was a tight pack of three lightning bolts . Cold sweat ran down my back as I watched each of those lightning bolts drill a large crater into the dungeon .

That was extreme grade magic no matter how you look at it . Moreover, it shot three rounds of that kind of magic at once? Do all intelligent weapons have that kind of power?

“That sword! Isn’t the red aura emanating from it looks like the one from the Divine Swordmaster from earlier, what the hell is going on?”

Xellos Reed repeatedly regenerated while being burned by the lightning, but I could see the confusion on his face . I guess he couldn’t keep up with the fact that the sword was the only thing that attacked him on its own .

“Master! Master!”

Fran squinted at the blast and called out frantically, but her voice didn’t seem to reach her master at all .

The Master continued to ignore Fran and suddenly jumped out at a terrifying speed . Apparently, the sudden acceleration from staying still was enough to catch Xellos Reed unawares and land a surprise attack . Before he had time to evade it, the sword blasted away half of his body .

“Guuh! What...! Is this!”

Moreover, it caused critical damage . Yes, that sword also had the ability to counter evil spirit energy and manifestations . Master’s chase continued against the anguished Xellos Reed .

“Latent Potential Release... . oooooo!”

Immediately after the master’s cry, a tremendous amount of magical power overflowed from him . The air surrounding him also vibrated by the magical power released, hitting my skin .

How much power did that sword have in it? Honestly, I felt that the intimidating feeling emanating from the current master was not inferior to the divine sword Gaia! To my regret, even if I swing Rind, I will not be able to exert all that power .

“Oh ohhhh!”

Lightning bolts were released again . What a surprise! It wasn’t just raining down from above, bolt after bolt was shot out from both sides . Three thunderbolts, clearly thicker than the previous extremely large magic shot



it looked . Master, who instantly understood that he had escaped, started chasing after Xellos Reed .

Again, its shape changed and part of the main body returned to its original form . There were still about 100 threads wounding about and continued to chase after Xellos Reed . While guiding his opponent's movements in this manner, the master took a swing with his main body .

“Divine Judgment”

“Get down!”

The master cut through everything with the extension of the sword . Xellos Reed, the evil spirits, the magic, the air, the dungeons, everything . Before I knew it, the ceiling above me was torn asunder . No, not just the part above my head . All the walls that were in the area of the extension of the teacher's swing were cut .

I was scared . If I hadn't been dragged down by Master Kiara, my neck would have been sliced off by the current attack, and I would have died without even realizing what had happened .

“Gaaaaaa!”

Xellos Reed lost his body from the waist down . Moreover, his regeneration started to slow down . He must have suffered substantial damage . The evil man who was much more powerful, beyond even that monstrous Myrellia, was being hunted down and injured so easily .

I couldn't stop shaking . I was really scared . That's not just a normal magic sword . It was something else... . something much scarier .

“Gaaaaaaa... Ouuuuuu!”

“What is it this time?”

The Master changed his appearance again . What's that? The design of the sword's hilt seemed to rise up, and then the sword was led up with a dull metallic sound .

“One form after another... I won't let you!”

This time Xellos Reed initiated an attack . He concentrated his evil spirit on his blade and slashed with it . But that, too, was offset by the barriers that were already put up around the master . The current blow alone should have contained dozens of times my entire magical power .

“Uuuu- Aooooooooooooo!”

It is a howl of madness with the intent to destroy everything in existence . I finally realized what the master's body was trying to turn into . A wolf . A wolf with a jet black body and a height of about 5 meters, entirely made of steel . And what erupted from his body was jet black magic .

The black magical power mixed with the red aura and gave off a vicious color . I muttered as soon as I saw it .

“Fenrir...?”

It was like the Demon Wolf Fenrir in the myths of old . It was said that a great demon beast once tried to devour the world . However, the descriptions of the beast in past records pale in comparison to master's form in front of me .

“It's open!”

Apparently, Quina and Master Kiara had done their job well while I only trembled in fear . The sound of Master Kiara's pleasant voice was followed by the sound of the entrance door opening .

“Let's get out of here!!”

“Ye- Yes!”

“Mia, take Guendalfa . Quina, carry Asura! I'll bring Fran to you!”

I didn't receive any instructions . Of course . I was frozen in fear . Quina tugged my arm, trying to pull me out of the room . However, as I was trying

to leave the room I saw it happen from the corner of my eyes . Master Kiara was attacked by Xellos Reed .

“Come on, let’s have some more fun!”

“Tsk!”

This was bad! Master Kiara cannot get past that man and bring Fran back . Fran was left standing there, still as dumbfounded as right after her master began his outburst .

“Damn it!”

“P- Princess!”

Quina’s worried voice hit my back . But it didn’t stop me . I didn’t know what I was doing anyways .

“Fran! What are you doing!”

“Mea, Master...”

“We have to run! Now!”

“No! I can’t leave my master!”

“But...!”

I could understand Fran’s painful feelings . If Lind had gone berserk in the same way, I too wouldn’t be able to just run away and leave . Still, I had to take her away from this place for now .

“Right now, your master is in a state of madness! He doesn’t even know you’re here . You will just end up getting attacked!”

“Bu- But...!”

“It’s a coincidence that you didn’t get involved in the previous attack!”

“...!”

“Now come!”

Fran’s ability to resist weakened . Taking advantage of this, I tried to pull Fran’s arm . But then I wonder why? I felt like the steel wolf’s eyes turned and looked at me instead of Xellos Reed . That was all it took to make me stand still . It was a tremendous killing intent .

“Oooooooooo! Fraaaaannnn!”

Did you just yell ‘Fran’ right now? By any chance, could you perhaps identify Fran? Wasn’t it a coincidence that you haven’t wrapped up Fran in your attack from earlier?

“Grrrrroooooo!”

The steel wolf opened its mouth . What emanated from that huge open mouth was a blinding light filled with enormous amounts of magical power . I held Lind over my heart, but I’m not sure if it could protect us . No, it was unlikely it could .

But the flash of light that tried to swallow me without me even thinking of fighting back was shielded by someone who stood in front of me .

“Master...Kiara?”

“Ou . Are you safe?”

“Ye- Yes... but master is...!”

“It doesn’t matter! Now get out of here!”

“Ye- Yes, Fran! Let’s go . ”

As instructed by Master Kiara’s words, I grasped Fran’s hand tighter this time so that she wouldn’t let go, and ran out to the entrance .



# Chapter 351

## Chapter 351

### Side Kiara

Just when one would think we were already out of the woods, the worst possible scenario struck...

The sword that Fran was holding began to rampage on its own . And when it came to the strength of its power, wasn't that already comparable to Asura? Maybe it's actually even more powerful .

Asura still had the ability to think and make sound combat decisions, even if he was out of control . Because of this, he was unable to go all out for fear of being caught in a dungeon collapse . His divine sword was best at widespread annihilation . However, in such a confined space, it wouldn't be able to show its true worth .

No, even without that, the sword was abnormal . It could activate the most powerful magic techniques in the world five times and at the same time it could even deploy Latent Potential Release, which was not normal . In addition, it has the ability to fly, transform, and it even took away Asura's skills . Having even just one of those skills alone would allow it to be called a top-tier magic sword .

“And we're not even close to the end of it yet . ”

It wouldn't be surprising to say that its power was on par with a top-tier divine sword . Really, just what was this place? How could a divine sword and a demonic sword suddenly just coincidentally gather here?

While I was thinking about that, Fran's sword suddenly transformed into a wolf-like figure made of steel, and gave off even more magical power . The ferocious red-black magical power that emanated from the steel wolf gave a feeling of pressure that made us feel uneasy just by looking at it from a distance . It's no wonder that Mea ended up being unable to move .

Mea began muttering about the mythical beast, Fenrir or something, but she might not be entirely wrong . At the very least, it was the strongest wolf-type demonic beast I've ever seen .

“Grooooooooooooo!”

I blocked the attack aimed at Mea as quickly as I could, but I took a lot of damage from just that one shot, my whole body screaming in pain . Still, I can't let myself go down . That wolf is not the only enemy here .

“Oi, oi, old lady . You're very motivated aren't you? Should I give time for the little ones to escape?”

Yes, it would be nice if they went easy on us, but it was scary to think about if they didn't . If you get chased by either, there was no way to escape . Someone has to stay here . Letting Mea and the others escape, I drew my sword .

“You know that you're going to die right?”

“It's not like I still have a very long time left to live anyway, It wouldn't be a bad idea to use it to save the young ones instead right? –Senkai Jinrai!”  
(TL Note : in the raw it's written : 閃華迅雷)

“Kuhahaha! Good! No matter how weak you are, it's fun to deal with someone who's willing to die!”

“Goooooooooooo!”

And so the three-way battle began . The wolf of steel started relentlessly targeting the enemy in front of it, namely me and Xellos Reed .

And Xellos Reed was also trying to get at me and the wolf . No, it's more like he was enjoying the battle rather than aiming for it .

I could have tried stopping those two, only if I didn't collapse all of a sudden .

“The question is, how long do I have...”

I was hurt and I have been continuously fighting hard since last night . It was frustrating, but it would be impossible for me to fight for hours on end by now . The best thing to do is to launch a critical attack in one felling swoop and kill these guys in the blink of an eye, but... .

I couldn't . Xellos Reed, who was able to withstand even the attack of the divine sword, and the metallic wolf, who is on par or even stronger than that Xellos Reed .

Then, what should I do?

“...Hah!”

“That's a good move!”

“Gooooooo!”

Bracing myself I daringly turned my back on the wolf, as I attacked Xellos Reed . The sword and black thunder blocked the movements of Xellos Reed, and I barely avoided the wolf's attack from my rear . I couldn't stop myself from dripping cold sweat . I didn't expect that wolf would attack me with his tail like a whip . If I hadn't been wary from the start, I wouldn't have been able to react .

But as I have intended, the attack from the steel wolf struck Xellos Reed . Although it was only a glancing hit, I could see that the evil spirit of Xellos Reed had been reduced .

“I think I can go on like this . ”

Yes, this is the only way I could keep on fighting . In my condition right now this is the only way I could beat Xellos Reed . To be honest, I don't know how to beat the wolf . Huh, never mind, let's focus and make sure the one that can be beaten will be beaten first . That's all .

“Oh, come on, you don't think I'm going to let myself get hit again and again with an attack like that, do you?”

“Oh really? Then let's try it . ”

I focused my all on speed and evasion . It took all I had to read and guide the actions of the wolf and Xellos Reed to hurt each other . Naturally, both sides would focus their attacks on me, but that didn't matter . One will not survive to this age if you couldn't juggle despair at this level .

The wolf's attack became more intense, but they missed me and caused damage to Xellos Reed instead . Xellos Reed tried to close the distance between them to regain control . But I wasn't going to let you get away with it . I used the full force of the Black Heavenly Tiger to chase after Xellos Reed . Of course, with the wolf right on my heels .

“This damn old hag!”

“Gooooooo!”

“Fuhahahaha! There! There! What happened to all your power just now! You evil person!”

I continued to abuse my body with intense pain as I kept on dancing, swerving around between the two monsters . The price for doing so was my life . I dodged the wolf's fangs with a paper-thin gap, parried the sword attack from Xellos Reed, and I ended up vomiting blood .

I continued to abuse my body with intense pain as I kept on dancing, swerving around between the two monsters . The price for doing so was my life . I dodged the wolf's fangs with a paper-thin gap, parried the sword attack from Xellos Reed, and I ended up vomiting blood .

We were almost even in terms of speed – no, was the wolf faster than me? I was overwhelmingly defeated in terms of offensive power, and our defensive and regenerative powers were not even on the same plane . However, there were several factors that have allowed us to still fight .

For one, Xellos Reed was still fooling around . He still dared to take advantage of our intentions to enjoy the thrill of battle .

Furthermore, the wolf's movements were somewhat awkward . The speed at which it moved was tremendous, but the fluidity of the movements were slightly off sync . Apparently, he didn't have a perfect handle on his body .

However, the biggest factor in play was the difference in experience . I was sure that both Xellos Reed and the wolf would be very strong innately . However, there was a slight tendency for them to move too intuitively . Only with enough experience could one counter such instinct .

The fight proceeded as is . They both kept watch of each other's movements and anticipated how the other wanted to move and where they were aiming .

I continued the battle solemnly, wearing out my nerves and straining my brain .

“Ah! Damn it! Drop dead already!”

“Guruaaaa!”

“.....Hmm”

Neither of them look tired at all . I hated it . Whereas, here I am, already exhausted and in extreme pain, and I couldn't seem to manage it . But we can't leave any stone unturned . Even a slight shake will kill me in no time .

“Hah... hah... hah...”

“Old hag! Are you getting tired already? . ”

“Hmph . Even if I was tired, you can't seem to capture this old hag?”

I tried to provoke him, trying to keep him from turning his attention to Fran and the others, but he exerted the last of his strength . However, the equilibrium that was just barely being maintained was suddenly shattered from an unexpected source .

“Gaaaaaaaaaaaaa”

The steel wolf let out a loud scream and collapsed on the spot . His body fell like sand, in tatters . What happened?

Xellos Reed and I didn’t agree on anything, but once we distanced ourselves, we both stopped to observe the steel wolf . No, it was no longer a steel wolf . For the form had completely crumbled and disappeared, and was now a mere lump of metal .

But the collapse has not stopped . In fact, it accelerated .

After the steel wolf crumbled and disappeared, Fran’s sword was left lying on the ground . It was a shabby sword with cracks all over, as if on the verge of being discarded . The red aura and black magic power previously emanating from it had already disappeared, and one would even start to wonder if this was the same sword that had a vicious presence that seemed to rival the divine sword just now .

This one really seemed to have stopped moving . I couldn’t feel any magic from it . He was probably dead by now . That left us with Xellos Reed . I was thinking that I had to keep this guy down, but then Xellos Reed looked bored and released his stance .

“Oi, why do you put your sword down?”

“What? It’s boring, it’s no longer interesting . The old lady would be incapable of fighting in a heartbeat if left to her own devices . Then it would be better if I-”

“I won’t let you!”

“Oh? You’re still fine? But your speed is obviously slowing down...”

That is a given . The pain was so intense and dizzying that it's a miracle how I could still move my legs any longer . But I will not let him go beyond any further .

I didn't care about the future of the Black Cat Tribe, the future of the Beast Kingdom, or anything else . But those girls . I will not those young children, who share the same blood relations with me, be subjected to this .

“\_”

“Un?”

“-Kiara”

What is it? I hear someone's voice . Is this a telepathic conversation?

(Who are you?)

“I'm Master . This is the first time I've ever had a conversation with you . Well, I had a one-sided conversation with you before though . ”

(Why? Where are you in the first place?)

“Right in front of you . That's me, the sword lying on the ground right now . I am an intelligent weapon . ”

(What!)

However, if that was the case, then it indeed made sense why it ran out of control because of the mad demonization skill . You never know what life had in store for you, who would have known that I would meet a legend at the edge of death .

(Telepathic talk is helpful . I can't even open my mouth anymore . )

“Kiara . First, release Senka Jinrai (TL Note : In the raw it's written 閃華迅雷) Otherwise, in a few minutes—‘

(No . As soon as I unleash the Senkai Jinrai, I'll end up getting cut down . .  
)

“But ... you're really going to die if you don't!!”

I was told I was going to die . Even though I was aware that it was true, I feel relieved . That Fran wasn't alone anymore .

Quina also has a father who loves his daughter in his own way, although he is a snot-nosed boy .

But what about Fran? The other black cat people would not be able to keep up with Fran . If I died, she would be alone, wouldn't she? That's what I thought, but I guess she has a good partner .

We only had a mere ten seconds of conversation, but I could ascertain that the owner of this telepathic conversation was a person with a firm heart . With this guy, Fran won't be lonely .

Now I can put my life on the line without a care in the world .

(This old lady is already nearing her grave . Can you help me use this little bit of life I have left?)

“.....I see . I understand . Then can you lend me that little bit of life? To defeat Xellos Reed . ”

(Fuhahaha, that's good, fine! Then what do you want me to do? Use the rest of my life as you see fit!)

“First of all—”



# Chapter 352

## Chapter 352

The haze that clouded over my mind cleared up and I regained clarity of the situation I was in .

This translation belongs to RNF .

As I took the madness away from the berserking Asura, I instantly went out of control myself . I vaguely remember the time of the rampage .

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I fired a series of lightning bolts without chanting, mastered the use of Transform, and even used Latent Potential Release . I see, turning into a mad demon is a tremendous thing . The only thing I cared about was to fight even though I'd lost my mind and went crazy, surprisingly though I still did a good job in battle . On top of that, it felt like I unconsciously drew more power than my limit .

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However, things became unclear right after . I busted through Xellos Reed... but then what happened? As far as I could recall, I was struck by a sensation of something with tremendous power flooding out from inside me – a sensation I had never experienced before .

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That's right, something about it forced my body into a form of a wolf . But the berserk me and that something deep inside was fighting for control of our wolvern body and I ended up being unable to move well .

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After that, I found myself lying on the ground, in a half-broken state with my sword blade in tatters . Perhaps, using Latent Potential Release for an extended period of time reduced the endurance value and that's what released the mad demonization... . I had less than a hundred left in my endurance value left . I only had a small amount of magic power left, and the regeneration of the broken sword blade still has not begun .

Just what exactly happened right before that...? No, it doesn't matter at the moment . Xellos Reed and Kiara were still in combat in front of me .

Moreover, Kiara was in a pinch . It seemed that she did as I told her to and kept on using the Senkai Jinrai, but any more continuous use of it would put her life in danger . That's why I tried to speak to her by telekinesis..... .

“Guuhh!”

An excruciating pain overwhelmed me . It wasn't physical pain . It felt like a mysterious pain that I will experience every time I exceeded my limits . I don't know how many times I've felt this today . Regardless, I can't hesitate here . I endured the intense pain as if it was directly cutting into my soul and sent a telepathic message to Kiara .

Even though she was in the middle of a battle, Kiara still responded promptly .

(This old lady is already nearing her grave . Can you help me use this little bit of life I have left?)

That being said, I couldn't tell her to stop deploying her skills any further . That would be disrespectful to someone who was prepared to die .

“.....I see . I understand . Then can you lend me that little bit of life? To defeat Xellos Reed . ”

(Fuhahaha, that's good, fine! Then what do you want me to do? Use the rest of my life as you see fit!)

“First, pick me up . But don’t equip me . If someone tried to equip me other than Fran, only disaster will occur . ”

I’ve actually been trying to use telekinesis for a while now, trying to endure that soul-rending pain, but I’m barely able to use it . If I really forced it, I could use it, but then I wouldn’t last long enough for my attack to reach Xellos Reed .

Therefore, I am working with Kiara here . Have Kiara carry me without Xellos Reed knowing and inject all of the power that remained in me before her time runs out .

“And then, all you have to do is throw me at him when you see an opening . ”

(Is that all?)

“Ou”

(I get it)

It was the only way that Kiara, who was already half-dead and half-alive, and me, who had lost most of my abilities, could possibly defeat Xellos Reed .

(Got it!)

Nice! Kiara picked me up firmly as she fought . Seeing this, Xellos Reed gave her a slight look of alarm .

He was probably aware that the attack inflicted by me earlier had the effect of breaking evil manifestations .

“Seems like you’ve got your eye on that sword . However, how could a broken sword, which has almost no magical power, be useful? It definitely looked almost broken or something . I presume the magic power must have been really low too . ”

“Haaaa!”

“Haha! I didn’t know you could still make that move!”

There’s plenty of leeway for that Xellos Reed guy . The high ranking evil man seemed to feel very little pain, and his strength was bottomless . Maybe he wasn’t a worldly creature to begin with . Even if his evil spirit was reduced now due to repeated fierce battles, he might still be able to recover with a simple rest just like human strength and magic power .

If that was truly the case, then this fight is really just a game to him . Playing with the powerful without fear of death . But I’m going to make you lower your guard!

“Shit! Rolling black thunder!”

“Mu!”

Good! I groaned unintentionally .

Kiara took a slightly larger swing at first, slashing head-on, breathless as she did so . It appeared like a weak attack . However, the slash was an invitation for Xellos Reed into a trap . Xellos Reed put only the slightest amount of force into his hand holding the great sword, intending to clash head on .

But the moment both swords struck each other, Kiara moved fast with a black lightning roll and got behind him . Xellos Reed, who had been putting a lot of effort into preparing for the coming slash, was momentarily delayed in his reaction to Kiara as he turned around .

By then, it was already after Kiara had thrown me toward Xellos Reed .

“aaaaaaaaaaaa!”

I’m going to use all the power I had left to activate Morphological Transformation . The true projection of the attack is of a thousand needles shredding into the body of the opponent . But right now, I could only be transformed into ten strands of half-hearted thickness .

Moreover, neither my momentum nor my sharpness was sufficient to penetrate Xellos Reed . Still, I didn't give up and wrapped myself around Xellos Reed's body .

Damn it! I need to twist with more power! Get thinner, sharper, and eat up Xellos Reed! In response to my intentions, the part that wrapped around his right leg turned into a needle and bit into Xellos Reed .

“I won't let you get away!”

“Gah! This sword still works! And what's more? What's that voice?”

“Giiiiii... Guaaaaa!”

“I won't let you get away!”

“Gah! This sword still works! And what's more? What's that voice?”

“Giiiiii... Guaaaaa!”

I was shouting out through telepathic communication . But now it didn't matter . I felt like I was going to lose consciousness from the pain . However, if we lose this chance, we'll most likely not get another one . We'll take him down! I kept furiously activating Morphological Transformation .

(Master! Are you okay!)

“Guh... I . . am . . fine!”

(I don't think you are!)

“I am fine!”

It's getting harder and harder to even communicate with telepathic language anymore .

“This fucking! Dumb-ass sword!”

“Gah!”

Xellos Read reached out to snatch me by force . Kiara slashed at him, but he ignored the attack . Did he even feel pain? I guess he thought that a few scratches would regenerate quickly anyway . So he decided that I, with my Breakthrough Evil Manifestation, was more threatening .

“Gugaa!”

“You son of a bitch! Get off me!”

No matter what I won’t let go!

A screaming Xellos Reed and me and Kiara, who can’t move at all .

Suddenly I saw a new shadow rushing into this room .

“Master! Kiara!”

“Fran...! why.....”

“I heard Master’s screams... and Kiara too . I felt like I had to return...!”

Kiara yelled with a determined expression as Fran yelled .

“Master! Please keep his attention just like that!”

“What?”

(I will use my trump card . All this time I’ve been looking for a way to use this little life of mine . I couldn’t find purpose for it before but at this moment I’ve finally found it . )

“Oi, if you do that, then your life!”

(I know myself the most . Stopping now would only delay my death by a week . I want to die here as a warrior . )

This Translation belongs to RNF

Kiara suddenly stood still . Her eyes were out of focus . It seemed that her vision was already blurred . However, she still wore a determined expression on her face .

(As I said a while ago . Let's show him our strongest form . Do you see the difference between humans and beasts? It's whether you care about appearance or not . Humans, how much do they care about appearance?)

“...Xellos Reed is a little more right . ”

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(You're a good man . Fufufu... Hey, take care of Fran, okay . )

Kiara raised her sword behind Xellos Reed back . Black lightning immediately converged and wrapped around the blade of her sword . That was not all . Kiara's eyes changed to similar to a feline's, and I could see her hair, which had grown white with old age, turning black .

I could see the rapid loss of vitality in proportion to the sudden increase in power . Still, the only thing I could do now was to keep Xellos Reed from moving .

“Haaaaaa! Claws Of The Black Thunder God! Ooooo!”

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In Kiara's hands, a sword of black lightning was produced . But unlike the Golden Annihilation Fire that Mea had used, it wasn't simply a convergence of power . There was even a sense of divinity from that black sword . The quality of the magic power is undoubtedly different .

It could be said that the magic power emitted was the opposite of the evil spirit that spread fearlessness and fear . The Black Thunder Sword was holy and awe-inspiring even from just a glance .

“Old hag! What are you... . . ”

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“Heyaaaa!”

The aim was slightly off! Kiara didn't even have the strength left to step forward anymore . I quickly brought my telekinesis to full strength and tried to correct the trajectory of Kiara's wielded Claws of The Black Thunder God .

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Was it a result of the injury? The sword, which would have initially missed by an inch, had suddenly changed its angle and succeeded in slashing off Xellos Reed's left arm .

“Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

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Xellos Reed screamed in agony . Even an attack with Breakthrough Evil Manifestation should not have made him shown such distraught . But it couldn't be helped . After all, Xellos Reed's evil spirit was already gobbled up and reduced .

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“Wh- why haven't you died yet?”

It seemed that Xellos Reed was still trying to regenerate the wound by holding his left arm in place . But the skin in the cut did not respond at all . To begin with, the area around the wound didn't seem to attract any evil spirits anymore .

Apparently, the sacred atmosphere I felt earlier was not just my imagination . It seemed that the Claws Of The Black Thunder God was able to fight evil power more than Breakthrough Evil Manifestation .

“Fuha...”

Kiara collapsed with a satisfied look on her face . However I just didn't have any strength left to use my [Heal] anymore .



“Master! Kiara!”

“No, more than me, Kiara.....”

“Guuoooo!”

You sure can't read the atmosphere! Xellos Reed stared at me with an abhorrent expression as he held the wound on his left arm that was cut off . But it wasn't as intimidating as it was earlier .

“No way... using divine attributes... Maybe it's true what they say about beastmans being descendants of Divine Beasts... I'll leave for now, but be prepared for our next clash! Tell that old hag that I won't lose next time!

He got away . No, more like he ran away, . Actually, even though Fran came back, if he was really desperate enough and wanted to fight back without regard for anything else, he would still give us a heavy blow . Hence, it helped that he escaped instead .

“Kiara...”

(Master... we did it...)

“But you...”

(I am content . I was able to unleash the full power of the Black Heavenly Tiger . We had a good fight at the end, too . )

“...you are... really cool you know . ”

(Kuhaha... that was the best compliment I've ever gotten...)

Fran ran up to Kiara, who was lying on her back .

“Kiara! Kiara!”

“Yo, Fran...”

“I'll heal you now!”

“It’s useless...”

Fran ignored Kiara’s words and used a series of Greater Heal . However, there was no sign that Kiara would recover . That couldn’t be helped . After all, her life force was exhausted . Kiara was technically already dead, and the dead couldn’t be brought back to life .

Rather, I didn’t understand why she could still speak .

“...For a short time...it was fun...”

“Ugu... Kiara...”

“Even though we’re not directly blood related, you’re all like my grandchildren . ”

“Un”

“Revenge...is just a worthless endeavor...”

“Un”

“Be strong... gentle, cool... live freely...”

Then... Kiara’s words ended there, as she exhaled her last breath .

The vitality keeping her together to speak her last words visibly drained from her entire body . Her eyes, which were already flickering as they struggled to stay open, gently closed, as if she was finally at ease .

“Kiara?”

“...”

“Kiara!”

Fran’s cries for her would no longer garner any response from Kiara .

She had departed with a peaceful face, with a smile lingering on it .

“Guuuu... . Aaaaa... .”

The large tears that flowed down from Fran’s eyes stained Kiara’s chest .  
And just like that, Fran plopped down onto Kiara’s chest, with a face  
befitting her age, and began to cry loudly .

“Uwaaaaaaa..... .”

# Chapter 353

## Chapter 353

As Fran was clinging to Kiara's body and sobbing, I saw several people running back into the room .

It was Mea and the others . However, there was a woman with them that I didn't recognize . Who was that? Right now, my appraisal didn't work as it should have either .

She must have followed Fran . Mea and the others rushed into the room in a panic, and when they saw Kiara lying there, their faces contorted .

“Master Kiara!”

“Kiara!”

Mea and Mianoa were the first to rush over . Aside from Mea, I've never seen Mianoa look so serious before . Both Quina and Guendalfa, who was carrying an unconscious Asura on her back, looked upset too .

They all seemed to understand the situation when they saw Kiara and Fran's condition . Everyone knew already that Fran could utilize recovery magic, and mythical ones too . Despite that, the fact that Fran was currently weeping without casting the recovery magic meant... . .

“Fran, did you manage to hear Master Kiara's last words?”

Mea spoke to Fran, as the tears flowing down both her eyes wetted her cheeks .

“Master Kiara was concerned about us . For Master Kiara, who had no family, we were close to her enough that she felt that we were like her own grandchildren . ”

This Translation belongs to RNF

“... she also said to be kind, cool, and live freely”

“I see . That sounds like things Master would say . ”

After hearing Fran’s words, Mea gave a big nod .

“Hmm.....”

“Live freely... . Master Kiara had a hard time because of that old bastard . ”

Old bastard? I wondered who that referred to, but it was probably the previous Beast King . He was the one who enslaved Kiara, but when I thought about it, he was a grandfather to Mea .

“But in the end, Lady Kiara looks happy with herself . ”

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Everyone nodded at Mianoa’s words . Mianoa, who was the lady in waiting, must have had a stronger bond with Kiara than anyone else . Understanding this, Mea and the others gave way for Mianoa to come close to Kiara .

Even Fran started to make space for her . Perhaps, she came to realize that she wasn’t the only one mourning Kiara’s death . She stood up, rubbing her eyes with her hands, which were bright red because she was crying .

“Thank you very much...”

Mianoa knelt down and wiped the dirt off Kiara’s face with her handkerchief .

“Kiara-sama... you’re smiling... . ”

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Yes, Kiara was smiling . She seemed to be really satisfied with whatever she managed to do just before she departed .

Perhaps, when she released her last move, Kiara could barely feel her entire body anymore . I think she was not even aware that not only could she not see Xellos Reed, but her attack didn't even hit him directly and was also assisted by my telekinesis .

Still, she said she was content and said her goodbyes to Fran with a smile . Her face seemed really blissful . Would I end up with a smile like hers on my face like that if I was destroyed right now and it was all over?

That was definitely impossible . I'm sure it would have been unsightly instead . I won't be anywhere near satisfied and I would have cried with regret as I called out Fran's name .

Do not read at other website

Kiara must have experienced all sorts of things throughout her long life, both good and bad .

Talking and drinking with friends, tasting the sweetness and bitterness of life, sipping muddy water – no, that's wrong . She must have lived a life that cannot be imagined even by a monk already in his thirties . In other words, Kiara's life probably couldn't be fully expressed with such a simplistic outlook .

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Thus, I think it's because of all of her life experience that Kiara was able to laugh and pass away so peacefully like that . It was impossible for me to be as such now . I admire her . I want to gain more experience so that I can end up laughing at the end too, together with Fran, hopefully after many fulfilling years to come .

Therefore, I cannot just do nothing and be broken in such a place . I managed to try to fix myself somewhat, but the intense pain didn't help .

“Guga...!”

What in the world has become of me?

While everyone was surrounding Kiara, one mysterious woman, who was not standing together with the group, approached me .

She was tall, with long silver hair and a white robe . Her eyes were sharp, no- her eyes were unsettlingly intense . Could it be that she was angry at being left alone?

I could see that the muscles on her body were well-toned despite being so lean . Merely from the fact that she was in a place like this suggested that she was not just any regular woman .

Her right eye, with only a slit opened, peeking out from between her long bangs, stared at me, holding me firmly in place . Ow... What shall I do... If Mea and the others were the ones who brought her here, then she was probably not an enemy . But if this woman starts to pick me up and tries to equip me, we'll all be in all sorts of trouble .

It couldn't be helped . I know Fran would have liked to be around Kiara a little longer, but If this woman suddenly picked me up in silence.....

“Fran... Guh...”

(.....Hm?)

“This, woman...”

Maybe it's because the adrenaline of battle had dissipated, but I could no longer hold back the pain . Still, I managed to ask Fran for help by sending her a telepathic message .

I think Fran then turned and saw me and the woman and understood what I was trying to say . She got up hurriedly, wiping away her tears, and ran up

to me . Then she picked me up before the woman could .

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(Master... . Are you okay?)

“Ou.....”

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Having said that, I couldn't shake this strong feeling of discomfort . No matter what I tried to do, I kept feeling this pain coming back again and again, and I couldn't even begin to repair myself . Moreover there was no sign that my magical power would recover .

Will I be cured if I get a blacksmith to repair me? No, I'll be in trouble if I can't heal . I couldn't do anything as it is now . This was a difficult moment for Fran, as she just lost someone she truly looked up to . I have to be strong, at least just for her .

“That.....”

Will I be cured if I get a blacksmith to repair me? No, I'll be in trouble if I can't heal . I couldn't do anything as it is now . This was a difficult moment for Fran, as she just lost someone she truly looked up to . I have to be strong, at least just for her .

“That.....”

Even though it was her possession, I understand that it was not polite to suddenly appear out of nowhere and take the sword all of a sudden . Fran approached the woman with a slight hesitation . The other person also slightly approached Fran .

For faster release only read at RNF

“Are you the owner of the sword?”

“Hmm”



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The woman had a sour look as she asked Fran . I knew she'd be in a bad mood . Still, though, she still had enough sense not to complain about the crying Mea and the others .

“I see . Let me see that sword for a minute . ”

(Master?)

Hmm, what should I do? I don't think it's a problem just to show it, but I don't know who this woman is . However, if I refused, it looked like I might make her mad, and if that happened, it seems like it will be a pain . In the first place, is my appraisal camouflage working now?

This translation belong to RNF

“You should let her see . ”

As I was distressed, Mea suddenly approached me from the side . From the way Mea said, she seemed to be surprisingly more superior than Mea . Moreover, the tone of voice earlier felt somewhat familiar .

“Lady Alistair wouldn't do anything wrong . Lind also meets Lady Alistair on a regular basis . ”

(Master, is it fine?)

“Oh . ”

Mea trusted her that much, so it would be rude to say no here . Besides, she was the kind of person who could handle a divine sword, right? She must be a great blacksmith . I don't know what someone with an awesome skill like that is doing here, though .

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“Hmm...”

“Oh, thank you . ”

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It's strange because both her tone and her sour looks didn't seem too strange when you think of her as a blacksmith . Rather, I even think that it was very fitting for a craftsman .

Alistair stared at me as Fran stuck me out, and she kept staring at me sullenly . Her gaze scoured my brim and hilt .

“I knew this design was..... But the shape of the pattern... . May I take a closer look?”

“Hmm”

“Now, if you'll excuse me..... . Analysis Eye!”

I could see the magical powers in Alistair's eyes . There was such a strong magical power concentrated in her eyes that if we were in a dark place, her eyes would glow .

Then Alistair let out a murmur of surprise .

“That's a very strict equipment registration..... . No, is this power a remnant of God's...? Moreover ... this ... this thing ... this bullshit sword, who made it? Was it a divine blacksmith?”

“Is there a problem?”

“No, that's not something to say out loud here . Could you give me a few minutes of your time later?”

Apparently, she has been able to see my status and other information through her appraisal-like abilities . And, based on the reaction she gave just now, she might have found out that I was an intelligent weapon .

“The magic circuit is shredded . At this rate, it's in danger of being unable to make a proper restoration . ”

“!!! Is this true? What should I do now?”

“Wait a minute... Can I touch it?”

“Hmm”

Now that’s a confirmation, you’re definitely talking to me . I knew it . This is a true intelligent weapon .

Alistair gently touched my hilt with her thin fingertips and began to pour a small amount of magic into it . However, I did not feel any discomfort . It was rather warm and soothing, so much such that it even felt good . I guess It may be time for me to have a blacksmith perform maintenance .

“Oh.....”

Is this similar to the sensation of healing wounds? I could sense that something deep within me was healing .

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Still, self-repair couldn’t work . Was it because it wasn’t that kind of healing that worked, or was my damage that serious? However, this Alistair woman feels trustworthy .

A bit simple minded huh, if I do say so myself . Was I the type of person who, when I was injured severely, would easily sway if someone was a little kind to me?

If you read this at other website that means they stole from RNF

(Master?)

“I’m fine . ”

I experienced less pain now when using telepathic communication . No, I’m sure, it was definitely much less than before . It’s all thanks to Alistair . I wonder who Alistair is exactly?

“I have administered first aid . If you don’t overdo it, it won’t get any worse than that, but you should refrain from fighting until it’s properly fixed . ”

“Then, can you heal it properly?”

“Of course . There are no weapons I can’t fix . ”

“For real?”

“Oh, just leave it to me”

“Is that so... That’s great... . !”

Immediately after hearing Alistair’s words, Fran squeezed my hilt and let out a sigh of relief . “Hou” . And then she shed a big tear .

She had lost Kiara and even I was feeling sad about it . I’m sure she couldn’t stop herself from having negative thoughts, and she was always anxious all this time too . I was too busy with my own problems to notice earlier .

“Fran, I’m sorry . I didn’t mean to worry you . ”

(No ... uh ... it’s okay . But really, it’s a relief that you’re okay master... . )

# Chapter 354

## Chapter 354

As Fran and Alistair were talking, Mea joined in the conversation .

“That conversation just now... Does that mean Alistair will undertake the restoration of the sword?”

“Yes . That is, if the girl allows it, I will work on it”

“You should allow Alistair to repair it Fran . I mean how often do you get this kind of luck?”

Mea and Alistair look at Fran .

(Master? Is it fine?)

“...Yes, I'll leave it to you . ”

In the first place, this woman healed me and made it tremendously easy for me to use the telepathic ability without feeling any pain . I felt like I could trust her skills . Above all, Mea gave an obvious sign that she deeply trusted Alistair from her fervent expression that seemed to have come from the bottom of her heart .

“Hmm, then, please . ”

“Yes, I'll take good care of it . So, what are you guys going to do after this?”

“Yeah... about that...”

Mea turned to look at Kiara . Kiara, who led everyone all the way up to this point, was dead, and Mianoa was incapacitated . Quina was only a maid and Guendalfa is still inexperienced . Asura just lost consciousness, and Fran was not fit to be a leader yet either .

Mea was the only person who could possibly hold this group together . She must have realized it as she looked around . She turned over slowly, rubbed her red eyes lightly, and then quickly looked up .

“First of all, we have to make sure that the master of this dungeon is really dead . After that, we will destroy the core . ”

“Are you sure? Wouldn’t it be a waste to destroy this large and valuable dungeon?”

Quina asked Mea, who answered Alistair’s question . But Mea nodded with certainty .

“It will only be another potential source of future disaster, especially a dungeon that spanned between two countries like this one . If we left this dungeon be it would spur a conflict between nations for ownership since a dungeon is a great source of incomes . ”

Well, even if any country eventually gains ownership of this dungeon, the other countries will still remain suspicious and be on guard against them . The fact that it was used for the war will have caused it to always have that image attached to it . However, the benefits of having power over the dungeon was too great for any parties involved to give up on fighting for ownership . Unless all sides created a clear-cut mechanism for co-governance, it would surely lead to conflict at some point .

Nonetheless, there was no way the Beastman Nation and Bashar Kingdom, which were already not on speaking terms with each other, would join hands and share such an extraordinary bounty . Their relationship would most likely only worsen as times goes by . Thus, destroying the dungeon would nip any future problems in the bud . Apparently Mea thought so too .

“As a royal family, we might have to consider the use—”

“No, I agree with you . ”

Also, considering the character of the Beast King, I feel like I’m in favor of destroying the dungeon . It’s like they’re going to say, “If it’s going to be a lot of trouble, let’s go ahead and destroy it instead . ” Anyway, Mea seems to have decided to destroy it herself . There was no hesitation in her eyes .

“Me and Quina will go deeper . Lady Alistair, please take Fran and the others and get out first . ”

“Well, since you have shown me your sword . Fine . I’ll take care of them until we get out of here . May I go straight to my house?”

“If we can’t catch up, we’d appreciate it if you could . ”

“What will you do after that?”

“I’m going to take Quina and the others back to Gringote . I have a lot of things I want to find out and research . But I want to entrust Fran and her sword to Alistair . Is that fine with you? ”

“No problem, and I’d like to take a closer look at that sword too, of course that is if that’s okay with you . . ”

“Is that alright with you, Fran?”

“.....Hm”

Fran reluctantly nods .

“I’m sorry . ”

(No, Master is the most important thing right now . )

I think she actually wanted to go with Mea . But I swallowed my words, understanding that my restoration was top priority right now .

“And what about that stupid demon over there? If you want, I’ll take him with us . ”

It could be said that she was acquainted with Asura as well . It's not simply a feeling of familiarity, but more of a sense of comfort . After thinking a little, Mea bowed to Alistair .

“Could I bother you with that?”

“Accepted . ”

Alistair approached Asura, who was lying on top of Guendalfa's cloak . She carried him up easily . Contrary to her slender frame, she was actually so powerful!

“Anyway, we need to get out of here . I think we should give Kiara a proper burial too, don't we?”

“That's right..... . ”

“Could you please take care of Lady Kiara, Lady Fran?”

“I understand . ”

Fran nodded at Mianoa's words and put Kiara's body away in her dimensional storage . I felt like storing the bodies of people I knew in dimensional storage was treating them like objects, and for a moment I wondered if that was okay, but apparently the rest of the guys didn't feel any particular sentiment about it except for me .

This is a world in which death was much more familiar to us, and that the way we thought about corpses was also different and more serious . If left alone alone, they could potentially become undead . The idea seemed to be that because of the concept of the soul in the first place, after you died you were no longer there .

After quickly getting ready to leave, we headed straight for the dungeon's exit, with Fran and Urushi in the lead .

After quickly getting ready to leave, we headed straight for the dungeon's exit, with Fran and Urushi in the lead .



It took longer than I thought it would because everyone was still worn out, but it wasn't as particularly dangerous due to the lack of monsters .

I've tried it lightly on the road, but apparently Fran's and my skill sharing was already starting to work well . That was the only blessing I received in this whole bundle of misery . However, since my magic power was empty, I had to make do with just Fran's magic power for now . We will have to be very careful about that .

While we were going through the labyrinth part of the dungeon, the dungeon started trembling greatly . It's likely that Mea and her team have succeeded in destroying the dungeon core .

Then, just before escaping the dungeon, Mea and the others caught up with us . Then, they reported that the core was destroyed and the dungeon was on its way to collapsing . Thus, from now on, this place will be nothing more than an ordinary underground structure .

“Well, I guess this is goodbye for now . ”

“Hmm...”

“A lot of things happened, but let's meet each other again in the future . ”

“.....Good luck . ”

“Thank you . We will also pray for Master's recovery, and hope that he will be able to heal properly . Also, can I leave Master Kiara with you for a little while longer? Once we get settled in, we will arrange a funeral for her, after all we want to make sure the funeral service goes off without a hitch . ”

“Leave it to me . ”

After escaping the dungeon, Mea and Fran gave each other a firm handshake and encouraged each other onwards .

We are supposed to still be at war with the Kingdom of Bashar . I don't know what will happen in the future, but I'm sure they won't lose now that

the threat from the North has disappeared . They should be able to repel the kingdom of Bashar .

No, they have to... otherwise, it wouldn't be worth it for Kiara to risk her life . And I am sure that Mea understood it as well . With one last emphatic nod, Mea left with Quina, Guendalfa, and Mianoa .

As Kiara's apprentice and a princess, I am sure that she has a lot of responsibilities, especially now that Kiara is no longer here, she will surely bear more responsibilities . Though thinking how much that small back of her has to endure from now on I can't help but want to root for her .

Fran stared off at Mea's back and the others as they climbed into the carriage .

(This Translation Belong To RNF)

“We'll see each other again soon . ”

“Hmm . ”

(Only read and donate to RNF)

After the golem carriage which Mea and the others were in rode off, Alistair spoke to a lonely-looking Fran .

“... . Should we get going now too? But first, you may have an idea who I am by now, but I'll tell you who I am anyway . ”

“Hmm . ”

(To get Bonus Chapter Donate to RNF)

“My name is Alistair . My occupation is a divine blacksmith . A pleasure to meet you, Black Thunder Princess and... . Mr . Intelligent Weapon?”

(For faster release read at RNF)

I knew it . I got found out . But still, a divine blacksmith? I thought it was possible that she was in charge of taking care of the divine sword, but I didn't think it was really true.....

There was just so much going on that I didn't have the energy left to be surprised anymore . Fran looked to be the same . She opened her eyes lightly and introduced herself normally .

“I am a rank C adventurer . Fran, the Black Heavenly Tiger . ”

“...I am Master”

“Hoo!”

“And this is Urushi”

“By the way, is Fran the one that gave you the name master?”

“Hmm...”

“So it's not named..... . How is it possible to not be named at this level?”

Wasn't the Named system supposed to be a way for gods to name their great equipment? I'd be honored to be compared to an item in that class, but what about it? I'm aware that I'm a good sword, but I'm not overconfident enough to say, “I'm a sword accepted by God! Now bow before me you fool!”

“For now, we're going to my house . Once we get there, I should be able to analyze and repair your master . ”

“I look forward to working with you . ”

“Thank you . ”

“It's the same for me, I get to touch a great sword, thanks to you . Alright, now get in this one . ”

What Alistair took out of the item bag was a golem carriage that looked exactly like the one Quina had in her possession .

Fran climbed into the carriage as prompted . Alistair threw Asura onto the floor of the carriage .

“Is that okay?”

“Serves him right! How could this idiot demon get out of control until like this anyway? I bet he’ll wake up with a stupid look on his face . ”

That’s a bitter pill to swallow for Asura . What happened between them in the past anyway? Well, we can ask him about that too when he wakes up .

“Well then, let’s depart!”

Then we got into the golem carriage and left for the divine blacksmith’s house .

# Chapter 355

Chapter 355: - On The Road With Alistair

Alistair's mansion was eastwards from the dungeon. Their golem carriage advanced along the boundary mountains.

“Well, shall we talk lightly along the way?”

“That, is that fine?”

What Fran worried about was the driver's seat. It was just the horse-powered golems right now. Even if they did remember the way, what if demon beasts attacked and stuff?

“It's ok. There is a powerful barrier against demon beasts. And there is no thief crazy enough that they would attack my carriage. No, more like they are long gone already. Kukuku”

It appeared that all sorts of things had happened before. Well, if a divine grade blacksmith said it was okay, then it probably is okay. Plus, there's Urushi there running alongside us. If push came to shove, Urushi will kick the shit out of them.

“So, first of all, would you like to talk about your master?”

“.....Hmm”

Fran nodded and then glanced at Asura. She was wondering if she would hear them. Then, Alistair took out a mysterious tool from the item bag.

It looked like a cord about 1 meter long, I think?

“It’s a telepathic communication device. Well, it’s an unfinished product that requires you to touch the string and that if you make it longer than 1 meter, you will instantly lose the telepathic communication. It’s a good tool for a few people to have a private conversation, right?”

Fran and Alistair, sitting side by side on the seat by the carriage wall, each grabbed the end of the cord. I was in Fran’s arms, and she wrapped the cord around the handle. So the cord was just barely long enough. I see, the ones using this needed to be extraordinarily close to each other for it to work.

(How is it? Can you hear me?)

(Hmm)

“I can hear you”

There was no pain from telepathy anymore thanks to the careful consideration of the item’s effect. Since this was the case, I could have a normal conversation. I mean, it worked as well for me, a sword.

(So let me ask you again. I would like to ask about the master himself, his creator and the period of production)

We decided to be honest about answering the things we were asked. We were going to need her help to fix me, and we’re dealing with a divine blacksmith anyways. If we lie badly, we will just end up getting found out. On top of that, they might find out about my roots so we decided it was best not to lie to her.

That being said, I really didn’t know anything about my creator. There wasn’t much that could be said of it. When I replied so honestly, Alistair uttered a word of surprise.

(I see..... so the master was a human previously right?)

“You- you know?”

To my surprise, she had already found out before I could explain myself. Why? Could it be that an appraisal used by a divine grade blacksmith could

even show that the item was originally human?

(No, because even I couldn't create an artificial soul spirit that can do master's level of response. And when I looked at the shape of the soul, it didn't look like it was artificial)

Apparently she had the ability to see souls, like the unique skill Soul Spiritual Eye that Jean the necromancer possessed. I don't really know much about it, but I guess there were many forms of souls.

(Your soul looks just like a person and could give out responses just like a human's. It's way too similar to a person. But it all makes sense if you consider that it was originally a human. Well, that leaves me wondering.)

“Of what?”

(I don't know how to contain a person's soul in a sword. I'm a divine blacksmith. But I have no idea what kind of method they used.)

That's where it all comes down to, wasn't it? Who put me on the sword? Was it the creator of the sword, or was it someone else?

(I'm hoping that once we do the analysis in my house, it will give us some further insight into this. Let's leave this for later. Yeah, I'm looking forward to it now. Kukuku)

Alistair seemed like a pretty sensible person, but the way she looked at me right now is a little scary. It's similar to a child's eyes when being given a new toy.

(Next, I want to hear about your encounter with Fran, is that okay?)

“Ah, yes. Don't worry. I'll try my best to remember it.”

However, Fran was already asleep. No wonder I thought it was strangely quiet. She must have been tired from crying earlier.

(I guess we'll have to wait to hear from Fran later.)

“My bad. I’ll answer as much as I can.”

(Well, it’s a kids’ job to sleep anyways. There’s nothing we can do about it. So let’s start with the encounter, shall we?)

I talk about everything without leaving out any details. I told her the story of how I met Fran, and even Alistair was taken aback upon listening to more of the story of how we first met.

Even I myself thought it was pretty absurd, so I don’t blame you.

After that, we continued on our adventures together, and together we’ve traveled and grown after reaching place after place. Sometimes, we delved into dungeons, crossed the seas, and finally came to this land at the end of our previous journey.

For the most part, Alistair showed little interest in our journey though. It seemed that she was more interested in knowing the way I matured and grew than of the adventure stories and such. She had a lot of curiosity, but it appears that it was only limited to the fields she was interested in.

My explanation then came to the part where we entered this continent and fought the Valkyries. During this time, a serious incident happened, which may have something to do with my mutation.

“For some reason, I’ve started to feel pain from time to time when I use my skills and consume mana.”

(Even though you are a sword you can feel pain? That’s interesting. Does it hurt every time you use a skill?)

“No, I only usually feel pain when I activate multiple techniques at a time, or when I’ve used too many form transformations.”

I’m supposed to have no sense of pain, but somehow I could feel it. No, I have no pain, and I’m doubtful if it actually hurt. However, the sensation of pain was certainly the closest I could relate it to.



(It's hard to say without using equipment to examine that. And I've never seen a sword in pain before. However, it could have some serious effect on the master. In the future, refrain from doing anything that might cause you pain.)

"I understand."

I've got this tool for telepathic communication, so I'm sure I can handle it for now. I then explained the process of eradicating the army of evil people and meeting Alistair. I don't remember where I got all of the skills, etc., as expected, but as far as I've been asked, I could answer all of them, and I don't think I've made any mistakes.

After that, time continued to pass as we discussed the sensation of absorbing a magic stone, the desires to become human, and the differences between humans and swords when using the skill.

She was particularly interested in the ability to absorb magic stones. She asked me in detail what demonic beasts had high magic stone values and what had low values.

Are these really the questions I need to answer for her to fix me? Aren't you merely putting your curiosity first?

But basically, the magic stone value of stronger demonic beasts are higher, and the magic stone value of evil people is low, etc. I told her.

And then there was that other thing, with regards to leveling up skills. The system of spending points is a system that Alistair has never heard of.

(The more I hear about it, the more intrigued I am.)

"I am honored to have a divine blacksmith say that to me."

(When it comes to combat power, we have more weapons than master. Like the divine sword. But there aren't many swords that are this mysterious. You surprise me, a divine blacksmith. You should be proud.)

2 hours later.

Around the time I finished answering most of Alistair's questions, the carriage stopped.

"Oh, we're already there. Well, time flew by so fast! It was a good ride! Hey, Fran, wake up.."

".....Nyu"

"Come on, you stupid demon, wake up!"

Alistair kicked Asura in the head next to a sleeping Fran rubbing her eyes. Oi, Oi, Is that fine? Even if the damage didn't look like much, he should be worn out from the mad demonization and other things, right?

However, Alistair's kicks didn't stop. Only after he had been kicked five times like that...

"Ah? Where is this...?"

"You finally woke up huh? You stupid demon."

"Geh.... Alistair!"

Asura looks up at Alistair and lets out a pathetic scream.

"Wha- what are you doing!"

"That's because I could feel the magic of the divine sword. There were two to be precise. So I went to see the situation. If it's a battle between two divine swords, it's a big deal."

A divine grade blacksmith even has the ability to sense the magic power of a divine sword? And the way you just spoke, were you thinking of stopping a battle between divine swords?

"If it's broken after a fight, I'll have a chance to fix it!"

Apparently, she was a person who was faithful to her desires.



# Chapter 356

## Chapter 356: - Start Analysis

Alistair's mansion had a strange appearance. It was a two-story building made of stone, but the outer walls were all made of one huge rock. If four 25-meter-long rock walls, polished to a mirror-like surface without the slightest irregularity on the surface, were put together to form a box, and one more rock wall was placed on top of it instead of a roof, it would look like this ㄅㄅ.

Such a mysterious looking structure was equipped with evenly spaced small windows. If the windows were not there, you wouldn't think of it as a residence for sure. At best, you would think it's part of a ruin or a magical device.

"How about it? What do you think about my house?"

"As always, your tastes are really weird. It's even more ridiculous because it's portable."

It seemed that this building itself was a magic tool and is portable. As expected from a divine grade blacksmith's house, it's amazing.

"Hmph. There is not an ounce of waste in this house. You just don't understand that, you're the one who is too big of a waste."

"Gu..."

Alistair didn't like what Asura had to say, so she glared at Asura and spoke harshly. But Asura didn't even talk back, he just flinched.

As I suspected, Asura is not very good at dealing with Alistair. I will not say it out loud though. I wonder what on earth happened between the two of them.

While being guided by Alistair, who had put the carriage into a special item bag, we stepped inside the house. The scene there was as mysterious as it appeared on the outside – no it's even more mysterious.

Apparently the entire building had been turned into a workshop and there was no entrance hall at all. As soon as we stepped inside, we immediately saw a room that seemed to be Alistair's laboratory and workshop.

However, I wouldn't have thought that this was a laboratory and workshop if I wasn't told beforehand. I mean, I had no idea what kind of use the room would be for from just a quick glance.

The walls and ceiling were dimly shining. Moreover, it was not a magical light. To my surprise, it turned out to be metal that was sticking to the wall like plating. The metal wall, like polished silver tableware, reflected the light from the lamps and shined brightly.

“Cool...”

My eyes flickered, and Fran stared at the walls and ceiling while squinting. When Alistair saw this, she explained it to me like it was nothing.

“Oh, that thing. That is Mithril plating. The magical power of the outside world is the most intrusive in order to perform magically delicate work.”

“Mithril? Is it Mithril?”

“Yes”

It's also a rare sight to see Fran constantly being surprised about something. But even though it's plated, this amount of mithril? Isn't that crazy extravagant? As expected of a divine blacksmith.

“You're not going to be able to deal with this woman if you keep getting that surprised.”

“Shut up, you stupid demon. We’re about to have an important talk, so you’re going to go upstairs. You know where the guest room is, don’t you?”

“I know. I want you to explain what’s going on before I go.”

“How much do you remember?”

When Fran asked that, Asura snorted, placing a hand lightly on his chin. I guess that triggered something and opened his memory.

“I..... I heard from the princess that I went berserk and you used your skills to take the madness away from me and stop me from going out of control. But soon after that, I lost consciousness and found myself waking up here. I can’t tell clearly but I think the evil bastard was fighting someone or something after I passed out...”

It looks like he was protected by Mea and the others after the mad demonization was lifted and they lightly explained to him about what happened, but apparently they didn’t tell him that I lost my mind after taking the demonization skill and went out of control and started fighting Xellos Reed.

“I haven’t woken up feeling this good in a long time. Thank you.”

Asura bowed deeply. It seemed that he was really grateful for the help he received.

“But even though I just took it away, I think it will be back soon.”

“Still, even if it’s only for a few days, I’m grateful to be free from the fear of not being myself. I owe you big time for this.”

“We would only be putting ourselves in danger if we didn’t do anything.”

“I suppose I should be thankful that I didn’t kill the princess and Kiara myself.”

I see. It looks like Asura still didn’t know that Kiara was dead. However, Fran has not yet been able to bring herself to explain from her own mouth.

She wrinkled her brows and looked down with a look that couldn't stand something.

“.....”

“What happened?”

“Haa..... this stupid demon! Let's talk about it later! I'll tell you what happened to Kiara later.”

“.....Oh.”

From Alistair's words and Fran's demeanor, he must have understood. The emotions drained from Asura's face. But I had to tell him this.

“It's not your fault.”

“.....Who?”

I'd really like to tell him more about it, but I still can't have a telepathic conversation on my own yet. However, I thought it was absolutely necessary to tell that Kiara did not die in the hands of the berserk Asura.

I don't know what kind of relationship they had, but it sounded like they were old acquaintances.

“I'll tell you all about that later. But you didn't kill her. After you passed out, Kiara fought with the evil one, and the battle with the evil one got too much for her.”

“I see... I understand. Then I'll borrow a room.”

“If you're hungry, go to the dining room. If you tell the golem, they'll give you something.”

“Oh.”

Asura went up the stairs with a heavy heart. I guess the upper floor was the living space. Alistair looked away from it and looked troubled for a

moment, but quickly turned to face me and Fran with a serious expression on his face.

“Now, get on with restoring master. Just the thought of leaving things as they are is enough to make me stressed.”

“Hmm, please.”

“Please.”

“Master doesn’t have to force himself to talk. More importantly, I need to repair the blade immediately. I don’t know if it’s just a matter of repairing it or more, so I’ll take a sample and analyze it. So, while adding the missing materials, I’ll be restoring it in a way that won’t be too hard on the master. Is that fine?”

“??????”

Yeah, Fran is in a completely muddled state. However, there was no one who knew more about and was better at restoring weapons than Alistair. So I’ll leave it all to her.

“I’ll leave it all to you”

“...In the meantime, let’s wrap a telepathic cord around master.”

Alistair wrapped the telepathic cord around my hilt. This made it somewhat easier to talk to both of them. I’ll have to get Fran and the others to hold the string every time, though.

“Fran, put your master on that table.”

“Hmm”

“Okay, let’s start the analysis. What about you, Fran? If you want, I can fix you a meal or something.”

“No, it’s fine. I want to watch.”



“Okay, I understand.”

Then the analysis by Alistair began. Alistair used various magic, skills, and magical tools on me on a table made of strange metal materials. What was amazing is that they were all appraisal and analysis type materials. It’s amazing that she could use that much variety of tools and still process all the received information and use it effectively.

Though if you see it from the outside, it’s so plain. After all, all she had to do was hold her hand over my half-broken sword and stay put.

I’m sure Fran will get bored with this as fast as she can. That’s what I thought, but after ten or twenty minutes, Fran was still staring at Alistair as she worked.

No signs of sleepiness, no signs of getting bored and starting to squirm around. That’s how seriously she cared for me, I guess. Maybe it’s uncalled for, but it made me a little happier. Because I realized again that I was truly loved by Fran.

One hour later. Alistair’s analysis was finally complete. Alistair muttered as she wiped the sweat from her forehead.

“As I thought The metal part is Oreichalcos after all.”

“Oreichalcos?”

“It is a special metal that can only be produced by a divine blacksmith. A person without the right knowledge would only think of it as a harmonium-based alloy, but when processed with a special technique, it can be used as material for a divine sword, a divine metal.”

I’ve heard that name before in Ulmut.

“Am I made of that metal?”

“That’s right.”

“So the person who made master was a divine blacksmith?”



# Chapter 357

## Chapter 357: - Discarded Divine Sword

Hi everyone! We've got some donations from anonymous so get ready for some bonus chapters!

TL Note : Hi everyone for this chapter I use ‘ 『 』 ’ for master’s dialogue and I italic master’s monologue. And so I want to know your thought which is better using ‘ 『 』 ’ for dialogue and italic for monologue (like in this chapter / chapter 357) or nothing (like in previous chapter/ chapter 356)? Leave a comment below on what you thought!

Well, it turns out that Alistair might know something about me. However, she doesn't seem to have a lot of confidence on her face.

“I just don’t know if this is true...”

“What do you mean?”

“Just a moment— Truth of the Sword, activate!”

Alistair closed her eyes and concentrated. And then she activated some kind of skill. Immediately afterwards, something that looked like a clear, thin plate floated in front of her. There are characters and pictures that were displayed there.

“That is?”

“It’s part of a divine grade blacksmith’s unique skill, a skill that has a function to know the truth behind the creation of a sword. Well, to put it

simply, it is like an illustrated book filled with divine swords and knowledge about them, from which divine grade smiths could draw information from. Information can also be displayed externally in this way.”

I think it’s something like an encyclopedia. And it looks like it can display the information you wanted too. Maybe it’s just a picture book with a really high performance.

If you look at the information display function of Truth of the Sword, which looked like a hologram, it looks more like science fiction rather than magic or skill.

“Well, there is a lot of information that is not available for others to see. How is it? Do you think you can read it?”

Even if you ask me if I can read it, since it’s right in front of me so—

『Hmm? What is this?』

“I can’t read it.”

The text on display was a mess. If it’s not encrypted, it’s completely nonsense. But apparently, Alistair already expected it. Therefore she only calmly nodded.

“I knew it. So what about the painting?”

『I can see a sword』

“Mm. it’s looks a bit like Master.”

『Is that so? Well, maybe that’s right』

Although the shape of the most important emblem area was completely different, the hilt and sword blade were exactly the same.

“The picture looks fine.”

The picture seems to be exactly what Alistair wanted to show. I mean, the text was just gibberish when viewed by someone who isn't qualified, but it looks like Alistair can see the proper textual information.

『If you went to the trouble of showing it to me, does that mean the sword isn't irrelevant to me?』

“Yeah, as Fran said, it has too much in common with you, Master.”

Then Alistair went on to list the similarities between this picture and me. First of all, the pattern. Then the shape, the size, the color of the braid and the weave, everything seems to match perfectly. It was so much alike that it would have been impossible to say that it was just a simple imitation.

Moreover, the sword blade. The blue pattern and other minor decorations were similar. The length of the sword blade is said to be a perfect match too.

However, the most eye-catching part, the brim, was completely different.

I had a heroic emblem of a wolf at the base of the sword, but in this painting, there were four human face-like things drawn side by side. It is an emblem with the design of four beautiful women with their eyes closed and each face has something that looks like angels' wings on the back.

『Sure, they might be similar except for the emblem.....』

“Right. A detailed explanation will take time. We'll have to wait until after we've made the necessary repairs. Give me a minute.”

Alistair paused and pulled out some kind of basketball-sized metal sphere from the item bag. When Alistair cast a spell lightly and touched the metal ball, the shape changed at once. It had a strange shape, like a tangled web of thin metal threads, or like a cotton candy made of metal.

Alistair made more changes as she wrapped that metal cotton around my sword blade. Then, she poured some kind of potion on top of it and applied some magic.

“—Fu. With this, this Oreichalcos should be absorbed into master’s blade and automatically begin to repair itself.”

So this is Oreichalcos. She took out a lot of it, even though it is a legendary metal.

“Thank you.”

“That’s my job. But more importantly, about what we were talking about earlier.”

Alistair pulled a chair from the corner of the lab and sat down. She offered another chair to Fran.

“Well, let me start by saying this... in my opinion, master was created by more than one person.”

『Multiple? Does that mean there were many creators?』

“Well, it’s close to that. The sword on the outside and the one who created the ability to seal human souls and absorb demonic stones inside would be different people. The quality of their work is too different, even on a casual glance. I’m going to proceed on that premise, okay?”

“I understand”

『I understand』

Unexpectedly, it’s more of a shock. There were quite a few surprises. We didn’t know anything about it in the first place, but I was actually a sword made by multiple people! That being said, when I heard it, I’m like, “Hmmm”. If it were from a human being’s perspective, isn’t it similar to a situation where there were multiple parents with complicated circumstances?

Once she was sure we understood, Alistair moved the still-displayed picture of the sword in front of Fran.

“This sword, inscribed with the word ‘Wisdom Sword Cherubim’. Currently it is one of the divine swords that have been lost.”

『Eh? A divine sword? You mean this is a divine sword? This sword that looks like me?』

I cannot ignore this information. After all, it's the divine sword you know? It's like the best sword in the world, and you say it looked like me?

“What do you mean?”

“Well, there are several possibilities... but, I think master is a discarded divine sword.”

『Discarded divine sword? Another word I don't know.』

“don't understand.”

“Hmm, I see. It's certainly not a widely known story. Let's start with the explanation first.”

“A discarded divine sword is apparently a divine sword that has been discarded, as the name stated. There were two main reasons why the Discarded Divine Sword was born.”

“One of the reasons, out of a variety of others, is If one failed to create it. Most of them were discarded because they have the power equivalent to a divine sword, but their abilities were unfortunately half-hearted and in danger of going out of control.”

In that case, the said sword fails to become a divine sword. It may seem a shame to discard it, but the potential for it to go out of control, on the other hand, would certainly be hard to overlook.

“The other is when the finished divine sword is ordered to be destroyed because it is too dangerous.”

“Ordered? By whom?”

“God. In the past, there were three divine swords that were allegedly ordered by God to be destroyed. It was said that all of them were so dangerous that they were discarded by the Divine Grade Blacksmith himself without activating most of the swords’ abilities.”

I see, so it’s a case of succeeding but having to dispose of it because its ability was more dangerous than expected. Though, I can’t imagine an ability so dangerous that God would order it to be discarded.

“Speaking of divine swords, they are as intimate as children to us divine blacksmith. How much pain the past divine grade blacksmiths who were ordered to dispose of it have to endure.....”

Alistair murmured with a strange face.

“But it’s also true that you can’t really let a sword that could bring calamity out into the world when the sword was supposed to protect the world instead. It would be unavoidable. That’s why I want the divine sword that is alive and well now to remain intact. It is a discarded divine sword that has escaped destruction for some reason.”

Is that why Alistair treated us so well? I thought you were just a sword nerd.

“What were those three swords?”

“One of the three is the nuclear strike sword, Meltdown. The details of it were not even recorded in the Truth of the Sword, but it was a terrifying divine sword that produced tremendous power and poison. It was ordered to be destroyed because, if left unchecked, it could threaten to wipe all creatures off the face of this world.”

Power and poison..... You mean nuclear energy and radiation? The name was also Meltdown. I don’t know how powerful it is, but it would definitely be dangerous if it was used around the world. It must have been so powerful that God considered it dangerous.

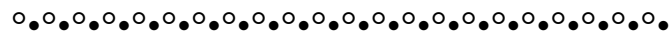


“The other was the beheading sword, Judgment. It is said that it was a divine sword that could simulate divine punishment. However, this was also discarded because it may twist the world’s reason.”

I can't imagine this at all. However, when it came to the possibility of abusing God's rules, it may indeed be seen as dangerous.

“And the last one is the wisdom sword, Cherubim. It is said that it was able to access, interfere with and even rewrite all the knowledge stored in the God Realm. However, It seemed that the ability to browse knowledge was the main problem, though. They said that people were able to access even knowledge that they shouldn’t know.”

So that's it. So it's a risk of spreading dangerous knowledge to the world? But I wonder if this Cherubim-san might have anything to do with me? I'm a little scared.



# Chapter 358

Chapter 358: - Announcer-san and Cherubim

“So, the two of you have come to understand a little bit more about the Discarded Divine Sword right?”

“Hmm.”

『Oh』

“Alright. Now, let’s talk about the possible relationship between Cherubim and Master.”

So, this conversation is finally happening. I’m getting a little nervous.

“I’ve been thinking about it. When one is told to dispose of a divine sword, just how exactly is it done?”

“Hmm.... By throwing it away?”

『No, that alone won’t be enough. It shouldn’t be allowed to exist anymore, so unless you could melt it down into an ingot or something....』

I shuddered as I imagined the scene of myself being melted down. If I were human, it’s like imagining a horror scene where I was murdered in a freakishly gruesome manner. Hmmm, I was a little surprised to find myself more inclined towards my existence as a sword than I thought I was.

“Of course, there’s also a method of disposal by smelting it again in the furnace and turning it back into a chunk of Oreichalcos. However, don’t you agree that that’s a waste of time?”

『Even if you ask me.....』

A divine sword would take a huge amount of time and effort to make. Can you destroy it completely and pretend it never happened? I couldn't do that.

『I think they'd rather do something about the parts they've been told are no good and think about reusing the good part.』

“Right? It's a divine sword, you know? That is a first class sword. Then we can just erase the abilities inside and divert the outside to something different.”

『In another words are you saying that I'm a product of that kind of process?』

“Maybe, just maybe. Even if you'd lost the function of a divine sword, its size as a vessel is incomparable to other magic swords. I'm sure you could add a new and different ability.”

『But why is the emblem part different? Isn't it strange that it is not an angel emblem as in the picture?』

“You could make several modifications if it were limited to superficial matters like that. And it wouldn't be strange to have a new emblem when the sword is born anew, right?”

“Hmm. I guess.”

“And I'm not really sure what I'm about to say is true but..... There's another possibility it could have been a test run or a failure when making Cherubim. The other possibility is that it was a prototype made before the production of the completed product.”

“My Master is not a failure.”

『Thank you Fran』

“What I can say for sure is that there is some kind of connection between Master and the Divine Sword Cherubim. At the very least, they may have

inherited similar abilities.”

Cherubim’s ability.... When Alistair talked about this, I was reminded of something, or someone. I had thought about it maybe around the time I started hearing about the Discarded Divine Sword, but the more I heard about it, the more I became convinced of what I’m thinking of.

A reliable person who was always there for me, the announcer. He was still the announcer who mechanically delivered level-up and title notifications to me, but once, I was actually able to talk to him. It was in the middle of the first time I used the potential release in a fight with the Lich, and Announcer-san left some words of concern as his voice dissipated.

〈Thanks to the individual named Master, I, who was not allowed to exist by God, who was erased from existence by the Maker and allowed to exist only as a vessel, was finally able to exercise power for the Lord. May the blessing of the God of Wisdom be on your way—〉

Isn’t that exactly what Alistair told me? Moreover, if I’m not wrong, Announcer-san also mentioned the word “divine realm” while releasing the potential limit.

〈——Attempting to access the divine realm——Success. Accessing library. Obtaining information on Clairvoyance in exchange for loss of access ability. Building the skill Clairvoyance— Successful〉

That’s what he said. I think he also mentioned the ability to browse and interfere with the knowledge of the divine realm that Alistair was talking about. And so I decided to tell Alistair about Announcer-san.

“It’s interesting. It may indeed be the remnant of the Cherubim, which makes it more likely that it really was created by reusing Cherubim.”

『Someone else mentioned that too.... Yes, that mysterious voice. That voice sounded like Announcer-san and he said, ‘Remnants of an existence that supposedly already gone, It just miraculously came to the surface with the potential limit release. The price of using so much more power than he

had, even the residue of it, will disappear.’ I’m sure he said something like that.』

That voice was also a mystery. It sounded more like an ally than an enemy, and it didn’t seem like something I can think and do something about, so I tried my best not to worry about it after that, but... We can no longer ignore it at present. I decided to ask Alistair about the mysterious voice as well.

『Actually, do you think there is one more person inside me besides Announcer-san? I think there is another person inside me.』

“What? What kind of person is that?”

『Hmm...』

『No matter what you say. All I can say is he is a somewhat bad attitude man.』

They say you can get your strength back when the Moon Festival approaches, but I’ve never been able to have a proper conversation with them because of all the things that get in the way each time. However, he seemed to know various things about my situation.

“I can’t guess it with just that.”

『After all, I don’t know his name or what he looks like. It can’t be helped - no, wait. I think I did see him once?』

He showed up at an inn in Barbora, like a phantom. As I recall, he came with the intention to apologize and told me that the potential release had worn that man out for some reason, and that I wasn’t going to be able to talk to him for a while.

『Let’s see, he was a mature man. He had silver hair, and he was wearing a loose-fitting, robe-like outfit in all black colour.』

“I still don’t think that’s a clue after all.”

『After all?』

I'm sure there are plenty of men with silver hair but....

“However, just keep it in mind. Maybe, if you keep looking into it, later, you may find out something. Anyway, once I'm done repairing the blade, I will start analyzing and repairing the interior.”

I mean, I feel like if I could have a conversation with that man, it would all be solved. Can't we use Alistair's power to search for more clues?

“Yes. Well, let's do our best to get in touch with that mysterious voice, too.”

『I'll leave it up to you』

“Leave it to me.”

『Any other information that might help— yeah, I'm apparently a member of the God of Chaos, right?』

“What? The God of Chaos? Not the God of Wisdom?”

“Hm.”

“Hmm.....The divine sword, as its name implies, is a sword that bears the power of a god. Each divine sword is a family member belonging to the god who gave it the power.... Cherubim was supposed to have been a family member of the God of Wisdom. Hmm.... Belonging to the God of Chaos, huh... Well, it seems worth investigating.”

Oh that's good. It might have helped a little. Hmm... Is there any other information I have not yet told them?

『Ah. Can you give me more information about the place I was stuck in, or perhaps some other hint?』

“Was it the Field of the Demon Wolf? Honestly, it won't do anything to help, unless you can examine the altar or whatever it is directly.”

“I see.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever been there either. I’ve conquered every continent in the last 100 years or so, but I still haven’t reached the Demon Wolf Plains.”

“100 years?”

『Eh? How old are you now?』

I was more surprised by learning of how long she had already lived than the information that she has been to all the continents. From appearances alone, I was sure she was completely human.

“I am half elf.”

“Your ears? Amanda’s were sharp.”

That’s right. Amanda, a rank A adventurer who used a whip as her weapon, was a half-elf, but her ears were as pointed as an elf’s. However, Alistair’s ears are round like any other human.

“Ha ha ha, do you know any other half-elves besides me?”

“Hmm.”

“Well, in my case, it looks like my father’s blood who’s human was thicker than my mother who was an elf. Therefore my appearance is closer to a human than an elf’s.”

So that’s how it is. Even if one was half elf, they don’t necessarily inherit the appearance of an elf.

“Well, the longevity isn’t just a tribal thing, it’s also an occupational thing.”

『Does your occupation affect your lifespan?』

“It’s not so much my profession, but rather, my profession’s specific skill is called Physical Mastery. As the name implies, it’s a skill that keeps the body in its prime, but it also extends the life span of the body by keeping it young for long periods of time.”

Skills that keep you young? It’s not a very blacksmith-like skill. No. Is it possible, considering that she will remain at her prime as a blacksmith for a long period of time? And she said she had a number of unique skills. As expected of a divine blacksmith, she was just truly as impressive as her title sounds.





# Chapter 359

## Chapter 359

I asked Alistair about her prediction that I might have something to do with the discarded divine sword, Cherubim, but she wasn't completely sure about it either .

“Either way, let's make restoration our top priority for now . Soon I'll finish repairing the external components . And then I'll start working on what's inside . ”

『What do you do to restore the inside?』

“That's where a divine blacksmith can truly utilize their skills . Just leave it to me . Just, it will take a lot of time to analyze and repair, so be prepared for that, okay?”

『I understand . 』

“As for you, Fran... Honestly, I don't think there's anything you can do to help even if you just watch . ”

“It's fine . I will just keep watching . ”

Fran replied in the same way as before, facing Alistair with a look of determination that displayed her intention that she would not move away from his spot even if just for an inch .

“Woof!”

Urushi also sat down in a well-mannered position beside her and looked at Alistair .

“Suit yourself . ”

Alistair muttered and said nothing more . Then she turned her back to Fran and the others as she faced me .

“Well then, let’s get started . Well, there’s nothing for Master to do though . Your job is to stay put . ”

『All right . 』

“Fuhahaha!!”

『What’s the matter? 』

“I never thought I’d see the day where I’d be repairing a sword and telling it to not move . ”

After laughing lightly at that, Alistair held up her hand above me with a serious expression .

“Eye of Analysis...!”

It was the same appraisal type skill that she used when we first met earlier . She began to observe me carefully with her magic-laden eyes . They were several degrees more serious and keener than they had been the first time round .

“...”

“...”

Complete silence engulfed the room . Neither Alistair, Fran and Urushi uttered a single word at all . Alistair needed her full attention to carry out her task and Fran and the others, understanding that, did their best to not disrupt that concentration . The only thing they had in common was the seriousness of each other’s expressions .

The only sounds in the silvery room were the sounds of two people and one animal breathing .

“...”

“...”

After a while, actually I stopped keeping track of how long we've been at it . Alistair's forehead was covered in beads of sweat . She had been concentrating her magical power for a long time, analyzing me . The exhaustion she should be going through right now was too large for me to imagine seeing how quiet the situation was .

Fran was still watching her work, not moving even slightly .

“Fuuuu~”

And then, after finally finishing her analysis, Alistair slowly looked up and exhaled . I could see the fatigue draining colour away from her face .

『Is it over?』

“Mhm . I'm sorry . ”

Suddenly Alistair apologized .

Eh? What? What... happened? Why are you apologizing?

『I- Is it possible that I can't be repaired?』

“No, you can be repaired . Let's be clear on that . However, even after so much time has passed, I still couldn't complete the analysis . I'd like to apologize for that first . ”

『But it's not like you didn't come up with anything at all, right?』

“Well... kind of . I've gathered all the information I need to make the necessary repairs without any problems . ”

Then, it's fine . It would have been nice to know what's going on, but my current priority is to repair myself . No . I was too impatient .

“In the meantime, I’ll explain the results of my analysis while I start with the repairs . ”

『I’ll leave it to you . 』

Alistair began taking out multiple potion-like objects again and started to concoct something next to me . It seems that the magical medicine prepared for repairs was made and customized according to the sword to be repaired . Not only does this mean that Alistair’s skills in blacksmithing was top-notch, but she was also quite adept in alchemy .

Alistair, who has finished mixing the concoction, poured it onto my sword blade . A second later, I felt something well up from inside my body .

It wasn’t a bad feeling though . It’s a warm and gentle feeling, completely opposite of the intense, dark one I had when I was under the control of the mad demonization . I could feel that soft, fluffy comfort spreading all over my body .

“Okay, the repair of the magic circuit has begun . How are you feeling?”

『Somehow, it feels good . It’s like soaking in a hot bath . 』

“That is quite an interesting expression . You are most definitely a person before . I don’t know if I will ever have this opportunity again in the future to hear thoughts directly from the sword, but this is very interesting!”

When Fran saw Alistair smiling and muttering excitedly, she felt that a huge burden in her chest had been lifted . Then, Fran asked Alistair with an expectant look in her eyes .

“With this, will Master finally heal?”

“No, not yet . This potion is just going to close up a big wound in the magic circuit . The next step is to close up the more delicate and deep wounds . This is the most difficult job I’ve been tasked with since I last created a divine sword! I’ll finally be able to go all out again and prove my abilities!”

I don't know how she'll do it, but I could guess that it was going to be a very difficult and intricate process . I'm glad Alistair was willing to do this, but I also think it's going to take a while .

Even so, you have made a divine sword huh .

She IS a divine blacksmith, so I guess I might say, it's expected of her, but hearing her say of her past work herself brings a different kind of surprise . I'm getting an awesome blacksmith to fix me up, huh .

However, after hearing Alistair's outburst, Fran fell back down into her chair again, looking dejected as she probably understood that my restoration was likely to be a long way off .

"I see . "

"Well, don't look so gloomy . It will take some time, but Master will certainly get back on his own feet . "

"Really?"

"Let's bet on it with divine swords!!"

I know you're trying to tell me that it's a sure thing to succeed, but betting with divine swords... .

Does that mean... If she fails to repair me, do we get a divine sword? That meant that for Fran, the more you fail, the better the sword you will give her..... . ??

"I don't need it . Instead, return Master to his original condition . "

『Fran!』

Good girl! As expected of Fran!

"I know . I'll definitely fix it . Well, returning it to the original... That's the problem . "

『What?』

“No, don’t worry about it . Let’s just focus on fixing it now . ”

『?? I understand...』

“That said, it will take a little longer for the potion to finish repairing the damage to the magic circuits . And while we wait for that, I’ll tell you what I found out earlier .

“Hmm!”

『Please do . 』

I know I said earlier that restoration was my top priority, but that doesn’t mean I don’t want to know!

“Oh, I think Master can at least use telepathic communication now, right?”

What? For real?

『Aa- Aa, test test . Can you hear me Fran?』

“Hmm! I can hear you!”

Oh, I can really use it now! And it no longer causes pain .

It felt a little laggy or slow to activate when I used it, but it was enough for conversation . I’m really getting better . Once again, I felt that I was really getting better, and I was moved by it .

“Did you say you have two persons in you?”

『Yes . The announcer and the mysterious voice . 』

“Let’s start by talking about this Announcer-san thing . ”

『Oh』

“Hmm . ”

Fran had a plain reaction to this revelation . I suppose it’s because she has heard of the announcer, but she has never spoken to him in person .

“It is severely damaged, but there is certainly an area that is deeply connected to the sword . It is similar to a nerve that stretches out its branches and leaves all over the interior of the sword . It is specialized in analyzing information and other stuff, moreover originally it is made for the host or in this case, it was made for Master . It was made in a way so it’s capable of assisting the host . ”

『Assisting? So I still have notification settings for leveling up?』

I don’t think there’s that big of a difference between before and after Mr . Announcer’s success in releasing the potential limit . But that was only scratching the surface of the story, apparently .

“No, that’s not all . Originally, it was supposed to assist in the activation of skills and assist in calculations . ”

『So you’re saying that he had the ability to help you activate skills and magic?』

“Ah . But unfortunately before we realized the benefit, that part was damaged . It was originally an ability that Master needed after you level up more . ”

Alistair said that it was for me – or in this case, in terms of the sword’s ability – is an ability that was reserved for when I level up more . If Announcer-san had been fully prepared and had that ability to support him, he might not have been injured from overuse of his abilities like he was in this case . On the contrary, if the ability was intact he could have warned me when he was nearing his limit .

But if it wasn’t for his success and sacrifice, we would have been defeated by Lich on the floating island . Therefore I won’t say words of regret .

『So will Announcer-san heal?』

“I am afraid it would not heal . It’s a miracle that there are even some remnants of Cherubim lasting to this day . There’s nothing we can do to fix it if it’s broken this badly . ”

Unfortunately, if Alistair said she can’t do it, then she really can’t .

『Is that so.....』

“There’s only so much I can do to prevent the residue of Cherubim disappearing or get any worse, such as reinforcing it . ”

『I understand...』

If you think about it, Announcer-san did a lot for me during my early days . It distracted me from my loneliness, and I’ve gained a lot of knowledge from it . If the only thing I could do was help it avoid from completely disappearing, I would be grateful enough for that .

『Please take care of Announcer-san . 』



# Chapter 360

## Chapter 360

Alistair opened her mouth again as she was working on reinforcing Announcer-san .

“Now, we’ll talk about the mysterious voice . ”

『 Oh, finally . 』

(I wonder, how is the result of the analysis? Could it be that we can find out who they are or how to call them out?)

“That being said, there’s not much more we know about this one than what’s left of Cherubim . ”

『 Ah, is that so? 』

“Yes . However, in a fairly deep part of the sword, I could certainly sense a soul separate from Master, albeit a weakened one . ”

So does that mean it was not part of a discarded divine sword or something like Announcer-san, but it’s instead sealed inside a sword like I was?

“The ability to get skills from the magic stone would have been an ability that this soul originally had . ”

『 You mean a being that has the power to absorb skills and magic power from magic stones? How is it that I was also able to use this mysterious soul ability? 』

“That’s where it gets complicated . Master’s interior is in a more complicated state and more mysterious than you yourself can imagine, you know?”

(Eh? What is that? Complex and mysterious?)

I’m a little afraid to ask . But it’s too late to retreat anyway . A man has courage, and a sword should face his enemies without hesitation .

『Tell me more . 』

“Before that, I’d like to see Master absorb the magic stone, will that be alright?”

I see... Well, she will certainly find out more about it if I show it to her in person .

“Then here . ”

“What am I supposed to do with this magic stone?”

“You have to cut it like this . ”

“I see, so it’s like that...”

The magic stone that was handed over by Fran, was hit by my blade by Alistair as Fran instructed . Then, the absorption was done as usual . The weak demon stone didn’t fill me up very well, but I’m sure it was properly absorbed .

『What do you think of this? 』

“Hmm, it’s an interesting flow of magical power . But I still think my analysis is correct after all . Therefore, I’ll tell you my conclusion now . Even if Master absorbs the magic stone, you’re not getting your power directly from it .

『What? What do you mean? 』

“The magic is flowing towards the mysterious soul, not to Master directly .  
”

To sum up Alistair’s explanation, here’s how it worked .

When I absorb the magical stone, the mysterious soul sealed inside me receives its power . Apparently, this soul is quite damaged and it’s a mystery how it could still exist . According to her, the fact that it was sealed inside the divine sword might have been to protect its existence instead .

And from this mysterious soul that regained its power after eating the magic stone, the power will be shared with me . Apparently that was how it worked .

“Perhaps, this mysterious soul is the identity of the mysterious voice that Master heard previously . It is quite an extraordinary thing . It’s soul level is, shall I say, at a superior plane that even I can’t analyze . ”

『 You don’t know where or who he is? 』

“I’m sorry . However, I don’t sense any kind of evil intent from it . I get the impression that it’s more than willing to cooperate with you . ”

Well, if this mysterious soul is the identity of that mysterious voice, it was certainly not an enemy . And if anything, I think he is more of an ally than an enemy .

“To make things even worse, it seemed that the ability to strengthen Master with self-evolution points was handled by something other than this mysterious soul . ”

『 ‘Something else’ huh..... That’s a more vague description than the mysterious soul . 』

“I know that, but I can only say as much . ”

Inside of me, the remnants of Cherubim and the mysterious soul seem to be intricately intertwined . It’s a complicated situation, and apparently a third mystery exists within it . I couldn’t sense any soul or thoughts in this other

mysterious thing, and it felt more like a magic program or system built inside a magical tool or device .

“Even though I say it’s a mystery, what I mean is that I don’t know the creator or the method of making it but I still understand some of its functions . Regardless, it’s too advanced for my understanding, and the analysis I conducted earlier could not completely catch up to it . ”

『Even Alistair, a divine blacksmith, can’t analyze it out?』

“Honestly . Whoever created this system is a monster . I don’t know if there’s such a profession, but it’s at a level that’s impossible to build without assuming that there’s a divine grade mage or a divine grade alchemist or something of that caliber . At least as a blacksmith, I know that I can’t build one from scratch . ”

『Is- Is that so』

“Ah . It may be similar to the dungeon core I’ve seen before . It’s exactly the same as that because it was impossible to duplicate or imitate and it makes me feel defeated . ”

Alistair smiled bitterly after saying that . Even Alistair, a divine blacksmith, feels defeated after seeing that? Isn’t that like super messed up? I’m getting excited . What kind of tremendous ability does it have?

『Oh, so what kind of function does this mystery system have?』

“Oh, as for that ——”

The system’s primary purpose, it seems, is to manage the power of the mysterious soul . Earlier, I said that power was flowing from the mysterious soul to me, but it seemed that this system was taking over and intervening each time .

It was this mysterious system that took the power from the mysterious soul who regained his power and changed it into a form that even I can use .

Well, I also heard that it's only because the mysterious soul is cooperating with me that I'm able to extract that power .

The power of the mysterious soul was quite tremendous, and it's difficult for me to use it on my own if I just let it run loose without control .

The power of the mysterious soul was quite tremendous, and it's difficult for me to use it on my own if I just let it run loose without control .

The same was true when it came to learning skills . The mysterious soul seemed to have the power to get skills from the magic stone, but it's usually difficult for me to use it as it was . Even though they're sealed inside me and had a connection to me, we're still separate souls to begin with .

However, the truth is that the skills the mysterious soul absorbed from the magic stone was converted and transferred by the mysterious system so that even I can use them . The power of skill sharing between me and Fran is an added benefit thanks to this mysterious system .

In other words, It seemed that the thing that adjusted the mysterious soul power into a form that even I could use was the mysterious system . And apparently the form it used to do so was the rank-up and the self-evolution point system .

“I just don't know why they're setting up this thing called magic stone value, I honestly don't understand . I think we could have built a system to make it easier to strengthen Master without setting it up like that . ”

『In other words, the more magic stones you absorb, no matter what kind, the more you get strengthened on the spot?』

““Yeah, exactly like that . Is it necessary to set a hurdle such as a magic stone value?”

『Maybe there are steps needed to be taken as a requirement?』

“Maybe . Well, to be honest, the creator of this mystery system feels like a pretty drunk person to me, or just someone with a lot of mischief . That's

just the impression I got from doing my analysis, though . Or maybe it could simply be a hobby of his, you know?”

Hobby... . Even though I’m having a lot of trouble thanks to the magic stone value... If it was really a hobby, he must be an awfully twisted guy .

“Oh, one more thing . You said you couldn’t get any magic stone value from even the powerful evil one’s magic stone? This is just an assumption, but maybe the mysterious soul can’t absorb all the evil spirits . ”

In other words, a magic stone with too much evil energy won’t restore the mysterious soul . That’s why the power wasn’t transferred to me and I didn’t accumulate any magic stone value . Maybe, the reason I couldn’t get the evil one’s skill was also because the mysterious soul couldn’t absorb the evil one’s magic .

Apparently, goblins and other evil one are able to absorb power to some extent because they contain not only ordinary magic power, but also some evil power .

『Um, it’s getting really confusing . Let’s get this straightened out a bit . 』

First of all, inside of me there is Announcer-san, the residue of Cherubim, a mysterious soul, and a mysterious system .

Announcer-san was responsible for my ability to process information from the outside world and communicate to me what’s going on inside me . It is the so-called announcing ability, and apparently, the reason why even though I’m a sword and have vision of the outside world was because of Announcer-san . The ability to use telepathic communication is probably the announcer’s ability as well . It’s kind of like a secretary I guess? Announcer-san the Secretary, that sounds great .

The mysterious soul is something sealed inside me . Even Alistair can’t find out more about his background than that . However, he is extremely damaged and seemed to be recovering by absorbing the magic stone . And he transfers the power he’s gained from his recovery to me . Apparently the reason I get pleasure from absorbing the magic stone is because I feel this

mysterious soul's delight in it . In other words, it wasn't me who ate the magic stone and felt good about it! It was Mr . Mysterious Soul who was the one with the perverted sexuality! So when I ate the magic stone and said, 'Oho!' It's not my fault that I'm saying that!

And then there is the mysterious system that adjusts the power from that mysterious soul so that even I can use it . Without it, the tremendous power emanating from the mysterious soul would, on the contrary, consume me . Self-evolution points and the like seem to be a benefit from this mysterious system . Although we don't know who its creator was, there are suspicions that he has a bad personality .

“Hmmm, we've managed to figure some of the things out, but I feel like now the mystery surrounding the creators of these... 'things' just got deeper . ”

“As far as I can analyze, I think at least four or more people are involved in the production of Master . One thing for sure is Elmera, the divine blacksmith who is said to have created Cherubim is involved . ”

“Elmera...”

This is a great piece of information to help me figure out who I am . In the future, if I am able to follow Elmera's footsteps, I might be able to find out more of myself .

“And then there's the mysterious soul himself . Perhaps it is not human, but some kind of demon beast, but they would not be able to build such an elaborate system without it agreeing to be incorporated into the system at will . ”

『Are you saying that the demon beast agreed to do this?』

“Some of the beasts are more intelligent than humans . That's exactly what happens when they reach the divine beast class, as their intelligence then far transcends that of humans . And it wouldn't be strange if there were some circumstances involved or if they agreed to some kind of agreement . ”

When he showed up in Barbora to make a gesture of apology, I thought he was human because he appeared in human form, but apparently he wasn't .

It seems strangely human, but when you think about it, Urushi also had some human qualities . Maybe if you become a high-ranking demonic beast, you're no different from a human inside .

“And then there's the person who put this mysterious system together . If it was Elmera's job, I, as a fellow divine grade blacksmith, would know . Hence, it's definitely a different person . ”

If Alistair said so, then it must be so . It must be one of Elmera's collaborator then . So there was someone who created a tremendous magic system that even a divine grade blacksmith couldn't analyze?

『Did I miss something?』

Cherubim, the mysterious soul, and the mysterious system . No, there must be someone who brought me to this side of the world in the first place . And, according to Alistair's view, it's not the former three .

『Me?』

“That's right . It's Master himself . In the first place, I can't find anything about the existence that sealed Master to the sword . At least, it's impossible for Elmera . I think it's impossible for Elmera to seal such a mysterious soul on a sword . ”

『What about the one who made the system?』

“It is possible . It just that—”

『Just that...?』

“It might be just my intuition as a divine blacksmith, but it feels like the method of work involved for the two is different . ”

『The method of work?』



“Yes . I don’t think the magic circuit of the mystery system and the magic circuit that connects the master to the sword was made by the same creator .  
”

I had no choice but to only believe that as it is the word of a divine blacksmith . Just like how, on Earth, craftsmen could spot the subtle differences between two antiques that an amateur wouldn’t be able to detect .

“I have no idea how to seal the master and the mysterious soul to the sword . It’s a mystery... . I’m sorry for only adding to all the mystery and unknowns you face . I couldn’t figure out that you are acting as a subordinate of the God of Chaos, and I also couldn’t keep up despite all the analyses I’ve done . I am a divine blacksmith, and yet this is what I look like . I am pathetic . ”

Alistair ridiculed herself as she said this .

# Chapter 361

## Chapter 361

Alistair regretted that she was unable to complete the analysis .

“Also, I don’t even know why Master was sealed inside a sword . ”

『The reason why I was sealed?』

“Yes . Considering the timing, the mysterious soul was first sealed in the remnant of the Discarded Divine Sword Cherubim for the purpose of protecting itself . Then, someone built a mysterious system and arranged for the power of the mysterious soul to be used by the sword’s main personality – or in this case Master . ”

『Ah』

“We can only speculate as to why they did so, but I think it was for the sake of the mysterious soul . If the number of magic stones it absorbs increases, the stronger it’ll become, then the person that has equipped the sword will continue to voluntarily absorb more magic stones . In doing so, the mysterious soul will be able to recover faster too . ”

I see . So we’re doing exactly what the creators of the sword might have intended us to do . No . Am I on the creator’s side? And if that’s the case, should we say that Fran was the one we’re looking for?

Still, I won’t complain about this because it is useful for Fran’s sake anyway . Rather, I am grateful towards this system . After all, it was because of this system that I was able to meet Fran .

However, the following words from Alistair made me feel like I was doused in cold water .

“But is it really necessary to have Master?”

『Eh?』

“Maybe Master’s soul was locked up in the sword at the same time as the mystery system was built . It should be so because Master’s soul and the system are paired together . But do we really need Master in this system?”

“Master is indispensable!”

Fran, who hadn’t said a word and had been listening intently to us previously, opened her mouth for the first time in a long while . I guess she was just trying to keep quiet so we wouldn’t be disturbed . You have really grown up, Fran, to be able to listen to a difficult story without dozing off even a bit! I’m a little impressed .

However, the moment she heard words that she couldn’t just ignore, she couldn’t help but shout her thoughts out loud .

“Don’t look at me like that . I’m not saying it in a bad way . It’s just that I am worried . Why did they have to go through all the trouble to seal Master in the sword just to have him act as a mediator of all this power? Couldn’t they just let the person who equipped the sword to directly wield the power of the sword?”

When you put it that way..... The sword had the ability to share skills, and we have Announcer-san . I suppose it’s possible for the wielder of the sword to choose their own skills and draw the power from the sword without me .

Ah... . Am I simply a leftover, an unwanted child...?

“We need Master! It’s only because I have Master, and because I could count on him that I could get this far!!”

“Fran...”

“Hmm!”

I’m glad I was Fran’s sword!

“Well, I’m not saying that it’s completely useless either . There’s a certain amount of merit to the fact that the sword itself has its own will . Besides, there’s no way that a high class blacksmith who has created so many swords would imitate sealing a human soul into a sword for no reason . Not to mention, sealing a human soul to a sword isn’t an easy task . Therefore there must have been something, an important reason why he put Master as the main personality of the sword . Well, I wasn’t able to find out anything about that from my analysis though...”

『No, we managed to find out about a lot of things, and all of it was pretty significant for me . Isn’t that right?』

Now, I understood better what my powers were, and I came to know of the name Elmera . It also turns out that I was potentially created from a discarded divine sword . This was a huge discovery .

“I don’t know if it has anything to do with Master’s role, but there’s one place in the sword that’s completely beyond my analysis . Should I say the deepest part? It’s in the deepest part of the sword . ”

『Are you sure?』

“Yes . I am sure . No doubt about it . Only, this part is different from the others, and it’s designed to prevent analysis and appraisal . ”

『Could you guess what kind of function it has?』

“There is too little information . I have no idea what it does or how it works... . I’m sorry, but I really don’t have any ideas . ”

She blamed herself again for this, but I think Alistair has done really well . If it wasn’t for her, we wouldn’t have gotten this much information . And it’s not like I didn’t know what to expect . I had come up with a possibility after hearing the results of Alistair’s analysis so far .

『I have a little hypothesis – or maybe it’s more of a wild guess – about the identity of the mysterious soul, but I have a bit of an idea . 』

“Oh? What is your hypothesis?”

『Well, it’s just a possibility but... . 』

『I’ve been thinking about the identity of the mysterious soul . And I think It’s Fenrir . Well, I know that I might be overestimating myself by saying this, thinking that the legendary Demon Beast could being sealed inside me . 』

The wolf emblem design on my handle . The name of the place with the pedestal I was stuck on was the Plains of Demon Wolves . The legend of Fenrir that was once roaming in the plain . The title of Divine Wolf’s Attendant that Urushi possesses . The fact that the mysterious soul is a demon beast .

We could list any number of possibilities . But with this information that we have gathered so far, that was the only conclusion I could come up with .

“I see... Fenrir huh?”

“I see... Fenrir huh?”

『Yes, what do you think? 』

“It’s not out of the realm of possibility . Some divine swords have those kinds of demonic beasts in their swords to borrow their power . There is also a type of magical sword called a ‘magical beast weapon’ that is used to contain magic beast souls . ”

『Isn’t that the same as manipulating the soul? Didn’t you said you it was almost impossible to manipulate and seal a soul in a sword? 』

“It is very difficult to control the soul . However, it is not impossible to create it with a body that is deeply connected with the soul and seal the soul altogether into the sword . ”

“What kind of other divine swords are there?”

『I'm interested in that too...』

“As for the items used to seal demonic beasts, the Demon King's Sword Diabolos, the Tyrannical Dragon Sword Lindwurm, the Serpent Emperor's Sword Jormungand, and the Golden Dragon Sword Eldorado were also used in the past, although Eldorado is already broken now . ”

Alistair counted on her fingers as she stated the names of the swords . However, Fran looked like she was curious about a different part of the story .

“Even though it was a divine sword it still breaks?”

『I'm curious about that, too . In the list of divine swords I saw before, there were names of swords that were already destroyed...』

In addition to Cherubim, Judgement, and Meltdown, which were said to have been discarded at the behest of the gods, the names Fanatics and Holy Order should have been listed too as destroyed divine swords . And now she mentioned the name Eldorado . Was it also destroyed unexpectedly?

“Ah, it's simple . Divine swords are rarely destroyed . But there are exceptions . When a god or divine grade blacksmith makes a move themselves . Another way would be when they get destroyed in a battle between divine swords . ”

Ah... Of course it was like that . God swords could certainly destroy each other .

“For example, the divine sword Fanatic has quite a dark history behind it . Dionysus, the divine blacksmith who created this sword, was a blacksmith who had a certain... inclination . ”

“Inclination? What kind of swords did he create?”

“Instead of turning the user into a warrior, Berserk, the mad divine sword, makes the user run out of control and turns mad instead . It is said that he

sacrificed a saint to create it, and it also had the ability to control the demon, Diabolos . Hypocritical Sword Pacifist brainwashes others into becoming puppets . There are many people that get their desires and dirty sides reflected onto the swords they create . ”

Indeed, the divine sword Fanatic that was made by such a guy would be no ordinary sword .

“Fanatic is, to put it bluntly, a sword that connects people together in spirit . ”

“? What’s so bad with that?”

『Does that mean it has something like telepathic powers?』

People connecting with each other in spirit... Does it mean you won’t have any quarrels with each other because you could understand all of each other’s thoughts? However, Alistair’s explanation was even more appalling than expected .

“I’m sorry . It seems like I didn’t say it well . Fanatic has the ability to force the mind of the person they dominate to integrate into themselves . ”

『Integration? Two people become one? And if so, what about the body of the one being

eaten?』

“This one’s a little outrageous . ”

Fanatic was able to integrate the spirit of others into themselves, but also maintain a connection to their original bodies . As a result, the body may appear to be a separate organism in motion individually, but the soul inside is in fact the soul of the owner of the divine sword, Fanatic .

I guess you could say that the owner of Fanatic is moving multiple mentally connected bodies at the same time . However, since the original owner of the physical body is integrated into Fanatic, it seems that the external surface can behave as it is .

“The whole spirit takes in others and fuses them together . As a result, you can own all of their memories, experiences and emotions . But do you think those who have taken in the memories of dozens or hundreds of people can keep remaining sane?”

『I don't think so . 』

“Exactly . The spirit of the owner who continued to use that sword grew so large that he could no longer retain his sense of self . In the end, he started turning crazy . The Holy Spirit Sword Holy Order was created by the earliest divine blacksmith Ulmer, who saw the Fanatic as dangerous, to counter it . It was apparently a specialized divine sword acting as an anti-Fanatic . As a result, both sides collided, and both sides were destroyed together . ”

So there are a lot of different types of people who are divine blacksmiths, and there's a lot going on between them .

『I believe Ulmer was the guy who made the first divine sword, wasn't he? He was supposedly the creator of the Beginning God Sword, Alpha . 』

“You know your stuff . That's right . He's a legendary man who received a divine revelation and became the first divine grade blacksmith in history . ”

『Did Ulmer and that Dionysus live in the same era? 』

“They were brothers, you know . Apparently Dionysus was his older brother all along . ”

I thought he was Ulmur's apprentice when he was blacksmithing, and he picked up Ulmur's divine skills while he was being ordered around in the smithy .

“But Dionysus was fiercely jealous of his brother, who was recognized by the gods and revered as the best blacksmith in the world . As a result, he went through his brother's work, stole the techniques of a divine grade blacksmith, and became a divine grade blacksmith on his own . ”



『Isn't that amazing?』

“To be honest, he was most likely a genius . In a book left by Ulmer, he wrote, ‘My brother is the true genius . That is why he is dangerous . ’ As a result, two divine blacksmiths were born in the same era, and many divine swords were created . ”

Now I understand after all this explanation . That's why this Dionysus guy produced so many weird swords, but I think he was just trying to match his brother . In order to surpass his brother, who made orthodox swords, he must have created many specialized divine swords with unique abilities to surpass his brother .

“We've digressed . But anyway, I think in normal circumstances it's rather impossible to seal off Fenrir completely in a sword . ”

『So, it means that the person who helped Mr . Mystery Soul was also the person who wants to help Fenrir, and he is the one that made me, right?』

“That would only apply if the mysterious soul is indeed Fenrir”

At least it meant it's worth looking into Fenrir's story in the future . Well, if the mysterious soul wasn't Fenrir, then it would be a waste of effort..... .

Never mind... We shall cross that bridge when that time comes I guess .

“So, let's head back to the Plains of the Demon Wolf once more . ”

“Hmm . ”

# Chapter 362

Chapter 362

Editor Makoto

Want to read faster? Read only at RNF!

TL Note : the words in “()” are what Fran talk with telepathy

Alistair continued to ponder on my theory that the identity of the mysterious soul might be Fenrir .

“I’m sure if we took more time, we could do a more detailed analysis...”

“How long will it take?”

“Well, if you want to find out who the mysterious soul is, it’s going to take years . ”

『Well, that is impossible . 』

“Hm . Impossible . ”

I can’t let Fran’s precious early teens be wasted here .

Of course, it might be a good experience to learn a lot of things from Alistair, but I still have to let the cute child travel .

Besides, I have to return to the Kingdom of Kleinzell to participate in the auction . I also have an appointment with Gallus .

“I know . If it’s not possible, I won’t force it . Well, let’s put a pause to all this rambling, and move on to serious restoration and refurbishment . ”

“Refurbishment?”

『Isn’t simply repairing enough?』

As far as I was concerned, as long as I could get back on track, it’s enough .

“Yeah, I decided that as long as the residue of Cherubim wasn’t working, it won’t be enough . ”

『It’s not good enough?』

“Originally, Cherubim’s remnant should have managed Master’s vast array of skills and assisted him in using them, but this is not the case right now . That’s probably why Master’s condition had gone so awry this time . Seems like Master can’t keep up with the processing power by himself . ”

Apparently I’m forcing myself to do the part, even though it should have been Cherubim who should take care of it for me .

“If you simply just put it back together, it will do the same thing right away . That’s why it needs to be refurbished . ”

『What exactly do you mean by “refurbished”? Is it like increasing its processing power?』

“That would be impossible . There’s nothing I can do to improve it any further in terms of ability . In the first place, Master is a semi-divine sword class— No, Master’s body has a complicated structure that can almost be called a divine sword . It’s not easy to achieve that, even for me . ”

So there’s nothing you can do about the hardware, the constituent parts . Then maybe the internal circuitry, the software... No, that’s not going to be easy either .

To put it bluntly, there’s a tremendous amount of software residing in the system, and it’s a situation where the gargantuan size of the space

consumed by the software is too overwhelming for the local storage . Since I can't remove that software, there will be no choice but to secure capacity in more detailed parts .

Is it because of my knowledge as an earthling that I still carry here? Surprisingly, I could easily understand Alistair's explanation . Fran, who was listening next to me, had already started to doze off, as her head tilted to one side, nodding throughout .

『Does that mean you're going to cut out the unnecessary parts of my insides somehow?』

“You sure understand quickly . That's right . To put it more bluntly, I will reduce the number of skills you have . If the remnants of the Cherubim had been there, they'd have had no problem managing the inexhaustible growth in skills . But as it is now, even if you're not using them, you're still in possession of a tremendous amount of skills, which places quite a burden on you, Master . ”

In other words, the more magic stones I ate and the more skills I added, the closer I got to my processing limit . I gained a huge amount of skills, especially in the most recent fight . Right now, I should have over 200 in total, and in the worst case scenario, it might have even reached 300 .

After I explained that, Alistair murmured with an amazed expression .

“Oi, Oi, what is that about . ”

“Nn . Master has lots of skills . ”

“Hah . Really??? Even divine swords have at most 30 or so skills that were granted to them . If the number exceeds 50, it will malfunction, and if it goes over 100, it's no wonder the sword goes out of control . And you say you have over 200 skills? That's crazy! Normally, it would have destroyed itself already!”

『Woah—』

“How could you not feel any pain before? In fact, I’m surprised that you’re able to hold on this long . ”

Alistair’s words made me realize how much I had been pushing myself .

If we hadn’t met Alistair here, I don’t know if we would have been able to repair me . Also, if the enemy hadn’t left us, we would have been even more overwhelmed on top of being in a half-destroyed state . If that actually happened, what awaited us would definitely be a bleak and rough future .

As we were talking about this, Fran raised a question while tilting her head slightly .

“Hey, why would Master feel pain?”

『Hmm? As Alistair just mentioned, the overwhelming number of skills takes a toll on me, right?』

“No, that’s not what Fran is trying to say, is it? You’re asking how Master, who has no biological body and is not supposed to feel pain, can feel the sensation of pain, right?”

Oh, is that what she was asking about? I was actually curious about that too .

However, Alistair apparently knew what to expect .

“If Master was an artificial spirit, he wouldn’t feel pain . He won’t know the feeling of pain in the first place . But in Master’s case, he still has a slight sense of what pain feels like when he is human . I think, because of that, Master is able to perceive occurrences that causes pain like forcing himself too hard to think or process skills, and unconsciously recreates the nonexistent pain . ”

『I- I see . 』

“I think the reason why you don’t feel pain when the sword part was damaged is either because you are too far removed from your human sense

to feel pain, or you have a strong belief that it can't hurt because it's a sword . ”

So you're saying that the pain I feel is all because I unconsciously perceive it, even though in truth it shouldn't really hurt at all .

“Well, it's a tricky one, but that's not a bad thing for the current Master . At least, he could sense his limitations without the remnants of the Cherubim from the pain he feels . ”

If you ask me, that's probably right . If it weren't for the pain, I wouldn't have realized my own limits and would have destroyed myself in the fight against Myrellia and Xellos Reed .

“Now, let's talk about the refurbishment . We need to remove some unused or wasteful skills to reduce the chance of Master feeling that pain again . Just, listen properly to what I am about to say . If there were just one or two skills to discard, then it would have been easy . However, with this large number of skills, your choice is either you just discard this huge amount of skills, just delete all of them, or you can select your skills one by one and choose ones to keep and others to delete . Unfortunately, this will take years . ”

『Huh? Wait a minute, that's a problem! We can't do that!』

If a useful skill I've acquired just disappeared, I'm definitely going to lose my strength in a heartbeat!

“However, it doesn't mean I'm just going to erase skills at random . Don't worry about that . ”

『I don't understand what you mean?』

“Ah, hmm... how can I explain it easily? What if I told you that I could use the ability of the mystery system within Master to integrate and optimize your skills?”

『Can you interfere with the mystery system?』

“No, I can’t change the main feature, but I could use the system to change things up a little bit . For example, we could combine skills of the same roots into one and evolve them into higher-level skills .

So, it seems like the problem is that I have a lot of skills that aren’t too useful, and you’re suggesting to lump them all together, and see if they’ll evolve or not? Isn’t that being too reckless?

“But we can’t really control the details, so it’s up to the system to choose the best option . ”

『I thought so..... . 』

“Evolving will increase the capacity of individual skills, but it should be much better than being overwhelmed by the process of managing so many wasted skills . Well, I can’t assure you that you might not lose some useful skills in the process . It’s the first time I’ve ever done this after all . ”

『... . What do you think of this, Fran? 』

(I’ll do whatever is good for Master . )

『But the worst would be if I lose all my useful skills, like swordplay and all that . 』

(If you lose them, we can get them back . )

Fran was very casual in her responses, and that’s when I made up my mind .

That’s right, and even if I become weak, I can still grow stronger again . If I have something I lost, I can get it back .

“I do have one question, though . ”

“What is it?”

“What happens if, after Alistair reduces Master skills this time, the number of skills increases again?”

There's that problem too . Exactly as Fran described it, isn't this just a temporary fix?

“Then come back periodically to see me . When the time comes, if you find out anything about Master, will you let me know? Hopefully I can be of more help then . ”

『...Is this help just out of kindness?』

“Well, I wouldn't say I'm not interested in Master's background . ”

Of course . Those are the eyes of someone who is completely engulfed by curiosity . Regardless, even for me, I wasn't planning on breaking relations with a Divine Grade blacksmith . It's really relieving to have someone offer repair assistance in an emergency .

In human terms, isn't it similar to the peace of mind one gets with being seen by an excellent doctor at any time? Anyway, with this, I can fight again with no worries .

“All right, we will definitely return . ”

『Please take care of the refurbishment . 』

“Sure, leave it to me . ”



# Chapter 363

## Chapter 363

Editor Makoto

Hi everyone! Here is more bonus chapter thank you to Asekhan for donating!

This translation belongs to RNF! Enjoy!

It's been a few hours since Alistair started the refurbishment process . Apparently, it takes a lot of time to get my internal system up and running, and ready to control .

As before, Alistair stood still with her eyes closed throughout, before suddenly opening her eyes and looking up .

“Okay, it's ready . We can get into the renovation process at any time now .”

Then, she wiped the sweat from her forehead . She has been working continuously for several hours without drinking or eating . I think she's pretty worn out, but I didn't see any significant signs of fatigue on her face .

『Hey, do you need a break? It's already night, you know?』

From the only small window provided in this room, we could already see the darkness of the night before we realized . The room was so bright and shiny that I didn't notice the passing of time at all .

“I'm okay . I don't get tired easily . However, we do have a long way to go . Let's take a little break...”

『Fran must be tired too, huh?』

“I’m fine . ”

“I’m tired . So let’s go take a break . ”

You just told me right now that you’re not tired .

Alistair was openly showing her concern for Fran . Lucky enough, Fran wasn’t a child who couldn’t read the air well enough to make that concern worthless, so she nodded with a coy smile at Alistair’s words .

“All right...”

“Then let’s go upstairs . ”

“Is resting here not good?”

“I don’t eat my meals in the workshop . ”

It seems like that’s a rule she abided as a craftsman . Good thing, the glutton Fran did not take out any food and started eating it during the analysis . Alistair’s concentration would probably have been disrupted and she might have messed up because of it . Or rather, the analysis process might have been interrupted .

“But then.....”

Fran glanced at me . She appears to be worried about leaving me here .

『Fran, it’s okay . I’m not experiencing any pain anymore, don’t worry about it!』

“But...”

『Unlike me, Fran is tired, and she needs a break . Even if I’m cured, what good will that be if Fran is incapacitated?』

And then, Alistair casually lifted me up .

What is she doing?

“Nothing, we’ve done some basic repairs, so as long as we don’t do any heavy fighting, we can carry you around . ”

You could have told me that earlier! We had such a heartfelt exchange for nothing!

“Here Fran . ”

“Hmm . ”

Oh, I knew I’d feel right at home on Fran’s back, sheathed in old man Gallus’ special scabbard . It fits me perfectly and I feel like I’m wrapped up in a comfortable blanket . Is this what it’s like, the comfort of coming home? Anyway, the relief I felt was beyond words .

“It’s here . ”

Alistair led me up the stairs, and I found myself in a surprisingly ordinary mansion . It was probably just slightly more luxurious than a moderately posh inn . The interior was made of stone and was decorated in a stylish villa style .

Through the door where Alistair just passed into, there was a dining room . There were also guests in front of the large marble dining table .

“Are you done?”

“Not yet . I’m just taking a break . ”

“I see.....”

“Hey, make more space, stupid demon . ”

“O- oh, I’m sorry . ”

I still felt that Asura was feeble or reserved around Alistair . There’s definitely familiarity, but it also looked more than that, as if Asura was

restraining himself .

Even towards that Kiara, Asura still spoke in a commanding tone . There's a strong sense of dissonance that I felt when I saw Asura acting so meekly like this . It's as if they weren't the same person .

Fran seemed to think the same way, as she tilted her head slightly in puzzlement .

“Hey, are you two bad with each other?”

It was a straightforward question . Alistair raised her eyebrows and Asura looked troubled . Was it something that we shouldn't have asked about?

“It's not that we don't get along . ”

“We- well...”

“Then why?”

I felt like they were trying to dodge the question . However, Fran continued to pursue it . I was interested in knowing more too, so I won't stop here .

“Haa, when this guy first came to me, I was so taken aback by his stupidity that I gave him a little lecture . I've been calling him stupid demon ever since then . ”

“Lecture?”

“Yeah, and what do you think this guy said the first time we met?”

Alistair turned a stern gaze onto Asura . It sounded like they had a very bad first meeting . Just from remembering that time seemed to have already made her angry .

“This guy, you know, came up to me, and the first thing he said to me was ‘A divine grade blacksmith can destroy a divine sword, right?’ And then he gave me his sword and told me, ‘destroy this thing!!’”

“Th- that... . I already said sorry about that...”

“Of course! To us divine grade blacksmiths, divine swords are like our own children! No matter if it was made by another divine grade blacksmith, they’re still special to us! And you wanted me to destroy one? By any chance, did you want to get your head split open, do you?”

“...”

Asura stroked his forehead silently . It was as if his head really got cracked . Afterwards, she made Asura sit upright while lecturing him with heated passion, continuing to do so for half a day .

“The Divine Sword Gaia, once it has been assigned to an owner, can only be used by that person . And even if it is thrown away, it will come back . But It’s not like they have free will.....”

For a moment, I thought Gaia had a mind of its own, but apparently it didn’t . Maybe it’s more of a mechanical type of artificial spirit, something like Announcer-san .

“I don’t know why they picked me, but I thought it sucked . ”

I understood how Asura felt . Just when he was in agony after mutating into a calamitous demon and gained the mad demonization skill, suddenly he obtained the divine sword . If it’s going to come back to him when he discards it, then it means he’ll definitely have it in hand when the mad demonization is triggered .

To put it bluntly, it would be the birth of the worst kind of demon who could spread mass destruction . If he knew that he couldn’t seal off the madness, he must have at least tried to deal with the divine sword .

“I’ve already accepted that now . ”

“Hmm”

“That’s why I’m hunting demonic beasts in the middle of nowhere so that I don’t bother people.....”

Asura seems to have accepted his ownership of the divine sword by now, too . That's probably why Alistair wasn't complaining about it and kicked him out . Despite that, I still thought it was impossible for her to be gentle toward him .

“...Even now, I ended up causing you trouble . ”

“...Kiara didn't die because of you . ”

“I understand . I'm not trying to put blame on who killed that woman, I just want to know what happened . Would you mind telling me about it?”

“Hmm . ”

“I'll tell you . ”

“It's fine . I'll speak . I want to tell him what happened myself . ”

Alistair tried to take care of it, but Fran turned it down herself . She was only with her for a short while, but it was the death of Kiara, whom she respected . She probably wanted to speak of the incident in her own words . She seemed to think that this was her role as the person who witnessed Kiara breathe her last .

That's not a bad thing . Personally, I think it's a lot easier for Fran to get herself together by doing this than just dealing with it by herself . Besides, as Fran said before, the end of Kiara's life was not a tragedy . She began to tell the story, including the part that she heard from me, as if she saw the events herself . It was the ending of a warrior, one who fought a powerful enemy and departed contentedly .

Asura no longer kept a sad expression on his face when he heard Fran's retelling . Rather, he laughed .

“Ah, so you left while smiling..... You fought a powerful enemy that you couldn't win even if you put everything you've got against it, scraped your life away, and died with laughter . It's a very Kiara-like way to go . And I'm ... well ... jealous... . ”

I couldn't fully understand the thoughts of these battle maniacs, but I could at least understand the weight of their feelings . Right to the end, having a satisfying battle and dying on the battlefield... All of that seemed really enviable to Asura .

Perhaps, this ending isn't possible for Asura right now . If he gets caught up in a battle to the death, his mad demonization would be triggered . If that happened, he'll either kill his enemies without realizing it or he'll end up dead . Asura wouldn't be conscious when that happens . At that point, the only thing driving him would be pure madness .

“I don’t know what you guys are going through..... But I’m pretty sure I could also imagine that person dying peacefully on her deathbed, surrounded by her disciples . ”

“Right . That’s right . ”

“The sword is for the battlefield..... I guess that means the same thing for warriors . That some of them would feel happier rotting away on a battlefield than on a shelf..... I’d like to understand that kind of feeling too .”

That's just like Alistair to be so empathetic .

# Chapter 364 - Evolution

Editor Makoto

“.....Now I’m a little heartbroken. Let’s just eat. I’ll have them fix a meal for us.”

“Can I have one too?”

“Hmm, I’ll give you a special one.”

Alistair stood up with a forcefully cheerful voice. It was followed by Asura and Fran. Everybody there seemed to have understood that a change in atmosphere was in order.

“Who will prepare the meal?”

“A golem. I have a type that can cook.”

*A golem making food? Now that’s something new.*

“Is the food they make delicious?”

“...Well, it’s all right.”

Fran turned her gaze to Asura, as Alistair and gave her that answer. I also thought that it was okay, although it didn’t feel like it’s going to be too delicious. Fran seemed to share my thoughts on this too.

“It seems hard to prepare the food for now. Let’s just eat this.”

“Hoo. You have leftovers stored in a time-space spell? That’s handy.”



“Nn. You could always cook beforehand and then just store them, and you can take the food out anytime you want to eat. The best food is always the freshly made ones after all.”

“But still, this one looks good.”

“This is curry, the best food.”

Fran took out a curry pot. Then, she placed a clay pot filled with rice and a side dish for curry on the table together.

“Put this on the plate like this, and then like this.”

“Aside from the color, it smells good. May I have some of that?”

“Of course. I’ll put this, this, and this on top of that, and then we’re done.”

Fran took out some more additions, which were some of my favorite toppings lately. They were a pickle, one that looked just like the fukujinzuke<sup>1</sup> I found and stocked up on in Barbora, crispy fried onions, and even a boiled egg.

Alistair and the others also imitated Fran, pouring the curry into their mouths in a fearful manner. I didn’t hear anyone saying the word “delicious” out loud, but anyone could tell by the way the food was shoved into their mouths that they all liked it. Rather, they were so absorbed in eating the curry that they couldn’t speak.

Both Fran and Urushi, who had been served a super-sized portion of curry by Fran, started wolfing the curry down their mouths in silence. For a while, the only sounds in the room were the sounds of chewing and the clinking of dishes and spoons as they collided with each other.

In just five minutes, they all emptied the super-sized curry pot. However, this special curry made with plenty of magical beasts’ meat was so generously served.... Fran seems to have liked the combination a lot.

With his belly churning, Asura pounded on his own abdomen and burped.

*Mmm, that's vulgar. It's bad for Fran's upbringing. Oh, come on Urushi! Don't imitate the burp!*

“Fu. It was delicious. I don't think I've had anything this good in a long time.”

“Me too. Where did you get it from?”

*Oh, did you think that we had put away something we bought at some restaurant.*

“Master made it.”

“Hou...”

“Who is the master? Is it Miss Fran's master?”

(Master, is it fine?)

Fran glanced at me. I think she wanted to reveal me to Asura.

*I knew you'd like this guy.*

『As I've said before, if Fran wants to tell him, then I don't mind.』

“Nn. This is my Master.”

“...What? What happened to that sword?”

『Hi. My name is Master and I'm an Intelligent Weapon. Pleased to meet you.』

“Wha- tha- I- is that sword speaking?”

I was surprised to see Asura almost fall off his chair. I wondered what the owner of a divine sword would say when he found out, but apparently he was also surprised when he saw a talking sword.

After that, Fran and Alistair explained me to Asura. After he heard all the explanation, Asura is looking at me with great interest.

But still, he was quicker to accept me than I thought he would be. After all, he was also a user of the divine sword, and I wonder if he had more resistance to strange swords.

“I see... So it was Master who made my madness disappear.”

『Maybe it's just temporary.』

“No, as I told Miss Fran before, I am truly indebted to you. If you need any help, just tell me. I will help you with everything I got, okay? Just keep that in mind.”

Maybe, the mad demonization was taking a bigger toll on Asura than we had expected. I could tell that he was really happy.

『Hey, can you show me your Divine Sword?』

“Gaia? I don't mind.”

Asura lifted the great sword that was propped up at his side and placed it on the table. The name of it is Ground Sword Gaia. It seems that if he breaks the seal to unleash it's true power, the sword will regain its original name and ability as the Earth Sword Gaia.

The sword looked really big. A handle wrapped in thick leather, and was long enough to be held by both hands, with a plain, rectangular hand guard without any particular carving on it.

The blade had a straight shape with no curvature, a so-called Western sword. The thickest part of it looked like it's a good 30 centimetres. It was a lump of metal that emphasized smashing rather than slashing. The black, dull-colored sword blade, which was devoid of all decoration, gave off an oppressive sense of intimidation.

It looked like a greatsword just like any other. However, when you look at it this way, the intimidation it could display was overwhelming. Anyone

could guess that it wasn't just a regular big sword.

Just for a while, I, for some reason, felt inferior just from looking at it. Was it my instinct as a sword? The feeling came naturally and I immediately understood that it was far superior than me.

*It's frustrating, but I'm only a semi-divine sword. Well, that's only if it's permissible to say so. And over there is a complete divine sword. The difference was large.*

“... Someday, Master will exceed this.”

『Fran?』

“I'll see to it!”

Fran has a frustrated, yet motivated look on her face. I felt oddly pleased. I'm inexplicably glad that Fran believed in me so.

『That's right!』

“Then we will need to get Master back to full form first.”

“Hmm! Please!”

『Please.』

I was motivated. I'm worried about what my remaining skills will become, but if I don't do it, I won't be able to fight in the future.

“Now that we've had enough of a break, let's get back to the workshop.”

10 minutes later.

“Then, we'll begin.”

『Oh.』

“Hmm.”



1 >>> Fukujinzuke (福神漬) is a condiment in Japanese cuisine, commonly used as relish for Japanese curry. In fukujinzuke, vegetables including daikon, eggplant, lotus root and cucumber are finely chopped, then pickled in a base that is flavored with soy sauce. The end result has a crunchy texture

You can see more complete explanation and the picture here : <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fukujinzuke>

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# Chapter 365 - Refurbishment Completed

Editor Makoto

Hi guys! For master's status I'll upload it as a separate chapter (the next chapter is only master's status) if I post it in this chapter I'm afraid it will be way too long and you'll get sore thumb from scrolling way too much.... Anyway enjoy!

『————』

I suddenly realized I couldn't hear anything.

Deafening silence...

It took me a few seconds to realize that the scream I was raising was gone.

『Is it over?』

Since then—How long has it been since the refurbishment began? The severe pain that irritated my whole body has completely subsided and disappeared.

『Is it over?』

I asked myself again. There was no longer any pain. Neither was there a feeling of fatigue nor discomfort. Instead, I felt something like a refreshing feeling.

However, only the sense of time I had was strangely obscure.

I wonder how long I was in pain. From what can I could see through the window, it's dark outside. I guess it's not dawn yet. Is it a few hours since then?

『No, I think it's been a day or a night.』

Honestly, my memory was fuzzy, but that's just how tough it was.

If you told me that only been a few minutes had passed, I wouldn't believe it, since it felt like a long time had passed.

『Fran is—』

There she is. She was sleeping while breathing soundly under the workbench I have been resting upon. I must have worried her a lot. Her sleeping face looked as if in anguish.

She had large dark circles under her eyes, and her hair was shaggy as if she hasn't had a bath in days. I remember her looking pretty distraught too, when I was screaming in agony.

Listening to the cute breaths resounding in my ears while she slept, I'm tempted to just let her sleep, but it's still better to reassure her that I was now awake.

I stroked Fran's head using telekinesis. I was a little anxious, but it went smoothly with no pain or lag. It actually feels smoother than before, but does it just feel that way because I feel refreshed?

『Fran. Fran.』

No problem with telepathic communication. It looks like the refurbishment went well. I lightly shook Fran as I called out to her.

『Fran, are you awake?』

“Munyu...”



As I shook her further, Fran's eyes opened thinly. And when she saw me floating, her eyes widen.

“Master...!”

Fran stood up, vigorously and hugged me. Her hug was enough to cover me. I quickly dulled the blade with a form-transformation, and I activated it with no problem here either. Usually, I'd be unconscious already, but right now, I'm not sure if I can use it or not, so I cringed for a second.

“Master, this isn't a dream...?”

『Yes. This is me, you know?』

“Hmm”

Oi Oi, this is intense. But as it is, Fran hugged me tighter that her chest ended up touching me as she started shaking her shoulders.

“.....I am relieved.....”

『It's look like I have made you all worried.』

“....Mhm. Worried.”

『Ah, I see, I see. I'm sorry』

“Hmm...”

Fran won't let go of me as large drops of tears keep falling off. I stroked her head and back gently, trying to calm her down.

After a while, it seems she's finally settled down. Fran's hold on me loosened. But instead, she leaned back, leaning her whole weight against me.

『What's going on? You are such a spoiled kid.』

“.....Hmm”

『Fran?』

“Su-Su—”

*Eh? She fell asleep again... I know she was a good sleeper, but sleeping in this situation?*

I was once again reminded of Fran’s incredible pace...

『Fran? Hey, Fran!』

“Let her sleep.”

As I was about to wake up Fran again, Alistair came down from the second floor. Like Fran, she had shaggy hair and dark circles under her eyes.

“How are you doing?”

『I’m in great shape. Telepathic communication and telekinesis have not been a problem so far.』

“I see, that was good... \*Yawn\*.”

『Alistair looked sleepy too.』

Not as much as Fran, but she blinks her eyes heavily and looked like she’s about to fall asleep.

“Well, even with my body, staying up all night for five days is unbearable.”

『Huh? What did you just say? Five days?』

“Oh, you don’t know huh? I see. Today is exactly the fifth night since we began our refurbishment ritual. I cannot sleep in case of an emergency.”

『Really..... Has it been that long? I thought it’s still the night of that day』

“Well, it can’t be helped if you can’t tell the time since you were in that state.”

『Then..... Fran also didn’t sleep...』

“She hasn’t slept a wink in five days, and she has been standing beside you all this time. Well, she ran out of steam and fell asleep about three hours ago.”

I see, so that’s how it is. Fran, who is usually easy to fall asleep, didn’t sleep for five days? Well, seeing her like this, It seems like she won’t wake up for a while.

I gently laid her body on the floor as I stroked Fran’s head, who still wouldn’t let go of the hand she put around my sword blade. Of course, Fran was still hugging me. I have given her so much to worry about, I should at least be able to let her cuddle me like this.

Unlike the anguished expression on her face earlier, Fran now slept with a look of relief on her face. She was distraught before huh.

*Sweet dreams Fran.*

『So, is this the end of the refurbishment?』

“Well”

『We- Well.....?』

“This is the first time I’ve ever done something like this. I’d rather like to hear more about it. Are you in pain now?”

Well, that’s true.

『I’m fine. As I said before, I feel refreshed.』

“Oh, I’m jealous. I can’t wait to get into bed, so I could feel refreshed like you.”

『Ah.... Somehow I feel bad, I'm sorry』

“Haha, I'm just joking. Usually, when I'm making a divine sword I go without sleep for more than 10 days. It's not as bad as that, yet.”

Wow, I knew it would be hard to make a divine sword, but 10 days of sleepless nights? Is that what physical mastery maximal skills were for?

“From what I've seen on the outside, you haven't changed much.”

『Eh? Is that so?』

I had the sensation of my body being rebuilt, and I thought my appearance might have changed on its own..... But apparently, according to Alistair, nothing changed.

『I have been refurbished, haven't I?』

“That's what I want to know too. How about your skills? Did the consolidation go well? I would like to know if there are any changes in performance.”

『I haven't had a look at it yet.』

It's a little scary, but now I can't help but look. I appraised myself, pushing down a strange mixture of fear and anxiety, hope and expectation.

『Eh?』

I was so stupid that I was amazed at myself. No matter how much I thought about it, I do remember my status.

『How can it change like this.....?』

Alistair said that my appearance has not changed, but in truth, my classification has changed. It evolved from an Intelligence Weapon to an Intelligence Unique Weapon. Unique..... I don't know if that meant as the odd one out or the one and only. I'm torn. But maybe it was just the effect of the change in class, but my abilities were also increased.



# Chapter 365.1 - Master's Status (Mini Status)

Editor Makoto

TL Note : Here is Master new status after doing the refurbishment. Thanks to Asekhan for researching and sending me master's previous status! If you guys have a suggestion on what the skill name should be do leave a comment down below!

Author Note :

Below is Master's current status

**Name** : Master

**Wielder** : Fran (Bound)

**Race**: Intelligence Unique Weapon

**Attack Power (ATK)**: 1182

**Magic Power (MP)** : 9500/9500

**Durability** : 9500/9500

**Magical Conductivity** : S+

**Skill**

Appraisal : LvMax

Appraisal Jamming, Transform, High Speed self-repair

Self-evolution 〈rank 15 | magic stone value 0/12000 | memory 50 | points 0〉

Self-modification 〈Superiorized〉, Telekinesis, Telepathic Communication, Space-Time Magic: LvMax.

### **Skill Sharing**

Intermediate Status Boost (Wielder), Lesser Recovery Boost (Wielder), Clairvoyance, Unsealable, Knowledge of Magic Beasts, Sorcerer, Evolution Concealment, Blessing Of The God Of Chaos, Blessing Of The God Of Wisdom.

### **Unique Skill**

Principal of Falsehoods : lv5

Dimensional Magic : lv4

Breaking Evil Manifestation.

### **Superior Skill**

Skill Taker: SP

Doppelganger Synthesis : SP

### **Weapon Combat Skills**

Lord Archery • Basic : Lv5

Lord Fist • Basic : Lv3

Lord Shield • Basic : Lv2

Lord Spear • Basic : Lv5

Lord Axe • Basic : Lv2

### **Tactical Skills**

Lord Archery Technique • Basic : Lv5

Lord Fist Technique • Basic : Lv3

Lord Shield Technique • Basic: Lv2

Lord Spear Technique • Basic : Lv5

Lord Axe Technique • Basic : Lv2

### **Physical Manipulation Skills**

Physical Manipulation: Lv4

### **Sorcery Skills**

Dark Magic: Lv2

Recovery Magic: LvMax

Flame Magic: Lv5

Blacksmithing Magic: Lv1

Wind Magic: LvMax

Strengthening Magic: Lv1

Contract Magic: Lv7

Moonlight Magic: Lv1

Phantom Magic: Lv1

Illusionary Magic: Lv1



Familiar Contract: Lv1

Familiar Summoning: Lv6

Purification Magic: Lv3

Tree Magic: Lv1

Sand And Dust Magic: Lv1

Undead Poison: Lv1

Necromancy: Lv 2

Pledge Magic: Lv1

Earth Magic: Lv6

Healing Magic: Lv1

Soil Magic: LvMax

Poisonous Magic: Lv5

Fire Magic: LvMax

Light Magic: Lv1

Ice and Snow Magic: Lv1

Auxiliary Magic: Lv5

Storm Magic: Lv1

Water Magic: Lv3

Despair Magic: Lv4

Molten Iron Magic: Lv1

Thunderbolt Magic: Lv Max

### **Sensory Detection Skills**

Omnidirectional Perception: Lv5

Omnipresence Perception: Lv4

### **Covert Concealment Skills**

Covert Concealment: Lv4

### **Influence Exerting Skills**

Lord Intimidation: Lv4

### **Resistance Skills**

Abnormal State Resistance: Lv6

Abnormal Mental Resistance: Lv6

Magic Resistance: Lv5

Darkness Null, Domination Null, Physical Attack Null, Thought Null

### **Technical Skill Skills**

Dismantling: LvMax

Blacksmith: LvMax

Throwing: Lv5

Cooking: LvMax

Trap Release: Lv6

Trap Creation: Lv5

## **Arts and Science skills**

Mineralogy: Lv1

Botany: Lv1

Pharmacy: Lv1

Zoology: Lv1

Toxic Knowledge: Lv1

Magic Engineering: Lv1

Herbal Science: Lv2

Alchemy: Lv1

## **Magic ability skill**

Flame Operation: Lv1

Water Operation: Lv2

Soil Operation: Lv1

Poisoning Operation: Lv1

Wind Operation: Lv3

Complete barrier: Lv2

Absorption: Lv1

Death Control: Lv1

Life Absorption: LvMax

Life robbing



# Chapter 366 - Verification of Integrated Skills

Editor Makoto

My memory skills were outrageous. I guess this is what they call consolidation.

I acquired several Lord Weapon Combat Skills and Lord Tactical Skills. However, the only difference between it and the Lord Swordsmanship Technique and Lord Swordsmanship that I originally possessed would be the word “base” attached to it.

I asked Alistair to analyze it as well, and it appeared that the lord arts • base and the lord technique • base were apparently a skill that’s upward compatible compared to the original lord arts and lord techniques.

The sword arts is a skill that comprised all sword-based weapons, such as dagger arts and sword arts, but the same is true for the lord arts • base. That means if you had a lord archery • base, you could use short archery, long archery, crossbow archery, and any other archery.

However, its efficacy seems to be reduced by half. It’s said that the Lord Swordsmanship Technique • base is only half as effective as the Lord Swordsmanship Technique at its highest level. So it’s multipurpose, but not very effective..... That being said, it’s nice to see skills I don’t regularly use put together in one place.

“Master, you can analyze your skills, but what about whether you can utilize them or not?”

『Oops, that's right..... wait a minute.』

I tried to remind myself how to set my memory skills as I did before. I could still set fire magic with no issues. Also, there was no particular change in my magic skills, with none reduced or increased by the refurbishment.

『—OK, seems like there is no problem in using it.』

When I cast the torch magic without chanting, a small light floated in front of me. It seems like for magic, at the very least, it will be pretty much the same as before refurbishment.

“If you're okay with using that skill, let's analyze the other skills.”

『You're right.』

Alistair sometimes gave skills to weapons, and because she had information on divine swords, she was well versed with ancient and modern skills, which helps a lot right now.

The next skill is physical manipulation. This is apparently a skill that integrated physical enhancement or manipulation skills such as herculean strength, instantaneous movement, and evasion.

Omnidirectional Perception, Omnipresence Perception, and Covert Concealment is the type of thing that integrated all similar skills as well. However, as Alistair told me, it was a skill that was too powerful and very difficult to master.

In fact, I've tried using Omnipresence Perception before... I was supposed to have only activated my magic perception, but my electromagnetic perception and airflow vision were activated simultaneously. Then, all sorts of extraneous information were displayed in front of me, making it tough to use.

This inconvenience could prove fatal if I suddenly received a lot of extra information during a battle and distracted myself. I think I need to think of a

countermeasure for it sooner rather than later.

“How is it?”

『Looks like it's going to take a while of practice to handle it with precision.』

“It's just as I thought. After all, those are skills that could only be learned by a master-level person who trained for many years. There's no way you were going to get it and use it right away.”

『Even if that was the case, I have to be able to use it. They're all essential skills in combat.』

My skills have indeed grown, but there was a possibility that my combat strength would decline for the time being. It's a pretty serious situation.

“I think it's quite difficult to use. For example, right now, you can use herculean strength and instantaneous movement. However, if you want to use it unconsciously, you must first reach a high level. However, if we tried to compensate for those effects with physical manipulation methods, more subtle use would be required.”

『So that's how it is.』

“If you make a mistake in boosting the power output when you use instantaneous movement, it could send you flying. If you make the mistake of using the wrong output of herculean strength when you hit your opponent, you could end up shattering your own arm along with your opponent.”

『I thought the change from a specialized skill to a higher level all-purpose skill would make it harder to handle, but not so much.』

“Just make sure you know what you're doing before you use it.”

『Yeah, I will do that.』

The next thing to try is the Lord Intimidation skill. Apparently, this is a skill possessed by dragons and other high-level magical beasts. It's a high-level skill of intimidation and fear, and it's quite powerful.

It turned out that the intimidation that I emitted increased abnormally. I didn't mean to intimidate her, but Alistair's face contorted. After all, it was not possible to perform precise manipulation. Rather, in this situation, the frantic Fran was impressive.

Even if this Lord Intimidation skill was used as lightly as the former fear and intimidation, it could cause ordinary people and others around me to flap and faint. In the end, I guess that means I need to train myself to use it.

Magic resistance is an integration of resistance skills to magic, such as flame resistance, thunder resistance, and storm resistance. This is, well, is it fine if I think that it has got stronger?

I also had good technical skills. Although the painting and singing skill that I had before disappeared, the only skills remaining are Dismantling: LvMax, Blacksmith: LvMax, Throwing: Lv5, Cooking: LvMax, Trap Release: Lv6, Trap Creation: Lv5

All the skills that I wanted remain. Could it be that my unconscious mind was at work in the choice of which skills to stay and to discarded, like the mad demonization skill? I'm especially glad the cooking skill is still here. I'm sure Fran will be deeply disappointed without it.

There was no change in the arts and science skills section. However, the magic ability skill section and special ability skill section had changed dramatically after the refurbishment. There were a lot of skills that I'm unfamiliar with.

『Flame Operation: Lv1, Water Operation: Lv2, Soil Operation: Lv1, Poisoning Operation: Lv1, Wind Operation: Lv3.....』

“Hmm. Those are also skills I've never heard of. Some unique skills manipulated the elements, such as Flame Principle and Water Principle, but.... Maybe it's an upward compatible skill of those advanced skills, just



like the lord arts • base. It must be the result of the integration of so many skills.”

I then asked her what I was most curious about.

『Aerial Jump is gone. Has it been merged into one of these?』

I can't seem to find the name of a particularly well-used skill, Aerial Jump. This considerably limits my scope of combat.

“Hmm, isn't it possible to manipulate air?”

“Manipulate air...” *I'll give it a quick try.*

Right then, I had the sensation of a foothold being created in front of me. Was that a wind-based skill? I didn't even realize it. Unfortunately, there's a problem. Doing so had consumed more than twice as much magic as it had in the past. Moreover, the foothold collapsed immediately. The downside of being a high-level skill seems to be here as well.

The rest of the new skills are Kill Master, Strengthen Senses, and Strengthen Body. Well, at the end of the day, these skills are also higher-level skills that were integrated with various skills.

Kill Master is a higher skill of killer skill system such as Goblin Killer and other killer-based skills. The damage efficiency to certain races was reduced, but it is a powerful skill that always activated and increased a small portion in attack power no matter what kind of enemy you are fighting.

Sensory Enhancement is a sensory enhancement system that included improved vision and acute sense of smell. Strengthen Body enhancement is an integrated physical enhancement skill, such as hair or fur enhancement, and shell or crust enhancement. It was actually probably the most useful skill I obtained this time, since just having it in my possession would strengthen my entire body.



# Chapter 367 - Master's Transformation

Editor Makoto

I was happy with the consolidation of my skills, but Alistair groaned at me with a problematic look.

“I don’t know if I can say I’ve succeeded…….”

『What do you mean? It- It worked, didn’t it?』

“Not really. The number of skills wasn’t as low as I thought it would be.”

Ah, Speaking of which... I was only focused on the growth part, but my main goal was to reduce the number of wasted skills and save more processing capacity.

“There are still about 150 skills left. Master, do you feel any pain or discomfort?”

『Hmm. For now…….』

While I struggled to use the higher-level skills, I don’t experience any pain when using them.

“Let’s do a thorough analysis once more.”

『Please』

Alistair analyzed me as Fran held me in her arms. I thought it would take a long time, but it didn’t seem to take that long to re-analyze it, as she had

analyzed it in detail once. A few minutes later, Alistair's eyes widen in astonishment.

『How is it?』

“No way, this much... As I thought, Master, you are really interesting.”

Alistair said there had been quite a change in my internal structure.

“The mysterious souls and the mysterious systems connected to the Cherubim's residue. Maybe they're making up for the lack of processing power.”

*Does that mean that the other parts of the system have changed to compensate for the other parts of the system that the damaged announcer was in charge of?*

“One more thing. The flow of power to Master may have changed.”

『What does that mean?』

*The flow has changed?*

“Well, to put it bluntly, it's possible that the master's growth rate has been greatly reduced, and he's been sent to deal with that. In the future, even if your magic stone value builds up and your rank rises, you might have little to no growth in attack power or anything else.”

『Eh? For real?』

I was delighted that my abilities had improved... My attack power is in the 1000's, you know? The tension is high, right? And yet, she said I might not be able to grow any further...

“Instead, you will be more efficient than ever when it comes to managing your skills. In other words, you sacrificed the abilities of the sword itself and are reborn as a skill-focused fighter.”

『Hmm.... But for Fran's sake, I'd rather have enhanced skills...』

Well, my strength isn't my offensive power as a sword; it's my skills. While it was honestly disappointing to hear that my growth rate has dropped, I was genuinely happy to see that the skill's operational potential had been expanded further. Besides, it didn't seem to have completely stopped growing, and there's still hope for me.

“Apparently, Master's internal structure was more flexible than I thought it would be. I didn't expect the mysterious soul and the mysterious system to change as much as it did.”

『Hey, is that okay? Won't the mysterious soul or mysterious system get overloaded this time?』

“Hmm. I can't say whether it will be a burden or not. At least, not until we see how that affects us in the future...”

『Alistair too doesn't know?』

“I do not know.”

Well, there's a lot of things I don't know about my body. I guess we'll just have to agree that our immediate crisis is over.

『It's not a complete solution, but it's better than before, right?』

“I can assure you of that. The load on Master should have been lessened greatly.”

『Then I guess we'll just have to wait and see for now.』

There was no doubt that I could climb higher heights, and it also helped improve my processing power, so it can be said that the repair was a great success. For now, I'll just be glad to be safely back in Fran's hands. Rather, that's the most crucial part.

After we finished checking some things out, we came back upstairs to the dining room. Alistair wanted some curry before she took a short nap, so I served it to her, and somehow I ended up feeding it to Asurasu as well.

“This is really good, isn’t it?”

“Ou, I want to eat it every day.”

“Woof!”

Fran was carried on Urushi’s back while I supported her with telekinesis. Urushi seemed to have had a good night’s sleep these past few days and was full of energy as usual.

*Fran has been tirelessly watching over me, and you stupid dog..... You look like you’re enjoying your curry. Here, let me help you.*

『Hmph』

“Yelp!”

I pulled his tail.

Anyway, the curry diminished at a tremendous rate. Fran won’t get mad at me later, right? I was a little worried when I saw Alistair and the others gorging on the curry.

I glanced at Fran lying on the couch in the corner of the dining room with me in her arms. Then Fran’s nose started to sniffing around. Immediately after, Fran’s eyelids slowly open.

“...Unyu...curry smell...”

“I- I’m treating everyone.”

“...wanya eat...”

*You’re not making any sense. However, it cannot be helped. It’s been less than an hour since you fell asleep, right? You must still be insanely sleepy. And yet you still reacted to curry...*

It seems that she has more of an appetite than the desire to sleep.

*I'll take out the curry plate. But I just don't see Fran getting up.*

“Muyumiyu...”

『Fran?』

“...Curry”

She was too sleepy to move. I'd like to tell her to go to sleep now, but she won't be able to sleep comfortably until she had her curry.

『It can't be helped...』

“Hmm—?”

『Here』

I used telekinesis to wake Fran's body. Then I fed her a spoonful of curry and brought it to her mouth.

“Momumomu...Aaaaannn”

『Here』

“Mugumugu... Aaaa”

『Yes, yes』

Like a baby bird begging its parents for food, Fran opened her mouth when there was no more curry in her mouth. I fed curry little by little in her mouth.

It's cute to see Fran munching on her curry with drowsy eyes, and it's getting a little fun. In the end, I fed her three bowls of curry.

“Oh, can you use telekinesis for such dexterity?”

“I see. That's why you can cook.”

Somehow, they were impressed. Apparently, they were wondering how I cooked. I've been taking it for granted, but I guess it's a mystery for someone who didn't know me well.



# Chapter 368.1 - Native World (I)

Editor Makoto

TL Note : Surprise! Bonus Chapter Thank you to Asekhan! Enjoy everyone!

Another note : thanks to all of your suggestion i make some change

1. From now on Asura will be Asurasu
2. Demolition in the technical skills will be change to dismantling

Sorry for the inconvenience guys!

While relaxing after finishing our meals, I talked to Alistair and the others.

『Did anything happen while I was out screaming?』

“Even if you ask me what happened.... What Master is thinking about is the outcome of the war, right?”

『Well, that's the most important thing. After all, if the Beast Kingdom lost, Fran would be sad.』

“I’m sorry. I don’t know. There’s no way to get any information from the outside world from here.”

Well, I kind of guessed it already. After all, this place was so out of the country and rarely anyone came here. It's not a place where someone can just casually come here to deliver information to you. Besides, Alistair was standing by all this time in case something happened to me.

Asurasu – he didn't seem to be the type of person who cared about disputes between countries. I mean, he is still here.

『Does Asurasu have business with Alistair?』

“What do you mean?”

『No, well, You've been here for five days, haven't you?』

When I said that, he laughed at me. Although he said he was planning to leave after thanking me for last time, I've heard bad things about him too. Even so, he was actually a pretty sincere guy.

“Like I said before, I'm in your debt. I can't just leave without saying anything.”

『Speaking of which, what happened with the mad demonization?』

“It's already back. However, we're not in a combat situation, so I can feel relieved for a while.”

I knew it would be back in a few days. I took it away with the skill-taker but then it disappeared after the refurbishment, so I figured it would be resurrected in Asurasu. Yeah, It didn't work so well. It seems like it was born on its own from within Asurasu.

“Oh, and about Fran's equipment.”

『That's something I've been wondering about as well.』

Actually, Fran wasn't wearing her usual black cat equipment. She was now wearing a downy cloth outfit and pants that looked like pajamas.

It's not the right size at all and she was wearing it with the hem and sleeves folded wide open. If it had not been folded, we would not be talking about moe after all.

Maybe she borrowed it from Alistair? The quality was quite high. It wasn't as good as the black cat equipment, but it was far more powerful than those

leather armor. It would easily protect against a bandit's knife or something similar.

『What happened to the black cat armor set? 』

“It's a pretty good armor, but it was getting worn out from all the repeated fierce battles. The automatic repair function and other functions have been considerably deteriorated. Hadn't you noticed?”

『For real? 』

This battle was hard fought. Fran's armor was also damaged and then automatically repaired, and it seems like while it was being fixed, it was damaged again. Because of this, I didn't even notice that the automatic repair function of the armor had deteriorated at all.

The functions of magic tools deteriorate and I know this because I've been in the body of a sword myself. Just as my processing power was being squeezed out over a long period of time, the more you use a magical tool, the lower its specs become.

“Restoration... isn't the answer. So I'm modifying that one too. And honestly, it looks like you guys were getting so strong that it couldn't handle the intensity of the fights.”

It's true that the opponents we're fighting grew stronger and the scale of the battles were bigger than when we got the Black Cat set. From Alistair's point of view as a divine grade blacksmith, she might feel that the Black Cat set isn't enough for us to deal with such powerful enemies.

“I've discussed this with Fran, and she's agreed to let me get my hands on it. Although it will be modified without the permission of the creator.....You can't put your lives on the line. You're going to see him later, right? Tell him I'm sorry.”

*Hmm. I'm sorry Gallus, but even for me, I'm grateful to have Alistair, a divine grade blacksmith, strengthen the armor.*



# Chapter 368.2 - Native World (II)

Editor Makoto

TL Note : Another bonus chapter Thank you to Asekhan!

*However, I can't share my secret without telling Fran. When Fran wakes up, we'll talk to her about it.*

That's what I thought as I watched Alistair's back as she went back to work.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Hmm, good.”

『That was easy!』

“Because Master wanted to say something to Alistair.”

『Well, that's true』

“Well, then?”

“It's a pretty big secret, but.....”

When I consulted Fran, it became simple. She said that since it's my secret to keep, I can tell it to whoever I want. Well, I said the same to Fran all the time, too.

“Also, I don't want to keep it a secret from Alistair either.”

Down in the workshop, Alistair seemed to just be taking a break. She sat on a chair and wiped the sweat off her face.

“Alistair, we need to talk to you.”

“Oh? What is it? Could it be that something has changed in Master?”

『Well, there's a change, or rather, something I haven't told you about yet. Would you listen to me?』

Alistair could sense the seriousness of our mood, and she straightened up on the spot.

“I have already analyzed Master, but Master still has a secret? In a way, the secret of Master, who is even more unique than a divine sword, is quite exciting.”

And then she looked at me with eyes that were brimming with anticipation.

『Oh– uh, well..... I don't want to sound like a crazy person, but... Well, you see....I've told you that I was once a human being, right?』

“Oh.”

『But it's not just that I was a former human. Actually, I've been living in a different world than this one.』

“Hmm? A different world? Did you mean, otherworldly? In other words, Master is an ex-otherworlder?”

『Well, something like that』

““Could it be that you're talking about the Native World?”

Alistair was astonished, but it turned out differently than what I expected. It looked like she believed that I was from a different world quite easily. But still, the Native World? What's that?

I asked Alistair, and she explained it to me. Apparently, the gods of this world were believed to have come to this world from a different one and created the earth along with all the creatures within it.

It doesn't seem to be explicitly told, but it was just mentioned in some myths and the like. The world in which these gods were born and originally existed is called the Native World.

『No, how do I say this? To begin with, I was born and raised in a world with no magic or skills. So, I don't really know.』

“What? Then how do you build things?”

I continued to explain Earth's culture and technology for a while, as Alistair asked me to. Anyways, I was only a former salaryman, so I could hardly provide detailed answers on specific matters.

She seems to be very curious and asks whatever question that pops up in her mind. She seemed to have a keen interest in Earth, which has acquired high technical skills without the benefit of skills or magic.

“No, it's interesting! I want to listen to this forever!”

『As for me, you believing my story so easily is kind of a letdown.』

“If you don't know the anecdotes of the Native World, this wouldn't be happening.”

『Even so, that Native World story may or may not be true, right?』

“I believe it is true, I am a divine blacksmith after all.”

“Hmm?”

If one wondered what the divine grade blacksmiths had to do with it, it seems that the origins of the divine grade blacksmiths were told in the Native World Mythology.

In the myths, there was a theory that the Sword God fought against the Evil God by summoning a weapon. That weapon could be called his own alter ego, which he later left in the world while leaving to Native World. It seems that the sword of the Sword God is the source of the divine sword. In other

words, the first divine sword was the beginning divine sword, Alpha, but Alpha began as an imitation of that Sword God's sword.

“Well, even until now, I don’t know the name of the god or the sword.”

Apparently the lore has been lost over the years.

“Oops, I’m a bit off topic. At any rate, I believe in the existence of other worlds, and I think it’s possible that there are beings that have come to this world from there. Well, I can’t be too sure if Master really came from the Native World...”

『Certainly, there must be a lot of worlds out there?』

“Ah. But maybe, the reason why Master was locked up inside the sword might be there. Is there anything you can think of? Even just a little might help.”

『Not at all. Just because you're an otherworldly person doesn't mean you have special powers. Perhaps me being an otherworldly person makes me somewhat special, but...』

"I see. Ah...that's a shame. Well, if you know anything, please tell me."

『Of course.』

*If one day, I have things I need to discuss, I won't just stay silent. At that time, I will definitely consult it with you.*



# Chapter 369 - Skill Practice

『Fran, let's go!』

“Hmm!”

The day after I woke up, Fran and I were confirming the usability of the skill.

“Hah!”

『OK! Good move!』

“Shhh!”

『That's right!』

Fran used me to slice through the chunk of rock I created with Earth Magic. There's a rock about 5 meter long that's been neatly cut in half. My own magic conduction and use of the attribute sword was also fine.

However, Fran had a disgruntled look on her face that came from the bottom of her heart.

“.....No good”

『Still?』

“Mhm. No good at all.”

『Right.』

Well, it's no wonder Fran didn't like it. First of all, the physical manipulation method took too much magic power. Although it didn't go out of control, it took a long time to activate, and the effectiveness was low. In general, it meant that there was too much waste.

Still, Fran could handle this skill far better than I can use the physical manipulation method... Maybe it's because she's used to moving her body. Regardless, it was also clear that it was not at all up to the standard we were looking for.

That wasn't all. Her mid-leap air manipulation for creating footholds was also terrible. Fran was going to run up in the air and slash the rocky mass from above, but the second foothold did not activate as she imagined it to. Therefore, she lost her balance because she couldn't feel it.

Although she managed to make a big leap by injecting too much magical power into the third leap in the air, she would have fallen if she made a mistake, and would have fallen straight down and ended up underneath a chunk of rock. Well, that's not really going to happen because she had my support, but still, it was a potential hazard.

Other than that, she seemed to have activated her omnidirectional detection to try to find the fragile spot on the rock mass, but she frowned at the amount of information she received. It would still take a while of practice to be capable of utilizing it in the heat of battle. In the end, we were able to slash that chunk of rock, but it was a clunky move that left a lot to be desired in terms of attack power.

When it came to the battling technique using air compression, it didn't even activate. The air leap was too difficult to control, and the skill did not work well either.

『This is not looking good.....』

“Hmm.”

All of my skills have evolved into higher-level skills, but my combat power has actually dropped tremendously. In my current state, we could have a

hard time even dealing with a D-class demonic beast, let alone a C-class threat.

The physical manipulation regeneration I tried before was also unusually inefficient. I think it took about 10 times as much magical power to use the regenerative skill as usual to heal wounds on Fran's arm. However, the regeneration power itself has increased, so if she comes to be proficient, Fran might be able to heal wounds more easily than using the recovery magic. But It's going to take a long time to master it.

Fortunately, there were some parts that are in great shape. I was visibly improving my ability to control magic. The simultaneous activation of magic was faster than ever before, and morphing is more delicate than previously possible. The activation of the barriers to keep the rock chunks out was also surprisingly smooth.

The Earth Magic consumed less magic and activated faster. It might have been possible to arrange Kanna Kamui like Myrellia did. No, I definitely could.

Well, we are still in recovery, I guess? I'll wait and see how it goes, and then try it out once again. Currently, my ability to use skills in combat is reduced while my magic-related skills are enhanced.

This will certainly help us surpass what we used to be once we become more proficient in handling the skills.

“Master, one more time.”

『Oh!』

Next, we used our various skills to gauge our current skill proficiency and train in them. I transformed, and I also verified the lord techniques • base, and the lord arts • base, To be honest, my impression is that it's not really a force. Well, I guess I could use Lord Archery • Base for long-range attacks and Lord Fist • Base for melee attacks. Still, I think it's better to improve my sword mastery by earnestly refining sword arts.

We continued to test out Physical Manipulation, Omnidirectional Perception, Omnipresence Perception, Covert Concealment, Lord Intimidation, Flame Operation, Water Operation, Soil Operation, and Wind Operation.

In the end, the training method I used was to maintain my Lord Intimidation and Covert Concealment skills while accelerating and stopping repeatedly with Physical Manipulation. I also utilized Wind Operation, Flame Operation, and to detect the stones and wind debris in all directions, I used Omnipresence Perception to dodge... In addition, it is also to avoid the wall produced by the Water Operation and the Soil Operation.

After a long training session like that, Asurasu emerged from inside Alistair's mansion.

"It looks like you're having a hard time."

".....Hmm."

Shortly after, Fran nodded to Asurasu's words.

"Hmm."

"...!"

『Wha!』

Asurasu suddenly grabbed the Earth Sword Gaia that he was carrying on his back and swung it at Fran. The attack oozed with murderous intent. Gaia thrust deep into the ground as Fran avoided it.

If Fran hadn't ducked on the spur of the moment, she would have been badly injured.

『What are you doing!』

"Kukuku. You evaded it pretty well. That was an attack you wouldn't have been able to duck if you hadn't used your skills to the fullest!"

Hmmm, Well, now that you mention it.... Fran also heard Asurasu's words and clapped her hand with a pop sound while giving a look of understanding.

So you're saying that she instinctively sensed the danger and subconsciously used the skills. I didn't quite master it, but it was certainly smoother to use than when I was consciously thinking about it in my head.

"It's good to repeat the training to master it, but live battle is just as important, you know?"

*Well, I understand what you're saying, but you could've just told us about it.*

Unfortunately, Fran, a passionate fellow, seemed convinced by Asura's actions. She then nodded many times to his words.

"Mhm. I understand."

"Then fine. With Master here, you wouldn't die easily, would you?"

Fran set me up so that we could match Asurasu's fighting spirit.

『Ho!』

"Haa!"

"Fuu!"

Before I could say anything else, Fran and Asurasu started a mock battle.

*Sheesh! That's why you guys are battle junkies! They didn't even ask for permission first!*

For the next few moments, the two continued to engage in an intense mock battle. No. Is it even a mock battle anymore? There were no reservations in each other's attacks. It's just like a face off, as long as one didn't die, they kept unleashing high-powered attacks on each other.

In fact, there were several moments along the way where they used healing magic. Nonetheless, it's also clear that Fran's movements have visibly improved during this battle.

After all, as Asurasu said, there is nothing better than a real battle. Asurasu didn't seem to be triggered in a fight of this magnitude, thanks to the resetting of the mad demonization once. It would be the only time I could get him to train with me.

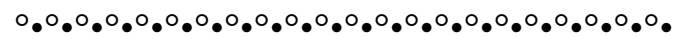
I'm really grateful to Asurasu for caring and lending a hand to Fran.

“Fuhahahahaha! Your movements are gradually improving!”

“Shhh! Not yet!”

“Hahahaha!”

*Well, it sounds like you're totally enjoying it.*



# Chapter 370 - One's Destination

Editor Makoto

It was already well past noon by the time Fran and Asurasu ended their mock battle that looked nothing short of a killing contest. Fran and Asurasu were now chatting over a pile of onigiri I served as a slightly late lunch.

“Mogu. You seem to have gotten a lot of your fighting sense back.”

“Mhm. Mogyu Mogyu.”

The half-day battle with Asurasu allowed both Fran and I to improve tremendously in using our skills during combat. While it’s still not as good as it once was, it’s unlikely that we will be in a pinch while in combat because of it.

It seems that the foundation has been solidified. Now it’s just a matter of application and practice.

『Thank you. You really saved us.』

“Mogu mogu. I had a good time, too, you know?”

Asurasu only laughed lightly in response to my gratitude. He looked embarrassed. Perhaps, he was not used to being thanked.

“After this, try to actively hunt for demonic beasts in various places. That’s the most efficient way to train.”

With a rice ball in each hand and a grain of rice sticking to the side of his mouth, Asurasu told me what we needed to do in the future.

*Training in live combat with demon beasts... Well, now that you mention it, it might be useful, but... To be honest, I'm worried. Wouldn't it be better to practice with our skills a little bit more?*

That's what I thought. But...

"Master, I'm going to find a demon beast."

『Isn't it too early for that?』

"I'm finding one now."

Fran was motivated.

*It can't be helped, let's find a demonic beast. Let's at least start with the weaker demonic beasts at first. If there are some goblins around, I can eradicate them without a care in the world.*

As we were discussing what kind of demonic beast we should look for, Asurasu lightly stepped forward. I guess he was done eating as he hit his stomach lightly. This guy ate about 20 rice balls by himself.

"I'll show you some interesting stuff at the end."

"Interesting stuff?"

"Oh, since Master is so determined to one day surpass the divine sword."

『Fran believes that I can.』

"Mhm. Master will be the strongest one day!"

Hearing those words, Asurasu smiled ferociously. Then, in a slow motion, he thrust Gaia up to the heavens.

*What are you doing???*

"Then, witness this! Witness this and see how far you've come!"



In response to Asurasu's spirited voice, we could see magic gushing out of his massive body.

“Ooo ooooo! Divine sword release!”

A magical power strong enough to visually manifest flowed into Gaia from Asurasu. Then, using that magical power as a source, Gaia unleashed her true power.

“Ooooo—”

『Uooo!』

If we hadn't put up a barrier as soon as possible, we would have been blown away. Even if we were already more than 10 meters away, we would still get blown away. That much magic was raging around Asurasu.

*I know you think we'll be fine, but you need to be a little more careful!*

Fran looked at me with a twinkle in her eye, though!

When the stormy magic subsided, Gaia's figure had mutated into the oddest weapon I saw in the dungeon before. It's that thing, like an over-decorated mixture of a siege hammer and a greatsword.

Just by existing, a tremendous sense of intimidation, even more so than the Lord Intimidation skill, covered the surroundings. Even though she knew Asurasu wasn't hostile, Fran can't help but back away.

Furthermore, the surrounding atmosphere, magical power, and the earth itself were shaking as if resonating with the magical power of the earth sword, Gaia.

“Appraisal doesn't work on it after all ...”

However, probably because of my growth due to the refurbishment, it was a little better than before.

**Name:** Earth sword, Gaia

**Attack power (ATK):** 4700

**Magic Power (MP):** 20000

**Durability:** 30000

**Magical Conductivity :** SS+

Skill

Only attack power, magic power and durability can be seen. Well, progress is progress.

“What I’m about to show you is a piece of Gaia’s power. Let it burn in your eyes!”

Asurasu set up to carry Gaia on his back. A brownish aura glaringly rose from Gaia. I could feel a vicious and intimidating magical power spreading.

“Haaaaaaaaa!”

It’s no longer at the level of vibrations or the like. The Earth was now shaking as if it were an earthquake, with Asurasu as the epicenter.

“Look at this! Ohhhhh!”

Asurasu leaped. However, that leap was really unnatural. He didn’t seem to have put much effort into it, but he rapidly accelerated and rose to the sky. Perhaps, they manipulated gravity.

He continued to jump up to a height of about 30 meters and only then began to plummet with unexpected timing and speed.

“Gravity Blow!”

Then, the moment Asurasu slammed the swirling magic-clad Gaia into the earth, the 30-meter square of earth surrounding him caved in at the same time, reaching a depth of over 20 meters. Earth with that much mass was compressed in an instant.

“So cool...!”

『Ye- Yeah』

What if we were in the range of that attack? We would have been helplessly crushed to death. At the very least, there would have been no way to save ourselves other than to escape with a dimensional leap.

“How was it? I can’t really release all of its power. This was only about 50%...”

*Are you telling me this is only half of the full power even though it’s already this powerful?*

Once again, I was reminded of the violence of the divine sword. At the same time, I was glad that Asurasu was out of control in a dungeon where he couldn’t get serious.

If we’d been out there fighting Asurasu at full throttle, we wouldn’t be here at all. Moreover, what’s frightening is that Asurasu, who unleashed that attack, wasn’t perturbed at all. Maybe, as he himself said, this wasn’t his best.

“Perhaps, this is the level you are aiming for right now. However, this is only part of it.”

“One’s Destination.”

“Ho?”

『Because Fran said so. I can’t just give up.』

“Fuhahaha. I see! Well, next time we meet, let’s do a mock fight again! At that time, let me be a little more serious.”

“Mhm! Let’s absolutely fight seriously!”

*No, No, Fran?*

I'm nodding with such a motivated look in my eyes, but I don't want to have a mock battle with a serious Asurasu or anything like that. No, Asurasu can't do mock battles seriously because of the mad demonization, right? So that means it's just pep talk for Fran.

"Then, I'll be going first."

Sheathing Gaia, he turned his back on us and began to walk away. He wasn't heading to Alistair's Mansion. Rather, he was going the opposite direction.

"You're leaving already?"

"Ou. It's not in my nature to stay in one place for very long."

That's a lie. I don't have to use my skills to know that. After all, as long as he had mad demonization, the fear of not knowing when he was going to go off the rails haunted Asurasu. In fact, it's probably because we've become so close that we couldn't stay together for long.

*If it wasn't for the training with Fran, you could have stayed here much longer.*

However, if he said that, it would watered down Asurasu's spirit, who was willing to go along with the mock battle, even if he had to speed up the activation of his own mad demonization.

Fran waved with a forlorn look while looking at Asurasu.

"Bye bye."

"See you."

"Yeah, see you soon!"

Then, Asurasu left with a quick dash.

*Hmmm, it looks cool.*

I can't help but admire it. If I was just a little bit more young, I might have called him 'Aniki!'



# Chapter 371 - Dismantling the Spoils Of War

Editor Makoto

After Asurasu left, me and Fran borrowed one of the work rooms on the ground floor of Alistair's mansion and worked on dismantling.

The carcasses of a large number of demonic beasts obtained in the riot this time are overflowing in the dimensional storage. It doesn't look like the storage is full yet, but since it's already dead it can't be left there.

Besides, some of the materials are quite valuable demonic beasts. I wondered if there was something that could be used to modify the armor, so I tried to provide it to Alistair, but it seems that the materials in Alistair possession will be sufficient for the modification.

I mean, I'm terrified just to hear how valuable the materials that divine grade blacksmiths will use are..... Well, I'll ask her about that when it's finished.

However, Alistair asked me to show her a list of materials that could be used by her when we finished dismantling them, as some of the materials might be usable for some things.

So for now, I'm starting to dismantle the demonic beasts that are high threat level first. Because the material of a low threat level miscellaneous demonic beast wouldn't be necessary for a divine grade blacksmith. There was not enough time to dismantle everything, so it was necessary to select and disassemble the ones with the highest priority.

The top priority will be the five demon beasts, the bosses of the first flock of demons that we fought before fighting the evil one forces. There are five types: Graphite Hydra, Crimson Wolf, Steel Titan Bear, Adamas Beetle, and Baron Devil.

Well, Graphite Hydra vanished without a trace with my Kanna Kamui attack. The ones who bothered us most, the Adamas Beetle and the demon of the phantom wizard, have already been disassembled.

Perhaps it's because we have defeated a lot of the evil ones and the like, but the dismantling of a demon-like humanoid monster does not feel particularly repulsive. Well, after all that killing, it's a little late to feel that way. Well, in the case of demons, the color of blood and internal organs are completely different from people, so it's probably a big part of why they don't look like people.

“Master, what do we do about this?”

『Hmmm, the fur is tattered, but...』

The next thing Fran took out was the corpse of the Crimson Wolf, the threat level C demonic beast that had fought a fierce battle with Urushi. Its fur is balding, and the bones are brittle, and its flesh smells foul because the entire body has been consumed by the poisonous magic of Urushi. There are very few parts that remain intact.

『But let's try dismantling. After all there might be some parts of it that still remain intact.』

“I understand”

『I think I'll take this one apart.』

I took out the Steel Titan bear. More than half of what should be a reasonably large workroom is now occupied. It is a huge bear that is over 10 meters long. The material remained in perfect condition as the magic stone was crushed with a single blow.

Because of that, dismantling it will be very messy. Peel off the skin, separate the meat, and put the organs away in individual dimensional storage. It took nearly 30 minutes just to dismantle it. Even though I have maxed out my dismantling skills and can move at will with telekinesis, but, this is only work for me. It would have been a half-day hard work for an ordinary adventurer.

We also dismantle other demonic beasts that are strong in their own right, such as the Dragon Lizard, a dragonish monitor lizard, a dryad lion that uses tree magic, and a special individual of a high ogre, which is a class D threat.

Fran stopped halfway through, but I continued to dismantle it throughout the night. All in all I think I have dismantled about 50. It is certain that a large amount of meat will be secured and Fran's future meals will be luxurious.

Next morning. I, along with a still sleepy Fran, went to ask Alistair if she had the materials she needed.

“Are you done with the dismantling?”

『Well, not much to show for it. Here's the list.』

I showed her the list I had written out, but after all, there didn't seem to be any material that was good enough for a divine grade blacksmith. She was just amazed at how fast we were dismantling.

“Really you dismantled this much overnight?”

『Because we did it together』

“Teacher did most of it.”

『Fran is doing about 30% of it.』

While chatting, Alistair reads the list. In the end, it was decided to give the Crimson Wolf's esophagus and the Steel Titan Bear's fangs away since Alistair said she has a use for them.



『After that, there are some magic stones, but do you think it's okay to absorb them?』

“Hmm... how do I say this. I'm not even sure how the skills will be integrated... After all I wouldn't know for sure if I didn't see it.”

『Yeah, I guess you're right.』

“Well, how about you just absorb it for now.”

“Oo, that's a good idea”

『I understand』

So, let the experiment begin. I take out some magic stones from the evil ones. You can't see the skills that dwell in the magic stones when you appraise them, but the hobgoblin spearer's magic stones should belong to the evil ones who were led by the Valkyrie.

I remember the appraisal result at that time. Almost all hobgoblin spearer possessed the long spear technique. What will happen when I absorb this?

『Well then, let's do this.』

“Hmm”

When Fran presses the hobgoblin spearer's magic stone against my blade, it is absorbed without problems. There seems to be no big difference in the functions around this area. No. Did it make me feel a little more satisfied when I absorbed the magic stone? Maybe it's because the refurbishment connected me more deeply with the mysterious soul.

『What happened to the skill?』

If I check my skills, there is no long spear technique or long spear art. Perhaps it was absorbed and integrated into the Lord Spear Technique • Base. Later, the skill that should have disappeared due to refurbishment, hole digging from the Technical Skill was added.

『I got hole digging』

“So, will the skills that have disappeared be revived if absorbed again from the magic stone?”

『Isn't this pretty bad? I was finally able to reduce my skills.』

“Hmm... wait a moment.”

Alistair is analyzing me. Then she asked me to absorb the magic stone again, so this time I absorbed the hobgoblin archer's magic stone.

I still don't get the longbow art and longbow technique, but I do get the carpentry skill from the Technical Skill.

『How is it?』

“Hmm... this is just a probability, but I think it's because you are reborn as a skill-specific type due to the refurbishment. It seems that you can afford a lot of skills.”

“Meaning?”

“I think it's okay to increase the skill if it's about 120 to 150. Well, I think it also depends on the quality of the skill...”

『That's good news』

What's scary is that the number of wasted skills increases again, and because of that, I become unable to move again.

“But don't build your skills until you're close to the limit. Come to me before that if you can.”

“Of course”

『I get it. But it just, I will get another refurbishment.....』

“That’s something you should put up with. Well, I think you’ll get used to it after a few times, right? Besides, it wouldn’t be as bad as this one if it was just to get rid of a skill.”

『I hope so.』

I then absorbed the magic stone while Alistair watched over me. It's reassuring to have someone that can deal with it if something goes wrong.

In the end, the magic stone value was 2203 from about 100 magic stones. I had gained about 15 skills. As far as skills go, it's all Technical Skill skills.

The dungeon-born evil ones were probably given these skills for building their positions on the battlefield.

『.....I guess we have a long way to go before the next self-evolution.』

[illegible]

# Chapter 372 - Black Heavenly Tiger Equipment

Editor Makoto

The day after Asurasu departed. After fully absorbing the magic stone, we prepared to leave the Alistair's Mansion.

『I'm indebted to you for all your help.』

“No, it was a great experience for me too. I look forward to seeing you again.”

『You even had Fran's armor improved, but are you sure you want to be paid like that?』

“I don't mind. Looking at Fran's reaction, I can tell that it is much more valuable than money.”

The other party was a divine grade blacksmith, and I had the opportunity to ask her to repair and refurbish me, and also modify Fran's armor. Moreover, I'm sure she used a lot of valuable materials to complete said tasks.

In a normal course of events, it wouldn't be surprising if it would cost hundreds of millions of golds, is it? However, Alistair said she didn't want any rewards. She added that all of it would be worth it with just being able to analyze an interesting sword, which was me.

Still, I felt bad, but when I insisted on giving a reward, Alistair said,

“Okay, I'll only take 1 million gold. It's just a feeling. You know, I got the materials from the monsters. Also, I want a whole pot of curry to be left on

the table.”

A million gold is quite a lot of money, but I figured it was a small price to pay for Alistair. Well, it’s just a hunch. Thus, I decided to leave a million gold and one of the largest curry pots on the table.

Fran insisted she’d leave all the money she had if we didn’t have to give Alistair the curry, but I convinced her that if we go to the town and get some spices we would be able to make more of it. Even a full-sized cauldron which people use to sell food filled to the brim with curry wouldn’t cost 10,000 gold.

When I tried to give her the recipe, she said she didn’t want it because she couldn’t cook at all. Apparently, the golem for cooking could only make dishes that have been programmed in advance.

“Thank you for the armor.”

“The original armor was a good one.”

“Yeah, it’s so cute and strong. I’m really glad I asked Alistair to help me out.”

Fran was wearing a series of black cat equipment that looked much different than before. No, the name had already changed, so it could be called new equipment. The shape of the armor had been drastically changed while retaining its appearance.

Regardless, its performance has changed even more tremendously than its external experience. First of all, the defense power of each piece increased by 50. Originally, the total defense power was 350, but now it has increased by 300 to a total of 650.

The durability had also been increased by 200, making it more sturdy. The effects are also enhanced in a modest way.

**Name:** Black Heavenly Tiger Uniform

**Defense:** 150

**Durability:** 800/800

**Effect:** good sleep, deodorization, purification, greater mental attack resistance

**Name:** Black Heavenly Tiger Gloves

**Defense:** 120

**Durability:** 800/800

**Effect:** greater impact resistance, increase in strength

**Name:** Black Heavenly Tiger Light Shoes

**Defense:** 115

**Durability:** 800/800

**Effect:** Jumping, increase in agility

**Name:** Black Heavenly Tiger Earrings

**Defense:** 65

**Durability:** 500/500

**Effect:** greater noise resistance, greater attribute resistance

**Name:** Black Heavenly Tiger Cloak

**Defense:** 135

**Durability:** 800/800

**Effect:** Cold resistance, heat resistance, automatic equipment repair

**Name:** Black Heavenly Tiger Leather Belt

**Defense:** 65

**Durability:** 500/500

**Effect:** granted during magic resistance, granted during abnormal condition resistance, small item bag

Moreover, the protection of the black cat has been enhanced with the protection of the black heavenly tiger.

The Black Cat's Blessing was +10 for all stats while wearing the complete black cat equipment. Furthermore, there was a skill to nullify immediate death. Also, I think there was an effect that made it so it could only be equipped by the Black Cat Tribe.

However, the Black Heavenly Tiger equipment was even more intense. In addition to all stats +20, there was instant death nullification, thunder nullification, and enhanced stealth. Now, the Black Heavenly Tiger was almost exclusively for Fran.

Well, it's a pretty cute design, so I don't think Grandma Chiara would have said she'd equip it if she were still alive.

It's basically black cat equipment. However, flares and lacy fluttering in the details added to the overall girliness of the dress.

A big change will be the black cat's uniform. There is a large collar around the neck that looks like a false collar, and the shoulders and chest have ruffles. The lower half of the body became a completely fluttery skirt type of thing. Underneath it, it looks like she is wearing pants that are somewhere between a culotte and an underskirt.

After all, Aristair was a woman even if she acted like a man. It's much more girly than the boyish one made by Gallus.

"It's fluttering but I can still move."

『Yeah, Fran is cute.』

"Yeah, I'm getting pretty good at this. It looks good on you. I'm sure you will stand out and become the envy of every man in the world. You know

what I mean?”

“? We can’t stand out.”

“Why?”

“We will be found by monsters.”

『Fran, when Alistair says stand out, that’s not what she meant...』

*Hm. Fran is not interested in cuteness at all. She is not interested in anything other than being easy to move and strong.*

“Master...”

『I know. I know, but there is nothing I can do, right? I’m a man, and Fran isn’t interested in cute things at all!』

“Yes, but the material is good.”

Alistair had no makeup on, but others seem to care. She stared at me with jittery eyes.

『I- I knew it wasn’t a good idea to go on like this either. I’ll do my best.』

“.....Well, I’ll just wait and see what happens.”

『So be it.』

“?”

Finally, Fran and Alistair give a firm handshake to each other.

“Thank you for everything.”

“Be careful. You haven’t mastered Master’s skill yet, have you?”

“Nn. We will train as we go.”



『I won't be reckless for a while.』

Worst case scenario, we will have to use teleportation to get around the guy who looks like they could be trouble. Or, until my skills are stable enough to use them, I'll be fighting mainly with my magic.

『Hey, when we want to see Alistair to do some maintenance, do we come here?』

“No, I travel around the world regularly. I will be moving out of this place in less than a month.”

Eh? So how do I get in touch with Alistair?

“I'm planning to move to the Gilbard continent after this. You guys are going to go back to Gilbard one of these days, right?”

“Hmm.”

『I'm going to attend the auction in the capital of the Kingdom of Kranzell.』

“Oh, that one huh? Is it in about two more weeks?”

“Yes, more or less.”

“If that's the case, then I might cross over to Gilbard first. In case you're wondering, they should be on the side of the town of Ulster in the southwestern part of the Kingdom of Berrios. If you are near me, I'll get in touch with you. I can already sense Master's magic, you know.”

It seems Alistair has the ability to detect the magical power of weapons even from a distance. If so, we might be able to meet easily.

『Let's meet over there』

“Hmm”

“Ou, be careful.”



# Chapter 373 - Gringott Again

Editor Makoto

After leaving Alistair's Mansion, we were on our way to Gringott. We want to know if the Black Cats were able to evacuate safely, and we also want to get information about the war.

“I see it”

“Woof!”

We left in the morning and by mid-afternoon we had Gringott in sight.

“The rampart is a little bit broken”

『Yeah, it seems like there's been some pretty intense fighting.』

Even though Kiara, Mea and the others had eradicated the swarm of demonic beasts to some extent, but of course there would still be some of them that ran away before Kiara and the others managed to strike them down. They must have been the ones who attacked Gringott.

It can be seen from the damage on the rampart and surroundings that there was a fairly fierce battle. There are burnt marks on the rampart, and part of the surrounding forest is burned down. Not only that, but a lot of trees were knocked down, making lots of hollow parts in the ground.

But the gates, though damaged, remain undestroyed, and soldiers can be seen patrolling on the ramparts. It seems that they have prevented them from getting into the city.

For the time being, we decided to get off just before the castle gate. In the past, there would have been a long line of people waiting to be screened to enter the town, but now the gates of the castle were tightly closed and there were no people in sight.

As we got off Urushi's back and approached the gates on our own, we were approached by a soldier on the ramparts asking who we are and what do we want by coming here.

“Who- Who are you!”

We can also see that there are multiple bows pointed at us at the same time.

『Fran, I don't feel any killing intent .....maybe』

“Mhm”

Omnipresence Perception is doing too much work and I will only get information overload, but I don't think the soldiers on the ramparts are going to kill me. However, there is considerable caution and fear coming from them.

“Fran. Adventurer”

“Like you—”

“Hey! Wait!”

A soldier who was about to raise his voice further was stopped by a colleague next to him, who looked flustered.

“What are you doing!”

“That person is fine!”

Apparently, there was a soldier who remembered Fran. This is going to save me a lot of extra time.

Eventually, the soldier was able to identify Fran and get us into the city. It's pretty crowded in there. But there is no liveliness at all. This is because many of them are refugees who have fled from the surrounding villages.

In the middle of central avenue on both sides of the area families were huddling together. Perhaps they had escaped in a hurry with only their clothes on. Most of them were just tired and sat down without a smile.

However, as I walked down the street toward the lord's mansion, there was a corner that was different from the other area where other refugees came together. Here, tents are regularly set up and even a simple kitchen is built. And everyone was chatting there comfortably.

『They just saved us the trouble of asking for the direction to the lord's house.』

“Hmm!”

It's an area where the refugees from Schwarzkadze gathered. I kind of know it when we escape from the pack of demonic beasts, and I heard that the black cat people are really used to escaping. They are obviously well prepared beforehand and seem to be more adaptable than other beastmen in places like this.

They are indeed a wanderer who has been on the run. Apparently, even though they had a safe haven in Schwarzkadze, they hadn't lost their escape skills.

Fran spots a familiar man and runs over to him.

“Chief!”

“Oh! Princess! You are fine!”

“Everyone! The princess is back!”

“Princess! Welcome back!”

Everyone greets her with an awesome smile. Fran seems a little confused, but I think the thought of joy is even greater than that.

“I’m back”

She nod to everyone shyly. Damn, it’s so cute. The black cats seemed to have the same impression as me, and everyone were either laughing or giving a wide smile.

Fran is a hero and idol to the Black Cat tribe. In no time at all, we were surrounded by a crowd of black cat people.

“Gentlemen, we mustn’t barge on the princess like this. Don’t come too close!”

“E~~ii, It’s not fair that only the village chief talks to the princess!”

“That’s right! That’s right!”

“E~~ii! So noisy! Shut up! Anyway, scatter for now! First of all, let’s have the Princess rest!”

“Yes”

“Tsk”

The village chief disbanded the Black Cats. Then he leads us straight to a place like a plaza set up in the middle of the Black Cat Tribe’s tent village.

“Now, now, please sit here, but I’m sorry we only have this one chair.”

“Mhm. Thank you.”

“Hey, bring us some tea!”

In the square, Fran sat on a chair and the village chief sitting on the ground in front of her. And the people from the village remain and surround her. Well, the area around it is filled with the black cat people.

“And what happened outside? What happened to the village?”

Well, It's obvious that, that's what you want to know. Naturally, we were on our way to Gringott to check on Schwarzkadze's condition.

“The village is safe. Few houses are broken. And now that all the demon beasts have been killed, we can go back to them whenever we want.”

“Is it really true?”

“Hmm”

“Is that so!”

“We did it!”

“As expected of the princess!”

“Princess Banzai!”

The moment Fran told them that the village was safe, the Black Cat tribe, including the village chief, seemed to explode with joyful emotions. There was an earth-shaking roar, followed by cheerings sound. I suppose that was their number one concern.

“Thank you very much! Di- did the princess exterminate the demon beast?”

“Not just me. Mea and Kiara are with us.”

“When you say Kiara, is that Kiara?”

“Do you know?”

“Of course! For our Black Cats, it's another hero lined up with the princess!”

I see, so you know her.

“Everyone is happy, and surely Kiara is happy too.”

“And, so where is Lady Kiara?”

“Hmm... Kiara—”

Fran is at a loss for words. It seems that just by seeing her, everyone, including the village chief, realized that Kiara was dead. He keeps his mouth shut with a painful expression. However, Fran told the story of Kiara as it was. Everyone is quietly listening to her words.

The village chief was taken care of by Kiara when he was young, or something like that, and he started screaming and crying halfway through. Other sobbing voices rise from among the black cat people.

But Fran concludes the story while smiling.

“Kiara won’t be happy to see people crying. I’m sure that she will be happier if everyone laughed and remember her as a hero.”

“Pri, princess...! Tha- That’s right!”

“Ou, it’s as the princess says!”

You can't seem to laugh all of a sudden, but at least no one's crying with a dark expression anymore. It's a reminder of the tremendous power of Fran's influence. Fran wiped her own tears and smiled.

However, many black cats are still crying all at once. The way it looked was nothing short of bizarre. Moreover all the other species in the vicinity are looking at us like they are looking at something creepy.



# Chapter 374 - The Result of the War is?

Editor Makoto

TL NOTE : I'm sorry for not updating last week because I need to be at the Hospital.....

As we finished explaining everything to everyone of the Black Cat tribe, the knights came over. Apparently, he heard the collective cry of the Black Cat tribe.

“We just received a report of a disturbance in the area.....”

“What happened?”

“Who is in charge?”

Apparently, the other refugees had notified the knights. Well, they must have wondered what happened.

After the village chief explained to the knights what was going on, their eyes turned to Fran. However, their gaze didn't seem to be irritated from looking at the source of the commotion. Instead, they looked at Fran with a twinkle in their eyes.

“You are the Black Thunder Princess, right!”

“I've heard of you.”

I heard that Marmano, the lord of Gringott, and Mea, who visited the city shortly before we returned, had told them many stories of Fran's heroic

deeds.

Fran was asked by the knights to join them by all means to visit the city lord's house. I was a bit troubled by the many beastmen, who froze and kneeled when they saw Fran walking by. They even worshipped her on the spot.

It appears the rumors of the Black Thunder Princess were widely known among the beastmen of Gringott. Apparently, the Black Cat tribe had also been going around preaching the splendor of the Black Thunder Princess like missionaries.

Furthermore, from the news brought by Mea, it became known that the Black Thunder Princess took the lead in the annihilation of the demonic beasts and risked her life to defend the beast kingdom. In such a situation, it was only natural that if an evolved black cat that was said to be impossible was walking around, their identity would be discovered in a matter of seconds.

Thus, the inhabitants of Gringott saw us off as we reached the lord's mansion, and as soon as we arrived, we were ushered into the reception room, where we were able to meet the lord, Marmano.

As they were still in a state of war, he struck a brave figure in his heavy armor. It gave off a completely different aura compared to the negligee I saw him wear when I visited him the night of the demonic beast attack.

"Welcome, Black Thunder Princess!"

"Hmm."

"I have heard about Her Highness' great service! Thank you for saving Gringott."

"I just wanted to protect my friends."

"Still, our city has undeniably been saved as well. I even heard that you kicked out more than 10,000 packs of demonic beasts and destroyed the

evildoers!”

Apparently, Mea exaggerated when she told him of the details. It’s true that we defeated 10,000 hordes of demonic beasts, but the stories Marmano heard seem to have been greatly embellished and beautified.

With a twinkle in his eye, Marmano recounted the story of Fran’s defense that Mea told him. Slaying a thousand demonic beasts with a single swing, and defeating ten thousand demonic beasts with a single magical strike... Who is this hero? Isn’t it hard to possess a divine sword?

“Well, in front of the power of the mighty demon beasts, the dainty appearance of the Black Thunder Princess who stood tall made her compatriots shed tears! I wish I could have seen it happen in person!”

Who are you talking about? The story isn’t exactly wrong, but I feel like it wasn’t about Fran? Well, Mea did intensely love Fran, after all. She must have been a bit too excited.

Then, Marmano bowed deeply.

“Thanks to your hard work, it’s not just Gringott. Our country too has been saved. Once again, let me thank you.”

“Like I have said before, I didn’t do anything special.”

“Fuhahaha. I cannot reward my men if you said your help is not something special. It’s fine. You did a great thing. I’m not saying you should show off and become arrogant. However, you should take credit where credit is due. Otherwise, you might end up making some unnecessary enemies.”

Marmano, suddenly with a straight face, advises us in a serious tone of voice. Well, he does have a point.

‘Fran didn’t do anything special’. If we kept insisting on saying we only did the obvious thing and declined compliments and rewards, wouldn’t it be hard for the other soldiers and knights to be proud of their achievements?

Also, it was okay now because Marmano is a good man, but some of the nobles might be offended by Fran's attitude. It may be easier to take a little pride in our accomplishments than to be humble to such a person, just so that they won't hate your guts.

These people have their own ways to measure others. Therefore, a reputation as a naive adventurer of a young age who gets carried away when praised would be less alarming to the nobility than an uncanny and noble warrior girl with no greed and no weaknesses to be exploited.

"Mhm, I Understand."

"Is that so! Well, forgive me. I started preaching to you all of a sudden."

"No. Thank you for your concern."

"Apparently, the Black Thunder Princess really is such a generous person as described! Well, I'm impressed!"

"Too much compliment."

"Gahahaha. If we had been pinned down from the north too, our country would have been in a crisis. Preventing one of them, destroying the dungeon and annihilating the demonic beast was an unparalleled achievement in this war. It's no wonder that Black Thunder Princess, Your Highness Nemea and Kiara-sama are dubbed the heroes and the country's salvation. The only people who could match them would be the two lion generals on the southern front line."

Southern Front line... I'm curious as to what happened on that side of the war. I also can't deny that I'm worried about the two generals, who played important roles in this war.... Wait. Before that, what happened to the war? Did we lose? Did we achieve victory? Marmano's face wasn't clouded or moody, so I don't think we lost.....

"What happened to the southern battle?"

"It was a great victory for our country!"

“Is it over?”

Wasn't it only about a week since the war started? Moreover, they must have deployed large armies to each other. If they can't achieve victory with that they will deploy more soldiers or use different tactics, therefore I don't think it would be surprising if the war went on for months, or even years.

“There is also the fact that the difference in strength of the forces was too vast. The Beast Kingdom was overwhelmingly superior in terms of number of mobilized troops and quality of soldiers.”

“Still, I heard that the Bashar Kingdom is very good at magic.”

“Well, yes. In terms of magic, the quality of sorcerers and the ability to develop magical tools of ours are both outclassed by Bashar Kingdom.”

The magic tools for long-distance calls were made by the Magician's Guild of the Bashar Kingdom, I believe. Perhaps, they developed a lot of other useful tools as well. If that was the case, then it could be said that even if we won in terms of the number of soldiers, we couldn't have won by simply overwhelming them.

At least, that was what I thought, but then I was made to know that regular soldiers were too weak to utilize their magical advantage at all.

“What can I say... There's the racial difference. But really, even more importantly, there is a bigger difference between our senses.”

“Senses?”

“Yes”

Of course... If we compared beastmen and humans, beastmen were more powerful in combat. However, it was not only that, as there is also a big difference in the senses of the soldiers from the two countries.

“They definitely have a substantial number of outstanding soldiers. Just, in war, soldiers are also recruited from farmers, amongst many other layman workers.”

Well, that was normal in this world. Rather, the army and knights were mainly responsible for maintaining security in peacetime and defeating demonic beasts. They would definitely be overwhelmingly short of manpower to fight a war on their own.

“On top of that, there were already notable differences between our country and the Kingdom of Bashar from the time of the conscription.”

“What difference?”

“The Bashar Kingdom dispatched an officer called a conscript officer to each village and forcibly gathered soldiers. In each village, although people were reluctant to betray their homeland, they also weren’t exactly willing to volunteer to become soldiers.”

That was also not surprising. No one wants to send their family to a dangerous war zone.

“However, in the case of the Beastmen Nation, there was no need to do that. Most of the time, volunteers come from the surrounding villages on their own. Some of them even come to us as if they were going hunting. In fact, it was harder for us as there were too many volunteers wanting to sign up!”

As expected of the fighting race. Even ordinary people were fierce.

“In both countries, although most soldiers were originally farmers, the soldiers of Bashar Kingdom were just peasants, while ours are semi-farmers. Also, I think theirs were forced into a war that they didn’t want to be in, whereas our soldiers— in particular those in the frontier villages— were soldiers by profession, and they usually feel that by farming they are making supplies for the logistics.”

I see, so the soldiers’ will to fight was overwhelmingly different. Moreover, the soldiers of Beastman Nation do training on a regular basis. Only, the Black Cats were thought to be particularly weak, so they weren’t associated with that kind of atmosphere.....



# Chapter 375 - Journey To the Royal Capital

Editor Makoto

After hearing of the end of the war from Marmano, Fran asked what she was most concerned about to Marmano.

“Do you know how Mea is doing?”

Yes, it was about where Mea and the others are now, and how they are doing. However, Marmano only shook his head apologetically.

“I don’t know. The princess left Gringott for the southern battlefield.”

“Is it safe there?”

“I don’t know that either. She is very strong though, so I’m sure she is safe.....”

“I see.”

“If you want to find out more, you should go to the royal capital.”

It can’t be helped after all huh. I’m also curious about Myrellia’s will. She said she wanted me to help a boy named Romeo.....

But, well, I’m hesitant to head to Bestia, the royal capital.

“Is this town okay?”



After all, the Black Cat tribe has taken refuge in Gringott. There's no way Fran can ignore the safety of this city and leave.

“Are you worried? Don't worry. The war is over, and the knights and soldiers we sent from our city will soon return. Those who have volunteered to fight for us will do the same too. We'll have no problem finding food to shelter them in the city until they return.”

It's just like what he said. Well, now that the monster beast in the dungeon is gone, things are back to how it was before. If only there were no concerns about food supply, it wouldn't be so much as a crisis for Gringott.

“Gringott is all right now. Please leave the Black Cats to me. I won't treat them badly.”

Marmano had Fran's back. Perhaps, he sympathized with Fran's anxiety.

“Please.”

“Leave it to me.”

After that, we were asked to stay at Marmano's residence for one night, but we decided to leave immediately. It would have been nice to stay with the Black Cats for one night instead of in Marmano's residence, but Fran wanted to hurry ahead.

Now that the Black Cat tribe was safe and sound, Fran wanted to ensure that Mea and the others are safe as well. We left Gringott with the Black Cats seeing us off as the sun set.

The soldiers were quite worried about us, but with Urushi around, we can manage attacks from most demonic beasts. If it was of a lower rank, we could use dark magic to defeat it, and small fry can't catch up with Urushi's speed anyways. If it is of the same rank or higher than Urushi, we'll use detection skills to steer clear of them.

“Su~ Su~ Su~”

Fran was already used to a forceful march on Urushi, that she could sleep soundly on its back. While firmly grasping its hair and belt, she slept soundly, buried in Urushi's hair. Looks like we won't even need telekinetic support. Actually, I'm not going to turn off my telekinesis.

She was even dexterous enough to eat her dinner before bed, and what she ate wasn't something like skewers or bread, but soup and pasta. She managed to balance it well, and ate it with a fork and spoon.

At this rate, wasn't it already possible for her to live on Urushi's back? There was no problem with sleeping and eating.

What's left... a bath? No, she definitely couldn't take a bath, indeed. However, I think we could go for a shower, though Urushi will get soaked. Wait, I think that can be prevented if we set up a wind barrier.

Seriously, I think I could handle most things while on Urushi's back. Just, it would be quite a nuisance for Urushi.

“Woof!”

『What's wrong Urushi?』

“Woo- Woof!”

Oh, it seems that Fran, who was sleeping while hugging Urushi's neck, was holding on too tightly and strangled Urushi. Fran's hand seemed to be in his neck in just the worst way possible.

『Good luck?』

“Woo, Woof?”

『No. If you pull it off badly, you'll wake up Fran. That's why... Good luck?』

“Wo, Woof!”

It's not that I'm getting back at you because Fran was with me while I was struggling with my refurbishment and Urushi was fast asleep, okay? It's the truth you know?

“Unn~~ muu~~...”

“Whimper!”

『Good luck』

“Whine~ Whine~!”

While having such an exchange, we pushed through the night sky, and by next morning, we had reached the royal capital.

There were no signs of war having broken out here. The royal capital was there, looking exactly the same as when I visited before. Outside the gate, a line of merchants and adventurers waited to enter, as usual. The aftermath of the war seemed to have barely reached the royal capital.

『Let's get off in front.』

“Woof!”

“Master, over there.”

When I instructed Urushi to descend to the plains before the royal capital, Fran, who was already awake, pointed to the sky.

『What? That is— a Wyvern?』

“Mhm. Mea.”

『I see! Is that Lind?!』

However, I couldn't tell. Just from looking at it, it looked like a wyvern, or something flying, passed us.

I'm going to try again to use my omnidirectional detection against the shadows flying far away. Then, I sensed a vaguely familiar magical power.

“It was definitely Lind.”

『How could you know who it was from so far away?』

“Friends don't mistake each other.”

It was such a simple reason.

『Is- is that so? Oh, well. Urushi, don't stop there. We're going to meet up with Mea and the others.』

“Woof!”

They seemed to notice us, too, and slightly deviated from their original course toward the royal capital and headed toward us. As they were moving in the sky at high speeds, in a blink of an eye, the distance between us was closed.

One wouldn't make a mistake at this distance. It was Mea, Kuina and Lind. But, it looks like Mianoa isn't with them.

“Fran! Master! Urushi! It's been a long time!”

“Mhm!”

Mea waved from above Lind. Urushi and Lind, as they were told, lowered their altitudes and headed towards a corner of the plains.

As they landed, Mea jumped off Lind's back and ran at us. The same goes for Fran.

“Fran!”

“Mea!”



# Chapter 376 - Scolded By Mea

Editor Makoto

TL NOTE : This is Monday, 14 September 2020 Chapter

“What were Mea and the others doing?”

Fran and the others sat at the table set that Quina had arranged according to the maid’s etiquette, while drinking tea and reporting back to each other on what they had been doing since they had left each other.

As a matter of fact we got steak as snacks that’s served with the tea. Sipping tea on one hand while munching on a thick steak. It’s already more of a meal instead of tea time, right? However, it is a common sight in the Beast Country. Quina, who acts as the Tsukkomi, doesn’t say anything either.

To be honest, I think it’s okay to share the information to one another later after we entered the royal capital but..... It seems that neither could wait.

We explain how the skills have become difficult to use and about my modifications.

“So the skill transform to the advanced level but the fighting power has declined? Isn’t that a grave situation!”

“Mhm, very terrible”

“But it’s not entirely unheard of, is it?”

『Is that so?』

“Yes”

According to Quina, this is a phenomenon that often happens when a sensory or physical enhancement skill reaches the highest level and changes to an advanced level skill.

It seems that the skills we usually use intuitively are more confusing when they change into a more advanced level.

“Well, even so, I can’t give you any advice, because usually it’s not possible for more than one skill to change to an advanced level at the same time, like what happened to you.”

『I see..... But how do you usually get over that?』

“Training.”

It was a very brief answer. But it’s the only way to go. And if there was an easier way to overcome it, Asurasu would have told us about it.

The next thing Mea got her teeth into after talking about skills was the story that my outer body was originally a divine sword cherubim. According to Mea, Quina is also very surprised.

“I never thought I’d meet a divine sword in a row in such a short period of time.....”

“Yes. I’m surprised.”

『I will return the words back to you. I’m only at the level of a former divine sword or a semi-divine sword, but you guys have a real divine sword.』

“No, no, no, it’s a semi-divine sword, and an intelligence weapon, moreover it seems to have some more secrets? Isn’t that much more better?”

『Isn’t the divine sword much more better?』

Mea and Quina are looking at me with a dumbfounded expression for some reason, but it can’t be helped after Asurasu showed me the Earth Sword Gaia’s capability.

It's not totally, but I don't think I can say that I'm better than a divine sword. Lind hasn't shown his true power yet, so Mea's perception of him may be a little too naive. Or rather, it's scary to see what kind of monster Lind will turn into when he's regained his true form. I am after all only a semi-divine sword.

When I muttered something like that, Mea glared at me sternly.

“Master, aren't you putting yourself down way too much? It doesn't matter whether you are a divine sword or not. You saved this country! Be proud!”

“Mhm! Master is an awesome sword!”

『I- Is that so?』

“That's right! Besides, the sword is rated by its owner, remember? It's one of the talents of an adventurer to come across excellent armor and be able to get it!”

So that's it. Luck is part of the talent, or maybe it's just that the adventurer's reputation is based on the strength of the armor they are using.

“Master, if you keep putting yourself down you will undermine Fran's achievements! Puff out your chest— no, you don't have any, but you should be proud of who you are!”

『I'm putting myself down too much....? And Fran will.....』

“That's right! Besides, think about it! You single-handedly fended off a huge army of demonic beasts and evil one that could destroy the country, defeated the vicious evil ones who were pulling the strings behind the scenes, and conquered the dungeon that resulted in saving the country.”

Well, if you look at it objectively, it's certainly pretty amazing. If I didn't know I would think she was talking about some Hero.

『I see..... I am— We are amazing』

“That's right! It's amazing!”



Fran said something similar to Marmano, apparently it was a word that applied to me as well. He has told Fran not to be humble, but apparently I was putting down myself too much as well.

I can understand the reason myself. The divine sword. With Gaia in front of me, I took the liberty of rating myself and thought I couldn't win now. And I thought I was no big deal.

I vowed that one day I would catch up with the divine sword. That means that I have admitted that I am not good as I am now, and that I am losing. It was no wonder that I couldn't beat the divine sword, but apparently a large part of me was unknowingly feeling frustrated and defeated. It seemed that my inferiority complex with the divine sword had caused me to belittle myself more than necessary.

But as Mea said, if I'm not good enough, that means Fran is using a bad sword. Besides, Fran and I are always fighting together. If I despise my accomplishments, that means I despise even Fran's accomplishments. I can't let that happen!

『I'm sorry. I'm fine now.』

“Um. That's good.”

I don't mean to be conceited, but I'm going to be more proud of myself from now on. As befits Fran's sword.

“But did you say he showed you Gaia? Did Asurasu show you the released state?”

“Hmm, just a little.”

And when I told her the story of our mock battle, Mea was very envious of us. Come to think of it, it's a mock battle against a rank S adventurer. How could the battle-crazed Mea not be envious?

“I- I wish I could have fought Lord Asurasu too!”

It seems that the tablecloth is about to be chewed at any moment. But apparently a pat on the head from Pessili and Quina brought her back to her senses. She cleared her throat with a cough and changed the subject.

“Nevertheless, the equipment looks pretty good. You said that you had your original equipment modified by Alistair-dono, how is it performing?”

Mea looks at Fran’s new armor and squints at it. Apparently, even though she is a combat fanatic like Fran, she likes cute things.

“Mhm. Perfect”

“I see. Fufu”

“What’s wrong?”

“No, nothing”

Mea smiled suddenly. What’s the matter with you? Did Fran’s cuteness get to you?

“Lady, Why don’t you honestly say that you’re happy to have matching equipment, since both of it was made by Alistair-sama?”

“Wha.....! What are you talking about, Quina! I- I don’t think about such a thing at all!”

“Your expression is becoming softer.”

“Shu- Shut up!”

So this is what it seems to be about. Quina continues to be calm and exposing her.

“Tha- that’s being said, what are we talking about?”

“Hmm”

She is embarrassed. It was Mea who forced the conversation back to its track.

# Chapter 377 - Mea and the Shadow Warrior

Editor Makoto

TL NOTE : This is Today (Wednesday, 16 September 2020) Chapter

“Did you go to the war area after we part way?”

“Hm, that’s right. Do you know?”

“I heard a little. I heard that they took out the armies of Bashar’s kingdom and the awesome earth magicians pushed back the enemy. Were you with him?”

“Yes. Well, I participated ostensibly as a mercenary, not as a princess.”

“Why?”

According to the story, it seems that she hid her identity from the general soldiers and civilians. It seems that she had spoken to the commander and others, but ostensibly she joined the army as an escort for the White Rhinoceros Rigdalfa.

“As a princess, I can’t move about freely, so, you know, it’s not like.....”

『What happened?』

“Selene was there.”

“Who is Selene?”

“Selene is a lady-in-waiting at the royal palace, she is the same tribe as me. She is less powerful in combat than I am, but she is skilled in the art of illusion, and her stature is similar to that of a young lady, so she serves as a shadow warrior. And we can disguise things like race with magic tools.”

Could it be that shadowy figure we just said hello to? I wondered what happened to Selene, but when Mea came out here, she(Mea) was sure that she(Selene) has changed from a shadow warrior to herself(Princess Mea).

“Why?”

“Selene plays the role of..... that’s...um....that is...”

“Selene plays a graceful, fragile, and lady-like, the so called princess, partly by order of His Majesty the King. Honestly, no matter how much we keep up, it was impossible for the real lady to perform that way. They’ll know for sure that she was replaced.”

I see. I don’t think Mea can do the ladylike thing. And when Mea and Selene are replaced, many nobles and generals will find out that the person they were trying so hard to please and protect with their lives was an imposter. Although it’s not surprising that a princess of a great nation would use a shadow warrior.

“For sure you will be able to see the difference between the young lady and Selene.”

『That’s a tough one.....』

“Umu”

Considering the temperament of the Beast Nation, I think a friendly and lively type like Mea would be appreciated. But I’m sure there are many of them who adore the graceful, fragile and lady-like daughter type.

I certainly don’t like being compared to. It would break my heart if it were me.

However, the question remains.

『Why are you letting the shadow warrior play such a character again?』

Why is the girl, Selene, the shadow warrior, acting so unreasonable in the first place? As long as that shadow warrior plays as Mea-ish character that is lively, it's all good, right?

At present, Mea's reputation seems to be a graceful and ladylike, low-combat shelter girl. When the real Mea comes out in the future, will she not get bash by the Beastman country's residence? Because a fragile beauty is suddenly a battle-crazed, energetic girl.

Mea nods in agreement with my question.

“Does Master think so too? It's strange isn't it? Isn't a shadow warrior supposed to be more like the person they are impersonating?”

She seems to think so too. But Quina answered my question without a care in the world.

“It's His Majesty's hobby.”

『Eh? Hobby?』

“Yes. He said he would love to see everyone's reaction when they figure out that the young lady is the real princess after making everyone thought that Selene is the princess.”

“Gununu(riled up sfx). That damn father...!”

Speaking of beast king-ish, it is beast king-ish alright..... I feel sorry for the guys that are being pushed around.

“And then there's the rest of it, which could be meant to be an insinuation or a tease to the young lady.”

“Are you kidding me?”

“Well, I think he enjoys watching the young lady who is depressed and embarrassed to see Selene, who looks just like her, behaving in a ladylike

manner.”

“What a bad hobby! That old man!”

“And if the impression is so different, you’ll be less worried about your daughter’s identity being lost in peacetime.”

Aaah, so that’s how it is. Unlike normal shadow warriors, Mea’s shadow warrior is out there acting as an adventurer. Rather, the aim seemed to be to prevent Mea’s true identity from being exposed by guiding her image into a different type.

I guess it’s also true that it seems to be interesting as the Beast King said.

『I understand that you participated in the fight by hiding your identity, but how did you feel about the fight itself?』

“Even if you ask me about that..... To be honest, we barely do any fight.”

“We just scattered the devastated enemies.”

When Mea and the others arrived at the battlefield, it was apparently already at the time when the Beast Nation’s army was about to push back the Bashar Kingdom’s invading army and start a chase.

It is said that Mea and her men have joined the pursuit force and have marched deep into Bashar’s territory.

“It was a condition of our joining the army that we would provide an escort for the general in command.”

『Come to think of it, you said something like that earlier.』

“Well, it wasn’t really escorting the general but more like to never leave the general’s side.”

So that’s it. Rather than letting the princess act on her own and endanger herself, the general’s aim is to put her on his side in the name of an escort.

“But, I left the army in the middle of the way.”

“Why?”

“.....I went to the Magnolia family.”

Speaking of Magnolia, that’s the place that Myrellia was talking about. It was a request to rescue a child named Romeo from the Magnolia family, from the lord of that house.

As expected, Mea and the others must have been curious about those words.

“With the Beast Nation Army marching across the border, the Magnolia territory in question was already in our sphere of influence.”

『You said crossing the border, but didn’t they have defensive fortifications and forts on the other side?』

“Of course, it does exist. But those facilities were in complete disarray as the devastated allied forces poured into them.”

Just when they think there’s no way they can lose, they suffer a huge defeat and their troops are running away in a disorderly fashion, that’s resulting in chaos at their rear.

Even if they tried to contain them, the entire army would try to enter the fort, and there could be enemy spies mixed in. Moreover, if the Beast Nation was chasing after them from behind, it would be difficult to judge.

“To be frank, the defense facility wasn’t working properly.”

『Did you mean you just pass it by?』

“It’s close. There were some forts that resisted, but that’s where Lysias comes in.”

“Lysias?”



“Um. Court magician Lysias Laurensia. The most powerful earth magician in our country, and the descendant of the royal blood of Laurencia that was renowned for the tragedy of Laurencia. Speaking of the Great Wall Lysias, he’s also famous on the continent of Krom, right?”

Laurencia? Did you just say Laurencia?

# Chapter 378.1 - The Missing Romeo (I)

Editor Makoto

Laurencia? Did you just say Laurencia?

『Hey, what does that person got to do with Linford?』

“Linford? As I recall, he was the evil sorcerer who summoned Myrellia.....”

“Hmm. Linford Laurencia”

“I see... Did you say that his surname is Laurencia?”

『Yeah, He was an old monster over hundred years old.』

“Hundred years old? I believe Lysias should be over 40. So Lysias probably isn’t his child.”

Then, his grandchildren maybe?

『This Lysias guy isn’t an evil sorcerer, is he?』

“Of course”

“Rather, I’ve heard that Lysias hates evil sorcerers.”

In the first place, we don’t even know if it is a direct blood relationship. It is possible that the Laurencia family has split over the years, and not all the descendants of evil sorcerers will be evil sorcerers. If the story about Lysias

hating Linford is true, it's more likely that Linford has done something to him.

It's unlikely that the Beast Kings will miss the evil sorcerer, and there doesn't seem to be any problems with this guy named Lysias.

"Lysias's earth magic is unrivaled in siege battles. With him, no matter how many fort there is, it's nothing to him."

"Do you mean that he is attacking the fort with earth magic?"

"Well, that's possible, but the most secure way you can do is dig a hole for a way to advance. Normally, they'd be fortified with magical tools and other equipment to guard the basement, but they were confused at the time. Lysias who was digging underground was not noticed or interfered with in any way by the enemy. "

I see, so they're going to build an underground tunnel and send soldiers through it. I'm sure there was something called tunnel warfare in Japan. I'm not sure how much of that is genuine and how much of it is fiction, but I'm sure that the method of going underground and crossing the ramparts is very effective.

"Thanks to Lysias and the others, it was easy to get to the Magnolias' house."

"There were no soldiers on patrol to deal with the Beastman's armies, and it was safe to say that there were no guards in Magnolia territory."

"Then, did you manage to get Romeo under your protection?"

"No, I couldn't"

Mea shook her head, her expression darkening slightly.

What do you mean? You have been to the Magnolias' house, haven't you? Did he resist? Or was there never a kid like that in the first place? It is also highly possible that they were evacuated when the war began.

But the answer from Mea and the others was none of those things.

“He had already been taken by someone else.”

『Someone else?』

“Yes, Apparently, a man who was over two meters tall, with scars all over his body, and was as ferocious as an ogre took him.”

I only have two people in mind. No, Asurasu was with us the whole time. And it's not like he is covered in scars all over.

If so, there is only one candidate.

“Xellos Reed?”

“Does Fran think so too? Apparently, Xellos Reed attacked the Magnolia family and kidnapped Romeo.”

Xellos Reed was Myrellia's partner, but he should have betrayed her in her last moments, right? Why did he take Romeo.....? Is he doing this out of spite against Myrellia? Or is there a different reason?

『What is the reason.....?』

“Don't know”

『Guess so』

“Can't you follow him with Urushi's nose?”

“Woof”

As expected even Urushi can't do that. Even if you try to trace it back from the Magnolia family, Xellos Reed will be moving around as well, and after a few days the smell will disappear.

“I see..... I'm afraid it's a dead end.”

“Now then, let’s put the prize money on the line. It’s already been arranged, but if we announce it again, it will be just annoying to other people.”

“You are right”

It would be better to leave it to Mea and the others to take care of the prize money. Seems like we didn’t really have a choice. It’s a pretty bad aftertaste, but the story about a boy named Romeo ends here.

“Hmm.....”

I’m sure Fran is wondering about what to do too. But I know there is nothing more we can do about it.

『Well it can’t be helped. If we run into Xellos Reed in the future, we’ll ask him out. Well, I don’t think he will speak honestly though.』

“Mn!”

I really don’t want to meet a monster like that for the second time. But I’ve already met him twice. Barbora, and now this..... they say that what happens twice might happen three times as well, and so we can’t let our guard down.

“Blow him away and get the full story.”

It seems that there won’t be any leeway for negotiations. Well, I don’t think negotiations are going to work with Xellos Reed, so it will end up being a battle.

『We have to be stronger to prepare if that were to happen.』

“Hmm”

Fran nodded with a look of determination on her face.

“Now, Master, I’m here to take care of Master Kiara.”

『Yes』



# Chapter 378 - The Missing Romeo

## (I) Part 2

Having finished our meeting in the open air, Mea and I entered the capital. Although I was worried that I would have to queue again, there was a person of royal blood with us. Taking advantage of her privileges, we immediately got into the city.

We were met by Mia, who was Kiara's personal servant. She returned to the capital before anyone else, apparently to report the sad news. Around the same time, she began to prepare for Kiara's funeral.

I placed Kiara's dead body, which I had previously hidden in the Dimensional Storage, in a coffin prepared by Mia. Fran and Mea, looking at her again, could not hold back their tears.

But not a single muscle twitched on Mia and Quina's faces. But not because they did not grieve. It is just that the court maids should not show their sadness outwardly. Real professionals in their field.

The funeral plan I heard later was very different from what I had imagined. That is, I, of course, imagined something like a Buddhist funeral, or a European funeral that I saw in the movies.

But the local view of life and death was completely different from the world where I come from. So, of course, the funeral ceremony was unlike anything I had seen before. Moreover, this is the funeral of the half-beast people.

For a start, there seems to be an emphasis on the very moment of death. After all, this is the moment when the soul is separated from the body and

ascends to heaven. Unlike on Earth, the existence of souls here is a generally accepted fact, so praying for the happiness of the deceased in the afterlife is especially important.

Therefore, in a sense, the very moment of passing away is a funeral. After that, only the body remains, which is considered an empty vessel, devoid of a soul. Of course, this does not mean that he is thrown at random, however, the body itself is not given great importance.

So, as a sign of respect for the deceased, his body is simply protected from turning into undead. After all, a strong adventurer makes a correspondingly strong undead.

Therefore, if the body of the deceased can be carried away, it is carried away, and if this is problematic, the body is simply burned and buried. It looks like bones are not being harvested either. It is necessary to make sure that no one else identifies the deceased.

If the deceased can be carried away with him, then a ritual of protection from turning into undead is performed over him, after which he is buried. However, the main thing at the funeral is not the deceased, but the living.

At a time when the Earth is sometimes said figuratively that the family says goodbye to the deceased, this is exactly what happens in this world at funerals. At the funeral, those present can see the deceased in a coffin, accept the fact of his death, and receive the support of others to come to terms with the loss.

But there are no funeral gifts or wreaths. Indeed, they cannot be carried away to the afterlife. And prayers for happiness in the afterlife and other ceremonies are conducted not by some monks, but by family and friends. Yes, there is not a single priest at a funeral in this world, this is another important difference from the Earth analogue.

- The funeral of Mrs. Kiara will take place in four days. The day after the return of the Beast King.

- What? Have you contacted your father?



- Yes. Since the magic device for remote communication does not work between continents, and there is a chance that the conversation might be overheard in Bashar, I used the Adventurer's Guild Mail Falcon. He replied that he would return immediately.

Wouldn't it be too quick to return from another continent in just three days? They will have to march without rest. However, when your country is at war, this is not surprising.

They tried to start it exactly when the king is not in the country. Although this alone did not create any particular problems. Still, the military power significantly exceeds that of the Bashar kingdom.

- Madam Fran, what are your plans? If you want to, you can get a job on the same fast ship, which will sail the King of Beasts. According to my plan, His Majesty will first disembark at the port of Graysir, and then return to Balbora during the day.

- Can I ask for something?

- I understand.

Fran agreed to Mia's proposal. But these words only worried me more.

- Hey stop. Would you like to attend Kiara's funeral? I asked.

- Hmm? There is nothing wrong with that.

Yes exactly. I still can't get out of my head thinking from my own world. Since Fran was with Kiara in her last minutes of life, there is no point in attending the funeral a second time. While I thought it was amazing how easily she was able to come to terms with her loss, for half-beasts, it seems that it was in the order of things.

But neither Mea nor Quina reacted at all to Fran's words that she would not be present at Kiara's funeral. Although, Mea, upon hearing that Fran was going to sail, immediately became sad.

- Well, Fran. Maybe you will stay a little longer?

- Sorry. I made a promise to someone.

“We are obliged to take part in the auction in the Kingdom of Cranzer,” I said.

- That's how ... Then you really need to hurry. That's the problem.

- Madam. Didn't you think that if you get so upset it will make Fran worry again during the trip?

- Yes you are right.

- Besides, there are still a few days.

- Right! During this time, we can play enough!

Quina is just a master manipulator. In an instant, Mea's tension was dispelled. It seems that she has already decided for sure that Fran and Mea should maintain a relationship ...

- Yeah. Let's play enough.

Fran was also eager. After all, this is her first close friend. I hope these three days will be filled with good memories.

# Chapter 379: Royal Bathing and Royal Meal

Incredible!

“Yes, truly,” I said.

- Ha ha ha! That's the same! That's the same!

It was the first day of our stay at the royal palace.

First of all, we were shown the personal bath of the royal family. Although I had seen enough luxurious baths before, this one was on a different level.

Of course, everything was in marble. A beautiful lion statue served as a hot water tap. Huge magical chandeliers hung from the ceiling, and episodes of someone's heroic deeds were painted on the walls. And the fact that these paintings were redrawn every three months only added to their greatness.

A wide pool served as a bath, around which grew deciduous trees of an unknown species, of a huge size. Probably each of them was over 100 years old. There were more than ten trees in total, and the size of them would fit as a shimboku from jinja temples in my native Japan.

From what I heard, they were very valuable magical plants. The fruits from these trees appear to have a healing effect.

Although I had the feeling that this was a very dubious waste of money, it was probably all done in order to show the greatness of the country to the foreign envoys.

Although I do not think that the king created these luxurious baths only for this purpose. Maybe, with his general love of provocative things, such bathing suits are quite in his style?

- First, you need to wash off all the dirt!

- Yeah.

We washed ourselves in a slightly different place. Even the soap and other personal care products here were of the highest quality. Mea quickly talked about their custom of taking a bath.

Although I thought there would be no shortage of maids at the royal baths, the only maid among us was Quina. It seems that half-beasts do not favor strangers when taking a bath, and even the royal family is limited to just one servant.

- Let me rub your back. Go here.

- Yeah.

Oh, what a beauty, this is how the bonds of friendship are strengthened. I could not help but be moved by the care with which Fran and Mea helped each other during the wash. And they rubbed the backs of each other, and helped with the hair, lovely. And Fran Mea treated as a friend, as an equal to herself.

- Right, right! - I rejoiced.

So I continued to watch them.

- Now it's Teacher's turn.

- ABOUT! Then I'll help too! Do not remain in debt to the Teacher!

Fran was not at all shy, and Mea didn't seem to be too worried about me. No, I certainly told her that I used to be human. But since I'm a sword now, it doesn't matter anymore.

And I myself, looking at Fran, did not feel a shadow of embarrassment. Perhaps this is because she was like an unmarried daughter to me.

Fran began rubbing me with a soft sponge of incomparable quality. Mea didn't seem to be worried about me rusting. I am a magic sword after all, and I have my self-repair, so there was nothing to worry about.

Nevertheless, Quina, of course, did not stand aside. Quina, wrapped in a towel like a tank top, hurried to pick me up from Fran and Mea.

- Quina, what are you doing?

- Yeah.

- Come on, wait a minute. How long have I said that a noble lady should know what shame is? He may be akin to family to Fran, but to you, madam, he is completely alien.

- But what's wrong with that? This is the Teacher.

- Certainly nothing good. Anyway, Master, let's do it this way.

Before I could guess what was on her mind, she wrapped a cloth around her eyes on my wolf emblem. Looks like she intended to make sure I didn't stare at anyone. Hmm, by the way, no one has figured out if these eyes can see.

In fact, my entire body had vision, so this manipulation did not particularly change anything.

Well, what to do ... To be honest or not? I think it's worth keeping silent so that Quina will be calmer ... But I'm afraid to blab it in the future.

I should be honest.

- This, one of my skills, "special vision" allows me to see everything around me, so does it make sense to cover this part?

- That it is true?

- Yes.

- So, you saw the mistress in such an inappropriate form from all sides?

- Yes.

- Here's how.

Hmm? Is she angry? What is Quina's anger like?

“Do you know what responsibility you would have had to bear if you were an ordinary man who saw the bare skin of an unmarried woman from the royal family?

A responsibility? Does this mean, "I am responsible for ensuring your happiness"? Scary!

“Although the Teacher is a very extraordinary character, you cannot marry anyone off to a sword.

Well, of course! After all, if you think about it, Mea is from the royal family. Of course, she should be strict about who she is naked in front of. But it seems that she herself is not fully aware of this.

- He's just a sword, it's okay! Really, Fran?

- Yeah.

- Eh. Master, I beg you, don't look if possible.

- Okay, I understand you.

So, until we left the baths, I looked at the painted ceiling. However, this did not mean that I wanted so much, just Quina reacted to every movement of my gaze. Cold sweat seemed to creep from her gaze, even though I was a sword.

Probably the effect of her skills "Recognize Presence", "Interrogation", "Recognize Magic", "Control Magic", and her title "Assassin Killer" helped

to capture even the slightest movement of my magical energy. I would not want to become her enemy.

Therefore, to the smallest detail, I remembered the image of the heroic deed, which was captured on the ceiling.

After the swim, a banquet took place. No, it's better to just call it dinner. In Mea's room, without much manners, everyone ate their food as they always did.

And now the worry was not about Fran, but about Mea herself. Since she had been an ordinary adventurer for a long time, such a meal was more to her liking.

Fran, who hadn't eaten anything but my concoction for a long time, looked very pleased. Of course, the royal chefs prepared very tasty dishes.

At the Niku Matsuri (Meat Festival), their cooking would have gained a lot of points. I mean, all of their dishes are meat, meat, and more meat. I don't mean just that there was a lot of meat in the dishes.

All the food was in one way or another with meat. So there was pork in beef, poultry in a composition with lizard meat, and stuff like that. And meat salads, and meat soups. Fran and Mea ate the dishes one after the other, and I even worried that they would not get heartburn.

Although they are half beasts, and a carnivorous type. As I briefly overheard from Quina, she prefers vegetables herself. Apparently, because she is of the herbivorous type, half-beast-tapirs.

It's hard to be a chef in a land of half-beasts, however. Tastes differ so much among different nations. However, in general, they remain human, so that under normal conditions they are able to eat meat, vegetables, and fish. The common people do not seem to be so picky.

Only aristocrats can afford to be picky.

# Chapter 380. New profession

It was the second day of our stay in the capital Bestia. The day was spent on sightseeing in the capital and sparring with Mea.

And we sparred, not sparing the training ground of the palace, everything turned out to be covered with craters in the end. I thought about how to fix the site with earth magic, but due to its special coating, which has the property of magical isolation, it did not work out very well to fix it.

- Ha ha! As I thought, sparring with Fran is breathtaking!

- Uh-huh!

But they were both happy with the sparring results.

Although we initially planned to just practice using the skills, Mea quickly warmed up and started fighting in earnest. Showering us with flame magic and other skills, she didn't really hold back. If Quina hadn't stopped her, she would have caused even more damage to the palace.

Though the proficiency improved in the end. Especially the progress was noticeable with respect to "Ways of manipulating the body." We also became better at resisting fire attacks, thank God we got the skill to resist burns.

The most important event of the second day is a visit to the capital's temple. Finally, after a long time, you can change your profession.

If you think about it, we have seen a lot during all this time. To be honest, it completely flew out of my head until Mea told me about it. It is quite possible that new professions have appeared.



The last time we checked this was before the Martial Arts Tournament. Then we could not choose anything but the swordsman-magician. Now, finally, remembering again about professions, I realized how useful the profession of a swordsman-magician was.

The professional skill of the profession, "Combining Magic", given Fran's relatively poor success in magic, perfectly helped her to close one of her weaknesses. Given her specialization in physical attacks, and the prospect of improving her magical side through this profession without leaving her weaknesses, this was the obvious choice.

So, given how we grew up after these many battles, there was a high chance that we could choose a more advanced profession. It doesn't hurt to check.

After donating money to the temple, we entered the career change room. By touching the stone slab that was there, we were able to find out if a change of profession was possible. According to the rules of the temple, except for cleaning, entry into this room was prohibited, so that it maintained perfect privacy.

Perhaps you can peep into it with the help of magic or magical devices, but it is unlikely that anyone would want to do this. After all, it was a temple. Who would like to receive divine punishment in the crown for inappropriate behavior?

“And we have a great choice here,” I said.

- Yeah.

At first glance, there were almost 50 professions. I don't know if this is the norm, but there were definitely a lot of them.

- By touching each profession, you can see its comprehensive description. And all for a donation of 3000 gold.

So, among the professions, 5 positions attracted my attention.

The first was the profession that we noticed for a long time - "Lord of the Sword". Apparently, thanks to our growth in the process of battles, now this option was available to us. It included Increase Strength, Enhance Sword Art, and Enhance Sword Mastery, as well as the Transformation into the God of Swords professional skill. In general, this profession allowed you to take your sword skills to the limit.

As far as I remember, the Beast King's profession is "Lord of the Spear." Apparently, this is something in the same spirit. That is, with this profession, the adventurer can reach S rank. I would say that this profession is at the top of our list of choices. But there was another interesting profession.

This is the "Holy Warrior". For some reason, this profession, which gives preference to auras skills, seemed very interesting to me. She also gave Empower Crush Evil, a specialized skill against evil spirits that I had already used, and the professional skill was Holy Armor. Although I could not find out the details of the professional skill, it was clear from the name that it was also directed against evil spirits.

Considering that in the future we may meet Zelsried or some worse evil, it would be nice to have a strong ability against her.

- The profession "Warrior-archmage" also looks interesting, which would help you develop more versatile. It looks like it makes it possible to reduce the cost of energy to release a burst of spells.

Although she had no professional skill, Fran would be able to use the burst of spells.

- This profession, "Heavenly Ninja", looks cool.

- Maybe yes. In addition to "Higher Agility", it would help make up for the lack of sensory and stealth skills. In addition, her professional skill is Perception of Time and Space. It looks like it makes it possible to react even to teleportation.

Since Fran is the type of warrior who rely on speed, for us now, who do not have sufficient defensive skills, the opportunity to close the gaps in sensory and stealth skills looks tempting.

- So, the last candidate is "Demon Slayer".

- Yeah.

This profession complemented us in the aspects of "Increasing all stats", "Increasing the effects of suppression skills", "Martial art", "Martial prowess", "Magic". This profession looks very balanced. Probably, the transition to this profession is equally valid for both warriors and magicians. It was a profession that evenly lifts you up in all aspects.

- So, we have the Lord of the Sword, the Holy Warrior, the Warrior-Archmage, the Heavenly Ninja and the Demon Slayer to choose from. Which do you choose, Fran?

- Lord of the sword!

It was not hard to guess. The Lord of the Sword is the most obvious choice. Fran still loves fencing more than magic.

- So there will be "Lord of the Sword".

- Yeah.

Then Fran chose the profession of "Lord of the Sword". At the same moment, white light enveloped her entire body. A powerful stream of magic radiated from her. However, there was not a single unpleasant sensation. The magic that enveloped her gave only pleasant warmth.

- Oooh ...

- Are you okay?

- Yeah. The strength in me is seething.

Using the assessment, I was convinced that the profession had really changed to "Lord of the Sword." The stats have also increased. The Professional Skill "Becoming a God of Swords" is also learned.

Of course, there were also disadvantages. The magical energy has slightly decreased, and the former professional skill ("Magic Connection") was forgotten. In exchange for his dramatically increased swordsmanship, Fran's own magic abilities undoubtedly lost their former strength.

Let's assume that Fran and I now have a clear line of roles. Fran is now fully in charge of the physical aspect, and I am in charge of the magical one.

- Hmm, I would like to know what it is - "Transformation into the God of Swords" ...

Becoming a God of Swords: Grants the user the power of a God of Swords.

Even after the assessment, I could not understand what kind of power is given by "Transformation into the God of Swords". Are all the skills in which the word "God" appears like this?

Then we have someone who could explain everything in more detail. This is Mea. After all, her father, the King of Beasts, Rigdis, possesses the Transform into Spear God skill. Chance is high that she knows about it.

If in the process everyone finds out that Fran has changed her profession to "Lord of the Sword", then hardly anyone will mind. Fran first of all promised to tell Mea about her choice of a new profession. In fact, Mea had changed her profession even before Fran, so she agreed to discuss new professions with each other.

When we left the room for the change of profession, Mea met us in a very nervous state.

- Fran! What, found a good profession?

- Yeah. That was incredible.

- Ltd! Nice to hear! Anyway, let's go back to the palace first!

Of course, nobody wanted to talk here. There were many outsiders here.

Returning to the palace, they immediately revealed their new professions to each other. The moment of sharing secrets, it seems, was to some extent sacred for them. The joy of both girls knew no bounds. Well, not surprisingly, they were both warriors to the core.

“The new step in my profession is called the Incinerating Knight.

- Sounds great.

- And then! Now the control of fire has become even better, and the knight's abilities have dramatically increased. The profession is just for me!

It was a profession one step higher than her previous one, "Knight of the Flame". It seems that there were also steps even higher than the Incinerating Knight.

Mea's face was beaming with joy. But Quina, with her invariably cold tone, broke off her joy somewhat.

“But I have to warn you.

- Warn? I asked.

“You might be attracted to the word "Incinerate", but it doesn't matter how high your attack power is when your power control can't keep up. As a result, you only increased the danger of a spontaneous explosion.

Hmm, this profession worries me very much. Given that Mea hadn't taken control of her flame very seriously before, now what, is it going to get worse?

- Young lady, I ask you to treat your actions with even greater caution from now on.

- I ... I know!

# Chapter 381 - Royal Profession

Mea, after Quina's argument about her lack of control over her flame, tried to quickly change the subject by feverishly addressing Fran.

- Yes, Fran, what profession have you chosen?

Fran answered the question in her usual unconcerned tone.

- Mm. Lord of the sword.

Mea's reaction to Fran's response was unexpected. Her surprise was so strong, she spat out the tea already that she was about to swallow it. So, why go straight to Fran's face?

While Mea was recovering from shock, I had to wipe Fran's face with a handkerchief.

- Once again, what kind of profession?

- Lord of the sword.

- So I heard correctly!

- It can't be, a profession of the royal rank ...

Not only on Mea's face, but on Quina's, surprise could be read.

- What is the profession of the royal rank? I asked.

- Among martial professions, this is the highest level. In addition to professions in the branch of the warrior such as "Lord of the Sword", "Lord

of the Spear", and so on, in the branch of the magician there are "Lord of Flame", "Lord of Storms", and further down the list.

- With the exception of my father, I saw with my own eyes only two other owners of this profession ...

It looks like this profession is more advanced than we thought. So, "Profession of the Royal Rank" ...

- Since you are the "Lord of the Sword", did you learn to "Transform into the God of Swords"?

- Yeah.

I knew she knew something about this. So it's such a strong skill that even mentioning it generates an instant reaction? From Mea's eyes, she was extremely serious.

- Listen carefully. Be extremely careful when using it. Especially the first time. Make sure no one is around.

- Is this such a dangerous skill? I asked.

- Yes, dangerous. If it gets out of control, it will hurt both you and your comrades.

From what Mea said, this is not only a strong but also a dangerous skill ...

- Using familiar terms, this skill falls into the category of "self-reinforcement". However, due to its extreme strength, it will be extremely difficult to control it. And my father also failed in trying to control him.

- Failure?

- His Majesty, when he used "Transformation into the God of Spears" for the first time was in a group of comrades. He killed them all.

So, this part with the murder of comrades is already alarming. What kind of skill is this?

- Can you tell us what skills like "Transformation into the God of Swords" and "Transformation into the God of Spears" are like?

Here's how. Although their names are similar, can their effect be radically different? Although there is a great chance that they work in the same way, you need to listen to exactly how "Becoming a God of Copies" works.

- The skill "Transformation into the God of Spears", while strengthening the user, endows his spear with a Divine element.

- A divine element? - I was surprised.

- Yes. Although I also do not know the details on this score, among the many elements that exist in this world, the Divine element occupies a dominant position.

Divine element. So he must be somehow connected with God? By the way, I heard that although there is immunity to the flame, there can be no immunity to the Divine flame.

- If your weapon is endowed with a Divine element, then you can chop the intangible, kill evil spirits that even the "Crush of Evil" does not take, and slugs that are immune to physical damage can be cut in half.

So this element ignores immunity to any elements? It's just an exceptional ability. We can say that in this way you can defeat any opponent with a sword.

“But ignoring resistance is not the main strength of the Divine Element. Remember what I said recently? This element dominates all others. That is, no matter what element you fight against, the enemy will receive such damage as if you attacked him with an element for which he has a weakness. The damage will be huge.

Does this mean that he not only ignores resistance, but also constantly exploits the enemy's weakness?



“It looks like my father, when he killed his comrades, used the Transformation into the God of Spears "without preliminary verification. Probably, in that situation, this skill was the last hope. After that, the father stabbed the dragon to death with one beautiful throw. But along with him, this throw took all his comrades.

The power of "Transformation into the God of Spears" was so great that the Beast King pierced the dragon with one throw of a spear, simultaneously simply annihilating half of the bodies of his comrades. The mental trauma caused by that event has not gone anywhere to this day. Now the Beast King never uses the Spear God Transformation if there are comrades or subordinates nearby. Which is not surprising.

“At that time, my father used an orichalcum spear. It seems like he could kill a demonic beast with a danger level B in an instant. I can't even imagine what effect "Transformation into the God of Swords" will have on Master. It is possible that even the earth itself around will not withstand such power.

Hmm. Perhaps, even if you try to restrain yourself, casualties on the side are still likely.

- Yes, you still need to monitor the strength. This skill puts an extremely heavy load on the weapon itself. Even the orichalcum spear crumbled to dust after three seconds of exposure.

That's how it is ... I guess this is quite normal. When you strengthen something through force, then, of course, it will exert a strong load.

“It's dangerous to use this skill for any length of time,” I said.

- Yes. You two, Master, this means that you need to be doubly careful. However, it also exerts a rather strong burden on the owner. Even with a strong desire, it will hardly be possible to use this skill for a long time.

In general, it is best to use it only when there is a question of life and death. With all this, you will have to try to apply it at least once.

- Where can you experience it? I asked.

- Yeah.

Well, here's another skill like "Unleash Potential" and "Magnificent Flash of Lightning" that painfully hits you ...

Moreover, in our case, we learned the skill by skipping intermediate steps. Therefore, we have not reached the level of body control and skills required for such strength. Compared to someone who received it gradually, the burden on us must be especially strong. As a result, the body will be at its limit.

But despite this, I am still pleased that Fran is getting stronger with me. Is there a case where a new skill can be used in conjunction with Magnificent Lightning Flash?

- We need to test it as soon as possible.

# Chapter 382 - The Descent of the Power of the God of Swords

After talking with Mea, we got down to business.

After leaving the city walls, we went to test the newly acquired ability "Transformation into the God of Swords." Although we have scheduled another sparring with Mea this afternoon, it looks like it will have to be rescheduled.

Although Mea asked if she could attend the Convert to Sword God check instead of canceled sparring, of course, no one knew what might have happened. So Quina was against it.

But Mea continued to resist, and Quina had to use her crown grip on her. No doubt that would have pacified anyone. I would say that such a reception has a place on the battlefield. Although I was not able to discern all the movements exactly, it seems to have consisted of a leg grab that had already shown itself in combat and some sort of suffocation.

In general, having somehow shaken off Mea, we immediately went to the plain not far from the capital. I didn't feel anybody's presence in the area. Not only me, but also the Urusi did not find a single soul.

- Is Fran ready? I asked.

- Yeah. Master, are you brave too?

- Yes. I started self-repairing and instant regeneration to the full.

This should somehow resist the loss of strength. I think that for a few seconds I will definitely be enough ... In any case, we planned to activate

the skill for only a few seconds.

- Let's go.

- Forward! Come on!

- Activation of the form of the God of swords.

- Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

What is it! I felt an incredible strength awakening in me. Right, waking up. In contrast to how it usually happens, the power seemed to rise from somewhere inside me, and did not flow into me from Fran.

The feeling was as if I was suddenly caught in the rain. But that was not all. It became surprisingly difficult to control myself, and I could not stabilize in any way. While I would not say that I am not yet seasoned enough or experienced enough in the use of power, but since this is the first time I am accepting power from someone else, I was not sure if I could handle it.

However, there was a feeling that this power was mine. She was ready to overwhelm not only Fran, but me as well. If the two of us can manage her, then, probably, we will be capable of anything.

There was not a shadow of evil in this power. On the contrary, it felt like the power of Divine support. I have only seen something like this in my life. I remember that Kiara's dying attack, "Claw of the God of Black Lightning" felt like this.

However, unlike Kiara back then, this power was significantly more savage and brutal. I tried my best to pacify this power raging in my blade. Does the Beast King somehow manage to control this power? Truly, I don't seem to have seen all the S-grade adventurers are capable of yet.

Fran paused the skill the next moment. At the same time, the power swirling in my blade disappeared. As I thought, you cannot be prepared for this.

- Fran, are you okay?

- Uh-huh ...

Despite her answer, I saw beads of sweat beading on Fran's forehead. Her shoulders heaved up and down strongly, and her condition was unmistakably tired. In the next moment, we were seized by an incredible breakdown.

We gave all our strength to control this skill, and it was worth stopping its action, as we were completely deprived of these powers. It will be difficult to get used to this.

“Fran, can you... can't you again?

- Sorry.

“Don't worry, it's not your fault.

Just a few seconds of using Transformation to God of Swords lowered Fran's magical energy to zero. For just one application. We didn't fight, didn't even move, and still so exhausted. As Mea said, it's unlikely to use this skill for long periods of time. Even the Beast King is limited to 10 seconds.

- Teacher, how are you?

- I think our safe limit is now 5 seconds.

During the "Transformation into the God of Swords" incredible power awakened in me. And it looks like a Divine element. However, my toughness was depleting at an amazing rate.

This thing is probably even more dangerous than Unleashing potential. In just one second, the strength has decreased by more than a thousand. And not even a single blow was made, Fran just held me in her arms. In ten seconds, I will surely turn into a heap of scrap metal.

- Let's rest a little and try again. Let's try to hit this time?

- Uh-huh!

An hour has passed.

Fran, having regained her strength with potions, again prepared to activate the Transformation into the God of Swords.

“Actually, I don’t know how much longer I can take,” I said.

- Are you all right?

“I’ll survive a few seconds.

Fran looked at me with a worried face. But she had reason to worry. The damage that "Transformation into the God of Swords" inflicted on me could not be immediately restored with the skill of instant regeneration. Just like before Aristeia repaired me, I could only recover gradually.

Apparently Becoming a God of Swords overloads the weapon so seriously. In addition, it seemed to me that one of the reasons for such difficulties was the Divine element and its dominance over other elements. Perhaps this can be compared to how the regeneration slows down in slug monsters under the influence of fire. It took me an hour to fully recover.

In battle, you must use the Transformation to the God of Swords with extreme caution. I do not want to return to Aristeia again in the same killed state.

- So, ready?

- Uh-huh!

This time we strike. Previously, I used earth magic to create five boulders 10 meters in diameter.

- Go?

- Come on!

- Becoming a God of Swords!

Go, go, go! Again! This feeling! Wild power has awakened in my blade, and swirls like a cruel whirlpool.

- Fran! Let me take over the taming of power! I myself will fully focus on controlling it!

- Uh-huh!

Fran, nodding slightly to me, stepped forward. And at that moment, something changed dramatically. Hmm? What? Is it really Fran? Outwardly, she remained the same, but seemed to have turned into a different person, a terribly strange feeling. Without further ado, I looked up at Fran. However, her gaze was directed forward.

Taking a step forward, Fran swung me downward, chopping the cobblestone into two even halves. And she repeated it five times.

And that's all. Nothing fancy, a standard forward slash.

However, during this blow, I felt something like cold. Although I shouldn't have felt it, being a sword, I felt like a chill ran down my spine.

I felt such goosebumps watching the ideal movements of a genius player in some sports manga, when his comrades celebrate how perfectly he honed the basics. Something like that. I don't know if this can be called what I just felt.

I have mastered the Royal Sword Art. In a battle with a fighter of a higher level, I can lose to him in combat experience, status numbers, in skills. But where I will definitely prevail is in pure sword technique.

But seeing Fran's movements now, I realized that I would lose to her. It was painfully obvious. Isn't the "Royal Sword Art" and the "Sacred Sword Art" that came before - not the highest level?

Seeing Fran's movements gave me exactly that impression. Until now, I had relied entirely on my sword art, but now I felt like I couldn't do anything.

Even though I own the Royal Art of Sword, the gap between us was clearly felt. If I were a normal swordsman, I would have no idea how you can strike so quickly and accurately. But, I ... we knew that.

Something sleeping inside Fran helped her make this simple but ingenious blow. It also pointed the way on the harsh path of the God of Swords, on the path of endless training and endless improvement of sword techniques.

After Fran scattered "Becoming the God of Swords" and the Divine element was removed, I could feel the old Fran again.

Without a word, Fran stood stunned in one place. Her breathing was ragged, and she looked at me in her hand, not even paying attention to the cobblestones that were cut so smoothly, as if they were made of butter, and cut them with a hot knife.

- What ... Now it was ...

"I don't know," I said.

Those exciting seconds now seemed like a dream. But judging by our general surprise and fatigue, these few seconds actually happened.

This is what self-empowerment is along with weapon empowerment. In words, this skill sounds simple. But the actual degree of amplification is truly extraordinary. Without strengthening her body, and surpassing even the "Royal" swordsmanship, without any skills, she cut these cobblestones.

- Is this skill a gift from the God of Swords? Incredible.

- Uh-huh ...

Is this a strong skill? Undoubtedly. But we didn't feel a drop of joy. Only one regret. I even felt ashamed that I had thought so much about my possession of the sword.

- We will train more.

- Uh-huh!



Suddenly I understood. Could it be that the skill "Transformation into the God of Swords" is designed to teach a lesson to those who are too proud to receive "Royal Sword Mastery" and to show the difference between them and God himself?

# Chapter 383 - Fran and Dress

It has been some time since we experienced Becoming the God of Swords. Although it was already nightfall, Prime Minister Raymond met us on our way to the castle.

We, having not yet recovered from the shock of the test of "Transformation into the God of Swords," little by little began to regain our former fighting spirit. Especially Fran, whose mood, in general, easily changed from depressed to full of enthusiasm.

- We need to train even more! she declared solemnly.

True, from this phrase, the morale was more likely to decrease even more than to increase. This surprised Raymond a little.

- Something happened?

- M?

- Oh, okay. It's good if everything is in order. In fact, I have a request for you, Princess of Black Lightning.

- Request?

- Yes. Regarding the thank you banquet tonight.

True, if you think about it, the celebration of victory will not be limited to a simple party. Since the King of Beasts himself is returning, it is necessary to prepare for this appropriately.

It seems that the generals, having disbanded the troops that previously held the defenses on the border with the Bashar kingdom, are already on their

way to the capital. To celebrate their triumph, the palace was about to organize a simple banquet.

Although I doubted whether disbanding the troops was the right decision, it turned out that fresh troops had already been sent to the border of the Bashar kingdom so as not to stop the pressure. That's what matters, then.

- Well, what about the banquet?

Are we offered to join? But this does not sound like a request. Are we being asked to ensure the food ingredients are safe?

Seeing Fran's questioning expression, Raymond hastened to clarify the situation. Moreover, he really said that he wanted to invite Fran to the banquet.

- No, the point is that there is a very specific reason for this.

- Which one?

- You are undoubtedly invited to a banquet, but this does not mean that you can come there just like that.

- What does it mean?

- This appearance is no good, you are required to attend the banquet properly dressed. That is, in a dress.

- Dress? What for?

“Well, frankly speaking, this is for Lady Nimei.

Raymond finally told Fran the true nature of the request. Apparently, he wants Nimea to be at the banquet in a dress. However, even after promising to attend the banquet as the representative of the Beast King, she still stubbornly refused to wear a dress.

She probably wanted to thank the generals not as a princess, but as an adventurer, as a warrior.

So that's Fran's way out.

“Maybe if her friend, the Princess of the Black Lightning, comes in a dress, then Her Highness will also grant it.

Clear. Undoubtedly, Mea is always happy when she finds common features between herself and Fran, including her preferences in fashion. Probably, she will not refuse to go in a dress with Fran.

- Okay, how do you imagine it? Of course it's not free.

Raymond offered what seemed reasonable to us. In addition, this event was not overly formal, and more should have resembled the drinking bout of a group of generals. That is, you don't really need to worry about manners. Moreover, you can eat as much as you like.

- Yeah. I realized.

- Agree? On a dress?

- Nothing wrong.

Fran quickly agreed, however. Probably tempted by free food. So Fran doesn't pay much attention to clothes. Therefore, she does not have both her favorite clothes and the hated clothes. What rags, what dress - all the same.

Although she would undoubtedly choose comfortable clothes that are easier to move in. But, for the opportunity to eat up to the dump, just wearing an uncomfortable dress a little seemed to her a small price. And yet, isn't it forbidden to take weapons with you? If I'm around, then certainly there shouldn't be any problems.

- So you are willing to come as I ask?

- Yeah.

- Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

True, we do not have a dress ... But it seems that he understood this even before we had time to say it out loud. So he offered to lend us the dress that Mea wore a few years ago.

“Looks like a tailor won't be needed, it looks just right in size.

Raymond muttered, examining Fran's chest and ass as if nothing had happened. Although Mea is slightly taller than Fran in stature, the rest of the dimensions are practically the same. After yesterday's episode in the baths, I'm sure of that.

Frankly, they are both punt. I even feel a little sorry for them when they stand next to such a sex bomb as Quina.

So, wait, what am I talking about, Mea is still 15. Maybe there is still hope? Probably should be?

- Mea, live and be strong ...

- M?

- Oh, nothing, nothing. Anyway, can you try on a dress?

So Mia helped Fran get dressed in Mea's old dress. And she was just shivering to the face.

- What a cute ...

It is something! That's what I understand, my Fran! This beautiful, blue and white dress went incredibly well for her! While her regular Lolita armor dress was cute too, this classic floor-length dress looked good too! Like a real princess!

She wore a cute tiara on her head, and her hair was pulled back in a high bun. Sexy from all sides! Her usual hairstyle is of course cute too.

In addition, she received a discreet makeup. I thought that it would not suit her, but he was surprisingly not conspicuous. It seems that special persistent cosmetics and semi-beast perfume were used.

Even while eating, your makeup shouldn't be damaged. Half-beasts are much less restrained than humans, so that some kind of makeup is never between them and food. The girl in charge of makeup, from somewhere in a smooth motion, took out sweets and meat.

- A little awkward to move.

- Well, it's a dress. But it suits you, right? - I said.

- Truth?

So, we must not miss the opportunity to compliment her. It seems that my interest in girls is gradually returning.

- No, I would say to the spitting image of Snow White.

- Snow White?

- Yes. A famous princess from my world. The evil witch poisoned her with a poisoned apple.

- And she didn't even figure out that it was poisoned?

- No, in my world few people can identify poison by smell, except perhaps the most talented.

Maybe a specially trained person can understand.

- From the poison she fell into a long sleep, from which, fortunately, she was awakened by the kiss of the prince.

- A kiss that cures poison? Is it such a special skill?

And really, if you think about it, why did the prince's kiss awaken her? I have read this book for a long time. In addition, the original piece was an order of magnitude darker. Yes, exactly, like on TV I saw how the original was taken apart. I can't remember all the details, but it seems like the prince turned out to be some kind of pervert who is turned on by corpses.

- Yes. I don't fully understand it either.

- Hmm.

It would be better to tell about Cinderella. Although no, maybe there is also some gloomy original.

# Chapter 384 - Grateful Banquet

When we came to the thanksgiving evening, it exceeded our expectations. I mean, at one point, I even thought Raymond's words about it being like a banquet were just a ruse to make it easier to lure Fran.

- So it really turned out to be a banquet ... - I said.

Fran left my words without comment.

And there was a good reason for that, she for both cheeks absorbed all the variety of dishes that rose in front of her. Although stop, I must say about who was present here besides Fran.

These were the guests of honor, the royal family, and the heads of the clans. Fran, introducing herself to the guests, immediately attracted an avalanche of compliments about her beauty.

After that, they did not hesitate to talk to Mea and Fran, showing off their feats of arms.

Well, there's nothing to be done, youth. And a beautiful outfit was still not only for Fran, but also for Mea. Contrasting with Fran's blue and white dress à la Snow White, Mea's dress was white and red.

Its design was quite bold, with bare shoulders. Considering Mea's childish figure, her appearance was not sexy, but her sweetness more than made up for this shortcoming.

By the way, at that moment I was in the form of a golden choker around Fran's neck. Although I thought it would bring back bad memories of the slave collar, she didn't really want to make any drama out of it. So the choker shape turned out to be a simple and successful solution for me.



Although it was not forbidden to bring weapons, and I could not invent anything, but I could not allow Fran to destroy her cute image by carrying me on her back. I wonder if I look sophisticated enough? Additionally, I decorated myself with small gold rings.

Since being on the neck, I could immediately close with a barrier both the head and the heart of Fran, the choice of this form really turned out to be very competent. Thanks to the work that Aristeia had done on me, I was now able to sustain the transformation for much longer. If it doesn't come to battles, then I'm probably enough for a few hours or something. If the party is really small, then I will stay in choker shape until the very end.

Although the eyes of many of the young guys were still fixed on Fran and Mea, almost all of them left after a short conversation. And the reason is simple - realizing that their interlocutor is stronger, and even evolved, everyone tried to disperse as soon as possible. Love is love, and lunch is on schedule.

Although I could usually understand this from afar, it seems that none of the young people dared to approach us with obscene intentions. The senior officers watched them all, smiling. Perhaps they were amused to look at the troubles of the young.

When the conversations ended, the tables began to fill with a variety of dishes. All of these dishes were truly sumptuous.

And then Fran was in the spotlight. It might sound a little rude, but everyone thought Fran was an uncouth adventurer. But, meanwhile, she showed excellent manners. Although she could be respected, at least for her strength, no one could ever imagine that she was capable of such a thing.

Even Mea was surprised. Although she was taught court etiquette from an early age, even she thought that Fran hardly knew anything about it.

- Fran, this is amazing!

- Yes. Perhaps even prettier than the young lady.

- M, yeah ...

Apparently, Mea could eat without breaking any rules of etiquette.

- You can't lose to her.

- Hmm, you're right ...

Mea nodded in agreement at Queen's words. Of course, it was a shock for her that she could lose in the etiquette of Fran, who, firstly, is younger than her, and secondly - whatever you look at, simple and uncouth. I felt that Quina was looking at Fran with admiration.

The rest of the half-beasts were also amazed. Of course, in the Land of Half-Beasts, strong heroes are loved, so they did not look down on her before. But when Fran, in a cute dress, began to demonstrate excellent manners, not inferior even to Mea, they definitely began to look at her in a completely different way.

Considering that she was also a heroic person, the admiration with which she was looked at would have envied even the idol singers from my native Japan. Hey, old man, why did you blush like that ?! And you, kid, you are not looking at her well!

Well, what to do, Fran is too charming now. They can't help themselves but admire her. After all, to become Fran's partner, you have to be strong enough to be able to support her.

In my opinion, among all those present, only three fell under this description. Everyone else didn't have a chance.

The first is old General Barberam. It looks like he was one of the commanders during the defense. He was from one of the ten founding clans, the Purple Wind Elephant clan. His height exceeded 3 meters, I even at first took him for a representative of the giant race or something like that. In addition, this growth was complemented by his excellent commanding skills, and he was known as a hero warlord who had seen many battles.

And though now he looks like a gentle, smiling grandfather, in his youth he was a stern warrior known as the "Lord of Destruction."

Perhaps this would correspond to an "A" rank of an adventurer. At least stronger than Gododarf. Given all this, it's hard to believe that age has weakened him in any way. Although, of course, his physical strength is probably not at the same level as before, but he undoubtedly stands at the head of one of the strongest military forces in the country.

The next strongest was Ligdarf of the White Rhinoceros. He bears the title of the head of the clan. Since he is Gwendarf's father, this meant that he was the younger brother of Gododarf, our opponent in the Martial Arts Tournament.

Does this mean that after Gododarf left his place as head of the family for the service of the King of the Beasts, Ligdarf immediately took his place? It was hard to believe that he was as strong.

Although he was inferior to Gododarf in terms of physical strength, he possessed level 5 wind magic, and his magical energy and stamina were also quite high. Did Ligdarf act wiser by choosing diversified development? After all, the Genus of the White Rhino is obviously famous for its power, and, probably, would have respected someone strong and hardy more.

Naturally, he has evolved. In addition, as a weapon, he wore not a huge ax, like Gododarf, but a hexagonal two-handed mace. He was a big man with not frail muscles and a height of more than two meters, and his club was taller than the average person. Probably, on the battlefield, his figure swinging such a mace should not have a feeble influence on enemies.

But I didn't know what he would think when he found out that Fran had defeated his older brother. Although I think, since Gwendarf knows about it, then Ligdarf could not help but find out about it ... This man remained as calm as Quina, and there was no emotion on his face. Even after meeting him, I still did not understand whether he had sympathy or antipathy towards us.

Finally, our favorite is a man named Lucias Lawrence. The one who bore the name "Lawrence". He did not have many similarities with Linford, outwardly he was a very handsome man.

Given his high level of mastery of earth magic, he was undoubtedly a highly skilled magician. This fact is confirmed by the fact that he is a court magician.

Among his titles, I did not find a single "villainous", and among his skills there was not one associated with evil. As Mea said, he seems to be a really good person.

When we met him, we didn't have to guess what he thought about us. On the contrary, he was very polite and courteous, it was clear that he had sympathy for us. Okay, don't raise Fran, please!

As soon as Fran took part in the conversation between Mea and Lucias, the other men quickly went about their business.

But the quiet atmosphere lasted only until new dishes for the banquet were brought. From that moment on, the party turned into a battlefield. Bosses, subordinates, young and old alike began to hunt, fiercely fighting for the right to eat.

And if the first to be served full-fledged dishes with metered portions, then as an addition, they brought huge plates of dishes so that everyone was surely full. At least it seemed to me that this was the case. Or will they continue to bring food until the next banquet? In general, in the best traditions of half-beasts, all of them, without hesitation, simultaneously pounced on food.

And Fran and Mea came out victorious here. Pushing the hefty men in different directions, they broke into the very first row, collected freshly brought food, and carried them back to their places. Unable to offend little girls, hefty men could only leave the table in tears, seeing their favorite dishes disappear out of sight.

So where did we start ... Yes, Fran ate food by both cheeks.

- What is delicious? I asked.

- Uh-huh!

Just please don't stain your dress!

# Chapter 385 - Offer from the Land of demi-humans

After this "competition of eaters" ended, Fran again called Prime Minister Raymond to him. He stood between two tables that were larger than the rest. There was a very serious atmosphere in the air.

- Thank you for participating in the thanksgiving evening.

- Yeah.

“Thanks to you, even Lady Nemea has grown in the eyes of her subjects.

Looks like Raymond has achieved his goal. Apparently, he really wanted to make Mea look like a real princess in public, in order to improve her public image.

Although combat power has always earned respect in the Land of Half-Beasts, in Raymond's opinion, it will be easier to appeal to the feeling of beautiful subjects.

- But it seems that now they love you even more ... In any case, my duty has been fulfilled.

Fran didn't really try. Maybe she's just too cute by nature?

“In addition, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to you for the support you have given us in this war. Thank you.

- Come on. I could not do otherwise.

- Haha. I only convey the words of His Majesty.

"The King of Beasts himself?"

- Not so long ago a letter fell into my hands. In it, His Majesty asked us not to let you go without a reward.

- Awards?

- Yes, as a war hero, it is unacceptable to leave you without a reward.

Is that really true? And this is despite the fact that Fran did not enter the battle at someone's request, but of her own free will. We had no reward in our thoughts. But since the name of the heroine who saved the whole country has already spread everywhere, apparently, it would be bad form to confine herself to only words of gratitude.

Oh, again I understand everything through the prism of my life on Earth. In the light novel about reincarnations, it often happened that the protagonist, who showed himself well, received a title of nobility for his efforts.

Of course, I would not mind if Fran gets the title, but something tells me that she herself is not going to become a noblewoman. There is little sense even from land holdings - she is not able to manage them. And even being an aristocrat, it is difficult to continue pursuing the craft of an adventurer.

- In our opinion, for invaluable assistance in the war, you should be entitled to the title of Baroness and hand over land holdings.

Yes, yes, I knew it! Things are bad, even if it's not what we want, rejection will surely ruin our relationship.

But when my thought processes began to search with might and main for a way out of this difficult situation, I heard something that I had never expected.

"But in a letter from His Majesty it was said that you probably would not be happy with any title. So he ordered us to refuse such offers.

Whoa! Well done, king!

- Yeah. I do not need him.

- You are not even attracted by the opportunity to welcome your land to the people of the Black Cat?

- Come on. The lord of Gringord said he would take good care of them. I cannot become a noblewoman, my high status will cause inconvenience to everyone around me. Therefore, I don't need a title.

- That's how, clear, clear.

Oh, how easily she parried it, I would also say something like that. Oh, how glad I am to see Fran growing up and growing above himself.

- Well, then let us tell you about your award ... Gvisa, I entrust it to you.

- Yes, with pleasure.

There and then a certain half-beast-dog appeared that had previously been waiting in the wings behind Raymond. Judging by the fact that Raymond pushed his chair to the side so he could sit down, one could guess about his significant position.

- I'm the finance minister, Gvisa.

Wow, even bigger than I thought! Yes, it looks serious. And it doesn't seem like he was accommodating. His face gave the impression of a wise, but completely unfriendly person. Interestingly, at least sometimes his facial expression changes? What's he going to tell us anyway?

- To begin with, I want to capture the points of view of both sides.

- Points of view?

- Yes. So, Mrs. Fran. In this war, you, having received neither an order from the leadership of our country, nor instructions from the leadership of the guild, entered the battle as a volunteer. Am I missing anything?

- Yeah.



- In this case, you are entitled to the same payment as any other volunteer, in accordance with the charter.

It seems that the Land of Half-Beasts has adopted a reward system for volunteers during wartime. So Fran's law is entitled to the same remuneration as any other local volunteer.

By the way, what do they do with those who helped without engaging in battle? Let us also fought with demonic beasts, but, for example, what about traveling healers who took care of the wounded on sleepless nights? Or merchants who provided free material support? They all contributed to the victory.

In addition, despite the fact that the princess herself witnessed this, their contribution to the victory is still not taken into account. Of course, no one forbade Fran to do what she did, but a lot of mercenaries and adventurers were on the defensive in strategically less important places, and they are unlikely to react with understanding to her initiative. Unhappy, they spread rumors that Fran's role in the war was deliberately exaggerated.

That is, if you thank Fran in a special way, it is unlikely that the other volunteers will accept it calmly. Or you will have to deal with the reward for each volunteer separately.

I mean, many of them worked hard for the victory, who would refuse a decent payoff?

- Yeah. I don't need special treatment.

Fran nodded back. Of course, we did not fight for the award from the very beginning, and as a result of the battles we have already received a lot of useful things. I think that we should not be judged on a par with those who really worked seriously to win.

Well, since we would not like to quarrel with the country, it is not worth giving up a small reward. While I was pondering this subject, Raymond continued his speech in an impatient tone.

- With all this, our country cannot neglect your merits. I hope you understand this.

It seemed that he had no patience anymore and wanted Fran to finally agree.

- Here's how. But, if we reduce Fran's achievements to the level of the rest, then we will no longer wait for volunteers.

They seem to realize that Fran's achievement stands out sharply from the rest. But due to laws and other circumstances, it seems that they could not deal with her in any special way.

- In general, there is a proposal. Fortunately, you have accompanied Lady Nimea all this time. So why don't we arrange everything so that you, on the orders of Lady Nimea, were holding back an entire army of Demon Beasts?

- In terms of?

Seeing the bewilderment on Fran's face, Gvisa explained what he meant.

- I'll explain. Firstly, if you accept this offer, then your achievement will partly become the achievement of Lady Nimea, this is his only drawback. Secondly, for our country, this option would be better in the context of foreign policy. That is, we will be able to introduce entry restrictions for countries hostile to us. At this point, you can no longer worry so much about the kingdom of Bashar.

- I realized.

- The advantage for you is that your feat, having become widespread, has the potential to have a positive effect on the status of the entire genus of the Black Cat.

This means that if Fran's feat is elevated to heroic proportions, it will simultaneously become the feat of Mea, who has been there all this time. Also, if the genus of the Black Cat spreads the story of Fran's feat

throughout the country, then the attitude towards the genus of the Black Cat will improve.

“Plus, given that we're going to frame this as a special order from the princess, the rest of the volunteers shouldn't feel hurt. So we can reward you as we see fit.

Here it is. Indeed, if it was Nimea's order, then it might be a good excuse for a special reward. Probably, then the salvation of a member of the royal family can be added to the list of feats.

Although Fran fought for her fellow Black Cat comrades, the fact that she did it on Nimea's orders doesn't give her much trouble. On the contrary, now Fran's feat has spread to the scale of the country, and in the end it will benefit both Fran and the Black Cat family.

- Teacher? Fran turned to me.

- So, what should we do ... - I thought.

It probably depends on what the award is. Well, no matter what we choose, we ought to find out what they have prepared for us, and for us.

# Chapter 386 - Medal or Rank

- So what if I accept your offer?

“In that case, we will award you with the gold medal of the animal claw.

- A medal?

- Yes. The Gold Medal of the Animal Claw is awarded to those who have accomplished particularly significant feats for the state. Medal of the highest rank. But for her feat, Mrs. Kiara received the same medal posthumously. If Fran receives this medal, she will become its first living owner in 300 years.

This award is more impressive than I thought. Apparently, the presentation of the medal to Kiara is similar to the presentation of posthumous medals to heroic personalities on Earth. Is it too stressful?

- This medal is not only a sign of honor in the country. The awarded will also be entitled to a certain amount. There is no upper limit for this award, so we can reward Ms. Fran as it should be.

It seems that since the time when this medal appeared, the exchange rate has changed more than once, and therefore the exact amount of the award has not been established.

- This time we have planned a reward of 10,000,000 gold.

- Yeah. Got it.

Stop, stop, stop, stop! Hey Fran? Have you listened to everything? That's 10 million! By earthly standards, that's over one hundred million yen! Maybe even now you will show at least a little emotion?

- Fran! He said "10 million"! I shouted.

- Yeah.

Hmm, incurable coldness. Now I feel like a fool to rejoice so much in the reward. Or are you helping me to understand my own shortcomings in this way? Eh, Fran. I would like you to remain the same pure and naive forever.

- Can you buy a whole grocery store for this? Fran asked me.

- A grocery store is definitely possible!

- Mmm, food aaa.

It is clear, she simply did not understand how large this amount is. Only one question remained - maybe I shouldn't have told her this?

- I did not expect anything less. And she didn't raise an eyebrow when she heard such a sum ...

You're wrong, she just cares exclusively about battles and food.

“Also, if possible, I would like some of my money to be given to help the people of the Black Cat.

- Hmm? That's it ... As His Majesty said, you are truly a selfless person.

Gvisa thought for a moment.

- Okay, let's figure it out.

- Yeah.

- Although I see that you are not against the medal, in fact, you have another choice.

- In terms of?

“The proposal I was talking about would be for the good of my country and Mrs. Nemea. Of course, you, Mrs. Fran, also do not remain empty-handed. But there is one organization besides my country that could offer you an award.

- Organization?

- Adventurer's Guild.

What we didn't expect to hear from Gvisa was this. But we didn't receive any instructions from them related to the war, and indeed, does the guild interfere in wars? I thought that their position was not to support any side, not to take part in the country's defense, and even more so not to issue any awards ...

- During this war, the guild did not achieve much. Although they themselves took part in hostilities as adventurers, but only in the role of ordinary volunteers. Without a doubt, in the event that their city was attacked, they would have helped in the defense and evacuation, but this, in fact, is the duty of all residents of the city.

The guild is a neutral organization, so there is nothing to do. Speaking of the lack of guild achievements, Raymond and Gvisa did not change their faces at all. So it was clear that this behavior of the guild seemed natural to them.

“However, at the same time, the top leadership of the guild was concerned about the current situation.

- Concerned?

- The way the kingdom of Bashar took control of many demonic beasts from the dungeon. After all, dungeons and demonic beasts are run by the Adventurer's Guild.

- Although the country is in second place for them, since no responsibility has been established for the guild before it, the guild reserves the right to act at its own discretion.

Hmm, that's what it is about. Still, this war was fought not only against people, from the north, hordes of animals from the dungeon invaded us like a tornado. No wonder the Adventurer's Guild has gone into action.

- It is not a fact that in the future the history of this passage will remain firmly in the people's memory. In this case, the guild will not be interesting to anyone. We, as the country's leadership, have no complaints about the adventurers taking part in this war. But the guild would probably like to eliminate unpleasant rumors in the future while improving their public image.

Yes, the guild took not the worst position in this war, but it realizes that better decisions could have been made. And then it turns out that Fran, who became famous as a hero, is an adventurer. If the directions for Fran's actions came from them, then they could take a piece of this glory.

“But the war is over, and all the demonic beasts are driven back. Now the guild has no tools left to influence the situation.

“Only Fran can lend a helping hand to the guild.

- In terms of?

Fran made a questioning expression in response to Gwisa's words.

- Yes. Well, the situation is almost the same as with our country's proposal. Only we asked to arrange everything as if Princess Nimea had issued a special order to fight the beasts, and in the case of the guild, it would be a special instruction from the guild.

So furnish it as a guild directive.

- The disadvantage of such a choice, first of all, is that the country would receive a much greater reward. And since the princess has nothing to do with it, you can also forget about the medal. In addition, the cash reward from the guild will be approximately 5 million gold. That is, even the monetary reward is much less.

We're talking about serious money here. It is not known what it will be like to negotiate with the guild. And even if everything goes smoothly, the disadvantage is a much smaller reward. Besides, rejecting an entire state's proposal will leave a bad impression.

- The advantage is that you get prospects to raise your rank, and improve your position in the guild. Sharing the glory of saving an entire country with an Adventurer's Guild is serious business. It will definitely pull up to rank B.

Here it is. Although we suffer financial losses, it is not often that there is an opportunity to raise the rank. Considering that the check becomes stricter with each rank, having risen from rank "C" to "B", we have the opportunity to jump over most adventurers and stand out from the crowd.

Moreover, we will get the favor of the guild. Since Fran is an adventurer, it can be said to be worth more than any money.

- We, as representatives of the country, give you a choice.

- Think hard.

As Raymond and Gvisa spoke these words, they were smiling. I think, as representatives of the country, they would like us to choose a medal, right? It seems that they are completely benevolent towards Fran, but still they are officials in the service of their country, what are the limits of their benevolence? No, that's not the point.

Maybe their politeness is just trying to get Fran to their side.

And all these explanations of the advantages and disadvantages were needed only to establish a connection with the interlocutor. Moreover, they offered an option that is not beneficial for themselves. Apparently, in this way Fran should feel a kinship with the country of the Half-Beasts. In addition, since the proposal was made not by someone, but by such a noble aristocrat as Gvisa, it is more difficult to reject him. Apparently, they decided that if he were an ordinary employee, Fran would not get the impression that the offer was better not rejected. Well thought out.



- Mentor?

“Fran, whatever you choose, I'll take it all.

- Good. I realized.

Well, it doesn't look like anyone was trying to trick us. On the contrary, there were normal negotiations. All options have their advantages. It would be better for me to trust what Fran herself desires.

- Since the decision is serious, I give you a night to think.

- Tomorrow morning you can report your decision ...

- No. Everything is fine. I choose a medal.

- Hmm? Are you sure?

Fran answered immediately. I myself did not expect. Actually, I thought she would choose the guild. Since she is definitely not of the character to desire a medal, it was easy to think that she would choose a promotion.

- The medal will be better. Like Kiara.

- Received. We will begin preparations immediately.

- Yeah.

What is the reason for this choice? So I thought they were just waiting all this time to present the medal to Fran.

- Well, let's try to contact the guild.

Of course, they seem to have already spoken to the guild. Thus, both proposals could be submitted. Since Gwisa was also tasked with handing over the guild proposal and negotiation, the Land of the Half-Beasts was definitely favored.

- Mrs. Fran, I heard that in battle you got a certain amount of trophies from demonic beasts, would you like to sell them in the guild?

- But I have no time.

It's already night, and tomorrow I have to hit the road. I think that even to just sell something, you have to go to another city. Although we have butchered many animals in Aristeia's mansion, there are still plenty of uncut ones.

“I think that since you turn down the guild's offer, it would be nice to do them a little favor and sell the materials to them. You have nothing against selling them, do you?”

- Yeah.

- Then I'll invite a man from the guild to the palace. I will also send cutters and evaluators. You can use the training ground of the palace for cutting. For my part, I promise to provide assistants. How about this?

I thought so, they were well prepared. Well, here it would be even indecent to refuse. I don't even know why they worked so hard. But, if they help us with cutting and selling, we will only be grateful.

“Let's accept this offer,” I said to Fran.

- Yeah. Got it. It will be better this way.

- Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

# Chapter 387 - Last Night in the Land of demi-humans

After we parted with Raymond, a man called us over. We found him at a bar adjacent to the officers' section of the palace, and took up questions.

- We need to talk a little.

- Hmm? With me? About what?

It was Lucias Lawrence. The earthmage is of the same lineage as the warlock Linford Lawrence, whom we fought in Barubor.

Although there was no one besides Lucias, Ligdarf, and the bartender, it is not known whether anyone else should have listened to our conversation. Noticing Fran's glance across the two of them, Lucias hurried to explain.

“Mister Ligdarf, my comrade in arms. I don't mind him hearing everything. The bartender also keeps secrets like a true professional.

That is, we will talk like that. Well, since he doesn't mind, then we don't need to worry.

- Have you heard the name "Linford Lawrence"? Where did you hear it? Have you met him?

- Yeah.

We knew about him, of course. Is he really his relative? In that case, you need to tell him how Linford died.

But before Fran opened her mouth, Lucias dropped his head in silence.

- Excuse me.

- What?

- All the evil that this man brought to people cannot be justified. Tell me how did you meet this villain?

We just mentioned the name, and he already reacted like this. It was clear that this was a difficult subject for Lucias. It seemed that he felt such guilt that he could not even raise his head.

“As his son, I am obliged to apologize for him.

Hmm? A son? So that's why there is such a difference in age between them. Is he human? If Lucias is really Linford's son, then he should have had a child that way at 60. If he is not an elf or something like that, then it sounds strange ...

Although no, this is completely impossible. And Fran, by the way, could not contain her surprise either.

- Hey Fran. We didn't even think that he had children, maybe it's not worth talking like that directly? I asked.

- No. We were the ones who killed Linford. Since he really is his son, we must tell you.

- I know that my apology is not enough ...

Oh, I got it. He decided that since Fran couldn't say a word, it meant she was angry.

- No no. I was just surprised that you are his son.

- And that's it.

“Besides, I have to apologize too.

- Apologize?

- Yeah. Linford is killed.

Fran told everything without hiding the tension in her voice. About how his father became our enemy. Fran talked about her fight with Linford, and then I supplemented her story about how other adventurers helped in defeating him. Everything from start to finish.

We didn't know how he would react. Although Lucias seemed to be ashamed of Linford himself, he was still his father. I don't think he would have given it as an offense ...

"So Linford is ... dead?"

Lucias asked again, not hiding his shock at what he heard, which was completely unsurprising.

- I ... I am very sorry to you.

- No no! Nothing to apologize for! You protected Barubora. There is not one bit of a bad thing in this!

- But ...

- On the contrary! On the contrary ... Apologize ...

- M?

"I chased Linford for years to send him to his grave with my own hands.

It seems that Lucias, as a child from a warlock family, endured harassment for many years for this reason. Therefore, over the years, his hatred of warlocks and evil spirits only intensified. When he spoke of Linford, I saw on his face the deepest hatred for him.

- I had to stop all that series of misfortunes that my father brought to people. But you did it instead of me. I don't have enough words to thank you ...

Lucias saluted us by kneeling down on one knee and raising his right fist in front of his face, placing it on the palm of his left hand. It looks like it was a gesture of the utmost respect.

Of course, I couldn't resist using Deception Control just in case, but I didn't find a trace of a lie. Both his hatred of Linford and his gratitude to Fran were true.

“Now my years of incessant worry have come to an end. Now I can visit my mother's grave with good news.

Tears welled in his eyes, and Lucias, after thanking us several more times, went to his private room with Ligdarf.

“I thank you for freeing my friend from his hardships.

- Yes, thank you.

It looks like he really endured a lot. It's good that we had the courage to tell you about Linford. No, only Fran had the courage, not me.

After that, it was time to speak with the Adventurer's Guild Representative who has completed all preparations for the sale of our trophies. We've put all the demonic beasts the guild hoped to see on the training ground. Of course, it was impossible to take out all of them, so we limited ourselves to selling about 150 copies.

Even the representative of the guild could not maintain a neutral expression from the sight of many animal corpses neatly laid out on the site. Seeing the strongest monsters killed with a single blow to the heart, and especially tough beasts with severely crippled skin or scales, seemed to give him a good idea of ??Fran's strength. Still, there were some very strong animals among them. However, given that people who specialize in cutting and evaluating usually sag in terms of combat power, this was not surprising.

- Well, let's finish this before the morning! Payment will also arrive at about the same time!

- Yeah.

However, it didn't take long before this fear turned into awe. So half-beast and good - that they respect strength. Undoubtedly, they see Fran as a real heroine.

- Let's go back to our room? - I said.

- Yeah.

Tomorrow morning we are heading to Graysier. If you don't go to bed now, Fran won't wake up in time. Although in which case, I can carry it using telekinesis.

Oddly enough, this time I fell asleep myself surprisingly quickly.

- Fran! I waited for you!

- Mea, what happened?

In the room Fran was waiting for Mea, already dressed for bed. When it comes to that, Mea wore a loose white nightgown. She was very, very good.

- And what happened? Nothing! This, here!

- M?

- But, here's the thing ...

Nothing was clear from Mea's words. Although no, I understood what she wanted to say.

- The Young Lady is trying to say that since this is the last night in the palace, she would like to sleep with Fran.

- I wanted to say it myself!

Ah, that's it. Tied to Fran as always.

- That's exactly what I wanted to say, let's sleep together!
- Yeah. Good. But maybe then Urusi will be with us too?
- Urusi?

Urusi barked questioningly.

From behind Fran peeped out Urushi, apparently responding to his nickname. On his face and without words it was possible to read: "Do you need something?" Judging by his slightly haggard face, he was given plenty of food at the thanksgiving evening.

"He did a great job today, so we'll sleep together. Good?"

- That's how it is. I'm not against. After all, Urusi and my comrade too!
- Won!

Urusi barked happily. It looks like his mood immediately improved.

So, on the last night in the Land of Half Beasts, Fran and Mea had their little bachelorette party. True, their conversations boiled down to the topics of battles with monsters, and the dangers they had to face during their adventures. But since they have fun together, I don't mind.



# Chapter 388 - Medal Presentation Ceremony

On the morning of the last day in the Land of Half-Beasts, the medal ceremony took place.

Although there was no splendor inherent in ceremonies, everything took place in just one room of the palace. After reading Fran's merits to the few invited guests, the royal family presented her with a medal. Probably, everything about everything took 30 minutes. The new medal winners will have to be publicly announced during the triumphal parade.

In the blink of an eye, all the necessary people were gathered and all preparations were made for the presentation of the medal.

It seems that in the Land of the Beasts, they initially refrain from especially lavish ceremonies or meetings. So such simple and short ceremonies were not something out of the ordinary. In general, none of those present was surprised that the ceremony of awarding the highest medal in the country, the Gold Medal of the Animal Claw, looked so modest.

Incidentally, of the officers present at the thanksgiving banquet, there were the Barberam of the Elephant of the Purple Wind, Ligdarf, and Lucias. Although they seemed to have drunk quite a bit of alcohol last night, so not all of them were on their feet, but they all held up with dignity in terms of facial expressions. As expected of seasoned veterans.

Among the officials, Prime Minister Raymond and Finance Minister Gvisa were present. In addition, there were some of their subordinates. However, I do not know if Lucias, the court magician, can be called an officer.

Although there were not many people present, since there was a general and a prime minister among them, the people gathered here were surprisingly influential. In addition, the medal was presented by Mea, a member of the royal family.

- Fran is from the Black Cat clan. Thank you for your work.

- Yeah.

- In order to glorify your feat, we reward you with the Gold Medal of the Animal Claw. Accept her.

This is how the ceremony went - quickly, but solemnly. There were only two surprises.

First, Urusi also received a medal. It appears to have been a Familiar Special Merit Medal given to the hero's pets.

- Urusi, thank you for your work.

- Won!

- Yeah. Suits you.

- Uuuf!

Urusi did not hide his delight when Mea hung the medal around his neck. Urusi did a really good job. Then it will be necessary to reward him in his own way. Maybe make him a particularly spicy curry like he likes? He usually eats the same as Fran, so I limit the amount of spices. This time I'll make it so hot that Fran can't eat.

Once you can, in honor of the presentation of the medal. By the way, Fran has promised to support the people of the Black Cat. Looks like he's going to visit them soon.

In addition to ensuring equality and living conditions in the country for the people of the Black Cat, those who wish to start a military career will be awarded armor and weapons by the state, and will also send mentors for

them in martial arts. In addition, Fran is entitled to an additional reward of 10 million gold. Yes, they did not stint on the award.

At the end of the ceremony, we will have to hit the road. Yesterday we managed to make some small purchases, and all the awards are now with us. All preparations for departure have been made. We planned to leave the capital immediately after the end of the ceremony.

Then, by nightfall, having arrived in the port city of Graysir, we will board the high-speed ship on which His Majesty sailed.

Usually the journey takes about ten days, but we can take a more direct route.

Previously, we traveled to the capital using a horned carriage, but taking the path right through the demonic barrier would only take us half a day.

“Let's say goodbye to Kiara and let's go,” I said.

- Yeah.

Finally, we spent a few minutes looking at the late Kiara. Without saying a word, without even shedding tears, they just stood silently in front of her.

But as Fran left, her face was just more enthusiastic than before. I don't know why, but it looks like Kiara influenced her so much.

- Well, that's all? I asked.

- Yeah. Everything is fine.

- Here's how.

- Come on, Teacher.

- Let's go!

At the exit from the room with Kiara's body, Fran was already waiting for Mea.

- Well, go!

- Yeah.

Looks like she saw Fran say goodbye to Kiara. But she said nothing more. With only a slight smile, she ordered us to hit the road.

We headed outside the capital. I didn't want to leave the palace. And then there may be a noise that a demonic beast has burst into the capital. So we decided to say goodbye to everyone on the plain near the capital.

- What is Fran, going?

- Yeah.

- Great, go ahead, Linda!

- Guooooooooo!

This time we skated not on Urusi, but on Linda. Linda's speed, of course, is second to none. Quina was on duty this time, so only Fran and Mea were flying on Linda. Therefore, the speed was even higher.

- Guooooooooon!

- Wow! How fast! - I was surprised.

- Uh-huh! Amazing.

With each flap of her wings, Linda picked up more and more speed. Even Fran, accustomed to riding the Urusi, could not contain her amazement as she flew in the sky. Although I myself flew at higher speeds, I never sat in the scabbard on Fran's back.

- Ha ha ha! Linda is not capable of that! Hey Linda! Show them!

- Guooooo!

It wasn't fast yet ?! In the next moment, Linda's entire body shone with a red light, and his speed began to skyrocket. Looking back, I saw that he had a trail of fire. He used the same ability in combat. It was like the Jet Shot from the school of fire magic.

Acceleration was not instantaneous, and although this ability was used to gradually gain speed, the end result was even faster than Rocket Shot.

This appears to be a unique skill related to flame control. One should also get skills in flame control. Even though I'm not that good at controlling flames, I think a skill from the same branch should be found.

In addition, with the skill of air flow control, he significantly reduced the air pressure. It's not that I didn't feel the wind at all, it could only be weak, like from a fan. Considering that we are flying high in the sky, you can ignore it.

- Look over there. A whole group of turtle kings.

- Oooh ...

In the place where Mea pointed, a whole group of turtles swam in the lake, resembling a small mountain from afar. First time I see turtles with a tree growing on their backs! A very colorful landscape.

- Look down. The famous all over the country Jade Lake.

- Beautyaa.

Now a lake appeared, the surface of which shimmered with the colors of jade. It seems that since its bottom is completely covered with stones of this color, the play of light on the surface caused such an effect.

Mea never tired of showing and telling us about each curiosity, one after another. Just like a real guide. Fran loved it too.

- Look! Now the fog will clear and the border mountain range will be visible!

- Oooh ... Awesome.

- High ...

In the place where Mea was pointing, a huge gray mountain range appeared. Although he should have been very far away, this only added to his amazing majesty. It seemed as if he was propping up thick clouds, which ultimately looked like a huge veil covering the ground.

This ridge was even higher than Everest. You will not see this on Earth.

- And we were at its foot ... - I said.

- Yeah.

Fran looked into the distance, at this ridge. It looks like she's been flooded with different memories. Both good and bad - there were many.

- By the way, Fran.

- Yes?

- Will you come back to us?

The right question. Of course, Fran has different memories of this country, and good ones are not in the majority. But, in recent days we managed to get so many good impressions.

- Of course.

- True?

- Yeah. After all, you live here, Mea.

Still, Fran never stops thinking positively. Although she has many bad memories and very few good ones, she has a dear friend here.

Even though Kiara died in this country, and we ourselves almost said goodbye to life, while her friend Mea is here, no barriers will stop Fran to meet her again.

- I will definitely, I will definitely come.

- Yes I will wait.

# Chapter 389 - Lord of the Sword and Lord of the Spear

Our celestial excursion on horseback on Linda came to an end when we finally arrived at the port city of Graysir.

There was a large ship in the harbor, and there was a noticeable lively action around it.

“Looks like the Beast King has already arrived at port,” I said.

- Yeah.

The air was simply saturated with the sense of his presence. One could understand this without even seeing him personally. Continuing further into Graysir, we saw the Beast King talking to his subordinates in the harbor.

Suddenly we noticed someone approaching us.

- Hey! So you and Fran-chan, you stupid daughter!

“We haven't seen you for a long time, Father. Or should I say "Your foolishness."

- Ha ha ha ha! That Mea got stronger while I was gone?

- Haha. I am growing by leaps and bounds.

Between the King of Beasts and Mea, there was no particular atmosphere of father and daughter, but they seem to get along. Since His Majesty was heartily happy about Mea's successes, his rude words did not particularly affect her.



- Hmm ...

After a short conversation with Mea, the King turned his attention to Fran. He slowly examined her from head to toe, as if assessing.

Nobody expected his next action. Taking the spear from his back, he made a downward blow at lightning speed.

At the moment when I thought that the spear would cut Fran's head in two, she barely had time to dodge the blow. In fact, we can say that she was in the balance of death. From the pressure of the air, her bangs flew up, and her clothes fluttered like in the wind.

But Fran didn't end there. Dodging the blow, Fran grabbed me and counterattacked. The king barely had time to place the spear so as to block her slashing blow.

There was a loud sound of metal hitting metal.

My blade stopped a few millimeters from the Beast King's neck.

They were perfectly honed attacks, I even felt their desire to fight to the last. Although neither Fran nor the King used the arts of sword or spear, there was something in their movements, gaze, and maneuvers that made them feel serious. Probably, if such an attack were directed at Mea, then she would definitely lose her balance. So strongly in this attack a certain bloodlust was felt.

A powerful blow from one weapon to another responded with a shrill sound.

In the next moment, both opponents bounced off each other, and at the same time removed the weapon in place.

- This time I dodged, then.

- And you too.

Neither Fran nor the King showed any anger or confusion. Now it became clear that this exchange of blows was nothing more than a test.

Yes, an ordinary person would not have survived this, these were first-class blows. It would be impossible to defend against such attacks without possessing the weapon art of the "Lord" (King) level. That is, they made sure that both are at the same level of weapon proficiency.

- What are you doing ?!

Mea, not understanding the situation, looked at the two of them with a shocked expression on her face. Yes, Mea, apparently, did not understand the essence of this exchange of blows. Even for her, with the sacred art of the sword, good intuition, and powerful skills, from the outside it must have seemed as if her father and Fran wanted to kill each other. This, in general, serves as a confirmation that Mea has not yet reached such heights of skill.

- Ha ha ha ha! What are you, we just said hello! Right?

- Yeah.

- Say hello? Just? But ... What would you have done if she hadn't had time?

- Yes, everything is all right! As a last resort, I would just stop.

- M?

- Hey, hey, I'm completely serious.

- Since he owns the royal art of the spear, then you can be completely calm.

- So this is how it is...

It looks like he was planning on stopping the spear at the last moment if Fran hadn't had time to dodge. Maybe he would have stopped, but he certainly would have inflicted serious injury.

“In any case, does it mean you really acquired the Art of the Lord of the Sword? Moreover ... Transformation into the Lord of the sword.

- How do you know?

- Haha. Maybe you, young lady, are good at hiding your presence, but you are completely incapable of hiding your strength.

- Hide your power?

- Yes. Along with the ability to sense the presence of someone, there is also the power to read the level of power. In your case, I was convinced of this very accurately.

- Yeah.

- For example, when I first met you, face to face, you seemed to me very defenseless. After all, a warrior like you, even trusting me, would weaken your defense? Of course not. And it's easy to answer why. Even in this state, you would like to feel at least partially safe. Before I gave in to you. You should already know what I'm really capable of. And all this, together with how you keep your distance, means only one thing. That you still received the power with which you can avoid my spear. That is, nothing more than the Art of the Lord of the Sword. And for sure I was convinced of this after the greeting. So she became the Master of the Sword?

Wow, he sees right through us. As expected of the Beast King.

- Well, whether you are the Master of the Sword or not, you probably haven't met a person of a similar level yet ... You do not understand what an important role information plays in battle?

- Yeah. I see.

- So what is the conversation between two owners of professions of the royal rank ...

Mea, looking at her father and Fran, was now in awe. She apparently could not even fully understand the meaning of their words.

- And what should you do to seem weak?

- Everything is easy. You have to be more vigilant about the environment. But strength can only be hidden to a certain extent.

Here it is. The strong always looks relaxed, because he has nothing to fear. This means that someone who wants to appear weak should show concern and alertness.

“So the one who looks down on others and hopes for an easy victory is stupid. A cautious adversary may be stronger than it seems. I hope I put it right.

- Yeah.

- However, there are still many nuances. This is just the quickest and easiest way to appear weak. Only on weaklings will it work. But never on me! Maybe only if Fran-chan dresses even prettier.

I'm sorry, but no. But it's good that we now understand that there are many different ways to hide your true strength.

- Thank you.

- So, and I never returned the debt to you!

- Debt?

- What, you really don't understand? I'm not someone there, but the king of the country you saved. In general, you have to kneel in front of me.

- So, old fool, here you are already true ...

- I realized.

No matter how sincere, democratic, or close the king may seem, of course, he deserves the appropriate treatment. And I understand that too.

- But now let's do this ...

With these words, the King of Beasts took Fran by the hand and bowed deeply. This bow meant the maximum degree of his gratitude. Leaving his head completely unprotected for Fran, he also showed the highest degree of his respect for her.

“This time, I have to thank you for your support. You saved all of us.

And there was no doubt that the Beast King's words of gratitude sounded extremely sincere.

# Chapter 390 - Departure and Parting

“By the way, I'd like you to take this.

The Beast King bowed his head to Fran for about a minute, then handed her a pouch. At first glance, it was an ordinary small, dirty pouch, but I sensed the magic in it.

- Item bag?

- Yes. You got some 10 million, right?

Some 10 million? What categories he thinks, however.

- Why skimp on the hero? It would be better to give one hundred million. But, even if I am the king, but I can not dispose of the treasury at random. If I start doing this, I will fall to the level of some dictator.

And he says surprisingly decent things. I thought he was one of those kings who preferred autocracy, but it turned out that he did not.

- Although, first of all, there are not so many civilian officials in our country. I would not want to harm them again.

The Beast King made a forced smile.

It seems that only military ranks were popular in the Land of Half-Beasts. It may seem that the "herbivorous" half-beasts are inclined to peaceful activities, but even among them there are many brave and daring. That is why the country is constantly experiencing a strong shortage of those wishing to become civilian officials.

And those possessing such outstanding qualities, who can be entrusted with the post of minister, can be counted on one hand. Therefore, in the Land of Half-Beasts, they are treated with special respect. In other countries, officers often look down on officials as weaklings, but in the Land of Half-Beasts, such an attitude is unthinkable.

“Our citizens love to eat well, so logistics is our top priority. So those officials who are involved in this area are especially highly respected.

- That's how it is.

- Oh, something I deviated from the topic. Well, although the country cannot give you anything more in gratitude, but no one will be against a gift personally from me. At least I'll feel better about that.

- What's in it?

- This is something like my pocket money, not so much, about 5 million gold. I still spent a lot on my trip. There was practically nothing left.

- Yeah.

Hmm. I no longer have the strength to be surprised. 5 million ... ha ha ha ha. Stop, is it true? 5 million? Together with the additional medal reward and the proceeds from the sale of trophies from demonic beasts, we have a total of over 20 million gold pieces.

And Fran, as always, did not raise an eyebrow! Why does she make me look like an idiot getting cock for no reason every time we get large sums?

But while we were talking, it was time to sail. Together with Loise and Gododarf, someone who looked like a captain appeared and came up to us.

“Madam Fran, I ask you to get ready to board the ship. We leave in 5 minutes.

- Good.

- Do you have luggage?

- Everything is fine. I gathered in my own way.

“That's how, then you are using Space-Time magic.

Having greeted the captain, we learned that we still have time to talk before sailing. And then that's it. This ship will take us away from the continent of Chrome, to the continent of Gilbard.

- Fran-chan, come back any time!

- Yeah.

- Thank you.

“You saved all of us.

After the King of Beasts spoke, Loise and Gododarf appeared next to him, kneeling and bowing their heads. Apparently the magic of teleportation.

- I would like to thank you for mentor Kiara.

- To thank?

- Yes. She died on the battlefield as she evolved fighting a powerful enemy. After all, this was exactly the dream of mentor Kiara. In addition, in your last moments of life, you took care of her, Mrs. Fran. The one she considered practically her granddaughter ... I envy such a death.

- I think so too. When I heard that the mentor came down with an illness, I immediately thought that she would not die so easily.

“It was you, Fran, who helped her up. If not for you, then, I think, the mentor Kiara would not have been able to evolve, or even fight anymore.

- Chin up! The death of your mentor is not your fault! She died the best possible death! Undoubtedly, she herself is grateful to you! I, as her student, have no doubt about it!



While it sounded a little harsh in my opinion, I knew it was all to cheer up Fran. And Fran knew it too. With a serious face, she nodded to the Beast King.

- Yeah.

- And one more piece of advice about "Turning into the God of swords." Don't drown in its power.

- I realized.

“Fine, then. This will be your guide. I think it will help you.

- Yeah.

- Let's spar the next time we meet.

It was clear that the Beast King himself did not find his Transform God of Spears skill easy to use. And it was a landmark that would help to conquer new heights after gaining "royal" skills. Apparently, he once felt the same as we do now.

- Fran ...

- Mea ...

Mea approached Fran one last time. Not knowing what else she could do, she took Fran's hands and raised them to chest level, and looked into her eyes with a sad look.

- We are parting.

- Yeah.

It was noticeable how not only Mea's eyes, but also Fran's eyes were moisturized. No, their eyes were already filling with tears. It's only a matter of time before they start to cry.

- If someone offends you, then call. Whatever I do ... Wherever you are, I will definitely rush.

- And me too.

- Yes.

- Yeah.

- This is not our last meeting. But I can't hold back my tears.

- Yeah.

- But I can't help ... with myself ...

- Yeah.

Tears rolled down Fran's cheeks and Mea wiped them gently. So, letting go of each other's hands, they parted. This was a sign of parting.

- Fran, look. The ship is already sailing.

There was the sound of a bell to sail, and Fran hurriedly ran up the ladder onto the fast ship. Once on deck, Fran still kept her eyes on Mea.

- Until!

- Thank you!

I guess she couldn't afford to cry the last time she saw her. Fran tried hard to smile. What a bitter smile. However, Mea did the same.

And even though both girls could not smile, they smiled for each other as much as they could.

“You helped me a lot,” I said.

- I have to tell you that, you helped us a lot. See you. Next time I'll show Linda's true strength.

- I'll gladly have a look.

- Well, Fran. See you!

- Uh-huh! See you later.

It is not by chance that this ship is called fast. As soon as the ship left the pier, it began to pick up speed surprisingly quickly. The earth was carried away from us faster and faster.

But Fran continued to wave her hand anyway. Even when she no longer saw anyone, and Graysir turned into a point on the horizon. She kept waving and waving.

- Bye everyone, bye-bye!

# Chapter 391. City of Curry fans

I didn't want to say anything bad about this fast ship, only good.

First of all, we were treated like clients with no duties on the ship, and due to the speed of the ship, there was not a single instance of demonic beast attacks. A few days of idleness - and the continent of Gilbard appeared on the horizon.

Apparently, such ships are not popular due to their very high cost. Even using the most modern magic propeller, more than ten magic stones are consumed every day on the road. Moreover, this propeller is so large that it takes up more than half of the ship's hull, which is why the capacity suffers 5 times compared to a conventional ship of this size.

So it seems that they were only suitable for transporting high-ranking personalities and especially valuable goods, and could not replace ordinary transport ships in any way.

In general, there were no special incidents on the way, and in the end we again entered the land of Barubora.

- We were glad to serve you.

- Yeah. Thank you.

It seems that the captain of the ship really liked us. Perhaps because during the cruise, we shared with the whole team a demonic beast fish caught from the sea.

Plus, they seem to be very jealous of our ability to use the Spatial Repository. And this item pouch also proved to be surprisingly valuable. It

has the capacity of a spatial storage facility with enormous storage capacity. This is an invaluable item for merchants.

- Well, where do we go first? Shall we show up at the Adventurer's Guild? I asked.

- Yeah. Probably need to find out something about Gallus.

- Right. Then you ought to look into the blacksmiths guild.

- Yeah. And then, to the shelter.

In addition, we have an acquaintance in Barubor, a former A-rank adventurer, a lord of threads, and now the owner of the Dragon Diner and also a chef in it - Fermus. It would be nice to say hello to Colbert and the three sales girls if they are in the guild. Although, I think that they are now carrying out assignments somewhere outside the city.

“I’d also go to the Lucille Trading Company. We need to stock up on spices.

- Yeah.

“How about a visit to Fermus at the Dragon Diner?

- Of course, let's go.

- I knew that you would not mind.

Not to be that Fran missed a chance to eat.

But first, we headed to the Adventurer's Guild. We did not spend enough time in Barubor to develop an affection for this city, and we were here not so long ago that we can say that we are bored. But all the same, it seemed as if we were returning to our native land. Maybe because there are many memories associated with this place?

We walked through residential quarters of the city, here and there, skipping buildings that we had not yet had time to repair. But there was something that caught my attention. Of course, it was not surprising that the

adventurers knew Fran, but she also attracted the eyes of ordinary people suspiciously.

What, so prettier? Or was Urushi making a strong impression with his new scar on his face now?

But it was neither one nor the other.

- Hmm, are you that black-tailed girl?

- M?

- Exactly! The curry bread I ate back then was delicious! It seems like a dream!

Of course, I heard that curry began to be popular in Barubor, but by this point it seemed to have taken on a particularly large scale. It all started with that culinary competition when the curry bread gained its original fame. Since then, Lucille's company, to whom we sold the recipe, has made a name for itself by selling curry bread and curry paste.

Since the recipe was bought, there have been those who have tried to replicate the original flavor, so all the locals have already tried a variety of curries. Then it became known that curry was invented by a certain character named "Teacher".

"But ... I didn't invent curry!"

It looks like Colbert has found significant success. So among the people rumors spread about a black-tailed saleswoman, a student of "Curry Teacher", that is, about Fran.

Suddenly, many people remembered Fran's face at the culinary competition. So it's obvious why the "black-tailed girl" attracted the attention of people so much.

Not that she didn't like it, Fran was neutral about it, knowing that no one was going to harm her. From time to time we have met some curry fanatics making speeches like "Master's curry is the best curry in the world ..."

“And the name“ Teacher ”, however, became famous. I mean, it's curry. It looks like everyone's roof was blown off on this basis. ”

Eventually, establishments began to appear in front of us with hastily made signs saying "Curry." Looks like all the establishments on this street specialized in curries. Here and there the same word flaunted.

- And how do they manage to withstand such strong competition ...

- It's incredible! I'm like in a dream! Fran said.

- Won!

- Well, maybe it's a dream for you.

We will be completely late for the guild at this rate.

- Is that a curry barbecue? I asked.

- What a smell!

- Roar, roar!

Fran immediately bought five. It looked like a chicken skewer sprinkled with yellow curry powder.

- Khrum-Khrum-Khrum ...

- Khrum-Khrum-Khrum ...

- Well, how's the taste? I asked.

- So-so.

- Won.

That is, not terribly delicious. It probably looked like a regular fish sauce skewer flavored with the right spices. They did not experiment much, and cooked the way most liked.

In addition, due to the extreme popularity of curry, the price of spices skyrocketed, so they skimped on them.

- Three cups, please.

- Good!

- Soup next? I asked.

- Yeah.

- Won.

And this, too, apparently, was not so intense. I immediately felt Fran and Urusi's interest wither away. Although the smell was good, the taste did not live up to expectations.

But despite this, the smell still attracted them, and Fran persisted in ordering new dishes. Well, at least she began to limit portions to one.

- One.

- I beg!

- Ooh.

Everything, now there are no impressions at all! Fran's eyes were like those of a dead fish, the first time I see her like that. But the light in Fran's eyes did not go out even when she was in slavery! And Urusi, obviously, also did not receive what he hoped for.

- One.

- Here you are.

The last place was an open-air stand selling meat pies. Something tells me that again with curry flavor. But to Fran's surprise, they weren't curry pies.



Usually they put something like kima-curry in the manju that they sell on Earth, but here they were ordinary manju with meat. It looks like the meat itself was fried with curry powder. While it wasn't curry manju, it was still a dish from the same category.

While Fran was initially surprised at the inadequacy of expectations, her expression changed after the first bite. Whether it tasted good to her or not, it was immediately clear by the way she began to eat it. She bit the manju three times with a calm expression, as if upset, she suddenly ordered a whole bunch of such manju.

- 30 pieces please.

- Hmm? 30 pieces?

- Uh-huh!

The saleswoman was very surprised, but as soon as Fran handed her the money, she immediately started cooking.

- What, is it really tasty? - I was surprised.

- Yes! Master, cook next time too!

- Won! Won! Won!

Looks like they really liked it. This time the chefs tried to develop the recipe. Well, Fran will at least come to the guild in a good mood.

Who knows, maybe if she came in a bad mood, it would rain a bloody rain. This time, it seems, will do without it. Although it was close.

While Fran's name has become known to more people lately and the number of fools challenging her has decreased, the guild has undoubtedly only strengthened her image. Probably because from the very first days in the guild, conflicts arose constantly.

- Let's go to the guild soon.

In response to my words, there was only a contented chomp.

# Chapter 392 - Romio's Location

Peeking into the eateries on the way, we finally arrived at the Adventurer's Guild. The atmosphere in the guild was calm, nothing of concern was happening.

Fran is still more famous than I expected.

Among the adventurers there are rumors about the incredible abilities of the girl nicknamed "Princess of Black Lightning", who easily defeated the adventurer of rank "A" and made the famous Colbert her henchman. And if you get in her way, the "curry teacher" student, you will no longer be allowed into the curry establishments.

Not all of these are lies, but they are still largely wrong. This is the effect of a "broken phone". Until this becomes a problem for us, we will not fix anything.

In the building, we met with the head of the guild, Gamudo, with whom we fought against Linford. But, we still didn't know where Gallus was.

"Since Fran-chan inquired about his whereabouts, I tried to find information about it in various sources, but failed.

- That's how ...

After that, we again exchanged information with informant Regus, who had previously investigated where Gallus could be. But it seems that he also did not have information on this matter.

- At least I can say that he did not return to Barubora.

Regus specialized in errands within the city, and his information network was quite serious. So since he says that Gallus did not return, then it is so.

In search of information about Gallus, we came to the blacksmiths guild, but even then no one had a single guess. For a second, I thought that we were just wasting our time ... But suddenly, I heard one very interesting thing.

“Although I thought that Gallus was taken by the Ashton noble family, something has recently begun to happen in the capital. Someone seems to be collecting various materials that the blacksmith might need.

This is actually pretty suspicious.

- And he does not collect it openly ... Several times he lied about his name, sent intermediaries instead of himself, and lied in our eyes.

Undoubtedly, we need to go to the opening of the auction in the capital. We can meet him there, and if not, then he may be associated with the strange activities of the Ashton family.

“It looks like we don't know where Gallus is. So let's go to the shelter, I said.

- Yeah.

Fran's grim expression softened. She probably liked the prospect of seeing the children from the orphanage.

At the entrance to the orphanage there was a doorkeeper who had not been here before. It looks like when Amanda became the boss here, she decided to put more effort into fighting crime.

The gatekeeper was a former adventurer, a half-beast man. And he recognized Fran too. Thanks to this, he let us through without any problems, and as soon as Fran went inside, the children immediately ran to her.

- Ooh, it's Fran!

- Sis Fran!

- And Urusi is here!

That's what I understand a warm welcome! The children, as if not at all noticing the terrible muzzle of Urusi, clung to his fluffy fur, laughing with delight. Urusi was also very happy, it was clear from the way he wagged his tail, lying imposingly on the floor. Children who managed to stroke his tail raised even louder cheers.

Although I thought that the enormous size of Urusi should definitely scare at least some of the children, it seems that no one was scared at all. What brave children are in this shelter. Of course, in this world, children probably should be bolder anyway.

Apparently, having heard the noise of children, one of the adults hastily ran out of the building. They had weapons in their hands, and their faces were extremely stern. Apparently, they decided that someone had attacked the children.

And I recognized their faces. One of the adults was Io-san, who is known as a great cook who can make a great soup from the worst vegetables. But there was someone else with her whom I didn't expect to see.

- Charlotte?

It was the dancer Charlotte who helped us in the fight with Linford.

- Fran-chan? Long time no see. And Urusi-chan is here too!

- Won!

From the conversation it became clear that Charlotte was one of the orphans who grew up in this orphanage. She was very grateful to Fran for making Amanda pay attention to the plight of the orphanage and save him.

- It's so good that it's you, Fran-chan ...

- And what happened?

- Actually...

There was a reason why Charlotte and Io came running so hurriedly for the voice of the children. The fact is that about two days ago, a criminal visited here, for whose head a solid reward was assigned.

- In general, although he was dressed differently, he cannot be confused with anyone. When we fought this unclean giant, I was able to get a close look at him.

- Zelsried ... Why is he here?

For some reason, Zelsried came to this orphanage. Looks like he said he wanted to transfer one boy to the orphanage who looked like he was three. Despite his appearance, he did not act like a cruel criminal with a bounty on his head, his expression was sincere.

- He said that this is the child of his deceased friend, whom he cannot raise on his own. That the children have nothing to do next to him. He was even going to pay to be taken ...

The child looked very tired, apparently, he had a very long journey behind him.

- What is the name of this child?

- As far as I remember, Romio.

I knew it was Romio! That is, Zelsried decided to fulfill the last wish of Murray, which he himself had betrayed before? Why would?

- Where is this child?

- No, the fact is that we did not accept him.

- Why?

It seems that the fact is that Charlotte was not at the orphanage then, and of the adults there was only a teacher, who is not here now. And when she

tried to take Romio to her, he began to scream, cry and resist. She said there was nothing she could do. As was the case with Io-san, as soon as Zelsrid hugged him in turn, he immediately stopped crying and even smiled.

It seems that as soon as Zelsried tried to move away from him, he immediately began to cry loudly.

Then she told him that she could not take from a man a child who is so strongly attached to him. She suggested that Zelsried take some more care of him. And if he really can't take care of him, then let him come again.

As a result, not being able to attach Romio here, Zelsrid took the boy in his arms and left. It turns out that Charlotte bumped into him as he was leaving.

- To be honest, he seemed to me a completely different person. Such a calm atmosphere reigned around him that he could not be compared with what he was at our last meeting.

- What, Zelsrida then?

- Yes.

It is impossible to believe in it. Not only did Zelsrid bring Romio to Barubora to give him up to an orphanage, without showing his former cruel disposition, but even the boy himself became attached to him. All this was completely impossible to believe.

- But we could not leave it as it is ...

Although we reported it to the soldiers, they never caught it. Although I must say that ordinary soldiers and knights, even at the cost of their lives, could not even touch him with a finger.

- Zelsried ... What's on his mind?

- Maybe, although he betrayed Murray, he decided to make her such a farewell order, fulfilling her request? I said to Fran.

“But he ended up taking the child with him. What was he going to do with him? To sacrifice? Fran answered me.

Hmm. Did he take it with him simply because feelings awoke in him? Moreover, if the child himself became attached to him.

I looked at Fran. I remembered the time when we were just starting the journey after our first meeting. Perhaps Zelsried felt for Romio the same way I did for Fran then? Then I can understand why he decided not to take the child to an orphanage against his will.

Although this is just my imagination. Considering the worst could happen, maybe we should find out where Zelsried is now? While Fran’s safety comes first, I’m definitely worried about the exact position of that child.



# Chapter 393 - Rumors of the Marquis family

At the shelter, Fran and Urushi ate their fill of Io-san's culinary masterpieces. After that, donating ingredients to the shelter, we moved on. Our next target was the Dragon Diner.

- Oh, Fran. Long time no see. ( Fermus)

- Yeah. Hello Fermus. (Fran)

An elderly gentleman came out to meet us, looking good as always. Seeing Fermus leaving the kitchen, one of the visitors raised an enthusiastic cry.

- Today you decided to come and eat with us? (visitor )

- Uh-huh!( fran)

- Ha ha ha. Since when you came last time, you did not find me, today I will show you everything that my cooking is capable of. What, this wolf is not with you?( Fermus)

- He's in the shadows.( Fran)

- If you don't mind, then let me cook for everyone. After all, you fought against evil spirits together. (Fermus)

- Won-won!(Urushi)

He already left , Fran didn't even have time to say anything. Well, since the last time they failed to eat at the Dragon Eatery, they probably wanted to eat this time.

- Well, what do you want to eat

- everything ( Fran )

- Haha. Understood

Fermus was not surprised, as if he already knew that Fran was big eater. Immediately he turned around and went into the kitchen. Last time we were able to taste only the food of his student, this same Fermus will cook for us.

The first thing that the female worker, whom we have seen before, brought in was dragon bone soup, one of the signature dishes. However, it was yellowish.

- New recipe, Dragon Bone Curry Soup

Apparently, he also decided to follow the curry fashion.

- What do you think? I asked.( master)

Fran said nothing, just continued to swallow the broth.

It looks very tasty.

- So what do you think?

- Gorgeous. A bit sour, but okay. (Fran)

- Won-won!!(Urushi)

- Really? I am Very glad to hear it from you!

Probably, the curry here was more like Thai than Indian. As expected from Fermus, he only had one hint to make such a curry.

With each new dish that was brought, Fran and Urushi were increasingly anticipating how delicious they would be. among 10 dishes were meat, the same that they had eaten before. After tasting a bite, Fran nodded, but suddenly thought.

- What? I asked. ( Master)

“It’s delicious, of course, but Fermus cooks better,” Fran told me.

- Eh ... its tasty ?

The voice belonged to a student of Fermus. It looks like he was cooking it. That's how, amazingly, she understood it from one taste. Fran praised the apprentice's cooking, saying it tasted better than the last time, not daring to say that the taste was inferior to Fermus's. Let him continue to work in the same spirit.

After that, Fran and Urushi tasted a variety of dishes, until finally they were full.

Our final destination awaited us at Barubor, the headquarters of the Lucille trading company.

As expected, it was a large company, and Fran realized this as soon as she entered the building. Or was it because she remembered coming here before?

The girl at the front desk stood up to bow politely to the guests. In addition, there was also a boy who looked like a local apprentice, who immediately hurried to her.

-long time no see , lady Fran. What bring you here today? (girl)

- Is Rengil here? (Fran)

- I will now check if he is in place, wait a little.(girl)

As soon as the girl left, the apprentice boy ran out after her. So she went to tell Rengil about Fran's visit.

- Come here. (girl )

The girl from the front desk invited us to sit down. Then, almost immediately, another employee came in in the uniform of a maid, with tea

and cakes. The cups and saucers were decorated with beautiful paintings and the cakes were unusually decorated.

Considering that the other traders had simple cups, this should have been a gesture of good relations. Fran seemed a little unhappy that only sweets were brought to tea, recalling the past with nostalgia. Does it mean that steaks for tea in the Land of demi-humans seemed strange to me, or what?

“Fran, you’ve been eating recently, are you sure you’ll eat everything?” I asked. (master)

At first she ate in open shops, then in a shelter, and finally - in a "Dragon's Eatery" ... She should have overeat herself long ago.

- M? Of course.( Fran)

She gladly put the cake in her mouth, as if she had not eaten before, but put all the food in the Spatial Storage.

- Maybe you won't mock yourself like that? (Master)

- I always have a place for sweets.(Fran

I, of course, do not mind that Fran ate deliciously, but still ... Lately, I notice that she is becoming more and more insatiable. Although, given how much Fran moves, she doesn't have to worry about being overweight. But I'll have to think of something if I notice signs of excess weight in her.

While Fran was devouring the cakes, the girl had already returned and escorted us to Captain Rengil's room.

- you decided to return to Barubora?(Rengil)

- Yeah. I'm moving on soon, so I stopped by to say hello. (Fran)

- Oh ! I'm flattered.(Rengil)

- Also, I would like to buy spices.(Fran)

Although now the prices for spices are somewhat overpriced, we can still afford them now. Without further ado, we were given the right amount to buy.

- Well, if you are in the city, come visit again .(Rengil)

- Yeah.(Fran)

Since Captain Rengil knew Fran owned the Space Vault, he did not ask us any questions about transportation.

After that, we asked Rengil about Gallus and Zelsrid, but it seems he could not say anything.

However, we learned something else interesting about the Ashton family of marquis.

- This family is now in a difficult situation...(Rengil)

- Tough situation?(Fran)

-The Marquis Ashton received a guild accusation about his son, Serudio, who was an adventurer. As an A-rank adventurer, rumors began to swirl around him, and few people trusted him. Now that he has already lost his life, his numerous atrocities are surfaced. (Rengil)

Rank A Adventurer Serudio, we killed him in Urmu! For molesting Fran, trying to extort me from her, and for filthy offers to make Fran his concubine, he got what he deserved. Then we used the story of the Divine punishment that will befall the one who equips me, so that he himself, in fact, died from the curse of the sword in his stupidity.

However, Diaz, the head of the guild from Urmu, has already said something about the fact that he wants to solve the crimes committed by Serudio to the other heads of the guild. Apparently, he really did it. So the accused are the Marquis's family? Are they not afraid of anything?

- How can the guild afford to quarrel with the noble family of the Marquis?(Fran)

- Now they can. Still, thanks to the fact that the state helped the guild, the noble family seems to have paid all the compensation in full. (Rengil)

The guild had oral testimony from a respected A-rank adventurer, and evidence in the form of magical herbs. In addition, since the country did not want to spoil relations with the adventurer's guild, they decided to throw all the blame on Serudio.

Considering that they also have testimonies from Serudio's henchmen that the Ashton family ordered him to seek the Divine Swords, it was not without the usual scandal that lowered the trust in the family. The state itself is now watching them closely.

- Recently, their dark financial affairs have been revealed. Since our company also had to trade with the Marquis family, I can say that many times they did not pay their bills. (Rengil)

- I see

Rengil did not know that Fran was involved with Serudio's death. It looks like Diaz hasn't leaked unnecessary information. But it's hard to believe that with so many witnesses, Fran's involvement was so well hidden. I don't know if the Ashton family is aware of this.

If so, then they can not only hide where Gallus is, but also harbor a grudge against Fran. It would be better to be more attentive when meeting the Ashton family.

The next destination is Urmut, so I'll probably need to talk to Diaz.

# Chapter 394 -Return to Urmut

After finishing our business in Barbra, our next destination before the capital was Ulmutt.

First of all, we went to the Demi-Human Country on behalf of Diaz, the Head of the Adventurers' Guild in Ulmutt.

Specifically, the assignment to find a missing adventurer from the Black Cat clan. That is, Kiara.

Although I earlier took the position that Fran's safety is paramount, after a personal meeting with Kiara, and watching her death with my own eyes, it was impossible not to report this to Diaz.

Since the Martial Arts Tournament has not yet faded from the memory of the locals, Fran found herself in the spotlight. As we walked along the streets of the city, people constantly looked back at her. If we had stopped, they would have surrounded us. In addition, almost all of them are adventurers.

It seemed that the adventurers who had arrived in town for the Martial Arts Tournament were still there.

“Why are you looking at that girl like that?” (Adventurer 1)

“Oh, you don't know?” (Adventurer 2)

“I don't.” (“Adventurer 1)

“That's the Black Lightning Princess!” (Adventurer 2)

“Really? Her? She looks like an ordinary demi-human girl!” (Adventurer 1)

“Only because you’re a beginner...” (Adventurer 2)

Here and there, people exchanged similar statements. There is nothing to be done, a beginner cannot just look at someone and understand the true power. For a long time nothing happened, but not far from the guild, a situation occurred.

“Hey girlie. Is your sword too good for a beginner?” (Adventurer 3)

“Wait, let's talk!” (Adventurer 4)

These are probably adventurers who have sunk to the bottom, just waiting for a chance to cheat newcomers that are heading to the guild out of their hard earned rewards.

On the surface, they look like bandits more than they do adventurers. What are these fur vests for - Are they for protection? To keep warm? Especially those three, one with a skinhead and two with Mohawks, seemed particularly unfriendly.

Unfortunately for them, they are extremely weak, to the point it's trifling. It seems like they'll soon turn 40, but they haven't learnt anything... Apparently, not daring to face the dangers, they wasted away their days gambling and hunting weak animals in order to somehow live longer. In other words, these adventure seekers have neither willpower nor a vision of the future.

I wouldn't say that that's bad. A lot of people have become adventurers just to be able to earn a living. But if you bother others with your behaviour, then that's another story.

“Hey, come here!” (adventurer 3)

“Quickly, I said!” (Adventurer 4)

When the men began to surround us with practised movements, luring us into an alley right next to the guild. If we were any ordinary newcomer, we



most likely would not have been able to go against the crowd of strong men, and would have complied.

“Ghe-he-he, in Ulmutt, it looks like there are plenty of small fries.”  
(Adventurer 3)

“Yah. Hey, what’s holding you up?!” (Adventurer 5)

“Come over here fast!” (Adventurer 4)

When Rumina, the Dungeon Master of the Ulmutt dungeon, helped Fran evolve, she used up her dungeon’s powers, and thanks to that the rating of the dungeon itself fell. Along with that, the rank of the monsters that emerge from there fell, and with this the extraction of trophies and materials from them.

As a result, the income of the guild and its adventurers fell, so to compensate for the losses, the guild began inviting newcomers to this place. ...And these idiots are waiting for them here, like some kind of prey.

“Hey girl! what took you so lo-- ugh!” (Adventurer 3)

“Oi you! Sto-- gah!” (Adventurer 4)

“HEY, yo-- gah!” (Adventurer 5)

It's good that Fran is in a good mood right now. She just decided to hit everyone at once. And all because she ate well before she came to town. If she had been in a bad mood, then she might have used me.

These men were already lying on the ground, spitting blood.

“You seem to have overdid it a little...” I said.

“Nn. A little.” (Fran)

Fran planned to let them get off with one or two broken bones, but it looks like she ended up breaking 4-5 ribs each, damaging internal organs at the same time. Apparently she got a little nervous and didn't hold back.

Although, it seems like the first one got a little bit more of a beating than the third. Perhaps the third one has a slightly better skill control. She wounded the first at 80% of his life, and the third at 70%.

She only planned for them to pass out, and not receive such injuries. A complete failure on her part. But I am the type of person who loves to praise more than scold.

“The third one survived it a little better than the others, right?” (Master)

“Nn. Be fine. Probably.” (Fran)

Instead of pointing out her flaws, it's best to praise her. And why do so many idiots still come at us? Although, if it happens it a hundred times more, it would be a good skill control training for Fran.

Oh well, let's let it be. Adventurers are everywhere. Rumours are scattered at the expense of time.

Apparently, having heard the noise outside, someone left the guild.

“Hey, what's all this noise?” (Elsa)

“Elsa?” (Master)

“Mm? Who's that? Fran! Long time no see!” (Elsa)

A sturdy man emerged from the building, who might have been called a macho if not for his permanent red Afro hairstyle and thick layer of makeup. And these tight clothes too.

It was B rank adventurer Baldy... Or rather, Elsa.

Despite the fact that he was a macho man with a feminine manner, his strength was really worth reckoning with. Considering that A Rank Adventurers and above are already considered superhuman heroes, Elsa easily towered above most adventurers.

In addition, despite her appearance, she was quite caring, and helped Fran often.

Not that it will atone for her perverted trans-bi-masochistic aura that she is spreading around her, though!

“I am soooo~ glad that we met again!” (Elsa)

“Nn. Diaz, is here?” (Fran)

“Yes, he’s in the building. But those guys on the ground, have they really done something to offend you?” (Elsa)

“Nn.” (Fran)

“Well, the fact that they can not understand who’s standing in front of them... it's nothing but their own fault! Okay. Eric, Kane. (Elsa)

“Yes!” (Eric)

“What?” (Kane)

“Can you throw these guys into the infirmary with the others for me? I have a conversation with Fran-chan.” (Elsa) --Note: Leaving in “chan” for character effect--

“Got it!” (Eric)

“Understood!” (Kane)

As always, the adventurers in this city obey Elsa without a second thought. However, I can understand why they do not want to contradict her. Under the gaze of onlookers, by order of Elsa, they took on these idiots and carried them away somewhere.

“So, you have some business with the guild head?” (Elsa)

“Nn.” (Fran)

“Heeee~~, of course, he’s always sitting in his office, but right now he’s talking with grandfather Aurel. Can you wait a bit? From what I hear, they haven't finished yet.” (Elsa)

“I need to talk to Aurel as well.” (Master)

“Mm? Is that so? Then I can ask if Fran can join.” (Elsa)

“Yes, please do.” (Master)

“Aha. All for the sake of Fran-chan!” (Elsa)

Before leaving, Elsa couldn’t resist giving Fran a wink. Ooooh, I haven't been thrown into such cold for a long time! I shuddered a little.

“What is it, Master?” Fran asked.

“Fran, you yourself did not feel anything just now?” (Master)

“Just now?” (Fran)

“Nevermind. Pay no attention.” (Master)

Oh, it's hard for me to bear Elsa.

# Chapter 395 - Reaction to Story

It's been 10 minutes since Elsa left to tell Diaz and Aurel about Fran's arrival.

Finally, we went to the guild master's office. Inside, we found two elderly men drinking tea.

One of them looked like he resembled a nobleman; his grey hair, neatly combed back, as well as everything else about him, indicated that despite his age he didn't forget about his appearance.

The other person was a similarly grey-haired, sturdy elderly man.

From the way his large muscles showed through the haori, it was clear that he never stopped training. His gaze was piercing and heavy, just like a mafia leader.

“Oh, Fran! Long time no see.” (Diaz)

“Lady Fran, so you came to Ulmutt after all.” (Aurel)

Their smiles were completely different: Diaz had a radiant, warm smile, while Aurel of the White Dog race had more of a smug grin.

Both of them met Kiara when she was still living in Ulmutt, and so had decided to search for her when she went missing.

“Fran! It's so good that you are came back!” (???)

“Doll, is talking?” (Fran)

On the table where the two men were sitting, there was something that looked like a doll, no more than 20 centimetres in height. The doll had a human figure, but it was clearly crafted very skilfully, like the finest figurines from my home world.

And then a voice came from her. However, I had heard that voice before.

“This voice... Rumina?” (Fran)

“Yes. At the moment, she is inside this doll.” (Diaz)

Even though I thought that the Dungeon Lord was unable leave the dungeon, it seems like there are a few workarounds. On that note, the doll really did look like Rumina.

“What are you doing here?” (Fran)

“I’m discussing issues related to the management of the dungeon.”  
(Rumina)

Why are all three of the city rulers, Diaz, Aurel and Rumina, present? And we arrived at such a surprisingly convenient moment. Nevertheless, we need to inform the people in this room about Kiara.

“What’s wrong?” (Rumina)

“Nn. I came to Diaz with a report on behalf of the guild.” (Fran)

“Oh, is that so?” (Diaz)

“Nn.” (Fran)

“Well, young lady, regarding the report...” (Aurel)

“Did you learn of Kiara’s whereabouts?” (Rumina)

“Yeah. I met her.” (Fran)

Aurel and Rumina immediately reacted with surprise to Fran's words,

“Oh!” (Rumina)

“Really?!” (Aurel)

“So what happened.” (Diaz)

Diaz got down to business when Fran’s face didn’t lighten up. Diaz and Aurel sensed this and corrected their sitting postures. Rumina, although in doll form, seems to have changed her expression to a more serious one.

Diaz could tell that Aurel didn’t intend to hide what the assignment relating to Kiara was about, and it seems that he didn’t mind that everyone present heard the report.

“Kiara was in the Beast-Kin Country.” (Fran)

“I see, as I expected.” (Diaz)

“How is she?” (Aurel)

“Is she alright? Did she evolve?” (Rumina)

“We met with Kiara in the Beast-Kin Country’s Capital...” (Fran)

Fran told them everything that happened after meeting Kiara, all of the events, battles, and struggles. Diaz, Aurel and Rumina listened very closely to what she was saying.

They couldn’t hide their happiness when Fran talked about when she met Kiara, the battles with the army of demonic beasts, and about how Kiara came to her aid.

Of course, she didn't say everything. There was a lot that was worth keeping secret; both about Alistair and myself. Surely, experienced people like Diaz and the others should have realized that Fran had something to hide. However, they shouldn’t doubt what Fran was saying.

Despite their emotions, they all listened attentively to what Fran was saying.

But when the report approached the event of trip to the dungeon, their faces immediately darkened. From Fran's tone alone, they knew that some kind of misfortune was about to happen.

By the time Fran finished the report with Kiara's death, none of them were remotely excited.

“Kiara...” (Diaz)

Diaz jumped from the couch with emotion, but immediately fell back on it, as if he lost all his energy, and sighed loudly with a blank look. He sat there, motionless. But it was evident that his hands were reddened to the very tips of his fingers from the strength with which he had been holding them together in front of him.

“I see... she hadn't changed at all... even up until the end...” (Aurel)

Aurel was in a similar state. Hanging his head, he wiped away his tears and sniffed. Nonetheless, he perfectly understood why everything happened like this. After all, he was just like her, a battle-obsessed warrior.

Rumina held on tighter than the others. However, for some reason, she seemed even happy.

“I see she managed to evolve. And as a Heavenly Black Tiger...” (Rumina)

Rumina probably understood Kiara better than anyone else. Instead of feeling sad about her death, she was glad that Kiara managed to spend her final years in happiness, achieving evolution, and emerging victorious from battle.

Soon, there was silence in the room, and then Aurel slowly raised his head and said:

“Young Lady... You said that Kiara smiled in the last moments of her life?” (Aurel)

“Nn.” (Fran)



“Then, in your opinion, was it a sincere smile?” (Aurel)

“Of course.” (Fran)

“I see... Then it's fine.” (Aurel)

It seems that he was having a hard time accepting the news of the death of his girlfriend, whom he had been searching for for many years. I heard Aurel whisper to himself over and over again.

“...Zelosried...”

Diaz muttered the word in a choked voice. Despite his restraint, I could understand all the rage he put into that word. Even though there was no emotion on his face, it made him look even more terrifying.

“Diaz, Kiara told me not to do stupid things trying to avenge her.” (Fran)

“I see. So revenge for her is stupidity. Is that how you watched the veteran's death? I would like to understand how you can be satisfied with the death of someone who is close to you...” (Diaz)

The head of the guild understood that not everyone wanted to leave it like this.

“But still, I... I cannot accept this news as calmly as you do. Perhaps this is because I am a human being, but as long as this dirty, low, hated enemy continues to live somewhere, I will not give up on my revenge.” (Diaz)

Diaz's words sounded subdued, but I saw a dark fire in his eyes. I don't know what he's going to do, but he will certainly never forget the name of Zelosried.

But realizing that he would be troubling Fran if he continued to say such things, he immediately changed his tone to a friendlier one.

“By the way, I thought that Kiara had a hard time in the Beast-Kin Country. So she still lived happily. This alone makes me quite happy.” (Diaz)

Even without a the Principle of Truth, I knew that this wasn't what he really thought, but I didn't want to point it out. After all, no matter what Fran says, Diaz will not be honest.

"Of course, it would be nice if she was alive, but... This is just the essence of time. It's not new to me to hear that one of my friends died, without me even knowing about it..." (Diaz)

"Gha-ha-ha-ha! You are right, Diaz. On the contrary, consider that Fran was present at the death of Kiara in our place. You should be grateful to her!" (Aurel)

"Perhaps you are right. Furthermore, she helped to show what it takes for the Black Cat-kin to evolve. We are all grateful to her for that." (Rumina)

While the three of them were ultimately unable to figure out how to respond to the news of Kiara's death, Fran was delighted.

Because Fran had both love and respect for Kiara. And she was glad that there was someone to tell her story to. It was new for Fran to tell such a long story, and her hands were even a bit tired from the many gestures she used to tell her story.

# Chapter 396 - Again about Serudio

When Fran finally finished talking about Kiara, it was time for her to listen to Diaz . Aurel and Lumina immediately left the room.

“I would like to tell you something about a man named Serudio.(Diaz)

- By the way regarding, him, I completely forget about him. ( Master)

Sorry Diaz, Fran doesn't remember who is it. Even though she remembers some annoying nobleman to whom she handed me over, after which he died, she completely forgot both his name and face. However, this shows how insignificant he was for Fran.

- Have you ever met the Marquis Ashton?(Diaz)

- No.(Fran)

“But after leaving Urmut, we will head to the capital,” I said.

- I see. It's because of auction?(Diaz)

- Yeah.(Fran)

Fran told that since the blacksmith Gallus took on some top secret assignment from the Ashton family, he has gone.

- Yes, I heard that he went to Barubora. So the rumors about his disappearance are true.(Diaz)

“Looks like the Ashton family is collecting materials for blacksmithing,” I said.

- Oh, really? So the Ashton family really took Gallus? It looks extremely suspicious...(Diaz)

-We promised Gallus that we would meet in the capital. Given the circumstances we wont be able do that without running into the Marquis's family. Therefore, I would like to know exactly how the Serudio incident developed, in particular - what the Marquis's family might know about Fran. (Master)

- I see .(Diaz)

Apparently, the first thing that Diaz did after our "quarrel" with Serudio was to arrange for his subordinates to interrogate , extracting as much information from them as possible.

- However, I heard from them everything that I wanted to believe myself...(Diaz)

The words "that he himself wanted to believe" sounded very creepy. Although Fran did not notice this, in response to leading questions, he allowed himself to tell only that information convenient to him.

- However, last time it did not go so well...(Diaz)

- And what happened?(Master)

- Under the auspices of the Ashton family, a nobleman named Baron Holmes , this guy was another pain in the neck for us. He had the skill of seeing through lies and was given a very important job...(Diaz)

Hmm? I've heard it somewhere. A skill to see through lies?

- Have you heard of a man named Viscount Alsand? i believe You have been in Ares, so I wouldn't be surprised if you know him...(Diaz)

Exactly! The same Viscount from whom I took away the Deception Control. Auguste Alsand. Exactly, then his father is Viscount Holmes.

- This skill was a big problem for us. It's called "Managing Deception" and not only exposes a lie, it can make anyone believe a lie. Just think about what you can achieve using this skill wisely...(Diaz)

“Interrogations will be useless,” I said.

- Right. For example, if that viscount interfered in the testimony of Serudio's , subordinates they would simply lead us on the wrong track...(Diaz)

In fact, Auguste tried to used his skill in the same way on Fran, obviously plotting a fraud.

- True, at some point, Viscount Alsand simply took and lost his skill in discovering lies. Without that skill, he became a burden to his family and went under house arrest. The affairs of the family of Baron Holmes rolled downhill. Thanks to this, the Ashton family can no longer manipulate with truth and lies. .(Diaz)

But I took the Deception Control skill from Alsand only in retaliation for trying to deceive Fran. I never thought that this story will be bringed up one more time .

- Having magic herbs as evidence, he could not get out. Since Serudio had the title of viscount, responsibility for his crimes fell on the family of Viscounts Reseps. Although the marquis family did not have to be responsible for them, there are rules for the guild representatives. So all the guild leaders whom Serudio annoyed decided to do this. .(Diaz)

Diaz made an odd gesture, slapping his neck. And it didn't seem to mean "Getting punished ." Undoubtedly, it meant "Head off the shoulders."

In conversation, Diaz appeared to be a good-natured old man, , but he was also a seasoned guild manager. To those who encroached on his power, he knew no mercy.

“Speaking of Serudio’s death, I tried to hide Fran’s involvement as best I could. For those who were at the place of his death, Elsa-kun made a very

serious conversation. However, it will still be difficult to hide everything completely .(Diaz)

- Its cant be helped (Master)

- that's why , various rumors had spread...(Diaz)

- Different rumors? I asked.

- Yes, that the cause of Serudio's death was either the magic sword of a certain adventurer, or I, or Forund-kun. . Although there is actually a rumor that he died from the sword of the Black Lightning Princess, you are too popular a person in this city. So, on the contrary, it would be strange if such a rumor did not exist. I don't think many people think that this rumor is true...(Diaz)

If you need to hide a something, put in the most noticeable place. It" fit to that situation.

“Moreover, since Serudio’s death, all subsequent interrogations and persecutions attract more attention. How much attention do you think Forund and I are, given our lively interrogation and other activities? .(Diaz)

- I see. And you and Forund are not worried about your safety? - I asked a question.

- Ha ha ha ha dont worry about us. we "A"rank adventur or who? Adventurers do have the potential to make an impact on an entire country. Whoever challenges one of us will become an enemy to all of us. And the family of the Marquis will not make such a stupid thing .(Diaz)

- Well, if that's true ...(Master)

“But it will still be difficult to completely hide Fran-san's involvement in this. Be very careful while meeting with the Ashton family...(Diaz)

- Yeah. Got it...(Master)

After talking with Diaz, there was still the last place in Urmut where we should have collected information. yes, we must go to the dungeon where Rumina had returned. We were immediately transported there by the spatial gate. Since we informed her that we will pay her a visit , she was already to welcome us with open arms.

The first thing we talked about was Murray. Although we've talked enough about Kiara, there was another member of the Black Cat family that I should have tell to Rumina about.

However, rumina's reaction was not as violent as we expected. She hung her head down, nostalgia and regret mixed in hre expression . Perhaps all this time she thought that Murray would never return.

For Rumina, Mureria was a memory of 500 years ago. Moreover, sharing the same bloodline with her, Rumina knew those whose lives were destroyed by the Dark God.

- Its you ... Lady ... Mureria ...(Rumina )

I could not understand what feelings swirl in her heart, but for a while Rumina remained silent.

After that, while Fran and Urushi were drinking tea with steaks, Lumina and I, who had already calmed down, moved to a separate room. Since I could not sit at the chair opposite Lumina, I lied down on the table.

- I apologize. There is something I would like to hear...(Rumina )

"Something Fran shouldn't hear?"(Master)

“Mm, Its not the case , but ...(Rumina )

I told her what I heard from Murray during that meeting with her in the dungeon. After that, I told that I was a follower of the Goddess of Chaos, and at the same time I have no connection with the Lord of the dungeon.

- Rumina, did it happen that you could not tell Fran about how to evolve? Could it be that you could only speak in my presence?(Master)

- Oh, I understand.(Master)

“So maybe it's even easier for you to talk when Fran is gone. So can I talk to you alone for now?(Master)

- I have nothing against it . So what would you like to hear?.(Rumina )

- What does it mean to be a follower of the Goddess of Chaos?(Master)

I talked to both the Goddess of Chaos and Murray, but I never understood it. Although I do understand a thing or two about those associated with her.

- How to tell who the followers are ... Followers of God are those whom God created with his own hand, and those who received some kind of power from God...(Rumina )

- And which of these cases is mine (Master)

“Hmm... Of course, I don't know, but most likely the follower of the Goddess of Chaos must have something to do with the dungeon...(Rumina )

- Do you think so?(Master)

- Unlike other Gods, the Goddess of Chaos does not show up herself in this world in any way outside the dungeons. The magic of the Goddess of Chaos is intended for the Lords of the dungeon exclusively for managing the dungeon, so until now there has not been such a thing that the Goddess of Chaos created some kind of living creature. As far as I know, the followers of the Goddess of Chaos are those monsters that are under the control of the Dungeon Lord...(Rumina )

So, am I one of them? After all, I probably am not the Lord of the dungeon. So, when I was created, the power of the dungeon was transferred to me? Besides, could that mysterious soul that is sealed inside me be a follower of the Goddess of Chaos?

- In the end, I have no obtain any useful information (Master)



I am deeply sorry , but here another and final chapter for today , once again without editing .

# **Chapter 397 - queue**

## Chapter 397 -queue

it was the morning of the second day since we left Urmut.

- it's the capital?(Fran

- it should be . I don't think there are any other cities of such magnitude, I replied.

- its Huge.(Fran)

From the back of Urushi, gracefully running in the sky, the surface of a giant city became visible. Barubora, of course, was also a large city, but could not be compared with the large-scale greatness of the capital. City was even larger than the, capital of the beastmen country.

Even the fortress walls were of unprecedented size. They were twice as tall as the trees from the forest surrounding the capital. More than 50 meters in height . Probably, there are such demonic beasts in this world that only this size can ensure the safety of the city.

In addition, these walls did not look rough and utilitarian, the walls and towers with spiers were beautifully finished, which only enhanced the impression of the city view. As befits a capital, she combined pomp and reliability in her image.

The capital was located southeast of Aressa, which was in the northern part of the country, and northeast of Urmut, which was in the southern part of the country. That is, slightly east of the geographic center of the country. It seems that at the time of the founding of the Kingdom of Cranzer, the center of the country was here, but over the long years of its existence, the territory of the country has grown, and the capital ended up being east of the center.

I heard that about 200 years ago they wanted to move the capital closer to the sea, but considering the cost of money and ore for this project, this

venture was abandoned. Well, yes, I can imagine how much money is needed to rebuild such a capital.

“Come on, let's go down there,” I said.

- Woow!(Urushi )

- Nn.(Fran)

As always, having reached the outskirts of the capital, we went to the entrance gate. A long queue immediately appeared on the way to the capital. Although there was also a long line at the entrance to Urmut, this one was much longer.

Although Diaz warned us about it before we left Urmut, its actual scale exceeded my expectations. All because the visitors to the auction arrived. If the line lined up straight, it would stretch so far from the capital that people at the end of it would have to fight off demonic beasts somewhere in the woods. Therefore, people lined up along the walls.

The area was patrolled by soldiers and knights, in addition to guards, who also looked after the order in the queue.

- It's hard, but it's cant be helped. We will obediently wait, ”I said.

- Nn.(Fran)

We went to the very end of the line. Having descended to the ground, we could not see its end at all.

Although in line, in Urmut I saw many people who traded with each other in line, but here the scale was different. The liveliness of trade in this line would be comparable, probably, to the market in some small village.

There were kiosks and ordinary shops in the open air. These benches may be easy to build, but is it really worth it? Since the line was moving slowly, everyone had enough time to properly examine all the goods.

Many of them were selling what looked like good old ekiben (packed breakfasts usually sold at train stations) from my native Japan. Although, probably, there is something completely different inside, to which I am not used.

It looks like there will be something to do in the queue.

- I see the end, over there.(Fran)

- What aa big line , - I said.

It seems that at least 3 thousand people are lined up here. Since there are separate gates for the townspeople and the aristocracy, where preliminary registration is required, this is especially surprising. So almost all people in this queue either visit the capital for the first time, or come here less often than once a year. That is, these are the participants in the auction.

I was already beginning to worry if we could meet Gallus in time. Okay, we'll think about the details when we get to the capital.

“This is going to take a long time, so let's relax,” I said.

- Nn.(Fran

- Wow!(Urushi )

This time, Urushi was next to us. even though I thought it was worth ordering him to hide in the shadows, there were enough other people with demonic beasts. Demonic wolves stood in line with the owners, and there were even huge horses under 3 meters, harnessed to a large trade cart.

With all this in mind, there is nothing wrong with leaving Urusi with us. Of course, in his gigantic form, he would panic in line. In general, it was worthwhile to clearly show everyone around that we have a familiar.

With Urusi, some small fry won't dare to cling to us, and even Fran will be comfortable sitting on it.

“Well, let's play game of words,” Fran suggested.

- Oh, you haven't played for a long time, have you?(Master)

- woof -woof!(Urushi )

For some reason, she really liked the game we played in line at Urmut. Since we have plenty of time, why not play around until Fran gets bored.

We spent two hours like this. We still haven't made much progress in the line .

By this point, she was already tired of the word games, so now she was playing with Urushi in reverse. Fran, for obvious reasons, moved the pieces behind Urusi.

By this point, many people in line have acquired board games that they bought in stores. Great business comes out, so skillfully exploit people's position.

By the way, before the reverse, Fran and Urushi had time to play tic-tac-toe, but by the hundredth game they were bored to death.

While we waited, we were not only playing games. We had tea breaks, snacks, and even made friends with the merchants who stood behind and in front of us in line.

Before us stood a dried fruit merchant, Rab-san, who was 31 years old. Having bought dried grapes and apple chips from him for a snack, we managed friends with him.

Behind us stood the aromatic wood merchant, Menan-san, who was 41 years old. Unlike Rab, he had a wagon. It was an open wagon pulled by a donkey.

In order to cook bloated meat later, we bought some aromatic wood, and have talk. Looking at the game in Reversi Fran and Urushi, they both had a good conversation.

“ no, young lady. Not this wrong You need do it like this (.Rab)

- But then he will do it .(Rab)
- Definitely. If he does so, then do such turn .(Rab)
- Nn, I get it.(Fran)

In the same vein as Rab-san discussed the game with Fran, Menan-san talked with Urushi.

- Hey, Urushi. make this turn...(Rab)
- woof-woof?(Urushi )
- You will soon be pushing to the coner . But if you keep doing turns like this, you can always slip away.(Urushi )
- Woof woof ...(Urushi )

This uncle with a serious face discusses moves in reverse with a wolf. Crazy picture. But since it was not a mystery to anyone that among the demonic beasts there are many who are comparable in intelligence to humans, Menan-san did not feel discomfort about this. He spoke to Urushi very seriously.

- Ooh. (passerby )
- Indeed...(passerby )

Every now and then all sorts of suspicious persons passed by us slowly. They didn't do much, they just looked at Fran strangely and went back and forth. Do they think that we do not notice it?

Moreover, almost all of these strange passers-by were half-beasts. Probably, news about the Princess of Black Lightning is already well known among the half-beasts in this line.

Although we used the "Conceal Evolution" skill, so even the beastmens shouldn't know that Fran evolved, but ... Most likely, since there were many who saw the evolved Fran at the martial arts tournament in Urmut, it

was already impossible to stop the spread of rumors that the Princess Black Lightning Princess has evolved.

So Fran, a girl from the Black Cat clan, with a wolf familiar, easily gave herself away as the very Princess of Black Lightning. Perhaps there were those who had already seen Fran alive in Urmu. So these glances from the - beastsmen seemed to be only intended to make sure Fran was exactly the Princess of Black Lightning. I felt no malice, nothing but respect. Even here her fans.

- Don't you notice? I asked.

- What?(Fran )

It seems that having visited the Beastmen's country , she is already accustomed to increased attention from passers-by. So Fran was completely didn't mind then . Then I'll leave it as it is. I can't say this directly, so there is not much choice.

t/n edited version will be later on



# Chapter 398 - lost in the streets

We have been fourth hours in the line at the entrance to the capital. We were finally able to get to the capital.

Unlike Urmur or Bestia, we have not had any conflicts with other adventurers, which is already a plus.

Having passed the check at the entrance and parting with the merchants, we first went to the Adventurer's Guild. The fact is that the head of the adventurers guild in Barubor, Gamudo, told us to show the letter of recommendation to the guild master first.

Since this place exist for more than a thousand years old, many buildings in the capital looked very ancient. We had not yet reached the main street with shops and other establishments, and walked along an alley, both sides of which were lined with blackened stone buildings. Although I don't think they have never been rebuilt in a thousand years, they were definitely one or two hundred years old.

Plus, the alleys were narrow. It was practically a maze. Apparently, these were private and apartment buildings, built without observing the urban layout.

The reason I have immersed myself in these reflections is that we are now truly lost.

“Oh, since we didn't know the shortcut for sure, we had to stay on the avenue,” I said.

- Maybe we will jump?(Fran)

- No, in the capital we should not draw attention . Let's look a little more for the way on main street.

- Got it.

The surroundings of the fortress walls looked more neat. But the part of the city where we were located was very ancient, the buildings around us referred to those times when the capital was expanding most vigorously.

There were buildings that looked like apartment buildings, with a a lot of narrow alleys stretching between them. Many of the apartment buildings had shops on the ground floor, so the voices of inviting merchants echoed in the narrow alleys.

From time to time we passed underground passages and tunnels piercing through buildings. Fran and Urusi were in a good mood.

If this place is deserted, like some ghost town, you like it or not, you will feel anxiety and fear. But the place where we were was hardly quiet.

Cheap taverns and public canteens, and other suspicious establishments came across every corner, and we walked among the tipsy townspeople, flirtatious-looking women, and whatever you look at, not very decent-looking men. From everywhere came menacing male voices, now charming female voices.

This place was definitely not very good for living, but at the same time it felt a kind of chaos and ardor.

Surprisingly, Fran liked that. She probably had nothing against such a lively atmosphere. Despite the fact that we were lost, she walked briskly and in high spirits.

And she completely ignored the evaluating glances directed in our direction and the feeling of someone's presence behind our back. Given his clumsy attempts to hide his presence, he was not our enemy.

After many unsuccessful attempts to hide from our skill of presence recognition, he finally felt the real power of Fran, and fell behind. Simply put, our annoying pursuer once again turned out to be a small fry.

“Hmm, I can't get out of here,” I said.

Due to the fact that everything around was densely built up with four and five-story buildings , we could not even see the landmark in the form of a royal palace or a large temple, so we got lost. Although Fran has the skill “Sense of Direction” , and she should have roughly understood where to go, but ... Considering how many dead ends and unexpected turns there were in this place, it was not particularly useful.

“We need to learn the way,” Fran said.

- Well, we have no choice . (Master )

The only question is, whom to ask ... Anyone in one of the establishments nearby?

While I was thinking about it, Fran suddenly turned 180 degrees. After that, she went to the diametrically opposite side from where we were going before.

- Fran, what are you doing?(Master)

- I know the way.(Fran)

I didn't even have time to ask who she was going to find out from.

- Excuse me, how do I get into the Adventurer's Guild?(Fran)

- How the hell did you notice me?(Men)

The voice belonged to a young man who had followed Fran's trail for almost half an hour. Probably one of the locals. Although he was surprised to be noticed, did he really hope to go unnoticed?

I don't think he was following Fran, or anything like that. If the goal was surveillance, then he would carefully hide his presence, and moved on his heels very carefully. So he didn't even follow Fran. Apparently, therefore, Fran's instincts did not find him hostile. Or at least not considered an enemy worthy of attention.

“I want to join the Adventurer's Guild. (Fran)

- Huh? Guild?(Men)

I thought the young man would answer in a rude manner but , he remained surprisingly calm. Although Fran looked weak at first glance, the sword on her back and her good ability to recognize presence hinted at her strength. Besides, she had a wolf with her.

Perhaps instead of robbing us, he decided to try to pull a coin or two from us safely.

- Of course, it's not hard for me to tell , but what do you have ...

- Hey, wait !(Men 2)

With a vile expression on his face, the young man was already ready to demand payment for information, when someone interrupted him in mid-sentence. This voice belonged to a grown man with a piercing gaze.

He set off after us about the same time that the young man followed us. From the way he stalked us, I can tell that he is pretty good at it. He was comparable to the exploration adventurers, and his fighting power was appropriate.

It seems that Fran also realized that this man should not be underestimated. However, his gaze did not intersect with Fran, but was directed at the young man.

- Kalk-san, what are you doing?(men)

- Don't mess with this girl.(Kalk)

- What is it? I just wanted to sell her information, that's all.(men)

Unsurprisingly, the young man made a displeased face upon hearing such words from the man he named Kalk. Perhaps he thought that he wanted to take "game" from him.

“Anyway, don't mess with her. (Kalk)

- Hmm? What are you talking about?.(men)

- Its not your business ! Get out of here, quickly!(Kalk)

- Understand!(men)

Kalc's serious expression and menacing voice forced the young man to leave Fran. Before leaving, he glanced at Fran again, but was immediately kicked by Calc.

The young man flew to the wall and fell on the ground with a crash. He didn't seem to expect such a thrust from him, and looked up at Calc with a face full of fear.

- I told you in an amicable way - disappear.(Kalk)

- Iii ... Sorry!( men )

Having finally received a portion of his suppression skill from Calc, he stumbled and ran away. After that, Kalk stopped and bowed his head low in front of us.

- I apologize. He's just a fool who has no idea about the difference between his and your strength. Will you be generous enough to forgive him?(Kalk)

- Nn? (Fran)

“Oh no, I didn't mean to make you angry. Anyway, you wanted to find way to the Adventurer's Guild?(Kalk)

- Yeah. Will you show the way? (Fran)

- Yes. Follow me.(Kalk)

It looks like he decided to show us the way with his own hand.

- Maybe you just tell us how to get through?(Master)

- No, I must be your guide. Such fools who want to stick their nose in your affairs, like this one, are countless. It's scary to imagine what will become of this area if someone starts a fight with you ... Kalk

Kalk muttered those words, not hiding his fear. It seems like Kalk is good at the art of assessing the real strength of other people. This ability is granted to him by a magical vision called the "Eye of Weakness." This is a magical eye that unmistakably recognizes those who are stronger than him. Moreover, it allows you to find out exactly what the gap between your strength and the strength of the target is. Apparently, in his opinion, Fran is just some incredible monster.

What would have happened if that gopnik started a fight with her? The destruction would be enormous. It seems that this is what he fears most.

Whatever the reason, Kalc did not lie when he said he was going to deceive us himself. He seems to have a good understanding of these places, so we should rely on him.

- I see. Let's go.( Kalc)

- Please this way (Master )

# Chapter 399 Aunt Steria

Following Kalc, we soon found ourselves on the main street. Without becoming to lead us further to places where he has no comrades, he bowed deeply to Fran for the last time and left. Looks like he was afraid of Fran.

As soon as we went out to the main street, after 10 minutes of walking the sign of the Adventurers Guild appeared.

-Finally we arrived . But the building, however, is not that big .(Master)

“ its smaller than in Balbor. (Fran)

Judging by the size of the capital, I was expecting to see the corresponding size of the guild building. But, , it was almost half as much. well, of course it was larger than in Alessa and Ulmut, but nevertheless I imagined it larger.

-Well, in any case, let's go.(Master)

- Nn... (Fran)

As much as the guild lose in size to Balbor, there was no doubt that this was the capital guild. The atmosphere inside was pretty heavy.

Although the building was made up of huge, rough-hewn boulders, the interior was decorated with huge embroidered tapestries with the guild emblem, scarlet carpets, and the wood of the reception desk had taken on a beautiful hue over the years. Everything around looked elegant and graceful. A good description of the atmosphere of the guild would be that the weight of the story was felt in this place.

Rather than the luxury resort style of the Balbor Guild, the guild was more like an old high society hotel.

The racks seem to have been split depending on the purpose. There was no guide here, as in the Balbor guild, but all the necessary information was clearly written on the board.

First of all, we decided to line up to the stand for ranks C and D. Behind it was a huge man like a bear.

Glancing at Fran, he said:

- Girl, what is your rank?( adventurer)

- Hmm? C. (Fran )

- I see.(adventurer)

Fran took out her adventurer card, which seemed to convince the man. He did not assume that it was a lie or a fake. This is rather not because he was able to feel the real power of Fran, but because he did not want to burden himself with unnecessary trouble, believing that the staff would certainly be able to distinguish a fake from the original. Besides, I think he could at least feel that Fran is not weak.

However, there were also those whom Fran could not convince. Nearby there was a line for ranks F and G. It seemed that for them, dreaming of this cherished middle rank, it was unpleasant to see such a little girl in line . There were especially many talks about this among the F rank adventurers, who recently left the rookie category. It was clear from them that they were ready to enter into a fight with Fran.

And then came the understanding voice of a strong-looking aunt, standing next to the counter for ranks A and B. Even as a compliment, I could not say that in her youth she was a beauty.

It may sound rude , but I was surprised that such a large guild could not find a pretty girl to work at the counter.

However, after looking closely, it became clear why she was entrusted with such a position. She was very strong. As strong as all those outraged F-rank



adventurers, and could have dealt with them all easily. She may have been an adventurer herself before. Considering the peculiarities of high-ranking adventurers, I had no doubt that strong people were chosen first of all for the role of service personnel.

- Girl, you, by any chance, are not that Princess of Black Lightning, which one there are so many rumors? (aunt )

- Nn.

Apparently, hearing the name "Princess of Black Lightning", the crowd of adventurers began to rustle. Well, well, almost none of them believed it.

-I see , then, you can come here.

- What, really I can? (Fran )

- Yes, you are only 12 years old, and already in rank C. In addition, you also became the star of the Martial Arts Tournament, defeating the former adventurer of rank A, and even the current rank A. You are strong , no doubt. So, I have nothing against you getting in this line here .

- Nn.

Apparently, this woman was treated in a special way in the capital's guild. When Fran confirmed her pseudonym, and this aunt willingly believed her, the adventurers around did not mind. Maybe they still had doubts, but the atmosphere was such that no one wanted to contradict this woman.

- Welcome. Steria

- Nn. My name is Fran, a C rank adventurer.(Fran

- My name is Steria. (Steria)

- Aunt Steria. (Fran)

Hey hey, be careful with what you call people!

-What is, Mentor? (Fran)

- no , its nothing. Just thought it would be nice to bake some cookies just in case. (Master)

-?

We spoke to Steria about the case. To begin with, Fran passed on a letter of introduction from Gamudo, the head of the Balbor Guild.

- I want to take part in the auction. Here's a letter of recommendation.  
(Fran)

- Hm? Can I tale a look ? (Steria)

- Nn.(Fran)

Steria opened the letter and confirmed its contents. It looks like he wrote that he would like Fran to provide maximum assistance in everything.

And it also seems that the seal next to the signature was there for a reason. I felt the magic emanating from her before, but now Steria herself brought some kind of crystal from this seal.

- Yes, this is the original. A letter from Mr. Gamudo himself, incredible.  
(Steria)

- Do you know Gamudo? (Fran)

- Why do you call Mister Gamudo so familiarly ... Listen, he's the same Gamudo, that known as dragon slayer!( Steria)

- I know.(Fran)

- You don't know anything! In my time, it was the legendary team: Dragon Slayer, Lord Gamudo; Dragon Hunter, Mr. Fermus; Dragon Crusher, Mr. Diaz; Captive of dragons, Mr. Eyvas. (Steria)

Steria spoke so quickly that we barely heard anything. But it seems that when she was a rookie there was a team of A-rank adventurers with Gamudo in the lineup, and she respected them a lot.

They rode around the world like a party of dragon slayers . We have already seen the power of Gamudo and Fermus, but now it turned out that my assessment of Diaz was also true. Considering that they had another comrade who was not equal to them, I could easily believe that such a party could hunt dragons. Although, of course, everything depends on the type and level of threat of a particular dragon.

However, this party split up 5 years after its formation. Diaz first took over as the head of the guild in Ulmut, and was forced to leave the party. Then there were disagreements between the magician Avas and the rest of the team, and it seems that these feuds caused the collapse.

I have a feeling that I already heard the name of Avas when after the Martial Arts Tournament Fran tried to lure the guild of magicians. Yes, "Guild of Avas Mages". Although they say that this guild is something like an underground organization, but from the name it is clear that its creator is this very Avas.

Perhaps the reason Fermus is so surprisingly familiar with this organization is that it was founded by his former comrade. And Diaz, therefore, harbors such hostility towards the Mages Guild because Avas was the cause of discord in the team.

It looks like Avas is a mage specializing in ice magic and poison magic. Not that I wanted to meet him, but if we happen to meet him, then we must bear in mind these two schools of magic.

- Oh. ... Something we are a little carried away by this topic.(Steria)

She said that we were carried away, although only she HAS spoke. Fran didn't say anything besides "uh-huh". Although, it seemed she was glad that she spoke out. Steria gathered her courage again.

- In general, I do not have the authority to do as I want , so we need to call the boss. Can you sit down here on a chair and wait?)Steria)

- Nn. Fine.

When Steria left her place, the adventurers did not take their eyes off from Fran. But they seemed to remotely sense her power, so they didn't say anything. Well, until they start bothering us, let them watch as long as they want.

-So, would you mind a tea break? (Master)

-Nn (Fran)

Fran took tea and a snack from the Spatial Vault.

Hmm? I said "tea break" right? (Master)

-Nn (Fran)

No, of course she got the tea. Black tea, to be exact. But why is the table bursting with food? Although no, everything is clear. It seems that this is how she envisions a snack for tea.

I have nothing against pancakes, cookies and pies. It looks like these fritters, along with curry, were Fran's favorite treats. Since we are talking about an appetizer for black tea, then it will not do without mitarashi dango and daifuku. And, of course, a steak, as a tribute to the traditions of the half-beast people.

Also, how about curry, fried rice and boiled rice? Sounds like a full meal, huh? Something too much rice dishes.

- Yummy. (Fran)

-Fran, will you eat some salad? (Master)

- Nn. i will . Fran

We should teach her to eat in a balanced way.

# Chapter 400 - Eliante

It's been 10 minutes since Steria left for a guild master

- Khrum-Khrum-Khrum ... (Fran) t/n eating sounds

- Ummm ... Of course, I may not understand something, but How this place turn into a dining room? (Master)

- Khrum-Khrum-Khrum ... (Fran)

A woman came up to the table where Fran was having so called the tea break. She was a woman of a who look like cold beauty, with an intelligent look. Her blue hair was styled into a tall hairstyle to complete her strong woman image. The first thing I thought about when I saw her was "A secretary from some big company."

She looked at Fran somewhat shocked, and there was not a shadow of a smile on her face. It was the opposite , it seemed that she was very unhappy. She was that the type of person whose smile does not look natural, but rather scary .

Although on surface she looked in her 20- years old, but it was clear from her eyes that she was not human. Her sclera were black and her pupils were green. Exactly the same distinctive features that were in that half-insect alchemist that we met in Balbor, Eugene. Only Eugene had antennae, and this woman did not.

It must be because Eugene belonged to the family of semi-insect bees, and this woman was something else.

Since she was not a purebred person, we could not just by eye determine her real age by her appearance. After all, Eugene, although he looked 40

years old, was actually almost 60. Given this, I would not be surprised if this woman was about forty years old.

No doubt she knew how to fight. She was also an influential person. Since Fran was focused on food and the woman showed no hostility, Fran did not notice her until she got close enough.

- Nn? What are you? (Fran)

“You are the Princess of Black Lightning, right? I'm the guild master ( guild master)

So it was the guild master. The next moment, the woman sat down in a chair, facing Fran. When she reached out to grab the cookies, Fran didn't stop her.

However, she watched the guild master closely until she touched the cookie, because if she chose curry or pancakes as her target without showing her true level of power, Fran would see it as a threat. Considering that she still has little control over her skills, if she had used "Royal Suggestion" here, then she would probably have caused a rustle. I would have had to calm Fran down as strong as I could.

- Khrum-Khrum-Khrum. ... my name is ...

- Well, no need to talk with full mouth .(Guild master

- Nn.

I did not expect such a kind tone from her. Maybe she has such a scary expression by nature? Finally finishing with her food, Fran introduced herself to the woman again.

- My name is Fran, i am C rank adventurer.(Fran)

“I am the head of the Capital Adventurers Guild, Eliane.(Eliane)

- Khrum-Khrum-Khrum.(Fran)

- Actually, I was hoping that we would talk in my office ...(Eliane)

The guild master inviting us to her office ? And she is easy-going.

But it seems that they simply did not have enough people.

- At this time, the guild staff is busy preparing for the auction, so there are no free hands at all. Steria cannot go anywhere, because she may need to deal with a high-ranking client.(Eliane)

Eliante said this while looking at Fran's meal.

- even though I also have no free time ...(Eliane)

Sorry. I am already finishing (Fran)

- Oh, okay. You don't have to rush ... (Eliane)

- Khrum-Khrum-Khrum ... (Fran)

She Is that really kind? Although her Face is still the same scary , but maybe she really has it by nature . Leaning relaxed on her elbows, Eliante ate the cookies, and now she seemed even softer than before.

passed 20 minutes .

- So, let's continue the conversation.

We have moved to Eliante's office. Well, there was a mess. This is not what I expected from Eliante, the "strong woman". Piles of documents were everywhere, clothes were scattered here and there.

It takes incredible power to move around this room. Perhaps this is already the standart for her, and she has lost sensitivity to the state of her office.

- Yeah. I would like to participate in an auction.(Fran)

- as the seller? Buyer? Or maybe both?(Eliane)



- I want to take part in the weapon auction.(Fran)

I see ... I don't think you will find better equipment than the one you are wearing now. Although there are no problems with this. (Eliane)

- Also, I would like to buy magic stones.

- And there is no problem with that. It looks like there is something like a separate auction for magic stones. Do you know how an auction works? (Eliane)

- I do not know.(Fran)

Eliante immediately began to tell Fran about this.

First of all , there are many types of auctions, each specializing in a different kind of item. Nothing other than weapons and armor can be exhibited at an arms auction, and all armor and weapons must be displayed on it.

It seems that this is because there are also dangerous items at the auction, such as the cursed or with unknown abilities. Indeed, if an invaluable demonic sword with a dangerous ability gets there, then the entire capital may be thrown into chaos. Both sellers and buyers are closely monitored.

In addition, after going through managers and appraisers, almost all items can be sold at the appropriate auction.

An exception is for items brought in on the day of the auction, for which there is a separate auction. However, the check here is quite strict, and if the item looks even a little suspicious, then it will not be accepted. So, especially high-level magic artifacts and other items that are difficult to evaluate are practically not exhibited there.

- To participate, you must go through many rigorous to find.

- Find?.(Fran)

- Yes. Identity identification, criminal history, and everything like that. Weapons, armor, and magic stones can be especially easily associated with crimes. But it is relatively easy for adventurers to qualify for participation. That is, it should not be difficult for us to issue an identity card for you to participate in all auctions on behalf of the guild.(Eliane)

- So it is possible?(Fran)

- If something happens, then the responsibility will be on Gamudo, who wrote the letter of recommendation.(Eliane)

This means that our inappropriate behavior can bring problems to Gamudo.

“Besides, without even counting all these recommendations from Gamudo, I would like to forge a good relationship with you.(Eliane)

As she said this, Eliante smiled slyly. However, it was more like she was plotting something, but such grin of some tomboy confessing to a prank.

- Haha. But there are not many women among the high-ranking adventurers. Not to mention a talent like yours. Not that there are none at all, but definitely the adventurer's world is inhabited by men. Almost all guild masters are men. When I decided to become the head of the capital's guild, such a loud noise arose from all sorts of folks . But I shut them all up. (Eliane)

That is, she would like to make friends with women who share the same job as her. Indeed, the vast majority of high-level adventure seekers are male. Dzyan, King of Beasts, Arslars, Forund, Colbert. Guild master and former high-level adventurers are all male too: Krimt, Gamudo, Diaz, Fermus.

Among women of high rank, I can only remember Amanda and Eliante. Mea and Kiara, if they were adventurers, would not have pulled up to a high rank. Elsa ... In general, I will consider a man.

“Because of this idiot Serudio, the number of female guild master has decreased significantly, and therefore I accept any active adventurer like you with open arms.(Eliane)

Diaz talked about female guild leaders that, under the influence of "seduction" Serudio gave him unfair assistance and were expelled.

- If you have any problems in the capital, always come to me for advice.  
(Eliane)

- Nn I understand.

Although she was calculating, there was no doubt that she was genuinely worried about Fran. These words cannot be lies.

- I would not want such a promising adventurer to be troubled by any problems. The capital is still full of aristocratic fools. The time will come when the Marquis Ashton and Baron Holmes will pay for their crimes on the block ...

What a horror! She also spoke the name of the Marquis of Ashton. Probably, he managed to annoy the guild of adventurers. I used Deception Control, but the words were just as true. So she really wants their heads to separate from their bodies?

- Understand ? If there is even a tiny problem, come. Got it?

Yes, she herself emphasizes this. Maybe she is familiar with the rumors about Fran? Well, I can't say that we haven't had any problems yet. And her tone was quite serious.

If something happens in the capital, then we should not hesitate to rely on her.

# **Chapter 401 - Types of Slaves**

## Chapter 401. Types of Slaves

Eliante finished telling Fran about the auction.

- Are you interested just in armor, weapons and magic stones?(Eliante )
- What other types of auctions are there? (Fran)
- Hmm ... You might be interested in an auction of materials from demonic beasts, a cooking auction, or an auction of magical artifacts?(Eliante)
- A cooking auction? (Fran)

I thought she would react to it. It seems that in such a short time Eliante began to understand something about Fran. Smiling a little tightly, she nodded.

- Yes. Mostly ingredients are sold there. they just not only the edible parts of demonic beasts, but also ghost mushrooms, magical vegetables, and other wonderful ingredients. Basically, they selling rare ingredients that are poorly present on the mass market. (Eliante)

- Nn, I get it. (Fran)

“Besides, I can exhibit recipes and culinary secrets there.

That is, in fact, everything related to cooking is exhibited there. If you have time, you should take part in it

- Nevertheless, the dishes itself is hardly shown there .(Eliante)
- Its fine.(Fran)
- Hmm? Do you cook yourself?.(Eliante)
- Nn.(Fran)

- Oh really? ... We are so similar.(Eliante)

Eliante muttered those words, visibly nervous. She probably didn't really know how to cook. Given the state of the room, she couldn't even handle the laundry and cleaning.

Apparently, there was an auction of art objects, and a real estate auction, and an auction of clothing and jewelry. But Fran didn't react at all. But it wasn't even the cooking auction that she reacted most strongly ...

- Slave auction?(Fran)

- Yes. The auction deals only with those who were enslaved for serious crimes, are you interested?(Eliante)

- No!(Fran)

- Why do you suddenly have such a frightened face?(Eliante)

- Nevermind.!(Fran)

Of course, for Fran, the topic of the slave trade is still heavy. She was not going to take part in either the shady or legal trade in slaves.

She seems to have an aversion to more than just the illegal slave trade. To begin with, I must say that there are many different types of slaves. As already mentioned, there are three main types: those who have fallen into slavery for debts, for light, and for serious crimes.

As the name implies, those who are unable to pay off their debts become debt slaves. In addition, it seems that those who are in a particularly difficult life situation can sell themselves into slavery.

When I first heard how debt slaves were treated, I even wondered if this could be called slavery. In fact, they are called slaves only because they are subject to the magic of enslavement, but their rights are surprisingly well protected.

The master pays the slaves a salary, and is obliged to provide them with food, clothing, and a roof over their heads, abuse is not allowed.

Compulsion to sexual services and coercion to participate in a crime are severely punished. Not only the slave, but also the master is bound by the magic of the contract, so he cannot break these rules either. I have the impression that this is like involuntary labor from one of the offers of the labor exchange from my native Japan, only you are also provided with food, clothing, and accommodation.

At best, the person is released after one month, and no discrimination against debt slaves is allowed. In some cases, a useful skill can be learned in the workplace, so it seems that a lot of people consider becoming a debt slave not a worse fate. Hmm, just like a labor exchange.

But starting with those who have fallen into slavery for minor crimes, the attitude towards them sharply deteriorates. Unlike debt slaves, whose position is more likely due to some kind of social security, in this case they became slaves as punishment for something. Of course, cruel treatment is still prohibited to them, their rights are significantly less than that of debt slaves. They seem to be used exclusively as bodyguards and for heavy physical labor.

Sounds like involuntary 3K labor (Note. In Japan, this means "Hard, dirty, dangerous work"). However, for hard work they are eventually released, so in general human rights apply to them.

So, the last are those enslaved for grave crimes, and their fate is truly terrible. For a start, those sentenced to death go there, and the goal is the most cruel exploitation of their labor. They practically do not count as people.

It seems that these slaves who fall into different categories. Some are also used to provide sexual services, while others are used as detachments. In fact, I was interested in the local slavery system before, and we had already heard something about it in the Adventurer's Guild before, but since Fran could not bear this conversation, I did not manage to fully learn about the system then. So I didn't know any particular details.

Of course, Fran's illegal slavery is much worse. It already fully meets my idea of ??slavery.

In fact, both debt slaves and criminals slaves are bound by a contract of their own accord. For starters, a slave contract is not activated without mutual consent. Even those convicted of a serious crime, in fact, also voluntarily choose between execution with public torture and slavery.

However, illegal slavery is different. They fall into slavery not of their own free will, but by force. The way they get around the slave agreement limitation when making a contract is more vile than you might imagine. That being said, this is a very simple way.

The stolen person is tortured for a long time, and when he agrees to the "black" contract, then he is also required to ask for forgiveness. Such a contract does not guarantee even those few rights that those convicted of serious crimes have, and the slave completely obeys all the orders of the drafter of the contract.

Although, of course, the extreme punishment is imposed for the illegal sale of slaves, there are still those who are engaged in this. And all because of the interest in illegal slaves on the part of criminal organizations, and the stupid aristocracy.

But Fran, was in illegal slavery, so it is not surprising that she is so negative about the slave trade. Sensing the unsettling atmosphere, Eliante changed the subject.

"This is perhaps the familiar auction for you?" Only trained familiars are displayed there. You seem to have walked with the wolf? Is it interesting for you? Oh, or isn't the familiar with you today?(Eliante)

- Urushi by my side.(Fran)

- Woof!(Urushi)

- This is ... The Wolf of Darkness? I really didn't expect them to be tamed. Does he use shadow dipping? Not the best bodyguard, of course. And even



this size ...(Eliante)

- Urusha may get smaller...(Fran)

-Woof !(Urushi)

- Oh, and such unique individuals exist.(Eliante)

It seems that the head of the guild Eliante did not know that Urushi was hiding in the shadows. Sure, he's used to it now, but he's usually pretty cowardly.

After that, while we were receiving the auction participant ID, Eliante asked us where we were going to stay.

- Fran, have you decided where you will spend the night today?.(Eliante)

- Not yet.(Fran)

- Then, can I offer you a good place? This hotel is used by high-profile adventure seekers...(Eliante)

Looks like she could show us a place to stay a night . True, there was only one question.

"Can we sleep there with the familiar?"(Fran)

“Yes, familiars are allowed in this hotel. If Urushi stays that size, then there is no problem.(Eliante)

I see , great. Since the auction of weapons and armor will take place in two weeks, until that time we will be able to see the capital. We need learn more information

# Chapter 402 - Going to the auction

It was our second day in the Capital.

We were standing in front of a large building. It looks like it was the building of the capital's leading theater.

Although Eliante, for us, created a list of the 10 best attractions of the Capital, suggested that we visit this theater, we politely declined.

Even under the most favorable conditions, Fran was unable to carefully look at the theatrical performance, not to mention the fact that it seemed to be some kind of snotty romantic performance, and even about love between young mens.

Since the title of the production was "The Sword of the Purple Rose", I thought it would be something about fighting. I thought that if it was a colorful production with a lot of action scenes, Fran could well have seen it, so in general terms we learned from Eliante the duration and content of the production.

She said that the main theme of the movie is love, although all the characters are men. What kind of romantic movie is this? And the "sword" in the title is that a dirty euphemism ?!

She was so carried away by her story that, without noticing it, she completely went into the jungle of her hobbies. Fran probably only understood 20 percent of what she said.

Eliante probably loved the aesthetic side of this kind of operas and theatrical productions. When she talked about the beauty of the actors, she was already heavy breathtaking. It's even creepy how local noble women go crazy about this production.

Indeed, when we are talking about cultural things , is it not worthwhile to understand in advance where to draw the line between simple decline and decay?

I'm a bit of an otaku too, though. It's not that I can't understand such a culture. But how can you advise such an innocent girl? At least I would not want Fran to recommend that.

When she asked with excitement in her voice about other attractions, out of 10 places 5 turned out to be something in the same spirit.

This is the palace garden, which was used as a stage where Eliante's favorite performances were played, and the cemetery of one princely family, whose lineage was interrupted due to the homosexuality of one of its heads, and the house in which the author of popular plays about same-sex love was born, and that's it. like that.

But in the other half of the list were places such as the Great Temple and the hill from which the royal palace is clearly visible - in general, thanks to her for recommending at least some normal places.

I was especially pleased with the giant building of the royal palace, which by its appearance told the rest of the city "The right to sunlight? What is it?" Although no one is allowed to live next to the palace except the high nobility, there is a corner where aristocrats of lower rank live. This place is the worst of all, as it is in the shadow of the royal palace all day. Nevertheless, it is a great honor to live near the palace, so there are still a lot of people do so. One of the soldiers-patrolmen told us all this, not hiding his disdain for the aristocratic vanity.

Well, let's finally come in(Master)

- Nn.(Fran

At the entrance of the hall, we presented a certificate of what they did for us in the guild. At first glance, it looked like a simple metal plate, from the engraved pattern on which one could understand the rank.

The certificate that was given to us was the 5th step, the second from the top in terms of the degree of admission. It allowed you to participate in all auctions, but it forbade you to take places specially prepared for large merchants, guild leaders, and so on.

As expected, it looks like noble visitor rooms are also not allowed.

(Auction of weapons and armor is open today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow - three days)

- How many weapons.(Fran)

Fran was flipping through the catalog we bought earlier while exploring the city.

This catalog has been on sale for over a week, so it's no surprise that usually the bidders arrived at the time when the items of interest were being displayed.

Spending the whole day at the auction from morning to evening, not being sure whether the product you are interested in will be displayed here is not the most efficient waste of time.

But in our case, there were no special products that we had our eye on. Our goal was to visit the weapons and armor auction. So we were still in the dark about what kind of items are being auctioned.

Of course, this does not mean that we did not look into the catalog at all. Gallus wrote in his letter about the scabbard that he puts up for the auction of weapons and armor. And his words sounded somehow suspicious.

I thought he was going to somehow contact us when this scabbard is put up for sale, but ...

The only problem is that there were several scabbards among the goods, and the time of their putting up for sale was very different. We tried to find the signature of the manufacturer of each of the scabbards or the name of the seller, but there was not a word about this in the catalog.

Apparently, we will have to come to terms with the fact that we will not find out. There that we decided to come to the auction in the morning.

We are of course entitled to special reserved seats, but (Master)

- What to do?(Fran)

-Hmm (Teacher

I don't know how Gallus was going to contact us, but if he is here, it's not a fact that he will be able to go to special places. So it was better to take the usual place.

The question was whether Fran could sit in one place all this time.

-Can you handle it(Master

- Uh-huh!(Fran)

I don't know if her enthusiasm will last for a long time ...

3 hours passed.

-Hey Fran, don't sleep. You'll draw unnecessary attention(Master)

-... yeah.(Fran

(We may be kicked out)

- ... yeah.( Fran)

Its useless. Its cant be helped , I will support her with telekinesis. I certainly understand her. Different weapons and armor appeared again and again, one after another. In addition, these were not only enchanted items, for example, they sold a collection of one hundred ordinary swords, that is, there were many simple things.

Having somehow endured all this boredom, in the afternoon they began to display special goods. As for those products that were registered after the

catalog was printed, no matter how unique and striking they are, it is not a fact that they will agree to put them up for sale.

In fact, the first thing that was exposed was an ordinary long sword. It was said that the engraving on its blade was done in a way that did not affect durability.

However, when I saw the next item, I involuntarily exclaimed.

Huh? ... Hey Fran! Master

- ... mmmm?(Fran)

I lightly shook Fran with telekinesis. We had to get ready to place a bet. Although a bet can be made at a special place using a magic device, it cannot be done at a regular place. As we were told before the start of the auction, for the bid you need to show the sign with your fingers.

- And here is the scabbard for the long sword! Thanks to the parts of the demonic beasts that were used in the manufacture, they are not only durable, but also able to adapt the size to your needs!

The auctioneer brought a sword scabbard and put it on the stand. The scabbard was made of brown leather. But when the words were said that they were fascinated by the adjustment of the size, a noise arose in the hall.

In this world, people find valuable the ability of the scabbard to adapt to the size of the sword. It's not the cheapest thing, but for an expensive scabbard put up for auction, being enchanted with resizing magic was a matter of course.

Without it, no matter how wonderful the scabbard is, it will always be limited to only one type of sword.

But that was not important for us. For some reason, it seemed to me that this scabbard was very similar to the scabbard by Gallus, in which I was sitting now. And the default size is the same. This scabbard is made exactly for me.

Finally, the auctioneer's voice, drowning out the voices of all the other participants, loudly announced the signature on the scabbard.

- The creator of the scabbard is unknown! Signed - The Mentor's Scabbard!  
The starting price is 10 thousand gold!(auctioneer)

Fran! We have to win the bid! (Master)

- Nn!

# Chapter 403: Master Scabbard

We tried to win the bid for the scabbard. but it was easy to win the bid. It's even surprising because it was too easy.

After all by not having size adjustment makes it not popular. It seems for the our opponent reason was they could re-use the monster material. But they immediately withdrew when they saw we had the bid.

The winning bid is 30.000 Goldes. I didn't know the market price, but it wasn't a super luxury item. The material used is not so expensive, and isn't it was only the scabbard alone?

However, it is quite conspicuous. In the first place, it is out of place for a child like Fran to be in a weapon auction, and i can feel a lot of gaze.

Isn't this looking bad? for Gallus to took such a roundabout way mean that he could not make direct contact. Perhaps he was still under Marquis Ashtner surveillance or is still in captivity.

No, since he was able to put up the bid, he must not be in captivity? However, i dont think he is in a state where he can casually go in and out.

In the worst case, for Fran won the bid for the scabbard made by Gallus in this auction has immediately revealed to Marquis Ashtner. And when they found out it was the Black Lightning Princess involved in Serdio's death? They will keep an eye on us i think.

『For the time being, lets win the bid after this』

「Why?」

『It's for distraction』



I don't think they can be deceived by only this...Honestly there is something interesting, and we can pretend that we were impulsive to win the scabbard.

So, we decided to win the bid for windbreak bracelet that appeared second in the afternoon. It was an item that softens the wind when riding a horse. It would be useful when we ride Urushi.

However, it seems to be a surprisingly popular item, and it has compete with a considerable number of competitor. But we have to show that we are serious, so we can't fall back. In the end, it cost us 470.000 Goldes. We are quite rich now, after all wasteful spending is moody.

『So, let's receive our winning bid, and return to our inn』

(Nn)

If you can immediately pay for the winning bid, you can receive it from that point. But, it's a hassle to carry around a lot of money, so it's usually a form of paying at a latter date.

Some fairly strong adventurer can be seen near the winning bid delivery counter, which is watching as a security guard. It seems the security guard are pretty good at it. Well, this is a big auction after all. Seeing Fran coming, he immediately increased his vigilance, which shows his high ability.

Among adventurers, if they are at rank G to E, they won't sense Fran's ability at all. Those who often try to pick a fight with us are usually around this rank.

When it comes to rank D and C, they maybe can sense something, even if they cannot see through Fran abilities. In addition, there were many cautious adventurers that is capable to some extent, and a few were actively trying to not get involved with Fran.

If they are ranked B or higher, by just only looking at Fran, they can already sense her strength, and almost no one trying to pick a fight. Well, we may

be spotted by battle junkie instead.

Considering that, these security guards ability was about rank C it seems. And it also depends on their sensing ability, so it's not certain.

「Hey」

When Fran called out to the staff at the delivery counter, the guards tension reached it's peak. On the contrary, the staff who did not have any fighting prowess seemed to think she was a lost child. She replies to Fran with a carefree look.

You can see that the guards are irritated by the staff carelessness.

「Yes, what can i do for you? This is the delivery counter for winning bid, so please ask the person in charge at the entrance for guidance」

「Came to pick up the winning bid」

「That's! I beg your pardon. Then, can you show me your participation card」

「Nn」

When Fran gives the participation card, she holds it over a crystal. That crystal probably is a magic tool, and it seems, to hold various information.

The rest was easy. Pay the money normally and receive the goods. Most expensive items are carried to their residences for crime prevention, and it seems that not many people pay and receive at the counter. They usually assume that they will hand over cheaper items at this counter.

The person in charge was pulling his face when he saw 500.000 Goldes piled up on the counter casually

『Well, first let's go back to our inn』

(Nn)

We can't expect any contact from Gallus, and is there any message hidden in this scabbard? When we returned to the inn room we examined the scabbard that we won on the bid.

『There's no different part...』

「Nn」

『Do you want to compare it a little?』

We compared our winning bid scabbard with my original scabbard side by side

「.....the same?」

Yes, as Fran says, they looked exactly the same. It seems that the size, the making, and the color are exactly the same.

「woof?」

Urushi tried to sniff, but it seems he can't get anything from it.

We carefully compare the details. Lifting hitting, sensing magical power, and so on.

『.....I can't get anything』

「Nnn」

But when i casually look inside the scabbard. That's where i noticed. The scabbard looked exactly the same, but it actually has only one difference.

It's inside the scabbard. And it was just a single part. The thread used to sew the inside of the tip of the scabbard was a red thread. The part of my scabbard that i originally had was made of white thread. To be honest, no matter how much i looked at it, i couldn't find any other difference other than there.

『For the time being, lets untie the thread』

「Nn」

『I-if you do it too hard like that it wi-...! I-i will do it my self!』

「Nn? Got it」

Instead of letting Fran forcefully pulling the thread, I'll take care of the thread my self. It was sewn tightly without any gap, but i managed to do it after a few minutes.

『Ooh, can the leather inside the scabbard turned over a little?』

「Is there something?」

「woof」

『Oh, hey!, dont push me!』

I searched inside the scabbard while calming Fran and Urushi who are curious and tried to take a look too. But i couldn't find any message which i expected.

『Hmm...there's nothing in it...Wait, something is written in the flipped place』

「What is written?」

『E-to, this scabbard, to be used by the strongest sword, wish for it to the God of Wisdom』

Is this some kind of cipher?

「Master want to use it?」

『What do you mean?』

「The strongest sword is definitely Master! that's the only thing about it」

『That's why you want me to use it? No. Wait. God of Wisdom? not the God of Blacksmith but Wisdom? Maybe it's about an intelligence weapon?』

As Fran says, this is without a doubt must be a message for me to use it. However, it doesn't mean for me to actually using it. It should contain more ciphers that only us know about it.

As i were thinking about the meaning of the cipher. Fran immediately put me in the scabbard right away. The front part of the scabbard is partially destroyed so it is more comfortable to get in.

The unraveled tip was a little stiff, and a little metal hits the base of the blade. I didn't know how it looked, but it seems that the metal fittings that fasten the back strap are slightly larger than my previous scabbard. So, even Gallus make a mistake like this.

No, wait. Will a blacksmith like Gallus make such a mistake? In other words, is this on purpose?

『Fran, take a look at the metal fittings』

「Nn!」

When i examined it, i found that the metal on the back side of the metal fittings was slightly different from my previous scabbard. A yellowish soft metal is used. It's just glued together and might peel off if you put some effort to peel it.

I carefully peel off the joints of the metal fittings. And then, some characters were written on the inside of the metal. It can't be, is it really meant for me.

『E-to, a mansion with a war maiden glared at by a scorpion lion?』

「More ciphers?」

# Chapter 404: Meaning of the Message

We reconfirm the text hidden in the bid winning scabbard.

『A mansion with a war maiden glared at by a scorpion lion.....』

I'm sorry Gallus, i disassembled the scabbard as much as possible to see if there were any other hidden cipher. I loosen all the parts that could be loosen, and tried to remove all the parts that could be removed...but, no more hidden ciphers left were found.

In other words, are you trapped in the mansion in this ciphers?

『Fran, can you understand what it means?』

「Nn!」

『Eh? Seriously!?!』

「Find a mansion with a valkyrie glared at by a manticore! If it's a demon beast, we can find it with Urushi's nose」

Yeah, it's not like i didn't know. As Fran says, the scorpion lion is a Manticore. The war maiden is definitely Valkyrie. We have fought both in the Beastman Country. Well, i don't think it points to the real thing. In the first place, there is no reason for such a high-ranked demon beast is in the royal capital. It's going to be a big fuss. When it comes to that, i think that was a metaphor...

If it's a hint to get us looking for it, it's likely to be surprisingly easy to understand. No, why did he make it a cipher in the first place?

『That may be true...but why did he entrust us with such a roundabout cipher』

It should be fine if he write more specific, maybe about the mansion of Marquis Asthner or more concretely. Or maybe this is already specific?

Are manticore and valkyrie really somewhere in the royal capital? No, it shouldn't be. When it comes to it, maybe it's a statue or a painting of a scorpion lion. Or is it a home ornament?

Maybe when he were confined somewhere, on the outside he can see a valkyrie glared at by a scorpion lion. Or an noble mansion with such anecdotes?

Note: They sometimes changes between using "sasori shishi" (scorpion lion) and "mantikoa" (manticore). "sen'otome" (war maiden) and "baarukiri-" (valkyrie)

If that's the case, this may not be a cipher or metaphor, but simply a hint of where he were being confined.

『For the time being, lets look for a war maiden who were glared at by a scorpion lion』

「Nn!」

『If we go near Gallus, he might get caught in Urushi's nose, can we count on you?』

「woof!」

On the night of the day when we received hint from Gallus.

We came to the Adventurer's Guild. To talk to guild master Eliante, our only acquaintance in the royal capital. It's easier to move after gathering information first rather than blindly looking for a scorpion lion without any information.

「Welcome. do you need something?」

When we sent to the officem Eliante was looking tired while being burried in a pile of documents. It's not a lie when she said she wasn't free the other day. She call us out without raising her face, maybe she know it was Fran without even looking.

「I have something to ask」

「Something to ask?」

「Nn, looking for a war maiden glared at by a scorpion lion」

「Huh?」

So Eliante looked at us for the first time. There is confused expression on that face.

「Scorpion lion and...what is it the other thing?」

「A mansion with a valkyrie glared at by a scorpion lion. You didn't know?」

「What do you mean? I don't think there's anyone in the royal capital who has manticore」

Eliante tilt her head at Fran's word that it seems doesn't make sense. It would be quick if i could speak, but it's impossible. But somehow, i managed to get Fran to explain it over time. Of course, without bringing up Gallus name.

Eliante was irritated at first, but she managed to listen to the end.

「In other words, there is an acquaintance you were looking for in that mansion. And you are worried because you can't get in touch with him?」

「Nn」

「But isn't it just a hint.....」

「Don't know?」



「I'm sorry, i'll let you know if i can find anything」

「Onegai」

It can not be helped. Lets steadily look for him at the royal capital...But, Eliante was strangely hostile to the Marquis Asthner. Maybe we can work together?

「Hey, does Eliante dislike Marquis Asthner?」

「Suddenly asking that, but yeah...if you ask me if i don't like them, I hate them」

「What would you do if I could make a blow to Marquis Ashtner?」

「Hoho? If there is really such a way to do that, I'll definitely cooperate, right?」

It seems what she said is true that she dislike Marquis Ashtner. For going that far, is it okay to declare you hate them?

「Even if they becomes hostile?」

「Hmmh. At this stage. how much do you think they're abusing their power under their political hat. I'm against them, it's like they're already hostile to begin with」

It seems to be a deeper problem than we thought. The Adventurer's Guild is not under national control, but it can't be independent and ignored the ruler of each region. Especially in the royal capital where the power of aristocrats is strong.

「If you really can blow that idiot of marquis.....No, it's enough to be able to harass them! I'll help you with anything!」

Said Eliante venting her excess stress with a Bang of her fist on the table.

「Ah! it's not like it」

The momentum destroyed the pile of documents. Is it our fault? No, it destroyed it self.

However, if that is the case, it wouldn't be a problem to talk about our own purpose.

Therefore, it's very likely that Gallus was confined by Marquis Ashtner. We told Eliante that this was a message from Gallus. Then she squints her black eyes and grins a ferocious smile. \*\*

「In other words, if we can find a place that matches this riddled sentence, we might uncover the wrongdoing of Marquis Ashtner, right?」

「Nn」

「I get it, I'll do my best to help. You can also find that place from here as well. And of course, all information about Fran will be hidden so rest assured.」

All right, with this we now have the Adventurer's Guild on our back. We'll get far more information than we can look for alone.

Later, Eliante was able to tell us some mansion locations associated with Marquis Ashtner. First of all, Let's go to check there.

「Thank you」

「Not a problem」

「Then, i'm going」

As Fran, who was about to leave the room and thanked her, Eliante remembered something.

「Oh yes, one piece of advice i want you to listen」

「What is it?」

「Recently, the security in the royal capital is not good. Many people are gathering because of the auction, including bandits, murderer, and criminal organisation」

The rich are gathering for the auctions, and cause of it, criminals are increasing.

「I understand. I'll crush them when i find it」

「No don't! rather the opposite!」

「Nnn?」

Eliante denied Fran's words. with her head down.

「If you go on rampage, the damage will be enormous. If you're not good at it, it's better to overlook them」

I see, she said someting similar to Kalk, the guy we met in the back alley. In the case for Eliante, she has information about Fran too, and she knows that Fran has her battle junkie like personality. So i think she is worried.

「I understand」

「As long as you understand」

「I'll blow them away without destroying the surroundings」

「You don't have to blow them away! Can you seize them more peacefully?」

「I understand」

「Really?」

「Nn」

She looked at Fran with a lot of doubt

「...can i count on you?」

「Nn」

「Can I really really count on you?」

I'll be more careful too. I'm sorry if this only increased the work of Eliante who is looks tired already.

# Chapter 405: KALK

After getting Eliante's help in the guild, we pretend to be sightseeing and looked at places around the Adventurer's Guild. First of all, I thought about looking on nearby place

But this aristocrat district was a favorite place where noble tends to gather. And we stand out too much. So, we are going to sneak around at night. We have night vision skill so darkness wouldn't be a problem.

『Stone statue, bronze statue. Banner in a painting. engraving on a relief. There's a lot of possibilities』

「Nn」

『Urushi, if you can smells something related to Gallus, please tell us. It was the smell that sticking to yesterday's scabbard, remember that? 』

「woof woof!」

All that's left is to search by foot.

However, even after we kept walking since morning, we can't find what we were looking for. In the first place, in this vast royal capital, relying only on a sentence of a scorpion lion that we don't even know its shape is impossible.

『If it like this, it's going to take a long time』

(Ask someone who seems to know?)

『Even if we asked Eliante, she doesn't seems to know right』

(How about Kalk?)

Kalk. We certainly had an acquaintance other than Eliante. No, he's not really an acquaintance, we only have met once after all. He has a face of a thug, and it seems he's familiar with the back alley of the royal capital.

But i can't trust him, he too seems scared of Fran, and probably would help if asked. However, he can also pretend to help us while leaking our information elsewhere.

I don't know how Gallus put the scabbard up for auction. In some cases, it's possible that Marquis Ashtner already knows that we won the scabbard.

That alone is still suspicious. But what if Fran, who won the scabbard, finds what she looking for? The ciphered message of a mansion with a war maiden guarded by a scorpion lion and the one who own such a mansion. It certainly will lead us to Gallus.

If that happens, it will become trouble some. It will be clear that the Marquis are our enemy.

But, Kalk's information network is certainly attractive. So i made up a plan.

『Well, I'll just make a strong Doppelganger and make contact』

Without asking Fran, I make up my doppelganger to be a dubious looking man in plain clothing.

『Yosh, isn't it looks good enough』

It's so-so in terms of its ability. Although far from reaching Fran, he can at least use swordsmanship and have an average status of about 200. His ability is on par with mid-level adventurer. With Urushi's nose, it will be easy to find Kalk.

Urushi then hides in the shadow of my doppelganger, and Fran followed him while erasing her presence. I was also able to talk to Fran while moving my doppelganger with split thinking.

(woof woof)

『This way』

We followed Urushi's instructions and passed through back alley. And then we arrived at a bar with a tattered appearance that it's doubtful whether it is open for business. If i haven't sensed the presence of person inside it, i would have thought it was an abandoned building.

I push open the swing door, with just a little push the hinges started to make a creaking noise, and then i steps into the bar. Their gaze turned at me all at once with their unscrupulous gaze as if they were appraising me.

And then their expression immediately changed into a mockery. Because what i look like now is a middle-aged man with a dull face dressed in plain clothes. and i doesn't seems to ever trained and is unlikely to have special skill such as magic. These are enough conditions to be looked down.

Well, it seems the person I'm looking for has a rather keen eye on me. I approached the table where Kalk sits while slips through the men trying to trip me with their feet.

「Yo, are you Kalk-san?」

「Tsk, what do you want me to do」

Kalk frowns upon seeing me. But he doesn't try to escape

「Don't be so cold to me. Someone told me that you can help me」

「.....where did you came from. stop your unnecessary pretense」

There is no one else with me, but he seems to be thinking various thing.

「Oi, don't do anything」

Kalk's words weren't for me, it was for his subordinate behind me that thought i was a nuisance and trying to get rid of me. Considering his man strength, he knows his man isn't enough to beat me.

His man was surprised when he understood the meaning of his word. After all, he thinks he is stronger than me. However, he seemed to be well educated as his subordinate and did not complain. The reason is he know Kalk's eye are highly reliable.

「Lets use the back room, come.」

「No, here is fine.——Silence」

「So you are a magician」

Kalk's face becomes even more bitter. Probably because my doubtfulness has increased. His man was surprised at the sudden disappearance of Kalk's voice. But when Kalk's restrained him, he promptly sat back on his chair.

「With this they won't hear our voice」

「So what do you want me to do?」

It seems that he will at least listens quietly. Good

「There is a place I'm looking for. It's a mansion with a war maiden guarded by a scorpion lion. Do you know? 」

「Is it a cipher or something? I would like to meet someone who can understand it already by only that」

「That's true, so please look for it. Also, secretly」

「Oioi...」

「This is a deposit. If you find it, I'll give you three times of this」

「Hou」

I casually put 50.000 Goldes in front of Kalk. The color of his eyes changed in front of the large amount of money.

「What's the deadline?」



「Tomorrow night, I'll come here again」

「That's, will be tough」

「That's why it's this amount」

「...Don't expect too much from me」

「I expect much from you, see you later」

「O-oi...」

I grinned at Kalk while erasing doppelganger Infront of him. He seen his client disappear like a smoke dispersing into thin air giving an eerie feel.

『Yoshi, with this i managed to get Kalk's help. Hopefully, we'll get information tomorrow night』

「Nn」

『That being said, we'll continue to search on our own』

「I know」

「woof!」

Author note:

I received a review!

Moreover, he is from Korea.

The charm of cat ears has nothing to do with borders.

# Chapter 406: Thieves Guild

The next night after we asked Eliante and Kalk to find the mansion.

『In the end, we couldn't find it on our own』

「Nn」

「woof」

We also looked around the noble district at night. However, even though there were stone statues of dragon, reliefs of lion, and angels like statue made of bronze. We couldn't find anything that matched the cipher.

It seems that Eliante couldn't get any remarkable information either, so she will continue her search.

We couldn't find it on our own or in the Adventurer's Guild intelligence network. So now we are relying on our last hope, Kalk.

(will he get any clue?)

『Well, even if it doesn't exist, at least we can narrow down our search range, right?』

With Kalk's information network, we can find out about downtown and entertainment districts to some extent. So, even if Kalk couldn't get any useful information, we can exclude this area from our search range.

『then, let's go』

「Nn」

I used my doppelganger skill to create my body split. According to Urushi's nose, Kalk is already inside the bar.

I push open the cracking door and step into the bar. As expected, at once all of their gaze turned to me. Perhaps, because they know i was talking with Kalk yesterday, so no one seems underestimating me now.

Oh yeah, yesterday i dissolved my doppelganger into thin air. Seeing that, they may consider me as an eerie person.

Today, no one trying to trip me with their feet, and no one is ridiculing me either. Rather, they don't want to get involved with me, so they opened my way.

『Yo, it's been yesterday』

「so you came huh? have you prepared the money? 」

『is it mean, you have found it?』

「yea」

That's amazing! Even an organization like adventurer's guild couldn't get any clue. It seems we can't underestimate on Kalk information networks.

『Then, this is it』

「Are you really going to pay before hearing the information first? 」

『Oh, I'm good at spotting lies, and you are not stupid enough to try to steal away this money, are you?』

「hmmf」

It is unlikely for Kalk to try escape and steal the money. Either in the sense of him losing his credibility and he also knows he can't escape from me.

Kalk snorts in an unamusing way, he probably doesn't like being insulted because they have to put themselves in the line.

『——Silence, can you tell me right away?』

「Here」

『A paper? what's about these number?』

「It's the address of the mansion you are looking for. It's in the center of the noble district. It's the villa of Count Olmes behind the mansion of marquis Ashtner. Opposite the mansion of Count Bailleys」

『Ormes...』

「It used to be the residence of Viscount Lesseps, but it seems that he was crushed by a scandal. Do you know? it's the concubine of marquis Ashtner」

Viscount of lesseps is, Serdio. The connection with Marquis Ashtner is perfect

「In front of Count Olme's villa, there is a stone statue of Manticore that faces the garden of the villa, and the garden is decorated with a stone statue of a war maiden...What do you think?」

It seems this information would be a hit.

『It's perfect. it saved me from looking for it』

「Even though I was forced to accept it, business is business. I'll do it perfectly」

『You have my gratitude』

As i thanked Kalk, i dissolved my doppelganger. The paper has been secretly handed over to Urushi in the shadow. No, wait. Kalk's information network may be helpful again. For the time being, i have to tell him in advance. We'll be bothering Kalk again.

『I'll come again when i have another thing to ask』

「Never come again」

『I'll make a best of you』

「Oi——」

I grinned lightly at Kalk who had an annoying look on his face while dissolving my doppelganger

(Master, how is it?)

『I never thought i could get the information this good』

(Then?)

『Ou, I know where the mansion is located. However, even if i was told the address, i don't know where the exact location is』

I was told it was behind Marquis Ashtner's mansion, but i don't even know where it is.

「woof!」

『You finally returned, Urushi』

Urushi has returned to Fran's shadow, we looks at the paper given by Kalk, but we still can't understand it.

(Then, ask Eliante)

『You're right, that's the fastest way』

(Nn)

We decided to go straight to the Adventurer's Guild. It's still in the evening, i hope she's still be there...

「Oh, Fran. What's wrong? 」

It seems it was an unnecessary worry. Eliante, who looked exhausted due to excessive work, welcomed Fran with a weak voice.

「Sorry, but i haven't received any information yet」

「Nn. That's okay, got information on my hand」

「Eh? did you find it on your own? 」

「Wrong, talked to an information broker」

「What do you mean by information broker? I also asked information broker among our adventurers. So you are saying you procured information faster than us?」

[TLN: I tried to make Fran's dialogue to be as short as possible and sounds monotone, it's like that in the raw. wdyt?]

Eliante stopped her works and turned her gaze to us. She seems to have been very surprised.

「Nn. Talked at the bar」

「By any chance, do you make a contact with the Thieves Guilds?」

From the shock, Eliante's eyes sharply narrowed. Did you just call it the Thieves Guild now?

「Nn? Thieves Guild?」

「You didn't know? They are like an underground organization that active in this royal capital」

「Don't know」

「Then, how did you find that bar? you won't find it if you randomly go inside any bar to look for information broker」

Apparently, from Eliante's aura, the Adventurer's Guild and the Thieves Guild are not in good terms. We should keep quiet about this.

However, we can't tell her about me, so we told her that Urushi remembered the smell of the person we met in the back alley and went to see that person again, relying on his nose.

「I see...If it's in the commercial district, is there someone you know?」

「Nn」

「I see, I'll believe you. But you shouldn't get involved with them as much as possible」

According to Eliante, the Thieves Guild has been acquiesced as an evil organization. In a big city like the royal capital, various people and criminals are wriggling behind it. The royal capital would be in a mess if they were simply left unchecked. Only the Thieves Guild could control those criminals to some extent.

Of course, acquiescence does not allow them everything and be overlooked. If the Thieves Guild goes too far, the country will crack them down. It seems that they are good at determining their limit line. Cause even if the soldiers are not deployed, bounty will be given to members of the Thieves Guild.

In that case, it was natural for them to be incompatible with the adventurer's guild to which those bounty hunters belong. I wonder will they get retaliation for catching a member of the Thieves guild, but that doesn't seem to be a problem. It seems they know that the Thieves Guild will also be crushed if they mess with the Adventurer's Guild. Besides, in their world, it seemed the one who get captured were often said to be idiots.

「Well, in the end, it's a group of criminals, their reserve, and their collaborator. It's not going to be a problem if you are not good with them. But be careful?」

「Nn. Understand」

Fran did not come into direct contact with Kalk, so that wouldn't be a problem.

Rather than that, the location of the address is more important now. Fran tells Eliante the address and the information that it is the villa of Count Olmes, behind the mansion of Marquis Ashtner.

Apparently Eliante knows the place. With just that address, she seems to be able to point the place to some extent, it seems Marquis Ashtner's Mansion are famous. She drew a map on the spot.

「Here」

「Nn. Thanks」

「...you know, you are prohibited to make an enemy of noble. After confirming the location, immediately come back at once. Never try to infiltrate alone」

「I understand」

As expected, we couldn't suddenly infiltrate into Count's mansion alone. We'll just check the location first. However, Eliante looks uneasy.

「Do you really understand?」

「Nn」

「...Aah, you are worrying」

Fumu, should we ask what rumours Eliante has heard? It seems that she thinks Fran was a wild kid that tends to rampage.

「It's fine, won't do anything stupid」

「Really really, right?」

Author Note:



The short story drawn by Maruyama-sensei published in the January issue of Monthly Birz is the best. Fran is so cute.

Moreover, the pancakes that appear on it look delicious!

I went to eat pancakes unintentionally. A man alone...

But it was really delicious hahaha.....

# Chapter 407: Reunion in an Unexpected Place

As we left the Adventurer's Guild, we immediately went to Count Olmes's villa. We erased our presence and look at the mansion from a distance.

(Master, that's its)

『I see, so that's a scorpion lion』

Fran is pointing to the gate pillar of the mansion in front of Count Olmes's villa. Certainly, it was the mansion of Count Bailleys.

As expected, the gate of the residence of an aristocrat is quite large. The gate pillar alone was over 10 meters high. And a majestic statue of a manticore set up on the top was staring at the street as if protecting the gate.

If we follow that statue line of sight, it certainly seemed to be facing the villa of Count Olmes. And then, it would be perfect if there was a valkyrie in front of that line of sight.

We can't look inside because of the high wall. I thought we can sneak in a little bit, but it's too risky so i hesitated. This is because i could already feel the magic barriers even from the outside. Moreover, its strength is mid rank. And it seems, Count Olmes's villa has stronger barrier than Marquis Ashtner.

Fran was really eager to go. I stopped her with all of my might. No way, are your talk with Eliante before was a lie.....That was close.

『...Let's take a look from the sky. I'm going for a while. So, don't move a step from there will you?』

「Nn」

Fortunately, it's night. Even if i make some flashy move, i won't stand out. Even more so if it's just me.

I moved to the sky by teleporting. I teleported a little higher because i have to take a great care to not touch the barriers of the mansion. I can feel the barrier magical power, it seems to have covered the mansion in a spherical shape.

While i were stationary in the sky. I turned my gaze to the garden of Count Olmes's villa. I utilize all my skills to observe every corner of the garden, and i found it.

『There! It's the statue of a war maiden』

There was a stone statue of a war maiden installed on the center of a fountain. Dressed in armor, and have the appearance of a maiden, there's no doubt about it. It also coincides with the line of sight of the stone statue of manticore.

I have confirmed it, and i teleported to Fran again

『I'm back』

「Okaeri, how was it?」

『It's a bingo, this is the right place』

「Great」

But it is not possible to tell what's going on inside the mansion just by looking at it from above. Of course, i can't even confirm where Gallus was.

『There's not much can be seen from the outside, but there are quite a few people inside』

「Nn」

By sensing the presence, it was clear that there were too many guards. Moreover, most of the guard are facing inward rather than outside, as if they were guarding to prevent something to escape.

『Urushi, can you smell him?』

(whimper...)

『No good huh』

(woof)

It seems the mansion also has a wind-type barrier. This may be blocking the sound and smell.

(What will we do?)

『I hope i could locate where Gallus was confined』

We decided to walk around the Count's residence to find any clues. I can sense considerable number of guards are patrolling the mansion. But they shouldn't be aware of us yet.

However, when we were walking around, Urushi reacted to something. He is eagerly sniffing around our surroundings.

『Is it Gallus?』

「woof」

He is shaking his head, maybe it's something different.

(woof!)

Urushi started walking to lead us. What's more is he seems to be reminding us to erase our presence with dark magic. We didn't mind our magic consumption, and we used our magic and skills and went into covert mode. We are confident that even if we pass in front of ordinary people, they won't notice us.

We followed Urushi while keeping our distance from Count Olmes's villa. From there go through a back alley and follow the route around the main street that runs in front of Marquis Ashtner mansion.

(woof)

Then, just before the exit of the back alley. Urushi suddenly stopped. Urushi slowly puts his head out and looks at the street. We also followed Urushi and slowly looked into the main street.

『That is, a vagrant huh?』

(woof!)

Urushi is staring across the street as seen from the alley we were lurking. There was an entrance to an alley slightly closer to Marquis Ashtner mansion. There was a vagrant wearing a large rag cloth. It's not uncommon for a big city like the royal capital. In fact, we've seen a lot of them.

But it was unusual for one to be in the noble district, but it's in a blind spot in that place. it's possible that patrolling guards may not even notice it.

However, after watching for a while, I noticed the strangeness of the vagrant.

『I can't feel his presence』

「Nn. That magical power is strange」

『...Are he used a skill to hide his presence』

It seems to be not your everyday vagrant. He is quite a talented person. At the very least, the covert skill of his can be comparable with C rank adventurers.

『From there...maybe he's monitoring Marquis Ashtner residence』

The vagrant's line of sight is facing the front gate of Marquis Ashtner residence.

Even so, Urushi can notice this vagrant from such a distance. Did he feel the faintness and unnaturalness? When I was wondering so, the vagrant turned around. He goes into the back alley. Did he notice us?

For the time being, we decided to follow after him while erasing our presence. We didn't take the alley where the vagrant went in.

We used the alley next to it, and following him along while maintaining a certain distance. Even if we lose sight of him, we can still find him with Urushi's nose.

And because of it, we were able to trail around without being noticed by the vagrant. We continued to trail him through the alleys of this noble district.

Perhaps he didn't think he were being watched; he took off his robe he was wearing from his head. It seems he stopped pretending to be a vagrant.

From under it, a surprisingly firm body emerges. He clearly has a trained muscle and appearance of a warrior honed in combat. I felt that the man's ability was about C rank scout, but it seems that was a mistake. Obviously, scouts are not his main job, but the poise of those who live with battle.

But, his face was familiar. Why is he here?

(Colbert?)

『Yeah, without a doubt』

(woof!)

He is a B ranked adventurer who helped our stalls in Barbra, and we confronted him as a strong opponent in the fighting tournament. A fighter who crushes a demon beast with his fist. He is the Iron Claw Colbert.

Probably Urushi reacted because he remembered Colbert's smell. And also, because we fought together hand-in-hand against Linford.

(What now? Call him?)

『...hmm, what to do?』

Although he is not a stranger, doesn't mean we are always an ally now. We should be careful while we didn't know who hired him as an adventurer. I don't think he would personally watch over Marquis Ashtner unless he has his own circumstance.

# Chapter 408: Two Half-Dragonmen

Colbert walks ahead of us. He was wary of the surroundings, but he wasn't hesitant with his steps. He seems to have a clear destination.

We decided not to call out and continue to follow him.

If Colbert goes into a noble mansion or some kind of facility, we will ask Eliante or Kalk what kind of place it is. If he went into an inn, we'll remember the place, and plan to meet again under the guise of chance. The rest is to pull out the information well. That's where it's difficult.

『Where is he heading?』

(Noble town?)

『That is so in that direction...』

Colbert didn't leave the noble district, but came to the northern section of the noble district. This area is under the shadow of the royal castle, so there's not much light during the day, and only lower-class aristocrats live in this area.

In the middle of it, Colbert enters a park with a lot of trees. There are other parks in the royal capital, but the park in the noble district is truly gorgeous. This is probably because it plays a role as a garden to be seen from the outside, not as a place for relaxation as in the commoner district, but only for the scenery.

However, perhaps because it is in a place where there is less light during the day, it is dull and gloomy. No flowers are in bloom, and the trees are too dense. At night, it looks like a haunted place. If you didn't know anything, it wouldn't be strange to mistake it for a cemetery.



『What is his objective?』

(Meet someone?)

There is no straight road in the park, and if you're in a hurry, you shouldn't use it. It seems his purpose isn't just to going through it. As Fran expected, are he really going to meet someone?

If so, i would like to know the identity of the other party. We will let Urushi remember the smell, so we can tail it later.

We decided to follow Colbert and infiltrate the park. Colbert was walking straight in the park for a while, but he suddenly stopped his steps.

He watched his surroundings, without much movement. We also stopped at a distance and were observing Colbert...

『Ah!』

(Hmhmh)

(woof!)

Colbert suddenly started running at full speed. Did he notice us? Moreover, while we were surprised, a new presence appeared somewhere at slightly distant place.

At the same time as the presence appeared, something was thrown toward us. It seems when he attacks, his camouflage decreased, and we can feel it.

I don't know what was thrown, but i instantly teleported above to avoid the attack with dimension shift and used physical attack nullification in a hurry.

Shyuu— (sfx)

We teleported about 20 meters above the park and looked down. We could see a green smoke fill the area around our spot before. It seems the think thrown at us was an item that generate gas. It was obviously a poison.

He seems to be puzzled because our presence suddenly disappears. His ability as a covert is considerably high, but he seems to have little experience in combat, because you shouldn't let your presence leaked every time you act.

It seems he was an acquaintance of Colbert, so it maybe bad to kill him.

『We'll hit him with lightning magic and then teleported behind him』

(understood)

『Urushi, hides and wait』

(woof!)

『Make sure you didn't kill him』

(Nn)

I and Fran fired stun bold in a row toward the spot where we spotted his presence. A small figure emerges illuminated by pale lightning in the dark night.

We teleported, aiming at his back. It seems he took some damage, but he can still move. However, he was blown away by the lightning bolt.

「——」

We have wind barriers as well as resistance to abnormal conditions, but Fran took a deep breath and hold her breath just before teleporting. Maybe it was just her instinct. If it's a super strong poison that even these two couldn't prevent, i don't think it's enough with just holding your breath. It's better to take care of your eyes and skin.

Fran, whose mouth was inflated like a squirrel, tried to hit the figure with me still in the scabbard, but when she was in the middle of it, she retreated swiftly.

「You dodged it huh?」

It can't be helped. In the place where Fran stood earlier, a jet-black spear created with dark magic was stabbed the ground. It seems we have 2 opponents.

The new enemy who attacked Fran were overwhelmingly stronger than the previous one. In the first place, his presence is quite thin even at this close. He seems to have the appropriate covert skills and magic.

「Th-that saved me」

The one we engaged before called out to the dark magic user. He looks pretty young, and as the appraisal says, he is 17 years old. And she was a girl.

She is a beauty who looks courageous, with her light blue hair tied up in a ponytail that seems to reach her back if she unties it. She is wearing black leather equipment like a kunoichi that appears in American Comics. It doesn't just help her to blend in the dark, but it seems it has the ability to help blocking her presence in all of her equipment.

(Note: Kunoichi is a term for ninjas, but for female)

She holds her knife in her hand, and looks at me with a stern look.

At her young age, her combat prowess is quite high. But more than that, her ability as a scout is considerably high. Moreover, she seems to know how to handle poison and the type who can still fight with her hand tied.

Her name is Velmeria Bailleys. It seems by her name; she is related to count Bailleys.

The dark magic user was Frederick. He is 35 years old, but his calm aura makes him look older. He is a handsome guy with black hair. His equipment is also black ninja-like leather equipment.

Not only he has high-level skills such as sword sacred art and dark magic, but he also has a wide range of resistance skills such as Mental Resistance:

Lv 8, Fame Resistance: Lv 5, and Storm Resistance: Lv 4. In addition, he possessed multiple unique skill such as Evil Lure.

However, his status is quite low compared to his skill. Even so, his status was about 100 on average, so he is not a small fish.

I've seen the opposite before. It was a noble whose level has been carried only by power levelling and medicine. However, this is my first time seeing a low status despite having higher skill level.

If you look only at his skills, he is certainly ranked B or higher. However, his status is about rank D. Maybe, he's not on his peak condition so he seemed to be weak.

Their race is also worrisome. Velmeria is a half-water dragonmen. Well, it seems there is a race called dragonmen, and i wonder if she is a half of them. The problem is Frederick's race. He was a half-evil dragonmen. I can't feel any evil, but is it a race related to evil people?

Even with the same half-dragon races, Velmeria looks almost like human. However, Frederick apparently has thicker Ryuujin blood in him.

He has reptile-like split eyes, and his right arm is covered with black scales. His left arm is covered with a gauntlet so i don't know if it has scales too. No, it seems that is not an arm with gauntlet, but a metal artificial hand.

「Be careful. This girl has immense skill」

「Yeah. I know. But how did she escape the poisonous gas and turn to attack me? 」

「Maybe it's space-time magic, that's the only think to explain her movement」

「Space-time magic user...what a troublesome one」

This would be troublesome. Frederick's declining status doesn't mean that he lost his experience and insight. As evidence, he found us out to be able

to use space-time magic. It's multiple times easier to do with someone who just have their strong status.

『Fran. Frederick seems to be a cunning type, longer battle with him may be troublesome. Let's end this at once』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 409: Velmeria and Colbert

In order to incapacitate Velmeria and Frederick, we decided to use lightning magic.

「Haa!」

『Eat this!』

The lightning magic Thunder Chain we invoked is a technique to bind and paralyze our opponent with a chain of lightning to deprives them of their freedom. The range was not so wide but it compensated for its shortcomings by using multiple activations released to our opponent.

If it is a magic below intermediate level, the Fran now can activate 2 shots instantly and i can activate 3 shots. But if i took it seriously, I was able to fire more than 5 shots.

「Gaah!」

「Hggh!」

Seven streak Thunder chain rampages like a snake, Velmeria are surely intertwined by Thunder chains one after another and fell limply on the spot.

However, Frederick is stubborn, he slashed the chain of lightning that came towards him with a sword imbued with magic. It seems to be an application of magic release skill.

『Not bad. But I will try to push harder too』

「!」

「...Kuh! Chant less magic! and she can re-cast it this much」

From 10 thunder chains i planned to shot, it cut it off until the 7th shots, it seems this number couldn't be blocked completely by Frederick. Thunder chain wrapped around his body, and depriving Frederick of his consciousness.

Thunder chain was a magic that focuses on paralyzing rather than power. Firing in rapid succession cost me unusual amount of mana. It was also difficult to hold back against Velmeria whose resistance are not very high. But that was what exactly I was aiming for.

We cast magic as an insurance on the two who fall side by side on the ground. Restraining their body with earth magic, the ground changed like an ivy and wraps around their legs and body and tied up.

Still, I'm not relieved. Frederick in particular has dark magic. The chances of him escaping to the shadows are not zero.

『Urushi, on guard with your dark magic』

(woof)

The use of Urushi's dark magic can even attack enemy in the shadows.

『Well, lets start questioning them』

「Nn」

Let's start with Velmeria, I don't think Frederick will answer us obediently. So, we separated Velmeria from Frederick.

Fran knelt beside Velmeria and tapped her cheeks, where she normally would kick and hit her body. That's good, don't always be so rough.

I think she's still paralyzed by thunder magic, but the impression is absolutely different between us fighting for self-defence and using violence after capture. She is a noble daughter who may be acquainted with Colbert after all. So, we must not hurt her.

「Ugh...」

「Woke up?」

「Kuh...what is this...」

As soon as she woke up, there was a black cat girl in front of her, and she was detained for some reason. Of course, she's confused.

However, she probably remembered the situation before. She glares at Fran and shouts.

「What did you do to me!」

「I was the one who should asking」

「Is my subordinate safe?!」

「Leave the trifling stuff, answer my question」

Fran activated intimidation skill; it must have break Velmeria's heart. Swallowed by the intimidation of Fran, her body quivered. There is fear in her face.

「Kuh...who are you...」

However, Velmeria said back with a determined expression. She must have accepted the calamity that was about to fall on herself. Although she is a little immature, she has her pride as a full-fledged warrior.

However, the miserable future that Velmeria imagined will never come to her.

『Fran, did you aware of it?』

「Nn」

There was a presence slowly approaching from behind us. He seems to be wary of us, but i didn't feel any hostility or malice.



「Yo. It's been a while. Could you release that lady? miss Fran」

It was Colbert who showed up. He seems to have been a companion with the assailant. Well, i thought so considering his good timing.

He raises his hands lightly and slowly approached Fran, there were no sign of sudden attack for the time being. It was supposed to be a proof that he has no hostility.

「Colberd-dono! Is she your acquaintance!?!」

「We are not really an acquaintance」

「So, she must be a spy of Marquis Ashtner?」

「Fran is? It's impossible」

「How did you know」

「This girl is the Black Lightning Princess. Do you understand what i mean?」

After Velmeria heard Colbert's words, she opens her eyes and raises a surprised voice.

「Re-rally? Speaking of Black Lightning Princess, isn't she is the adventurer who caused the death of Serdio Receps!」

She knows that much huh

「I'm sorry miss Fran. She told me there was someone following me. I left it to her because she said she would detain him.....but i didn't expect it was you」

Colbert are equipped with a magic tool called Wind Jewel; it seems to be an item that can pick up the voice of other party in a distant place through the wind. However, it seems to be a disposable item, the jewels are in a damaged state. She must have contacted him with this.

「Then why did you followed Colbert!?!」

「Cause suspicious appearance, and being sneaky」

「Ugh...」

Velmeria frowns. She admits Colbert was looks suspicious and being sneaky. And Fran isn't lying, right? If he was dressed normally, she would have call him out with out tailing him.

「These guys, who?」

「Ah, how to say this, these guys are the subordinate of my employer, for the time being, they are my current colleague」

Given Velmeria's surname, is their employer was Count Bailleys?

「But, i didn't think miss Fran was in the royal capital. I asked Gamudo's man, they said you went to the Beastman Country. What was your purpose of coming to the royal capita? for auction?」

「Various things」

「Various things huh. And it seems miss Fran has become even stronger again」

「Nn」

「Honestly, the me right now can't win against you」

「Wha-!」

Velmeria was surprised at Colbert's declaration. From her point of view, it was unbelievable for strong person like Colbert admitted he would lose without fighting.

「They weren't trying to kill you. So, could you release them?」

「What are you raiding? Is it related to monitoring Marquis Ashtner?」

「Huft, you have seen that much huh? i never thought this would happen」

Colbert sighs as he gives up. Fran has an overwhelming advantage in here. In the first place, there are hostages. He also knows that Urushi is lurking somewhere and don't even know when Urushi will attack the hostages. On the contrary, it becomes pressure.

And then, when it comes to Frans against Colbert, Fran will win. Colbert has grown since that martial arts tournament, but we are a lot stronger. Well, it wouldn't be an easy win.

He apparently chooses to reveal the facts obediently rather than trying to bargain. Colbert talks about their situation.

「I was certainly monitoring Marquis Ashtner. My objective is to lure the spies that serve under Marquis Ashtner」

In other words, Colbert dared to act suspiciously so Velmeria and the others can follow the one who was tailing Colbert and catch him. So that was their plan huh, but Fran was the one who caught in their operation instead, not the spy of Marquis Ashtner.

Yeah, it was an unfortunate accident. Let's go along with that.

「Then, hostile with Marquis Ashtner?」

「Yeah, that's right」

It's not a lie. Maybe Colbert didn't know the information about Gallus? We decided to reveal our situation to Colbert to some extent.

「My acquaintance may have been captured by Marquis Ashtner, and was looking for his whereabouts」

「What? So that's why you were there?」

「Nn, and happened to meet Colbert」

「Huft...of all things...But, so that's why」

Colbert thinks for a few seconds.

「Do you got any information?」

「...Let's leave this place for the time being. If we talk too long, people will come here soon, and I want to hear more about it」

「Understood」

Colbert is right, so we decided to follow him for the time being. Release the restraint of the earth magic from Velmeria and the other one. It seems Velmeria will do something about Frederick.

「Then, where are we going?」

「About that...Miss Fran. Would you like to meet my employer?」

# Chapter 410: Count Sidre Bailleys

Colbert said he wanted us to meet his employer, so we decided to follow him. He says he will tell us what information he knows, and he is also interested in that person.

Along the way, we asked Colbert about his employer

「Your employer, who is him?」

「My employer's name is Count Bailleys. He is the leader of the Knight of the West Gate, one of the four Knights of the royal capital」

I've heard the name, but it's bigger than what i imagined. What's more, he isn't employed under the Count Bailleys, but the person himself. According to Colbert we were a rare and reliable person among the nobles.

Velmeria snorts in complains while listening to the conversation between the two.

「Hmph」

It seems that Velmeria hasn't completely trusted Fran yet. As she walks forward, she occasionally turns her gaze at us. Still, she didn't object and complain at Colbert's decision.

I don't know about Frederick; he is quietly walk next to her with his poker face.

We walked for more than 10 minutes in this noble's district.

Ah, by the way, we are not just simply walking. Everyone is using their covert skills and Frederick used dark magic to erase our presence.

We proceed through the noble's district like that, and arrive at a small mansion. It looks like a typical lower-class noble's mansion with no soldiers at the gate.

「Here?」

「Yea, this way」

Velmeria enters the mansion through the back gate instead of using front gate, it must be an insurance.

There are indeed soldiers in the mansion, and when he sees Velmeria, he quietly bows his head. The soldier was pretty strong. It's a pity to compare but they are stronger than the corrupt knights of Allesa, whose deputy leader was Alsand. Can't he become a knight because he is a commoner?

When i thought so, the soldier we met next were just as strong as the one before. I involuntarily appraised them, but everyone can at least use martial art, and their status are quite high.

This seems to be the average of the soldiers here. But they were stronger than the patrol soldiers we met in the royal capital.

Fran seems to have noticed that too, and she's looking at the soldiers in the sideways.

「What happened, miss Fran?」

「Soldier is strong」

「Well, it's a little special here, because they are all fighters」

Their lord was a leader of the knights, they may have been trained by him to be a good soldier.

Velmeria goes up the stairs and lead Fran into a room. It seems to be a drawing room. It wasn't flashy, but the interior was calming.

「Wait here」

「Nn」

At the same time, a female servant brings us a tea. Velmeria is still wary of us, but she seems to treat her as a guest.

『But, there is still surveillance huh』

(1 person in the attic, 1 person in the next room)

『Don't do reckless things, it's a nobleman's mansion』

(Nn)

Partly because we didn't notice Frederick, we are paying close attention to the surroundings. Skills, magic, and Urushi's nose are all mobilized. If we still can't find him with this, I think he was already in a rank S class powerhouse.

「Zuzu」

On the sofa in the drawing room with a peephole, we spend time drinking tea while paying attention to the surveillance and killing time. As expected, i need to refrain from serving large amount of food from dimensional storage in this noble mansion.

Because it's strange to suddenly serving curry here. For the time being i only allow kushiage here.

What? You want us to stop eating? Hahahaha, it's impossible.

After waiting for about 10 minutes, Vermelia returned to the drawing room where the delicious smell of kushiage remained. She is accompanied by a man of about 50 years old. However, he didn't look like an elderly person, though not very much.

He wears well-tailored, loose-fitting robe-like clothes, but he can't hide his trained body underneath. The bodybuilder also has a deep blue tint, he is clearly a high-ranking warrior. If his clothes weren't for noble, he would only look like a high-ranking adventurer

「.....You seems to be relaxed」

The man speaks with a low-pitched baritone voice. If i had met him on earth, i would have recommended him to be a voice actor.

「Nn? Who?」

「You! This person is——」

「It's fine. You should pay respect to the strong, especially not in a public place like this」

Velmeria raises her anger at Fran's words, but then controls her with an uplifting attitude.

「I'm Count Sidre Bailleys, and the current employer of Colbert's and these two lords」

Was this man the Count of Bailleys? He seems to be strong enough to be entrusted as the head of the Knight Order of the royal capital. He has frank personality; he smiles and asks Fran for a handshake.

「Adventurer Fran」

「I know. I wanted to talk to you once at least. With that Black Lightning Princess」

「Do you know me?」

「Ah, of course, I was watching the martial art tournament. The battle where you won against this Colbert and the battle that defeated the Dragon Hunter Fermus. Fufufu, I'm excited, it was truly wonderful」

So, he watches the martial arts tournament huh. Then it's natural for him to know Fran. His eyes are shining like a boy listening to an adventure story.

「I couldn't exchange words at that time, but I'll never forget you, Besides, you are His Majesty the Beast King favourite after all」



「Do you know the beast king?」

「Yea, I fought side by side with him. At that time, His Majesty the Beast King was still a B Rank adventurer and he was my subordinate」

「Was the beast king in this country?」

「At that time, I was traveling around the world as adventurer, and during my stay in the beastman kingdom, a skirmish with the Kingdom of Raidos took place, and I participated in the battle as a mercenary to earn travel expenses」

So, he participated in that war to earn travel expenses huh. As expected of the Beast King. Well, in the Beastman Kingdom, it's normal for adventurers to participate in the war, and it maybe a good source of extra income.

「The Beastman Kingdom at that time was in difficult situation due to the naval blockade of the Raidos Kingdom. So, the war is meant to return the grudge. At that time, I was the organizer of the mercenary unit, and that person was assigned to my direct unit」

Count Bailleys laughs at the fact that he was immediately pulled out from his position. The beast king at that time hid the fact that he was a royalty, so he only thinks that he was only a cheeky and interesting young adventurer.

However, it seems the Beast King and the Count still have a relationship. No, it may be said that it is a friendship that transcends position and age. After all, when the Beast King comes to the royal capital of Kranzel Kingdom, he always stays at the residence of Count Bailleys.

The Beast King who come to the royal capital after the martial arts tournament, naturally stayed at the Count Bailleys residence and asked him to take care of Fran when she come to the royal capital.

「It's his Majesty the Beast King request. I can't help but wonder, but I didn't expect to have this kind of encounter...」

Everything was true. Rather, there is no single lie. Does he trust us so much? Anyway, it seems we can consider this Count as an ally.

「Take care of me」

「Umu! Take care of me too」

# Chapter 411: Investigations

「Oops, It seems i talked too long, I was excited to see the Black Lightning Princess in front of me. Please take a seat」

「Nn」

Prompted by the Count, Fran sits down on the sofa again. The Count sits in front of us, with Colbert to the right and Velmeria and Frederick to the left of the Count.

「Well, it seems to have been an unfortunate encounter, but I'm not going to blame it」

That's good to hear. We slammed our thunder magic into Velmeria, the daughter of the Count. If we were blamed for that, we would have a lot of trouble.

「But if possible, I would like to know what's your purpose for? We are investigating Marquis Ashtner, and it's almost over. If you make a flashy move there, what we've been secretly doing so far will be wasted」

Count Bailleys said he was investigating the treason of Marquis Ashtner at the behest of the kingdom. In particular he was suspected of his own research and search of magic swords, and illegal manufacturing and smuggling of narcotics.

「It's all because of Black Lightning Princess——Fran, we can uncover a part of Serdio Receps sins」

They haven't able to grab Marquis Ashtner tail until now, but it seems that various things have begun to appear in the wake of Serdio's death.

「It seems that he run out of his luck up until now. Serves him right」

Count Bailleys said so and laughed with joy. He is completely hostile to Marquis Ashtner huh.

「I heard from Colbert that your acquaintance may have been captured by Marquis Ashtner」

「Nn」

「Can i know his name?」

(what to do?)

Well, with the help of the Count, we might be able to get information about Gallus.

Besides, when it comes to the investigation by the order of the country, if we do something wrong and get in the way, there is a possibility that we could be criminals.

『Fran, we'd better talk about Gallus here』

(Nn, understand)

In the first place, as long as we can find Gallus, it doesn't have to be on our own. Fran would want to rescue Gallus on her own, but I'm okay if Count Bailleys rescued Gallus from Marquis Ashtner.

「Looking for Gallus the blacksmith」

「Gallus...Maybe the Kranzel Kingdom Honorary Blacksmiths, Gallus?」

「That's him」

「...Surely a while ago, Marquis Ashtner had invite Gallus under the pretext of a public project...Frederick?」

「Sir, According to the investigation, Marquis Ashtner requested it should have been for repairing magic tools of the Great Barrier」

The Great Barrier is a magical tool that creates a huge barrier that covers the town developed by Marquis Ashtner. It is not completed yet, but it is said that it has been put to practical use.

It seems that this is also one of the factors that Marquis Ashtner is suspected for treason against the kingdom. In other word. It is thought that they intended to use it as a trump card when it comes to a fight with the country.

Although the information is handed over at the request of the country, the doubt seems to remain.

「At first, it is a secret of the Marquis, so we don't know where and how long the work was done」

「So, the repairs already done, right?」

「Yes, about Gallus, he has already been released」

In other words, he means that he has been released but they are still confining him?

「Gallus is likely to have been confined in Count Olmes's villa」

「Huh? Is that true?」

「Nn. A mansion with a war maiden glared at by a scorpion lion. That is where Gallus is」

「I see, that's certainly the mansion」

It seems he understood immediately because his mansion was related.

「How did you get that information?」

「Gallus told me」

If it's him, it wouldn't be a problem to tell him. We tell them that there's a letter secretly written on the scabbard exhibited by Gallus, and what written on it was "a mansion with a war maiden glared at by a scorpion lion."

Bailleys seems to have believed us by showing him the actual scabbard.

「So that's how...can you give me one day? we're going to investigate it」

「Can you get anything on one day?」

「I've spent a lot of time keeping my hands around Marquis Ashtner. I'm going to do my best to find out」

It seems that he has taken a long time to prepare. That's why he wants to avoid Fran from ruining his effort.

「If he's detaining the kingdom's honorary blacksmith, Gallus, he can be charged with a clear national treason」

(Master, what to do?)

『Hmm, I'm sure it's bad to rush it』

I don't even know where he's being confined in the mansion. Moreover, if we do something to the noble's mansion, it becomes a big crime. So, it would be less dangerous to have Count Bailleys investigate.

「If Gallus-shi is confined, it must be related to the research of magic sword, if so, we can investigate by the route they used to procuring the supplies necessary for blacksmithing from somewhere」

He seems to be quite confident. This seemed to be worth for a one day waiting.

「I understand, will wait 1 day」

「That's helpful, I will send you a messenger tomorrow night」

「Nn」

But what can we do until tomorrow? is there anything we can do to help?

「Do you need helps with the investigation?」

「Rather, adding an unfamiliar person might confuses the field. If you won't do anything——No, can you spend your day normally?」

「Normally?」

「Umu, I'm talking about the scabbard, I don't know how much Marquis Ashtner knows. At worst, he may be monitoring Fran. Ah, but in here you are safe. This mansion is our base for investigation, cause I'm paying really close attention to it. But, i won't know in your daily life. There's a possibility that there's a watchful eye in the inn or in the town」

「I see」

「In that case, it would be more deceptive to the other side to go sightseeing. It's fine to participate in the auction, right?」

Well, he does have a point. And to tell the truth, i was really grateful for his word. After all, magic stone auction will be held tomorrow. In this situation, i was hesitant to participate. But if he asks us to keep it normal, I can't help but do that, right?

「Nn, then tomorrow I'll be normal」

「Do that please, Ah, I'll be putting surveillance over you, so please don't attack them」

「Surveillance? over me?」

「No, I'm trying to keep an eye on the spies which is monitoring Fran. I don't know how much information Marquis Ashtner has about Fran. But if it done well, I might be able to grab the tail of the other person」

So, Fran become a decoy huh? Well, we don't really care, there is no harm here. We have to talk with telepathy as much as possible, otherwise, when Fran is alone, she will be thought as a loner with a lot of monologues.

# Chapter 412: Street Murderer

After we promised to cooperate with Count Bailleys, in the night of royal capital, we walked towards our inn.

As expected, there are many people at night in the royal capital. Especially around the red-light district, it will be more crowded than during the day. On our first day, we got into this place and got lost, but now I have grasped the way to some extent, so no problem.

「Nom Nom」

「Munch munch」

There were many food stalls aimed at drunk people in red-light district, Fran and Urushi enjoyed buying and eating as usual. However, they don't have much taste variation huh.

The royal capital is a landlocked city. So, it seems the seasonings are more expensive than Barbra. Neither spices nor salt can be used in large quantities due to high transportation costs. Therefore, most of the seasonings here are based on miso produced around here.

That's why we are doing research in this red-light district, but it seems we unexpectedly won't get bored of it. Fran and Urushi were even aiming at a stall with miso-based seasoning in the middle.

But when a child like Fran walks in the red-light district at night. She really stands out, so today we used our covert skills. With this, a thug level won't even notice Fran, so it shouldn't develop into destruction of the red-light district to the ash, like what Kalk was worried about. But if something happens, it can't be helped right?



Well, we'll be close to our inn soon, and it's unlikely for something to happen. After this, if we go through underground passage there, we will reach our inn in a straight line.

Fran descends to a slope leading to a dim underground passage. As expected, there are no food stalls here. Rather, the traffic suddenly disappeared, and I felt the noise of the red-light district was strangely far away. I thought it was because we simply went underground.....

(...Master)

『What's wrong?』

(I felt something strange)

『What? something strange?』

(Nn)

What does she mean? I didn't feel anything.

『What exactly is strange?』

(...it's just felt strange)

『E-to, did you feel unpleasant?』

(Nn! unpleasant!)

So that mean, she felt unpleasant sensation? Moreover, only Fran?

『Is it magic?』

(Nn...?)

It seems that Fran hasn't grasped the true nature of that sensation.

『But, why i can't feel it...?』

I don't fully open my detection skills on a daily basis, but if it was a magical anomaly in our surrounding, I should feel a sense of discomfort. But why i hasn't feel it?

『How about you Urushi?』

(woof!)

It seems that Urushi also felt it.

『...Let's get away from here for the time being』

I don't know what Fran and Urushi felt, but it's better to stay away from here. If the two feel something is wrong, we can't ignore it.

But it seems that we were a little late.

「Master」

『Yeah, i know』

Strong killing intent and intimidation. A man was approaching us from the front without even trying to hide his hostility toward Fran. Is that a magic sword in his hand? A strange magical power is released from the long sword held by the man.

It's not just magic. He was also in a strange appearance. But no matter how you look at it, the sword was half destroyed. After all, the blade broke in the middle, and the remaining part was also deeply cracked. The handle has a sabre-like hand cover, but the surface is engraved with a face of a man with a look of agony.

『He seems to be a skilled ones, don't let your guard down』

He has Sword Skill: Lv 4 and Sword Technique: Lv 2, he even has intimidation, covert skill, and flame magic. Maybe he's an adventurer, he's certainly on rank C or above.

The man's name is Hamuls, I've never met him. Maybe he's the street murderer? Or is he going to defeat Fran and make a name for himself?

(Note: Street Murderer [Tsuji Giri: killing passerby to test a new sword], and also, any better suggestion for ハムルス (ha mu ru su)? Hamurus, Hammuls, Hammulus, Hamrus...)

As I continued the appraisal, I noticed the condition i had never seen before. Fanaticism? If you look only at the letter, does it mean a fanatic or something like that? This is my first time seeing it.

In any case, even though it's a strong enemy, Fran didn't lose in terms of both status and skills. The only thing that bothers me is the ability of the magic sword. Even though it's broken, it still emits strong magical power. Moreover, whether it was originally a high-ranking magic sword, it was not possible to appraise it.

『Fran, watch out for the magic sword, i don't know it's abilities』

(Understand)

『Urushi waits in the shadow in case of emergency』

(woof!)

Well, anyway, I wonder what this feeling is. When i look at Hamuls, it makes me feel uncomfortable. It feels like when my chest is rustling or my stomach is stuffy.

In a single word, disgust? Anyway, it's not physically, but I couldn't help feeling unpleasant about this man. I wonder what this feeling is.

『Fran, when you look at him, do you feel unpleasant?』

(It's not unpleasant, more concerned about how strong he is)

『Urushi?』

(woof)

Apparently, it's only me who felt it now, opposite from a short while ago.

『Uhhh』

It was probably since I felt terrible disgust for Serdio that i thought others so badly. No, it's far worse than that time. But, did I hate this Hamuls-like face? But he's just your average looking man, they're everywhere.....

Fran readied herself to pull me out anytime and called out to Hamuls as he approached.

「...Who?」

「—」

Hamuls didn't answer anything to Fran, and proceeds to walk silently. The distance between the two was already less than 10 meters.

「If you get any closer, I'll consider you as enemy」

「—」

As expected, Hamuls moves forward without answering anything. He wields the sword as it is. He's clearly hostile.

After confirming his action, Fran moved, run with her body as low as if crawling on the ground. The aim is his foot, we intend to deprive him of his mobility and neutralize him.

As the result of continuing our training to control our skill since the integration of skills, the strengthening of physical ability has worked. The enhanced agility was already been considerable. To be frank, even if we just slashed at this speed, we can already beat an ordinary opponent.

However, Fran is on alert. Immediately before the slash, she puts in a feint with her eyes and pretends to aim at his neck. Hamuls got caught of her feint and moved to guard his neck with his sword.

It seems that he soon realized Fran's aim, but it's too late. It was already impossible to prevent this attack.

Yes, it seemed impossible—

Clank!

「—」

「Ugh」

The magic sword that Hamuls held is protruding and slashed to the ground. Seriously, it seems to do better than I expected. Besides, the magic sword is also unusual.

Currently, I have consumed about 500 magical powers and have greatly increased my attack power. If it's a mass-produced sword that's sold all over the place, we should be able to cut it along his legs. We should be more careful with this magic sword.

And there's one more thing I noticed. I did feel uncomfortable about Hamuls, but I seemed to be even more disgusted with that magic sword. The moment we exchange our slash, I thought I'd get goosebumps. There's sign of magical power emitted from that sword, it seemed to arouse my disgust.

Is this a familial disgust? But I have never had such a feeling with other magic swords and swords.

『Uhhh...』

(Master, what's wrong?)

『No, nothing. It's just that his magic sword is strangely irritating』

(Is that, Master's enemy?)

『No, how to put this...But I'm sure i don't like it』

(Understand, Master's enemy is my enemy)

Oops, it seems that Fran is fired up. But, I'm sure i don't like that sword. I want to destroy it here if possible.

『Yosh, Let's do this seriously!』

「Nn」

Either way, he's the one who's been slashing, if he doesn't want to speak up, that's fine. I will slash both the user and the sword as it is.

I put more magical power into my blade and fully opened my skill. It's still not at fine control, but it was possible to use it with the determination to waste magical powers. This could be an overkill, but it doesn't matter if you're against this opponent.

Now, I just wanted to bury that magic sword as soon as possible.

「Hyaa!」

「—」

# Chapter 413: Hamuls

Shiing! Sclank!

A high-pitched metallic sound is heard in the underpass when our blades collide with each other.

There is a girl and a man who manipulate the swords and slashed each other. Fran and Hamuls.

Thanks to the reticence of the two of them, the only sound echoing in underpass was the high-pitched sound of me and my opponent's magic swords clashing each other.

We're overwhelmingly advantageous in this battle, but Hamuls sometimes manages to evade Fran's attack with strange movements. No, it seems, it is the magic swords that makes the strange movements.

「Sha!」

「—」

Gaiin!

(Note: there's a lot of sfx that i don't know how to translate it in English properly!!)

It's so now, Hamuls was completely caught in the illusion of Fran created by my illusion magic.

Hamuls thrusts out his magic swords to attack Fran's illusion. Moreover, because he used his sword skills, his body will be slow to react.

And at the moment he slashed the illusion, a deadly blow by Fran who went around behind him was released. Hamuls was completely lost sight of Fran. Moreover, his body is still stiff from activating sword skills before.

He is supposed to be a dead body now. Fran's sword technique was supposed to cut through Hamuls's body. However, Hamuls arm moves quickly, preventing me from being slammed into his back with his magic swords protruding over his shoulder. No matter how you look at it, Hamuls doesn't see Fran's slash. It was as if the sword had moved on its own in order to prevent our attack.

Does he have auto guard skills? But there is no such thing in Hamuls's skill, so it must be the ability of that magic sword.

「—」

Even so, Hamuls's expression doesn't even change

「—Fire Javelin」

Still, his mouth moves smoothly only when chanting magic. It's creepy to see that only the mouth moved so quick.

「—」

And, without making a voice again, he slashed. Isn't he's completely unconscious? Is he being manipulated by someone?

Fran and Hamuls face each other quietly. Then, suddenly Hamuls jumped up, at the same time his magical power also increases.

「—!」

Hamuls's muscles began to swell, making a creaking noise. Moreover, his status rises up sharply. It's abrupt, is it a sudden power-up development? His appearance looks like a human being becomes an evil person as we have seen in Barbra, but i don't feel any evil from him.



However, when facing Hamuls, I felt my disgust just become stronger. Heck, what happened to me...

I can see that the magical power is so dense that it be visualized around the magic sword. It deployed a blade formed by magical power. It's an image of Aura Blade, a sword technique that attacks with a magical blade, instead of its own blade huh.

「Haa!」

Fran attacked Hamuls, who was still convulsing. That behaviour that doesn't wait for his transformation to complete will be an advantage for us. However, the sword moves again. Hamuls is still standing on the same spot, but the sword moves automatically. There's no doubt that sword has an Auto Guard ability

However, Fran was calm. While keeping our distance she readied me on her hips.

If it can prevent our normal attack, we simply need to aim at a place where is it physically impossible to reach. Specifically, the diagonal line of his right hand holding the magic sword. The left ankle.

We deal a blow of god speed with sword drawing technique. The sword tried to respond to it, but it wasn't long enough because it was broken, and can't guard it on time.

I was swung by Fran and cut Hamuls's leg off easily. Losing the support of his left foot, Hamuls falls to the ground. Well, this guy is just like before, with his white eye and still convulsing.

However, something amazing happens in front of us. The cross section of Hamuls's wound swelled, and it began to regenerate with at tremendous momentum. His ankle returns to normal in only two seconds.

In a hurry, I tried to appraise him again. Now he suddenly had Regeneration, Muscle Enlargement, and Martial arts were added to the skills of Hamuls.

It's not that strange to have more skills afterwards. When Fran evolved, her skills would increase, even the Evil Person had evil arts after their first change.

However, what is the reason of the sudden powers up and increased skills while still remaining as a human?

When I continued the appraisal with that in mind, I noticed a surprising fact. The state of Hamuls was him using Potential Release.

His life force continued to decrease while his status was greatly increasing. Certainly, it is the side effect of using potential release. Is this also the ability of that magic sword?

「—」

「Fuh! Shii! 」

Hamuls stood up from lying on the ground as if jumping with the power of his spine, and attacked Fran with an expressionless expression like deadpan face as usual.

With a terrible continuous attack. Hamuls, whose using potential release, seems to be aiming end this battle quickly. But continuous attacks tend to be in an unreasonable position. In other words, Hamuls now is full of gaps and opening from our point of view.

It is not so difficult for Fran, who has gained a lot of experience in one-on-one fighting, it's not difficult to make use of that opening. She launches an attack and slashes Hamuls.

Several fatal slashes caught Hamuls. However, the wound is immediately regenerated due to the abnormal regenerative power. It seems, due to using potential release, that mere regeneration skills have been raised to the same level of effectiveness as instant regeneration.

For such opponents, long distance magic attack is more effective, but it is also difficult to use in the town and in this underground passage. Fran could

even be charged with a crime if she let it collapse.

「Next one will be more faster!」

「—」

Well, Fran seems to be enjoying the fight against this abnormal Hamuls, that's relieving.

Fran sped up even further and attacked Hamuls with 3D movements using walls, ceilings, and aerial jumps. Hamuls's whole body is scratched but it immediately closes. The magic sword doesn't only prevent attacks on vital points, in the meantime, it even strikes back.

It is an attack that take advantage of his abnormal regenerative power. Moreover, his attack method was abnormal.

「—」

「Kuh」

『Dorya!』

His arm, which was in a state of being bent at an impossible angle, continued to attack. I can hear a painful cracking sound. Is it possible to do such an unreasonable attack?

Hamuls's abnormal attack continues

Zobbu!

He thrust his sword into his belly. Blood started dripping and Hamuls vomited blood. Then, the magic sword that penetrated Hamuls's body approached Fran, who were slashing behind him.

「Muu!」

Fran was surprised, but thanks to Hamuls's warning in advance when he did something, she avoided it by a hairbreadth.

Even though he has the ability to regenerate, he's too bold. And is Hamuls rally come up with such a surprising tactic, who is clearly lost his reasoning?

Hamuls, with a hole in his chest started to closing, and advances his steps with a hollow expression that seems to not have emotion or intelligence at all.

「—」

As expected, something is strange here.

# Chapter 414: Magic Sword Struggle

Fran continues to fight fiercely with Hamuls, but his luck is about to run out.

Fran, who had become accustomed to Hamul's bizarre movements, can completely see his attack, while his vitality continued to diminish due to the potential release.

However, even though he has been cornered, Hamul's still expressionless as before.

『As expected, that sword is strange』

(Nn)

Actually, while fighting, we tried several times to destroy Hamul's magic sword. However, all of it have failed.

For example, when we aimed at the sword itself with fire attribute sword technique and vibration fangs, Hamul became a shield as if to protect the sword.

Next, we tried to paralyze him with thunder magic so he will let go of the sword, but no matter what, he didn't let go of his sword.

There was a doubt i had all this time.

Is there a person who manipulates Hamul who has lost his reasoning? If so, where are he and how are he manipulating him? Is he hiding somewhere

and manipulating him with magic? Or is he has been put in something like a suggestion in advance?

Or is it that sword who manipulate him?

That's right, my doubt was that. Isn't that a sword similar to me? Whether it is an intelligence weapon or not, it seems that the sword is manipulating Hamuls. Moreover, as we have seen Hamuls move to protect the magic sword, it seems that it has some intelligence.

On the contrary, there seems to be emotions such as impatience and anger. This is also only my guess after seeing Hamuls's movement.

Immediately after he fired a slash with the magic sword, his attack intensified as if to take a distance to be vigilant or retaliate.

Although, an Intelligence weapon is a legendary existence, but that doesn't mean that I'm the only one.....

No, our battle is our priority now. Hamuls vitality will soon run out, with that said, there would be no more resistance.

Even if the magic sword itself has a will, if you look at our battle so far, you can see that it cannot act autonomously or not even able to move alone. It is already cornered this much. If it really can move, it's strange to not launch a surprise attack with only the sword.

「—」

It seems that it realizes that his limit is approaching, and go on its final offense as the magic power of the sword increased even further. The magical blade swelled like a large snake and attacked.

「Muh!」

Even if Fran avoided it, it seems it will stretch forever and chase her relentlessly. But this is an opportunity. It only focused on chasing Fran.

『Urushi! Do it!』

「Grrraa!」

「—」

It was a surprise attack by Urushi we had preserved so far. He jumps out of the shadow of Hamuls and reach out his hand holding the sword. His hand was bitten by Urushi and Hamuls let go of his sword.

The magic sword loses its support and falls to the ground, disturbing the attack of the magic blade. The ceiling of the underpass has been severely scooped out, but let's pretend we never saw it.

「Master!」

『Oh!』

We won't miss this opportunity! Fran, approached him at once with my transfer and unleashes an air sword technique with all her strength.

「Haaaa!」

Gyaiiin!

The magic sword collided violently with me with an echoing high-pitched metallic sound.

「Gnuu!」

『This thing, is so hard!』

We were going to split it in half with this blow, I have put sufficient magical power and activated our skills.

However, Fran's attack, which was swung down from above, only managed to chipped some of the blade that had already broken and had been shortened. Well, it seems we can defeat him with straightforward manner!

Immediately after that, Fran tightened her expression at once and jumped out of the place.

『 q ● s / . , o x 4 q ◇ n 7 @ ———! 』

The presence of the magic sword suddenly increased, and something like an indescribable scream echoes in the underpass.

『Gaa! What now!』

「So noisy」

Moreover, it's not just a mere scream. It was as if the screams were being hit directly against our brain, like a telepathic skill. Fran holds her head and frowns.

The source was the magic sword. Is it felt hurt and angry? It looks similar like me...Its possibility as my kind has finally increased.

However, its resistance will be only up to this point. Hamuls's vitality, who has been abused, has finally reached its limit.

「—」

Doshaa

Hamuls collapses on the spot like a doll with a broken thread. As if the fierce battle until now was a lie.

「...Dead?」

『Yea』

There is no need to appraise him as his vitality can't be felt from his body. His heart was also stopped beating. He loses his skills effect and his muscles shrink.

I used dimensional storage to confirm whether he died or not, and i was able to get it done without any problems. After all, Hamuls is dead.

All that's left is his magic sword. I tried to appraising it again, I wonder if there will be any change after we managed to damage the blade. Then, the



result of the appraisal looked different from the previous one. It seems that appraisal has become more effective because its ability has declined due to the damage.

『...I was only barely able to reveal its name huh』

Name: c % s :● h j / n ■ P

However, the characters were garbled and i couldn't reveal its ability. If I can find out its true name, we can at least find the source of the magic sword.

Wait? Someone who couldn't be appraised in the past should not have been able to simply see it. The same is true for swords. Only the part that can be identified such as the name is displayed, and the impossible part simply cannot be seen. But i never heard of garbled characters.

I thought that the name was garbled as a result of this magic sword blocking the appraisal...but, isn't this its real name? No, did it mean that the original name was originally there, but as a result of its severe damage to the blade, the name has become strange?

「Master?」

『Oops, it's nothing』

Well, I don't care anymore. This thing is going to be destroyed here.

『Fran, I'm going to destroy this guy』

「Nn」

This time at full throttle, we paid no mind about our surroundings, Fran swings me while concentrating her mind. It was just after that.

『W-wha!』

「Muh」

Tremendous amount of light and magical power was emitted from the magic sword.

# Chapter 415: How to use Magical Release

Immediately after Fran swung me, a tremendous amount of light and magical power was emitted from the magic sword. It released magical power from its whole body. It's not just a blinding light, it's an omnidirectional attack with considerable offensive power.

『Cheh!』

Although it was prevented by my barrier, the entire underpass were shaking. The release of magical power soon subsided, but the figure of the magic sword was no longer there.

Not only it attacked us with the release of magical power, but it also makes use of that moment to move.

「It fled?」

『I won't let it get away』

The magic sword flies toward the entrance of the underpass at a tremendous speed. Its speed is comparable to my full-powered catapult.

Using transfer is—a no. At that speed, we wouldn't be on time right after we transferred.

I think it's bad to destroy this underpass by trying to unleash magic of great firepower. In the end, we shot Fire Javelin in a row. More than 20 flame spears reach out the magic sword.

However, the magic sword avoided everything with a sharp movement  
While flying at high speed, it twists its body and creates a rotating  
trajectory like a barrel roll.

And the magic sword that avoided all of our attack run out without killing  
its momentum.

『We'll chase it!』

「Nn」

When we followed it in a hurry, the sight of pandemonium and scream was  
spreading outside.

「Uwaaa!」

「I-it hurts, it hurts!」

「He-help me...」

「Bl-blood is...!」

Near the entrance of the underpass, more than 10 people were bleeding and  
collapsed, some of them have broken arms and are dying.

Not only that, we can even hear screams from far away.

『Tha-that bastard...It attacked anything in its way!』

「...heal them!」

『Aa! Urushi chases that magic sword!』

(woof!)

We abandoned the chase and healed those victims with recovery magic. It  
seems this is the aim of that magic sword.

It's definitely has intelligent. Otherwise it wouldn't come up with such a nasty way to stop is. It means that sword was really a kind of me.

「I hate that sword」

『Me too』

「Will absolutely beat it」

『The next time we meet, we'll settle this』

「Nn! won't let go next time!」

『Ou!』

Even so, the movement of that magic sword at that time of escaping was like my catapult.

However, the principle is completely different. Apparently, that magic sword blew out compressed magical power to gain propulsion.

As the name suggests, my psychic catapult first explode kinetic energy and shoots my self, then steers with psychic. While that magic swords way of flying is like a rocket that constantly spouts magical power. It was a method that could be called an engine system.

Perhaps this is the cause of Hamuls abnormal movement that ignored Hamul's physical limits during battle.

Previously, the insect-type demon beast, Disaster Ballbug we fought in Ullmut dungeon, used his magical power release skill to rapidly accelerate and change direction, it seemed to be the same principle.

Anyway, it must take tremendous amount of magical power to produce that speed. At least, it should have been impossible to continue using it for a long time.

In addition, even if it has acceleration force, it will not be able to make small turns. Aside from attacking a non-moving opponent, it's pretty hard to

hit someone who moves around at high speed like Fran. If dodged, both Hamuls and the magic sword will be defenceless during that time. That seems to be its weak point.

After the rescue of the citizen was over, we went back to the underpass for the time being. Then Fran shouted in a small voice.

「Aa」

『What happened?』

「The unpleasant atmosphere disappeared」

『Did you mean the unpleasant feeling when we entered the underpass?』

「Nn」

As expected, it must have been related to that magic sword. But I have no idea, is it related to the disgust I had for that magic sword? It seems that Fran and Urushi didn't feel the same feelings as I did for the magic sword and Hamuls.

『I don't know』

「Nn」

For the time being, what should we do with Hamuls's body? Should we hand it over to the guard station? I don't think he'll be treated as a murdered, but he's likely to be detained.

When I was wondering what to do after this, I felt someone's presence entering the underpass. Moreover, many people come from both entrances. It seems that ordinary citizens have come down to the underpass.

But, when I thought about it, it was unnatural for no one came in when we fought fiercely.

Besides, it's unlikely that no one coming into this underpass in this entertainment district for that much time.

Did the underpass have any abilities to prevent people from entering in the first place? So, it's a type of barrier that only affect peoples. With that in mind, it's understandable for me to not felt the strange unpleasant feeling as I'm not a living thing.

When I was thinking on the spot, I felt a presence that I knew come down to the underpass from the opposite side of that magic sword's escape.

「Fran, are you all right?」

「Black Lightning Princess, are you safe?」

「Velmeria. Frederick」

It was the two who we had just parted earlier.

# Chapter 416: The Magic Swords

## Identity

Shortly after our battle with Hamuls ended.

Velmeria and others came down to the underpass. She rushes to Fran with a worried look. So, the escorts sent to Fran was Velmeria huh.

「I'm terribly sorry. Even though he said i must be wary of any enemies coming into contact with Fran...」

「But i never expected it to be in a place like this...」

Apparently, my guess about a barrier to prevent people to enter the underpass was correct. According to Frederick's analysis, it seems that this underpass would be hard to recognized unless you have certain or higher status.

Moreover, it seems to be considerably higher cause even Velmeria and others couldn't break in.

Because of that, Velmeria and Frederick lost sight of Fran and stuck around. They seem to not recognize we had entered the underpass because of the high-level barrier.

Both of them are quite dispirited. In the end, they can't grasp our opponent identity.

「What happened?」

「Attacked by street murderer」



「Street murderer...Did he escape?」

「Defeated it. I can take it out」

「Ah, you were a space-time magic user right, does it mean, you killed him?」

「Nn」

Velmeria thinks on Fran nods.

「Even so, I don't think a mere street murderer can put up such barrier」

Surely, but I don't know if it was just a mere street murderer.

「He had strange sword」

「Sword?」

「Nn, it was a magic sword」

Fran asks Velmeria and others about the magic sword that Hamuls had. However, it was not possible to identify the true identity of the magic sword by only that.

However, we tell them that the sword seems to be manipulating Hamuls and also greatly improved his ability, and about how it escaped by moving alone.

「Impossible...It can manipulate people? is there really such a magic sword」

「Well, you are right...I don't have any proof, but if it's an undead sword, it might be possible」

Frederick seems to have a guess.

「Undead Sword?」

「Ah, it's a sword which a soul have moved in」

Frederick explained to us, it is a weapon that has become a host for ghost, and the user will be possessed by the ghost and be manipulated. In addition, those who are being manipulated may be strengthened by the ghost's ability. Certainly, it matches the characteristic of that magic sword.

But, if it's an undead sword, it wouldn't be a magic sword anymore but a kind of demon beast from ghost system.

「However, undead sword is not such a strong demon beast. Their threat level is only F. If you are slightly stronger than average person, you wouldn't be manipulated by it.」

「Nn? But, felt great magical power from it」

「That was strange, I've never heard of an undead sword that emits magical power so strong that would makes Black Lightning Princess felt it. Maybe it's a unique individual or a higher-ranking species」

Even though it was a unique individual, is the original small fish demon beast was strong?

「I have to report this to his excellency and search for it. Also, in order to find out the identity of the street murderer, I would like to ask you a few question」

「I understand」

「We have a room as our base on this side. Let's go there before the guards come in this turmoil. It would be a lot of trouble if you get detained」

With the guidance of Velmeria, we moved to a small room prepared in the apartment house in this entertainment district. We took Hamuls's corpse out of the dimensional storage and show him to Velmeria and others.

It seems that Hamuls was not just a mere street murderer.

「Eh...? Hamuls!」

「...without a doubt」

It seems they knew each other. After confirming it, Velmeria rushes to Fran.

「Fran! What do you mean by this!」

「I fought because he attacked, Then, he couldn't stand the strengthening of that magic sword and it killed him」

「There is certainly no external wound」

It's good for Frederick to remain calm. Velmeria seems to have noticed that she was too restless when she saw her subordinates' attitude.

「I'm sorry Fran, that was my bad」

「Acquaintance?」

「He's no more than a colleague! He was missing during infiltration in Marquis Ashtner ranks」

It's smells fishy. In other words, is the source of that undead sword is Marquis Ashtner? Or by any chance, they are not researching for magic sword but for an undead sword? Isn't it impossible?

「But it's certainly unusual. There's no precedent for an undead sword that can control a warrior like Hamuls」

「...Hamuls. Why...」

Velmeria gently touches Hamuls's face, she seems to be trying to close Hamuls's eyes which remains open. However, her hand suddenly stopped.

「This is...?」

「Velmeria, what's wrong?」

「Frederick, take a looks at Hamuls's eyes」

「Eyes?」

「Yes」

「I see. This colour...」

And like that, the two begin to examine Hamuls's body. they examined his eyes, his gums, and smells. Further, Velmeria apologized at Hamuls and she lightly scratched her fingertips and checked his blood colour.

「What's wrong?」

「Yea. on Hamuls's body...it's showing symptoms of being a drug addict」

「His body is pretty tattered. I think he was given a large quantity of drugs in a short period of time」

Speaking of drugs, I recalled Serdio. His party member was also a servant of Marquis Ashtner and he was also insane.

Did it mean, he was captured by Marquis Ashtner during the infiltration, administered drugs, and used as a host for the undead sword? It means, when you lose your sanity with the drugs, even a strong person wouldn't be able to resist the control of an undead sword.

Even so, the appraisal didn't tell us he was a drug addict, right? Serdio had the title of a drug addict. No, are constant addict and being drugged different? Apparently, the addict isn't listed as a title. Does Hamuls's state, Fanaticism represent for being drugged? Drugs addiction and fanaticism...I can't really connect it together.

The most important thing for us than that now was how much Marquis Ashtner involved in this attack, and what he knew.

Does Marquis Ashtner known that Fran was looking for Gallus and that attack was a warning for us? Did he think we were related to Count Baileys? Or is Marquis Ashtner not involved in this attack at all?

Well, I don't think the last one is possible...Now, how should we move in the future huh.

「Fran, are you injured」

「Nn? no」

「Although he was being manipulated, but you didn't suffer a single wound against a warrior like Hamuls...You are really strong」

It was a compliment, but her tone was dark. Rather than blaming Fran, she has a colour of self-mockery.

「If it as strong as you, my father too...」

「Nn?」

「No, it's nothing」

The expression of Velmeria shaking her head after saying that is still dull. And Frederick stared quietly at such Velmeria.

And then, Urushi returned, but the chase seems to have failed. He looks disheartened. However, something that flies in the sky was hard to track by smell only, so it can't be helped.

Even so, where on earth did that conspicuous magic sword disappear?

# Chapter 417: Magic Stone Auction

The day after Hamuls attack.

After we consulted with Velmeria, we came to the auction site as planned. Velmeria asked us to take part in the auction, they judged that spending time normally will not interfere with Count Bailleys operation.

What we are aiming for today is magic stones.

『Our first target is the Goblin King's magic stone』

「Nn」

In most auctions, the name of the demon beast that own their magic stone is known by prior appraisal.

But, i don't really know about the skill used. Well, it's meaningless information for ordinary people. Even my appraisal with Heavenly Eye skill doesn't reveal the skill sealed in a magic stone.

Maybe there is a special skill that can analyse it, but I have never heard of it. It would be convenient if I could get my hand on it.

Therefore, what we are aiming today is a magic stone with a threat level of C or higher, or it was a magic stone of a humanoid demon beast. After all, humanoid monster is dexterous, and they are likely will learn new skill by training. Until now, goblins, orcs, demons, and other humanoid demon beasts often possessed many skills.

There's a good magic stone of a devil that will be exhibited at the end of the morning session. But there will be many people aiming for it, it will be a tough battle.

No, I have 20 million Goldes on hand, and I have no problem to just drop it all, but I don't want to suddenly putting dozen times of the market price. If I ignored the market price, other participants and auction organizers may glared at us. Worst of all, the chance of us being too conspicuous and being noticed by Marquis Ashtner wouldn't be zero.

So, we will give up if the price went up too much.

「Shall we go then?」

「Nn」

『Fran, Listen quietly to what Codart says today』

(I know)

Actually, we are not alone today.

To keep a low profile, we had a representative prepared by adventurer's guild. If a child like Fran make a bid on an expensive magic stone, we will stand out, and if we win a number of bids, they will definitely look for our identity.

When we consulted with Eliante who was really concerned about us, she introduced us to some adventurers who are familiar with the auction.

Codart is a rank E adventurer, he has an appraisal skill and was originally working as an auctioneer. But he has been longing to be an adventurer for many years, he has an interesting career by becoming an adventurer by equipping himself with the money he has saved.

Therefore, he was also a late-blooming adventurer who was already 35 years old, he's not young anymore. But still, he had climbed to rank E. He seems to be having fun doing things like getting rid of small fry and doing chores in this royal capital.

He also admired a strong adventurer, and so he shows tremendous polite attitude toward Fran. He seems to have a deep respect for Fran, who has a nickname for herself at young age.

Eliante seems to have introduced Codart to us with that in mind.

「Then, it's good for us to win the bid for the items on this list, right?」

「Onegai」

While sitting next to him, the bid will be made by Codart. The items to bid in advance are decided by looking at the catalogue. We decided an upper limit after consulting with Codart. We planned to have Codart win a bid within that limit.

If an item on our list exceeded our upper limit, Fran will secretly call him out with wind magic and tell him how much to exceed.

If something else we want comes out, we will make a successful bid by ourself. It's rather strange to come to an auction site and not bid on anything.

It seems there are several products that are not listed in the catalogue exhibited today, and a mysterious magic stone that even an expert could not appraise are exhibited, so we are aiming for it.

「Are you sure you want a special seat?」

「Nn」

Because you are allowed to eat and drink over there. We take a seat in the special seat corner with Codart, and we'll just leave the rest to him.

Normally, in such a case, a representative should be paid a percentage of the difference between the prepared upper limit amount and the winning bid amount, but Codart put a fairly low price for us.

Instead, he suggested that Fran would go out for training with him once, that's why we hired Codart on that condition.

We just trained with Codart early this morning. To be honest, it's a little late to become an adventurer at the age of 30. However, he is very serious and has some guts. So, if he continues with his training, he will be able to go a little higher.



Today, I was teaching him the feeling of using martial arts, we showed how Fran unleashed her martial arts and letting him receive it with a stance while holding sword, and Codart was pretty impressed with it.

It seems that he was glad that an adventurer who was far stronger than him gave him a serious guidance. No matter how many times he was sent rolling by Fran, he seems to be smiling happily.

「Then, leave the rest to me」

「Nn」

1 hour later.

「I managed to win the goblin king」

「Munch munch」

「Next is the devil's magic stone that appears early in the afternoon huh」

「Munch munch」

While listening to Codart's words, Fran continues to ate the rice balls in her hands. I thought it would be bad to serve a strong-smelling food, so I told Fran to only eat rice balls and sandwiches.

By the way, today onigiri ingredients are tuna mayo made from grilled tuna and spicy seaweed similar to kelp.

Even so, I never thought that goblin king magic stones would be so expensive.

The Auctioneer explained at the beginning of the bid that 「It is a magic stone of the goblin king who able to use life magic endlessly to heal himself, this is the magic stone of the goblin who has tormented the adventurer! 」 I ended up giving instruction to Codart to push for it.

The winning bid amount is 2 million Goldes. It is more than four times the market price of a goblin king magic stone.

Apparently, some magic stone mania was competing for it.

Which ever the world is, there are collectors in every world, and it seems that there are magic stone mania who collect everything in the world of magic stones. What they want is a rare magic stone. Or a magic stone with a beautiful shape.

Magic stone shape are varying and most of it have a distorted shape. However, there are rarely magic stone that are well shaped like a cut gemstone.

Magic stones cannot be polished. No, it can be polished, but if it is damaged, its magical power will be greatly lost. Then, its value will decrease and even lost. For that reason, a naturally beautiful shaped magic stones are extremely rare. Therefore, it is said that the price of high-ranked demon beast stones with beautiful shape tends to rise.

I don't think magical powers matter if you just use it as decoration or collection, but a magic stones collector doesn't seem to think so. They preferred a powerful magic stone and have beautiful shapes. That was exactly the magic stone of this goblin king.

The magic stones that are put up for auction are like a collection of gems, so it seems that the winning bid cannot be estimated from the rank alone. I was told about that by Codart in advance, but i realized once again the difficulty of an auction.

『The devil's magic stone is in the afternoon...I wonder how it will goes』

# **Chapter 418: Master's Value**

## Chapter 418: Master's Value

At the end of the morning session of the magic stone auction.

It is a bargain time where items that just brought in on the day and items that cannot be appraised are exhibited.

「The next one is this! A mysterious magic stone that even if an expert appraised it, everything will come out as unknown! The adventurer who brought this in, got it after seizing a thief's hideout, so there is no information regarding the demon beast that was the owner of this magic stone at all!」

It was a small magic stone. However, it has a good shape, and it seems that it was exhibited with the expectation that it would be more valuable as a jewel than a magic stone.

「Starting from ten thousands Goldes!」

Bid is coming in, but it's not that popular. The only problem here is that we don't know the exhibitor name. However, I was willing to make a successful bid for it and asked Fran to bid.

3 minutes passed while continued to competing for it. We succeeded in winning the mysterious magic stone for 120 thousand goldes.

(Got it)

『Oh, sankyu. Now we have the evil goblin general magic stone on our hand』

Yes, the mysterious magic stone is a high-ranking species of goblin, an evil goblin, it was also a general one. The evil species are more wicked, so even if they appraised it, the result will be unknown. I guess no one knew it.

However, in my case, thanks to my heavenly eye skill, I can reveal only the name. The evil magic stone doesn't help the mysterious soul in me to recover, so I'm sorry for this time. But if it's a general rank one, we can expect a few numbers of skills.

After that, Codart made another successful bid for magic stone. He got 7 out of the 8 we were aiming for from the beginning. The only bid that failed was the magic stone from a fairy species called Ketsey.

(TLN: ケットシー Kettoshii)

It is a demon beast with a threat level of C, but it's quite small. Furthermore, its colour and shape are high grade, its price has risen more than 10 times the market price. We expected special skills from it, but it can't be helped now.

We managed to get the devil's magic stone that I wanted the most, I am really grateful to Codart. We spent more than ten million goldes in a day. Well, money is meant to be used.

We parted with Codart in front of the auction site and head towards our inn.

『Well well! Let's go back to our inn and absorb it!』

「Nn」

『Iyahoo!』

Haah, my tension goes up. After all, even the cheapest one was a threat level of D, except for the evil stones. We also got 3 threat levels C, Moreover, the devil's magic stone is a Count class. In other words, it has the same threat level of B as the devil we defeated in Allesa.

There are not many opportunities to be able to absorb such high-quality magic stones at once. I want to absorb it real quick!

『Magic stones? Magic stones?』

「Master, looks happy」

When i were singing along, I felt that someone was running up from behind. He stopped for a moment, but soon increased his vigilance. It turned out that the other party was a complete amateur.

He didn't erase his presence, and on the contrary, his running steps could be heard echoing. He's less than a small fry adventurer. It seems he must be a completely ordinary person.

「Please wait a moment!」

It was an elderly man who run up. He is literary a civilian with well-tailored and loose-fitting clothes. The flesh of his belly is shaking every time he moves.

「Can i have a bit of your time?」

「Nn?」

「Yeah you! There's a story i want you to listen! There's no loss in this! Would you like to listen about it?」

(Master?)

『Well, if only a little』

I really want to go back to our inn ASAP!

「Nn, if only a little」

「Ooh! Then please come with me, this way」

What a carriage he had prepared. I'm ready for anything. But, is he a fool? Without even giving us his name, he suddenly asked us to get on the carriage. I would like to meet a fool who would get on a carriage like that.

No, i think he's underestimating this child, Fran. In other words, it seems that he hasn't investigated Fran's identity. What on earth are he going to do? I can only guess he's a scammer.

When I appraised the man, more or less, he's a nobleman, and a baron.

「Your name?」

「Oh, sorry it's a bit late. My name is Beckert」

(TLN: ベッケルト Bekkeruto)

The nobleman is humbly giving his name without his family name. he's just getting more suspicious.

「What's the story?」

「Well, it will be a long story」

「Here is fine」

We shouldn't follow a suspicious person.

「But...」

「Then, I'll go home」

「Oh! W-wait! You'll regret it!」

「...Are you threatening me?」

「No-no way! I-i didn't mean it! Wa-wait a second! Oi! Come out!」

When Fran returns her heels, the man calls out into the carriage in a hurry. Then, two strong looking men come down from inside. I already know from the presence, but obviously he was going to threaten or attack Fran in the carriage, right?

However, Fran refused to ride in the carriage, so he instructed them to come out to intimidate her.

Two men stand around Fran. He is sliding the sword on his waist and frowning as if showing he is angry. It seems that he is accustomed to this

kind of works.

They are not a big deal in terms of ability. They are using fake muscles and weapons that are only a fashion. It's funny that their acting skills are higher than their swordsmanship. A mere guard under Count Bailleys we meet last night can handle them by himself.

「So, you are talking?」

「Wha? Oh that's right」

Beckert was surprised at Fran who wasn't scared at all. However, he remembered his purpose and he began to talk about why he wants to talk with Fran while holding down his voice.

「Actually. My lord wanted the sword you are carrying」

「Lord? who?」

「I can't reveal that...but if you give away your sword. I'll pay you 50 million goldes. How about it, it's a good deal isn't it?」



# Chapter 419: Not For Sale!

「If you give me your sword, I will pay you 50 million goldes. That's good deal, right? now will give me your sword?」

He never expects his offer would be turned down, and he offers his hand. Can he give it here? 50 million goldes is a lot of money. Perhaps he thinks with this amount, any ordinary people can play and live for the rest of their lives. But is there anyone in this world would believes this stinky man will pay as much as 50 million goldes in a post-payment?

He is looking down on Fran, or are he making a fool of her? Or do we look like we're in trouble with money?

「Won't sell swords」

Look! I believed her!

「Wha? What did you say?」

「Won't sell swords」

「Hahaha! stop joking」

「Not joking」

「It's 50 million you know? I don't think there's such a good deal out there? It's an amount that ordinary adventurers can't even earn in their whole lifetime you know?」

Beckert looks astonished. Now it's clear that this guy doesn't know anything about Fran. Is these trio an idiot?

If she knew Fran was that Black Lightning Princess, he would have had different response. Fran completely loses her interest in Beckert, turn back her heels and starts walking. Well, of course the two thugs won't let us escape.

「Wait a minute」

「Don't be too cheeky」

While grinning, they stepped out to stand in front of Fran——.

「Ghaa...!」

「Bufu...!」

They stopped moving.

Because I choked both their necks with telekinetic. They must be felt their neck is grabbed by a huge hand and being lifted a bit huh.

The two fluttered their legs in struggle to escape. However, these guys couldn't escape from it and lost consciousness almost at the same time.

「Wha? What did you just do?」

「I'm not doing anything though?」

With that said, Fran glared at Beckert. He got that gaze and felt like he was being told that he was next.

He dropped his jaw while dripping cold sweat.

「Kuh...i understand! Let's make it 60 million! this should be enough!」

「No matter how much. wont sell」

「Then 100 million!! How about 100 million!!」

That was a lie. No, it's even a lie when he said 50 million.

I thought about selling me to find out who his lord was, but i don't want to leave Fran when that mysterious magic sword hasn't been discovered yet.

Besides, there is a possibility that my magical power will be sealed when transporting me. Although i have the seal nullification skill, but there is no guarantee it will always worked. I didn't feel the need to gamble here.

「? Are you deaf? won't sell. It's not something that can be replaced with money」

「Wa-wait a minute」

He's persistent. However, Fran has lost interest in Beckert. She turns her back on Beckert, who is screaming with an impatient expression.

「Thi-this brat...get on with it...I'm telling you I'd buy that filthy sword! You are just a mere commoner, hand over that sword at once! Or I'll take it by force!」

This guy true self has come up. However, he's a pathetic guy.

「...Oi」

「Huh...! Wh-what...!」

「Is it filthy? Did you just say master is filthy?」

「Hi, hiiiiii!」

「And you are going to rob me? Did you just say that?」

He stepped through Fran's land mine. I'm loved by Fran. The future in which Beckert, who said he would take me over by force from Fran and could safely return to his lord disappeared at that moment.

Fran activated Lord Intimidation skill on Beckert and breaks his heart. Moreover, because she is in deep anger, she was able to concentrate Lord Intimidation on Beckert without spreading it around her. Isn't this the first time she have succeeded in controlling it?

Instead of involving her surroundings, she succeeded in controlling it thanks to her anger...Well, it really is like how Fran is.

「A, A...Aah...」

Ah, this bastard Beckert, did he leak? Black stains spread on the lower body of his clothes.

Ah, Fran, you're fine with getting this close with him?

「...Fun」

「Gegagagaga!」

However, Fran didn't seem to care about Beckert's ugliness, and when she stood in front of him, she gently reached out. She clasps her hand when reaching out to the fallen Beckert. It looks like they're shaking hands, but of course it's not a handshake.

「Abababa!」

Fran, who boast super-grip strength that cannot be imagined for her appearance, she holds his hand with all her might, and crushed his hand and deformed it like a rubber glove with no content in it. Beckert was screaming, and his mouth were letting out foam.

The moment she releases his hand, Beckert collapses on the spot. There is nothing left as his hands which had been squeezed.

『What should we do with this guy?』

(listen about his lord)

『What are you going to do after hearing it?』

(Of course, I'll beat him)

Well, you are right. But i don't really want you to do it. The other party is an aristocrat, and I hope it won't be a trouble for us later...

Aaah! So troublesome! I want to return to our inn soon! Why don't we just throw him away as it is?

As if i was worrying about Beckert's treatment, there was a new presence approaching us. It's Frederick, he dared to leak his presence as if to inform us about his existence.

「Black Lightning Princess. I'll pick up and handle these guys here」

「But.....」

Fran is eager to interrogate this guy and have his lord take account for him. But it's a waste of time to spend by interrogating Beckert. Fredericks would be better at cross-examination in the first place.

『No, Fran. You do as what Frederick says. Absolutely』

(Is that so?)

『Yea』

「I understand, I'll leave it to you」

「I'm going to find out the background relationship here」

Beckert should be left to Frederick. We came to the right place.

『Then, this has been resolved, let's go back to our inn!』

(Master)

『What is it?』

(Did you just push it to Frederick because you want to go back early?)

『No no no, that's not true right?』

(...let's return to the inn)

『Yea Yea! It's magic stone absorption time! Hiyaaha!』

Fran looks a little dumbfounded, but she doesn't mind, right?

『Fufufu, It's finally the time!』

「Ne—」

『Well well, Fran-san. Please line up the magic stones!』

「...Nn」

Huh? Why does Fran show such an eye? Whatever. Rather than that, the magic stone has lined up in front of me now.

『Then, i ta da- ki ma- su! Hyahahaha—! Magic is flowing in! Oh—! Good—! goood—! unbearable! Hmmmh—! Pa?Ra?Di?Se...』

「...Master looks happy」

「...Woof」

Not only Fran, even Urushi's eyes too? Why?

『Ohoo—!』

「...Nn」

「...woff」

# **Chapter 420: Marquis Ashtner's Conspiracy**

## Chapter 420: Marquis Ashtner's Conspiracy

10 minutes after I absorbed the magic stones.

『Aah...I'm sorry』

「Why apologizing? Master didn't do anything wrong」

「Woof」

『Then why are you looking at me like that!』

I got a lot of magic stones points and skills in exchange for my dignity as a guardian.

I got 1420 magic stones value in total. 11 new skills and even 2 unique skills.

But there's no skill that can help me manage Fran's eyes.

However, there were a number of skills that looks interesting. And with our new Life magic, it completes the 6 types of combined attributes, it is: Thunder Magic, Life Magic, Dust Magic, Tree Magic, Molten Iron Magic, and Ice & Snow magic.

I was expecting to get few, but I was only able to get one new title. The name is 『Attribute Master』 .

Magician had the ability to control magical power and increase the processing power during casting. It doesn't work for me, but it will help Fran to use magic in the future.

In addition, it seems that she now can choose Magic Expert job. From the name, you can tell that it is a high-ranking magician.

Other skills that are unlikely to be useful are singing, dancing, woodworking, and carpentry. It was all basic skill.



Skill that seems to be useful are normal skills such as corruption nullification, overweight, ghost dispel, and animal knowledge. Unique skills we had obtained were predatory absorption and cannibalism.

Corruption nullification, as the name implies, is a resistance skill that nullifies corruption attack. Corruption is an attribute that rots flesh if it is a living thing, or corrodes it if it is an inorganic substance. It's a resistance skill that can be used for both me and Fran.

It seems that overweight is an upward compatibility skill for weight increase that we already have. It is a skill that increase the weight of yourself and your equipment. If you use it at the right time when attacking, you will be able to increase your power.

Ghost dispel is a skill similar to purification magic that can defeat a weak undead or scare strong opponents. And animal knowledge is as its name isn't it. Well, it wouldn't hurt to have it.

As for the unique skills I'm interested in, Predatory Absorption is a skill that increases the experience and other values gained from eating. Some of the skills that Urushi possesses seem to have been gained through the effects of this skill, so I'm sure it will be useful in a humble way.

And cannibalism. Hmmm. This is the only one that's subtle. It's a skill that allows you to kill your own kind and absorb some of their power. It's also a skill that Zelos Reed possesses. The reason why he became so strong so rapidly is probably because he used this skill to absorb the power of evil people.

But what about me? Is my kind a divine sword or an intelligence weapon? And besides, even if i was told to kill them. The opponent is a weapon, so does destroying it mean I've killed it? To be honest, it was a skill that seemed extremely unlikely to be used.

Well, let's just equip it and consider ourselves lucky if it activates. Oh, and by the way, the magic tool and the magic sword were not recognized as being of the same family. I bought a magic weapon at the Armor shop near the inn and have already experimented with it.

As a result, the expensive magic weapon was only destroyed in vain.

I absorbed a large number of other skills, but most of them have apparently been integrated into higher-level skills. No, it's better considering my processing power. I've been trying so hard to increase the number of skills I have. I'm not used to it yet.

After that, I was testing the effects of my new skills in the courtyard of the inn, and night was quickly approaching. Count Bailleys said he would find out where Gallus was in a day, but now I wondered what had happened.

「Master」

『Yeah, looks like he's here』

There was a familiar presence near the entrance of the inn. It seems that he dared to give a big presence to let us know that he had visited here.

The owners of the presence leave the inn and come to the courtyard where we are.

There is no doubt that it was them. Fran told Velmeria to sit on the bench after soundproofing the area with wind magic.

Velmeria is looking at Fran's magic as impressed.

「The flow of your magic invocation, I'm impressed with it. What's more is that, you are staying at this inn where you can't stay without a letter of introduction」

「Nn. When showed Eliante's letter of introduction. They let me stay here normally」

「From a guild master? Are you on good terms?」

「So so」

「Hmm, so so huh...」

Rather than being wary of Fran, Velmeria seemed to be uncomfortable with Fran's type. She didn't know how to handle Fran, who had no expression and spoke in an unpredictable way.

「We-well that's fine. But more importantly, I have a few things to report.」

「Nn」

「First of all, about the magic sword you saw. I've looked into a lot of things」

It was the one who had manipulated his friends to death. Velmeria and the others must have a great deal of interest in that magic sword. When we parted, I asked them about its characteristics in detail and left. Apparently, they had been searching for it earlier today.

「First of all, there was an eyewitness testimony. People who Fran healed, naturally saw it, but of course, they couldn't trace it afterwards. It seems that it suddenly disappeared into a residential area. Its current whereabouts are still unknown...」

It is a mysterious flying object that moves through the night sky while spewing out magic power. I think it stands out like a sore thumb. Well, it's not that big, and once it hides itself, it's will be hard to find.

「There is a high possibility that it is an undead sword, so we have mobilized adventurers who can use the undead search skill, but we have yet to find it.」

「It's regrettable」

「We also collected information on the magic sword, hoping to get some information from its shape. However, this too has ended as a wasted effort. There was information that Marquis Ashtner has been collecting magic swords for several years, so we thought that they might be included in the sales records..... Apparently, that's not the line either.」

Well, we have no clue after all.

「Next, I have information about the man who came into contact with you today. His name is Baron Beckert Huth. He was a subordinate of Marquis Ashtner.」

「Marquis Ashtner? What is his purpose?」

He is related to Marquis Ashtner too? Well, his name comes up everywhere.

「It seems that the Marquis himself had ordered him to obtain your magic sword by any means necessary. But the way he gave the order was to obtain a magic sword with a wolf design, which is in the possession of a strong black cat tribe girl swordsman...」

It was a messed up and ambiguous way of giving orders. For example, if they knew about Gallus's scabbard and wanted to reduce his strength and harass him, the order should have been to take the adventurer Fran's magic sword.

「I can't tell if the Marquis really knows Fran. Maybe he just half-heard a rumour about you and wanted the magic sword you possess」

In other words, the order had nothing to do with Gallus-related matters, but was aimed at the holder of the magic sword? I've heard that the Marquis house is collecting magic swords around the world.

「We're tightening things up even more at the moment, so I'll let you know if we find out any new information」

「Okay」

It seems like all the bad things are the conspiracy Marquis Ashtner. What's more, there are still reports about that Marquis house to come after this.

「Then, finally, i would like to tell you the information about Master Gallus.」

「Nn」

「The information you provided to us has been confirmed. It seems that Master Gallus was indeed confined at Count Olmes's residence.」

# **Chapter 421: Velmeria's Circumstances**

## Chapter 421: Velmeria's Circumstances

「It seems that Master Gallus was indeed confined at the Count Olmes' residence. I'm sure of it, since someone from our side witnessed it. However—」

「However?」

「The report came from a person who had infiltrated as a gardener, so we did not know where he was in the mansion. Furthermore, we don't even know if he is still in the Count's mansion」

Well, normally he's likely to be confined in a hidden room, a basement, or something like that. However, it seems that he just happened to witness his existence when he was taken out to the hall on the first floor for some reason.

「He said it was just the other day」

「I understand」

Fran nodded at Velmeria's words. But immediately, as if in a panic, Velmeria continued her words.

「We are now preparing to conduct an on-site search of Count Olmes's residence under the authority of the Count Bailleys! Please don't do anything rash!」

Unknowingly, she felt the fighting spirit rising from Fran and thought that she might have to go in alone.

In fact, I think that was exactly Fran's intention. However, I was against the idea of Fran running into the Count's mansion alone. Even though he was doing bad things, he was still a nobleman.

It would definitely make us look like the bad guy. Unless we are prepared to rescue Gallus and flee the country, But I have no intention in doing so. I also don't know if I can really rescue Gallus for sure.

「It's difficult to gain access to the Marquis Ashtner's residence, but if it's in the name of investigating Count Olmes, I'm sure we can get the permission. Absolutely. Within the next few days, we will definitely make our move. I'll ask if Fran can join us then, so until then, Please don't do anything rash.」

Velmeria glared at Fran as if begging

『Fran, you should just nod at this point. The more details they can give us about Gallus's whereabouts, the better chance we have of rescuing him.』

「Nn. Okay」

「Oh, thank you very much」

Velmeria feels relieved and strokes her chest.

As for Fran, she seems to be a little dissatisfied, but I'll let her bear with it a little longer. However, it seems that once she got motivated, her battle switch will be turned on. Her body is still leaking with fighting spirit.

Frederick must have sensed this, because he's about to open his mouth, which had been closed up to this point.

「Velmeria, why don't you have Black Lightning Princess train you」

「Eh? Frederick? What are you talking about」

「There is a lot to be gained from practicing with a stronger opponents. Besides, doesn't Black Lightning Princess also want to exercise her body?」

「Nn!」



Fran, of all people, is the most enthusiastic about Frédéric's proposal. She is already getting up from the bench and pulling me out.

「Velmeria, I'm on it」

「...understood」

Velmeria too, must have heard Frederick's words and realized that Fran's excitement should be dissipated here. She nodded obediently at Fran's invitation.

No, not only that, but Velmeria also seems to be on board. I guess that means she is also a battle junkie.

「You doesn't want to pull it out?」

「Yes, this is my stance」

「Got it」

Velmeria faced Fran with nothing in her hands, seemingly empty-handed. But that doesn't mean that she is good at fighting with her bare hands.

Based on her appraisal, she can use martial arts, but she is more skilled in using dagger, dark arts, and throwing. He must be good at assassin-like combat combined with muffling her presence.

Well, I won't tell Fran. It would be more fun for Fran, and it would be a good training for her. Now, I wonder how well Fran will cope with her first strike?

Frederick used a technique to envelop the surroundings in darkness to prevent the two from being seen from the outside, which was also the signal for the mock battle to begin.

It was Velmeria who strike first. However, i think that is the right decision. Because there's no point in waiting for Fran, who is lightly armed and has a surprisingly effective strategy to attack her.

Even if her opponent is stronger than herself, she may be able to defeat her with a strike to a vital point using dark arts.

Even though I don't have dark arts skill, but i can tell that Velmeria was throwing out something familiar. Apparently, she threw something like an arrowhead that she had prepared under her sleeve.

She suppressed her killing intent and presence as well without any motion. But I was a little too impatient. I was thinking too much about launching an attack before she got close to Fran.

If she were an ordinary C rank adventurer, she might have been able to cause some agitation. With hope it can give her some damage. However, it didn't work on Fran. At this distance, Fran could still see and react to it.

Fran dodged the arrowhead thrown by Velmeria by simply tilting her head lightly. She then stepped in at once and kicked Velmeria's solar plexus with a front kick.

「Shhi」

「Gafuuh...!」

「Hyee」

『Hou』

She's been taking it easy on her, but she's still sent flying backwards from that kick. She has taken some damage, but not enough to stop her from moving. You can't underestimate her strength. With more battle experience, she will become stronger.

「Like hell i would let this end like this! Haaa!」

「Mmh!」

「Shhh!」

「As expected...!」

Velmeria held up a dagger in both hands and danced directly at Fran. She fired a smoke screen shortly before and throw a net-like object at her. She must have gotten serious.

Fran used wind magic to blow away the smoke and nets, but by then, Velmeria was already right beside her. Seeing her, I change my view of her. I thought she was an assassin type aiming for a surprise attack, but her skill with dagger was quite high.

Moreover, she's somewhat tricky. she compensated for the lightness of her body and the low attack power of a daggers with centrifugal force. While spinning around like a wheel, he slammed both of his daggers into Fran. In addition, almost all of the blows were aimed at vital points.

『I see, if she can get it done, she can turn the tide with a single blow』

Her teacher must have prepared her for a fight that even she could win against stronger opponent. I myself think the best thing to do is to run away from an opponent you can't beat, but there are certain situations where you can't run away from and certain situations where you shouldn't run away from.

However, she was still inexperienced. Her attacks were repelled by me, and she was often blown away by jus a kicks and fists. However, her will to fight did not fade from Velmeria's face. With her light blue ponytail swinging wildly, she came towards Fran. It's proof that her mind has been trained well.

I wonder if it is Frederick who is teaching Velmeria how to fight? Speaking of Frederick, he was watching over Velmeria with a very kind expression. He looks like a father or a brother.

I don't really understand the relationship between these two either. Velmeria, who has the surname of Bailleys, and Frederick, who talks to her in a way that he seems to be treated as Velmeria's subordinates...

They are both from half-dragonmen races, and I'm sure there is some reason for that. But I'm not sure if it's the right thing to ask. I don't want to poke

my head into the muddy side of a noble.

But some people just simply couldn't read the air.

「Ne, what relationship does Velmeria and Frederick has? Is it just because you are both half-dragonmen?」

That was Fran-san. She casually asked it during the break. Then, Velmeria answered surprisingly easily. Apparently, it wasn't like it's a secret as I thought it was.

「It's hard to say what kind of relationship we have, but isn't it more like a guardianship? I heard that he was originally a guard in my mother's service, but when my father took me in, he came to this country with me.」

「Then, your mother is not in this country?」

「Yeah. father is——My ChichiUe is the Earl of Bailleys, whom Fran met the other day. What i know is that he met my mother when he was sent to the continent of Gordisia.」

(Note: You know what 父上 Chichiue is right? Chichi Ue = Literally "father above," it's very honorific and respectful way to address a father)

The continent of Gordisia was supposed to be a place where most part of it were covered by a magical beast so huge that it swallowed the continent. As I recall, I've also heard that there was a dragonmen's empire.

「I was told that my mother was the caretaker of my father」

There, the Count and Velmeria's mother became family, and Velmeria was born. However, the Count had to return to his country after his dispatch period was over, and that's when he took her in.

Certainly, the Count already had a wife and children, but as a nobleman, that was not a problem.

「Your mother is still in Gordisia?」

「Yeah. My mother has something to do there, so she can't leave Gordisia continent.」

「Lonely?」

「Well, what do you think? I have very little memory of her, and I don't think I want to meet her that badly.....Well, even if I could meet her, do you think i would like to meet her?」

She seems to be pretty easy going. Maybe that's how it is if you were separated at an early age and grew up without seeing each other.

It was Frederick who had a rather painful face. He looked at Velmeria, who shrugged her shoulders, and sadly lowered her eyes.

Maybe he's feeling sorry for Velmeria, who has no memory of her mother.

# Chapter 422: Midnight Raid

The night of our mock battle with Velmeria.

「Master!」

「Woof!」

「Ceh! Fran, barrier」

「Nn!」

Fran and Urushi jumped up from their fluffy beds in the inn, and I immediately activate the transfer. In order to get away from this place as much as possible. Fran is already putting up barriers as fast as she can.

Booom!

Immediately after we moved to a dozen meters above the courtyard, there was a huge explosion from the room where Fran was staying. It had been struck with flame magic.

『Even though there's another guest, they're crazy!』

「Master, that is!」

『Ah! I can feel it even from here. It's that magic sword』

In the middle of the courtyard, the person who did it stood quietly. He had a blank expression on his face which I couldn't tell what he was thinking and a half-destroyed longsword in his right hand. There is no doubt about it, that was the sword with a face of a man with an expression of agony engraved on the hand cover.

More than that, the disgust rising from within me tells me. It's him.

『Are Velmeria and Frederick safe?』

「I don't know.」

Velmeria and the others were supposed to have taken a room next door, but i couldn't feel their presence. Is it because they sensed an enemy attack and disappeared, or is it because they lost their lives and have no more presence of them? I think it's the former.....

『Urushi, check the safety of the two!』

「Woof!」

We weal deal with him

「——」

The man is looking at us with an expressionless face.

「This time, gonna defeat it!」

『First, i want to block his escape route...』

The only thing I can think of that might work is the Great Wall skill. But I can't use it in this small courtyard. If we covered all four sides with the huge wall made by that technique, we would only have a space of about four and a half tatami mats. If we made it thinner, it wouldn't be strong enough and he could easily escape.

I also thought about surrounding the entire inn, but then the people in the inn would not be able to escape. In the end, we had to be careful not to let him escape huh.

『Fran, don't let it go!』

「Nn! Leave it to me! Haaaa!」

Fran offsets the flame magic released by that magic sword again by releasing flame magic in the same way. She ran down the street towards the man below her.

「Awakening——」

The awakened Fran kicked the sky to accelerate and slashed at him with all her might. However, the man used his magic sword to fend off the blow, he's pretty skilled.

I appraised the man during our attack. His sword skills are at level 5, higher than Hamuls. He has various strong skills such as Herculean Strength, Physical strengthening, and Rapid regeneration. He was clearly stronger than Hamuls.

And also, he is in the same state of Fanaticism and Potential Release as Hamuls. But there's something interesting.

Hamuls would have had the skills of regeneration, muscle hypertrophy, and martial arts added when he is using Potential Release. However, the man in front of me - Gordon - has none of those skills. Regeneration may have been integrated since he has rapid regeneration, but what about the other two?

Weren't those three skills given to him by the sword? I wonder if it was a skill gained from using potential release, a skill that bloom from his dormant talents?

Well, let's think about it later after we destroyed that magic sword.

『If possible, I want to capture Gordon alive』

「Nn」

If we can talk to him, we can find out if Marquis Ashtner is behind this. We'll destroy the magic sword without letting it escape and capture Gordon without killing him.

『Since he has rapid regeneration, it's okay to hurt him a little...』



As long as he was in a state of potential release, he would soon die if we didn't do anything. We had to destroy the sword and return him to his normal state before that happened.

「Haa!」

「——」

Fran's target was Gordon's wrist. The first step is to separate Gordon from the magic sword, and then hit the magic sword with a great firepower.

But that doesn't work. Gordon took advantage of his rapid regeneration and forcibly attacked her. However, Fran, who has a superior skill with the sword, did not miss the flaw in Gordon's attack. She used a feint to hit his neck and aimed at Gordon's wrists

However, Gordon reacted to it as well. But he didn't evade it, or that he repelled the thrust. Gordon dared to expose himself in front of Fran's thrust.

「Tsh!」

We pierced Gordon's solar plexus deeply. Gordon then let go of his magic sword and grabbed onto my hilt with both hands. His grab is powerful because of his Herculean Strength and Physical Strengthening skills.

I tried to get out from his grab, but Gordon had tightened every muscle in his body to hold me in place so that I couldn't escape. If I tried to escape seriously, I could shake him loose, but if I went crazy in this state, I might kill Gordon.

「Get your filthy hands off my master!」

「——」

「Haa!」

「——」

「Aaah!」

Fran grabbed my hilt and kicked Gordon in the face. The sound of Gordon's legs and ribs snapping echoed through the air. But that didn't freak Gordon out. On the contrary, she was blown away by the magic power released by the magic sword that had fallen at Gordon's feet, she's forced to let her hand go from my hilt.

『Fran!』

「Kuh! Master!」

Thank God. She's okay. But what Gordon did after that was beyond our expectations. He showed his back and ran away from Fran.

『This bastard!...He wasn't after Fran, but his aim was me alone!』

「Stop!」

Fran was about to chase after him when she saw the magic sword standing in the way. It's trying to split me and Fran up!

『Like hell, i would let you!』

「——」

I used telekinesis to entangle Gordon's leg, and then used wind magic to break Gordon's legs as he dropped to one knee. But he still wouldn't let me go.

Should I just hold Gordon here and leave the magic sword to Fran?

『But, she can't take on a magic sword without a weapon...』

As I watched, I saw that Fran was parrying the attack of that magic sword that had plunged in at high speed with her fist that had concentrated barrier. No matter how fast it was, it would not be able to catch Fran in such a straight line of attack. Fran's fist was a little bit damaged, but she was still able to deflect its trajectory significantly.

It was just after that.

Kiiinnn!

『Obey me!』

An inorganic, high-pitched voice that sounded as if it had been synthesized by a machine rang in my head.

I can understand it with my senses, that Fran's resistance skills have been activated, something must have been played. She used to leave everything up to her skills, but now that she has trained herself to manipulate the flow of her magic, she now can understand which resistance skill has been activated.

It's mental resistance and dominance nullification.

『Fran, are you all right!』

「Nn? Is this your voice now?」

She seems to be fine. There's nothing wrong with her. But I'm pretty sure it has used some sort of mind control ability on me. Looking at Hamuls and Gordon, there is no doubt that they have the ability to manipulate people. There was a good chance that he would be able to exert that effect on the person he slashed.

I guess the reason I could hear her voice too was because I was connected to Fran.

『Obey me...!』

「So noisy」

『Fran, don't let it cut you! It has mind control powers!』

「Okay」

The sword on the ground jerks away. Is it just me, or does it seem surprised that it couldn't dominate Fran?

# Chapter 423: Disgust

I wanted to go back to Fran as soon as possible. My resistance skills are preventing it from taking control, but I don't want to get hit by it again.

For the time being, I decided to restrain Gordon with earth magic. I'm not sure if it can hold him long enough, but it's better than just leaving him alone.

Gordon's figure was covered in ivy made of earth and swallowed him. After make sure of it, I transferred back to Fran's hand.

『Fran, I'm back』

「Master!」

『Are you okay?』

「Nn!」

When I transferred back to Fran's side, she greeted me with a hug. It must have been very painful for her to have me taken away forcefully, even just for a few seconds.

「Unforgivable...!」

「——」

The magic sword looks as if it's not sure whether to run away or to attack Fran again. From the way it acted, it really seemed to have emotions. Fran slashed at the magic sword, throwing her killing intent.

「Haaa! Brilliant Lightning Rush!」

「——」

She closed the distance at god speed and swung me down. However, that magic sword had jumped back just before that.

『I won't let you go away!』

No, this time it was different. The magic sword distanced itself from us and shot magic to Fran. But it wasn't aimed at Fran. It blew away the rock cage in which Gordon was trapped. It was a bit harsh, but it managed to set Gordon free.

I guess that magic sword isn't good at acting alone for a long time. It needs a wielder to continue the battle.

The magic sword flies towards Gordon.

『I won't let you!』

「Haaa!」

We used wind magic to blow Gordon away even more and knock him out of position. After that, we transferred and slashed at the magic sword. Immediately after the transfer, I tried to use telekinetic to block the magic sword's movement, and Fran will attack it with Sword King technique. I had planned to do that, but...

『It detected our transfer!』

The magic sword accelerated rapidly and was already out of our sight. It seems that it has excellent sensing ability. Gordon, who had just gotten up, rushed in. He was not doesn't hold the magic sword, and he had no hands.

But this guy has no martial arts or fighting skills, so what is he going to do? As I was thinking that, he came straight at me. Although his movements were not that sharp, if we get caught, we would suffer a great deal of damage due to his physical strength.

However, Fran and I both hesitated to attack this guy. He already had very little vitality left in him. If we attacked him now, we might end up killing him.

Fran quickly jumped back and dodged Gordon's attack.

But, at that moment

Booom!

Gordon's torso made a dull sound and exploded from the inside. No, it's not that. Before i knew it, the magic sword had moved behind Gordon and rushed from his back.

It seems that when the magic sword hit Gordon's body, it dared to curl magic blade around itself to make it look like a hammer, so that it would not penetrate Gordon's body, but make his body burst. But, no matter how fast he can regenerate, if his upper body was destroyed, he would die instantly.

『This bastard! It killed its own wielder!』

My anger rises up after witnessing it.

『As a magic sword, I can't forgive what it have done!』

Its very existence was disgusting.

The magic sword attacked with its magic blade while blindly scattered Gordon's flesh and blood. Its shape transformed once again, and the blade branched out into multiple pieces, each blade coming at Fran from multiple direction.

We were wary of its mental control and used transfer to keep our distance. The magic sword did not give a chase. Rather, it seemed to have anticipated our escape. Without slowing down at all, it flew towards the inn, passing by our side at super high speed.

『It got me!』

「Is it trying to escape?」

『No, it wasn't!』

There was a figure at the destination where the magic sword flew.

「Run away!」

「Kuh!」

「Velmeria!」

It was Velmeria and Frederick, who had been rescued by Urushi. They were hiding in the inn, watching over our fight. However, the magic sword seemed to have aware of them.

I'm not sure if she heard Fran's warning, but she turned on her heel in panic, but it was too late. Just as she was about to be cut by the magic sword, Frederick, who was standing next to her, push her away. The blade of the magic sword, which seemed to pierce through Vermelia's body, had cut deep into Frederick's arm.

「Gaah!」

「Frederick! How is your condition?」

「I-I'm fine! but what is this voice? If you want me to obey you, then show me what you've got!」

So that's it, it was planning to take control of Frederick and make him it's new wielders! But it seems that it failed. Frederick has mental resistance. It must have prevented the magic sword from taking control of him.

But Velmeria didn't have that kind of skill. We have to settle this before she was attacked.

『Let's jump』

「Nn!」

We had already confirmed that it can detect when transfer will be used.

The magic sword releases magical power to Fran who appears in the room after transfer, but the attack is transmitted by our dimension shift.

Fran swung me out against the magic sword, which was shaking in surprise.

「...Sword King Technique - Heaven Judgement」

『Giyaaaaa!』

The blade of that magic sword that had already been broken were cut down even further with the flash of sword released by Fran. The magic sword then lets out a high-pitched scream.

It was obviously damaged, but an eerie magical power that swirled within it had not yet dispersed. Does it mean, we have to destroy its core-like part in order to defeat it?

One more shot! I was about to shout that, but I couldn't raise my voice.

『Urgh...!』

「Master」

『Kuuuuaaa!』

I screamed a moan while feeling a huge force flowing into me. Apparently, Cannibalism had been triggered.

It wasn't like I felt being overwhelmed by taking too much power, or it was going out of control. But, the magical power from that sword flowing into me made me feel so disgusted that i couldn't think of anything else.

I'm sorry to use a little dirty representation, but it was like having a mixture of filth, garbage, and crappie juice smeared all over my body. Anyway, I couldn't help but feel sick. If I had been in a human body, I would have been screaming and rolling around.



『Uuuwaaaaaaa!』

「Master!」

There was no way that magic sword would miss such opportunity, it accelerated at once to escape from the room.

「Urushi! After it!」

「woof!」

『Guurghhhh!』

# Chapter 424: Intelligent Weapon

『Sorry Fran. I'm fine now』

(really?)

『Yeah』

While I was screaming, the magic sword escaped me again. I hope Urushi brings back some information for us.....

But I don't know why cannibalism was triggered. It's supposed to be an ability to absorb power if you kill someone of your own kind.....

We're inorganic, we're already lifeless. In other words, because we're lifeless, attacking us and damaging us will trigger it? Or is it judged that cutting some part of us counted as killing? Or is there some other reason?

Either way, it's going to be dangerous if I don't deactivate cannibalism when we fight that magic sword in the future. I don't want to have to go through that feeling again.

However, absorbing its power means that I will be strengthened while the magic sword will be weakened. If that's the case, it might be better to put up with the disgust and use cannibalism. Hmmm...

「Fran, are you okay?」

「Nn?」

「It seemed that your movement suddenly slowed down...」

「That sword had the power to control the mind of the person it slashed. Doesn't it affect you?」

Velmeria and Frederick asked worriedly. Frederick had already healed his wounds with a potion that Velmeria had, but his face was slightly frowned. Even though his mental resistance prevented it, Frederick was still affected by the domination skill. I'm sure he understands the horror of it.

They knew Fran might be already manipulated; we couldn't win the fight. Hence, they were looking at Fran with caution.

「I got resistance skill, so I'm fine」

「Is that so」

「I'm glad」

Apparently, they understood that she wasn't lying. The two are relieved and stroked their chests.

After that, we decided to rescue the people at the inn. Some part of the inn was still burning by that explosion. We had to do something about this.

Leaving the firefighting to Velmeria, who is good at water magic, we searched for people who are late to escape. Surprisingly, there were only a few people were injured and unable to move.

Because it was originally a high-class inn, there were only a few guests. Furthermore, it was an inn for adventurers of rank C or higher, and half of them had escaped on their own.

Of course, there were some ordinary rich guests, but they had their own guards, and they had already evacuated with their help.

In the end, we rescued only one of the employees who had failed to escape. The young man had already been led out of the inn after we healed his wounds.

「Let's go back to courtyard」

「Nn」

「We need to secure Gordon's body.」

With all this commotion, the soldiers would be here soon. Of course, if they saw Gordon's body, they would suspect that it was related to the case because of its unnaturalness. His body would be confiscated.

『We need to get his body before they do.』

「Nn」

When we returned to the courtyard, Frederick was already examining the body. The upper half of the body had been destroyed, but the head was still there, and there was a chance that there might be a clue to the identity of the magic sword.

「Got something?」

「More or less」

Hou? That's not something to be overlooked.

「Tell me」

「First of all, this man's identity is undoubtedly that of Gordon, a servant of Count Bailleys」

「Same as Hamuls?」

「Yeah, he went missing during reconnaissance」

Gordon was apparently a colleague of Frederick. There was a hint of mourning on his face, but there also seemed to be a slightly reluctant look in his eyes.

「But——」

「But?」

「Gordon was not in charge of the actual operations, like us and Hamuls, but was in charge of surveillance」

「In other words?」

「Of course he was trained, but his fighting ability wasn't that high. I'm sure he shouldn't be able to go against Fran head-on even for a short time」

I guess that means, when he used potential release, his ability had been raised to the fullest. However, there was still a point where he felt something strange.

「Gordon was fighting with a sword, wasn't he?」

「Nn」

「But...Gordon was a spearman, and I'm pretty sure his sword skills weren't that great.」

Potential Release is a state in which one's original abilities increase. In the case of physical enhancement skills such as regeneration and muscle hypertrophy, i can think of it as an awakening of a dormant talent due to potential release.

But how is it possible that only his skill in swordsmanship would increase? Even though he originally possessed low-level sword techniques, it seems strange that it would be strengthened to the point of turning into sword saint techniques. In addition, the spear technique, which was at a higher level, did not seem to have changed.

「And so is his fire magic. Gordon was only able to use basic earth magic, and no fire magic at all.」

「But, he was using flame magic」

「Yeah, I saw it too」

Sword Saint Technique and Flame Magic..... Both of these skills shouldn't be so easy to get. That is unless you have the ability like me.

「So, it's that sword ability?」

「...I don't know. But, is there such a sword that can manipulate its wielder and give them multiple new skills...? Now I've seen it this close, I'm pretty sure it's not from a dead soul」

Frederick also understood that it was not an undead sword, but a magic sword. This was confirmed by the fact that my cannibalism was triggered.

On the contrary, it was more likely to be an intelligent weapon.

「I heard voices when it cut me.」

「Me too. "Obey me" That's what it said.」

「Nn. That sword, has its own mind」

「Huh! You meant, it's an i-intelligent weapon! No, but it sure sounded like one」

Frederick is surprised with his eyes wide open. An Intelligent Weapon is said to be of legendary things. It's only natural to be surprised when it exists in a place like this while spreading destruction.

But that didn't seem to be the only surprise for Frederick.

「No way...I didn't think there's another one exist outside of Gordisia...」

「What do you mean?」

「In the continent of Gordisia, exist a single intelligent sword」

According to Frederick, it was the beloved sword of Trismegistus, the tragic hero of Gordisia. It is said that Trismegistus, a genius alchemist, used all of his knowledge and painstakingly created it.

As a result of divine punishment, he was destined to fight forever until the Abyss Eaters he created were destroyed.

Maybe, Trismegistus was the one who created me?

He doesn't seem to be a divine blacksmith, but if he has the original discarded divine sword or something like that, there's a chance, right? After all, he is a genius alchemist who almost destroyed the world.

『Gordisia Continent huh...』

# Chapter 425: Familial Disgust

「And this, this is likely to be a clue」

「The piece of that magic sword」

What Fran took out was the blade of the magic sword that she had cut off. There would be a chance to get closer to its real identity. Thanks to the fact that most of the magic power had been drained out from it, its already felt much less disgusting.

『...Hmm. the material is...I think it's similar with my blade』

I have blacksmithing skills, so I can tell some things apart to some extent. At least it's not iron. I don't know exactly what this metal is, but the closest I can come to it is the metal used for myself.

As I recall, it was a metal called Orichalcos, which could only be used by a divine blacksmith. However, since only divine blacksmiths can handle it, I can't tell if it's something special with my normal blacksmithing skills.

Even that Gallus didn't understand the material of my sword. Still, I could tell that the metals that made up my sword and this were very similar.

But that would make the story more complicated. After all, there will be possibility for that magic sword to be a divine sword.

Well, compared to Gaia that Asurasu showed me, I only felt a much weaker magical power, and I think it's more likely that it's less than divine magic sword made by a divine blacksmith using Orichalcos.

When I think about it, it makes sense that I was able to activate cannibalism. An intelligence weapon made by a divine blacksmith, made of



the same material. It wouldn't be strange to say that we are the same kind. It seems to be more likely related to a divine blacksmith rather than Trismegistus.

「I'd like to examine it. Can you leave it with me?」

(Master?)

「I'll make sure to return it to you when the investigation is complete. It's Fran's loot after all」

Well, we can't investigate any further on our own even if we had it, and if you want to lend it to him, that's fine.

『I think it's a good idea.』

「Nn. Understood」

While Fran and Frederick were talking in front of Gordon's body, Urushi returned.

「Woof!」

「Urushi, welcome back. you got something?」

「Woof!」

Oh, Urushi looks so confident. Apparently, the chase went well.

「...Marquis Ashtner's residence?」

「Woof!」

Urushi nodded at Fran's question. Seriously? Fran had only mentioned Marquis of Ashtner randomly, but actually it was the correct answer.

「Really?」

「Woof woof!」

When Fran asked back suspiciously, Urushi desperately appealed for her to believe him. It seems that he has really escaped to Marquis Ashtner's mansion.

Last time, it took the trouble to cut off its sign in the residential area and was wary for anyone to not follow it...But this time, it was so easy to find where its destination is.

No, because it was damaged by Fran's Sword King technique, it didn't have enough time to scatter its pursuers. And I'm sure I've absorbed some of its power too.

Incidentally, as a result of cannibalism, my magic power and durability increased by 50 each. It may seem subtle, but if I can completely absorb the power of a magic sword, I can expect a considerable strengthening.

「Did that wolf find out where that magic sword ran off to?」

「Nn. Marquis Ashtner residence」

「Really?」

「Nn. He is trustworthy」

「Gau Gau!」

When Fran suspected him, he reacted with a 「please believe me」 kind of whining, but when he looks at Frederick, he looks at him like saying

「What? You didn't believe my words?」 That's how he reacted and shot a glare at Frederick.

Even in his dog-sized state, he is powerful enough, but Frederick is not flinching at all. As expected of him.

「Don't glare at him」

「woof...!」

Fran smacked Urushi on the head and warned him. Then, Urushi looked back at Fran with a look like saying 「it's because of him」

However, Fran ignored Urushi and proceeded with her story.

「I'm going to Marquis Ashtner」

「No, wait a moment」

「whine...」

Yeah, hang in there, Urushi.

「Even if you force your way in here, when you can't find any evidence of guilt, you'll just end up being pursued. It will take a long time to start the investigation again. Be cautious」

「Muh...」

「Gau!」

Urushi glared at Frederick again. Now he looks like saying 「Bastard, what did you said to neesan huh」 maybe?

Fran hit him on the head again, and Urushi looked away from Frederick with an attitude of 「Damn. I'll let you off the hook this time」 he said. I've never seen this boy looks so much like a thug.

In the end, there was a possibility that we would be attacked again if we stayed here for too long, and after putting out the fire with Velmeria, we decided to move on. The place we were aiming for was their hideout in the noble district where we first met Count Bailleys.

When I mentioned that the magic sword had disappeared to the Marquis Ashtner's mansion on the way, Velmeria nodded her head in agreement.

「It seems that he were involved, after all. That's one more reason for us to search Marquis Ashtner's residence」

「Assuming what that wolf say was real. We'll have to back him up」

「Gau!」

Urushi responded to Frederick's words, groaning like saying 「Are you saying I'm lying! Haah?」 No, he's usually a bit more of a cute guy, but he gets strangely worked up over Frederick.

Is its familial disgust? Well, he have a similar skill composition and are rivalling Frederick, who seems to be a threat to his position. He's a wolf, after all, and he's probably concerned about his position in the group.

『Familial disgust huh.....』

I wonder if the disgust I feel for that magic sword is the same thing.

It is a magic sword with great power and can act independently with its own will. In addition, it can give its user skills and other abilities to strengthen it to an unbelievable degree.

Of course, this information was not confirmed yet, but at present, it was highly likely that it was an intelligent weapon with powers similar to mine.

We are alike, too much alike.

I was angry at it for its methods. But Hamuls had died because he had been in potential release for too long. It could have happened to any of us. Both I and that magic sword are dangerous swords that can bring death to the wielder. I hate to admit it, but.....

『Hmm』

(What's wrong?)

『No, nothing...I just wondered why that magic sword and I are so much alike』

(Not alike)

『No, we don't look alike, but our abilities are pretty similar, right?』

However, Fran denied my words with an unprecedentedly strong voice.

(Not alike! it killed its own wielder!)

『But it's the same for us, if we overuse your potential release, you will lose your lives. The only difference is whether or not we stopped in the middle. Well, I know It killed Gordon』

(Not alike! It killed its own wielder. Master is always thinking of me. Completely different)

『...is that so?』

(Nn! that thing is a bad sword. Master is a good sword)

To be honest, I don't think there's that much of a difference between that magic sword and me. The only difference is our stance towards the wielder.

But if Fran says it's different, then it must be different. That's what I'm going to think from now on. (

Just thinking about it like that, I found that the haze in my mind cleared up. I'm a lucky guy...

『...Thanks』

「Nn!」

## **Chapter 426: Velmeria's Tears**

## Chapter 426: Velmeria's Tears

After repelling the attack of the magic sword, we had retreated to a mansion in the noble district. This is the mansion where we first met Count Bailleys.

In fact, I wanted to report to Count Bailleys on various matters and discuss our future moves with Frederick and the others.....

『Fran, get up』

「Unya...」

『Come on, we have to discuss our future moves with the count』

「Nyumu〜...」

Last night, Fran was so sleepy that we couldn't talk at all. Count Bailleys went out of his way to greet her, but she was asleep while standing.

I was really glad that the Count was the tolerant type. He smiled and forgave her. However, as expected, I couldn't keep him waiting again today.

『Come on, get up』

「Mu〜...」

『Hai, I'll wipe your face』

「Muyu—」

『We need to fix your bed hair, so don't move a bit.』

「Uaa〜」

What a 15 minutes exchange.

「Good morning, Master」

『Ou, good morning』

Fran managed to wake up, and the next thing she do is rubbing her stomach and looking sad.

「...I'm hungry」

『Hai hai. In the meantime, you can put this in your stomach.』

Last night, after the battle, she slept without eating. Well, I predicted that she would be starving in the morning. I took out some snacks such as rice balls and sandwiches and laid them out in front of Fran.

The mansion would have prepared breakfast for her, but they would not be able to handle Fran's appetite. It would be better to fill her stomach first.

『Urushi too』

「woof!」

「Munch Munch」

15 minutes later.

「oof oof!」

「Munch munch」

Fran and Urushi were having their second breakfast in the dining room of Count Bailey's residence.

「What do you mean!」

「——.....」

「I can't accept that I'm being left out!」

「——.....」



A loud angry voice was coming from upstairs. It was Velmeria's voice. She seemed to be arguing with someone, but I couldn't hear the other person's voice. Velmeria must have yelled very loudly.

「Excuse me!」

Bam, A sound of a door being roughly closed can be heard along with Velmeria's voice. Then, I heard the sound of someone running down the stairs.

As expected, it was Velmeria running into the dining room with a flushed face.

「Velmeria?」

「Fran...」

「What's wrong?」

「No, nothing...excuse me」

When she comes face to face with Fran, Velmeria stopped for a moment. However, she quickly turns her head and leaves the place in a hurry.

(Velmeria, crying)

『Yea』

What on earth had happened? With tears welling up in the corners of her bloodshot eyes and her teeth clenched, Velmeria's figure seemed fragile, as if she was about to collapse on the spot.

That Fran stopped eating and wondered if she should go after Velmeria. That's how weak she was.

However, Fran could not go after Velmeria. She was called by a new person entering the dining room.

「Fran, Sidre-sama called you」

「Velmeria, what's wrong?」

「...don't mind her」

「I'm concerned」

「...I can't talk about it」

As long as the tight-lipped Frederick couldn't tell me, he wouldn't tell me even if I persisted.

『Fran, we're not going to get anywhere by arguing here. Let's just go to the Count's place.』

「...understood」

Frederick guided Fran in, looking somewhat relieved. And in the office where she was guided in, Count Bailleys with a tired-looking face was sitting on a sofa.

「So you've come, Black Lightning Princess. I would like to discuss our future plans immediately, do you mind?」

「Nn」

「First of all, thank you for all the information. Thanks to you, I was able to get permission to enter Count Olmes' villa without any problems. Even if it's owned by a marquis family, they can't object with the decisions of the royal family」

The villa belonging to Count Olmes is now the property of the Marquis Ashtner, but I guess they can't resist if it's in the name of investigating a case.

No, in the past, he might have defied us. However, his power has declined due to his repeated blunders, so now, he can no longer resist. He must have lost his ability to manipulate from behind the scenes.

「We haven't received permission to enter the Marquis' residence yet, but if the investigation of the villa produces evidence, we should be able to use it as a reason to investigate the main residence.」

「Nn. What should i do?」

「I need your help in raiding the Olmes residence tonight. What do you think?」

Today? That was crazy fast. Fran seemed to think so too, and was surprised.

「To night? so quick」

「The longer we wait, the more likely for them to notice. What's wrong with that?」

「Unn. That's fine」

「I see. In the meantime, you'll be treated as a collaborator hired from the outside, just like Colbert. You'll be working under Colbert's direction in the field, is that okay?」

「Nn」

「I'm grateful」

Seeing Fran nodding, for some reason Count Bailleys looked relieved. Was he worried that Fran might not be able to wait and go off on her own?

「I know you're capable, but in this case, Colbert knows how to do it better than you do.」

I can understand from his words. Count Bailleys had seen the match in which Fran had defeated Colbert. That's why he was worried that Fran might say that she was uncomfortable following the instructions of an opponent who was weaker than her.

Knock Knock

「Who is it?」

「It's Colbert」

The man who appeared there at the right moment was Colbert himself. But there was a hint of confusion on his face.

「Ahh, excuse me. I passed miss Velmeria back there, but is something wrong?」

Oh, good one Colbert. You just asked the question we were afraid to ask!

「...It's not a big deal, but. I told her I'd remove her from the investigation of Count Olmes' residence tonight, but she wasn't happy about it.」

「You're going to remove Miss Velmeria? Why? I'm sure she's quite skilled. At least she's a better scout than I am.」

「This was a pretense. she has gotten a little better at it, but she's still immature. and she's not as strong as you guys」

If we compare our fighting prowess only, that would be true. However, as Colbert said, the true value of Velmeria lies in her scouting skills. Rather, I'm sure she is suitable for searching inside the villa. I think the Count does not understand that.....

Is there some other reason?

「Velmeria, crying」

「.....I know. But it's not the kind of place where you can take inexperienced people.」

The Count replies to Fran's words in a weak tone. But it's a lie. It seems that Colbert has figured it out. He stares at the Count with sharp eyes.

「Count. I understand that Miss Velmeria is cute, but she's an adult now. You can't keep her away from danger forever, can you?」

「...ugh」

He was simply being overprotective while saying all the right things. The look of dismay on the Count's face showed that Colbert's point was right on the spot.

I guess even if you're an outstanding warrior, a parent will always be a parent aren't they.

「Isn't that why you're teaming her up with Frederick, so that she can get some experience?」

「A-anyway! I'm not taking Velmeria with me on this raid!」

Colbert shook his head in dismay at his words, and Frederick slumped his shoulders in disappointment.

「Thi-this is my final decision!」

# Chapter 427: The Dragonmen Now

Fran and Colbert are kicked out of the room by the Count, who says the conversation is over. Colbert sighs in exasperation.

「Haah. Frederick, you don't want to go after miss Velmeria?」

「She's in her room, so it's better to leave her alone for now. If we talk to her now, she'll just get more stubborn」

「As expected, but you should play your role as her teacher, you know」

I guess Frederick played the role of Velmeria's teacher. That must be why they have such an easy relationship.

But there was one to worry about. Count Baileys was overprotective. He was more worried than overprotective, though.

But if that's the case, why are he raising her as a warrior or a covert agent? If he were really worried about her, he could raise her as young ladies of high society. I'm sure there are many noble girls who don't know anything about fighting and spend all day learning.

Even if she was the child of a concubine, she seemed to recognize that she would be carrying the family name, and she should be able to get a good education.

When Fran asked that question, Frederick and Colbert answer it.

「There are various circumstances.....」

「Well, we can't stand and talk here. Let's go downstairs and have a cup of tea and talk.」

As Colbert suggested, we were told about Count Bailleys and Velmeria's situation while drinking tea in the dining room.

First of all, to answer the question of why he taught Velmeria fighting skills and raised her as a warrior, he said that it was simply because it was his family tradition.

「Count Bailleys came from a renowned military family. Men and women alike are educated to be knights and join the military. Even if they are the children of concubines, they are not given special treatment」

「Rather, it's because she's from a concubine, isn't it? If he treated only Miss Velmeria like that, we'll be talking about how much he loves his concubine more than his real wife」

「That's right. Because in the end, the one who would be hurt the most by that would be Velmeria. So Sidre-sama trained Velmeria with a cold heart」

「Well, it's bad enough when that wife stares at you. I've met her a few times, and she's an awful person. I guess she thinks adventurers are just relatives of bandits. She looks at us as if we were insects. And yet, she had the good looks to make up for it. That's what we call a noble's wife.」

I see, for Velmeria, who lives far away from her mother at Count Bailey's residence, it's important to be on good terms with his real wife.

「Well, I guess that's why she don't blame her for being a concubine's child. A concubine is a natural part of being a nobleman, and if you behave like a concubine's child would, she won't be worried about anything」

It seems that if she avoids putting her selves on the short end of the stick, they have to be rather strict. At the very least, he's not allowing preferential treatment to his wife's children. No matter what.

But then another question arose.

「...Isn't Velmeria a knight?」

It is said that Count Bailleys' families are educated to become knights. However, Velmeria is being raised as a covert agent. Even a concubine's child would become a knight if she was the daughter of a Count.....

However, this wasn't an usual story of a concubinage. Rather, the bottleneck was her race.

「Race? Half-dragonmen?」

「Oh. In the Kingdom of Kranzel, not only half-dragonmen like us, but dragonmen themselves are not allowed to obtain a special status. This naturally includes being knighted and holding important positions in public organizations.」

「Why?」

「Because dragonmen are considered as a symbol of abomination」

「Abominable species? They hate you?」

「Fufu, I wonder」

Frederick chuckled at Fran's blunt words. However, perhaps it was because that words came from Fran, a black cat kin who had been oppressed for many years. He didn't seem to be offended and told her how dragonmn were treated in various countries.

「Trismegistus, who caused the tragedy of Gordisia, was the king of the Dragon Men. That was the biggest cause.」

「But, not all dragonmen are bad」

「No. It was Trismegistus who was judged by the gods, but the dragonmen enthusiastically supported and encouraged the king, with the vile delusion that he would conquer the world and make it prosper under the superior race, dragonmen」

I had thought that Trismegistus personally was the only bad guy, but apparently that was not the case. It seems that the entire dragonmen race



welcomed his ambition and research.

「And as the result of the arrogance and greed of the dragonmen race, was that incident that nearly destroyed the world. The nations that were suffering from dragonmen race invasion began to eliminate the dragonmen race because they had been punished by God. On the surface, they look at us as a sinful race that had been punished by the gods, but behind the scenes, they were probably afraid of us, the dragonmen, a race with strong ambitions and aspirations.」

「Well, the dragomen race is powerful as a species. They were probably the eyesore of human's eye. Even now, they are feared along with Insect-kin and High Elves」

I can understand why the dragonmen are so strong. After all, they are dragons. But what about the insect-kin and High Elves? Are they as strong as the dragonmen? I'm not sure what to make of that.

「Don't you know the story little miss? The deadly dragonmen. The crazy insect-kin. The most powerful high elf. You must have heard of that, right?」

The dragonmen are a race with enough military power to control an entire continent, and yet they cause misery for themselves and those around them.

Although there are individual differences among the insect-kin, those of the warrior class are said to be born with overwhelming abilities. Their combat power is at least at the level of rank C adventurers. In addition, their loyalty to their country is high, and their values are different from those of humans, so they are sometimes seen as crazy by humans. For this reason, the insect-kin are said to be crowned the craziest.

「I've met an insect-kin before. They look like normal people」

Eliante was also from insect-kin, but she looks normal by all mean. But apparently that's because she only has half racial blood in her.

「Ah, she must be half-insect kin.....A pure-blood insect kin or their higher species are quite different」

Insect-people are born as a noble species or leader class. The battle type specializing in combat, or a leader to rule the civilian. But just because they were a child of noble species, doesn't mean they will become a noble, it's completely random and is strictly divided according to the species of the child born.

Among the four class of insect-kin, the noble class, the fighting class, and leader class are born with a strong sense of belonging and loyalty towards their country, and are said to be difficult to understand than the civilian class.

「When they are from a civilian class, they're just like any other normal person」

「Both in appearance and in ability.」

That's interesting. Could it be that the higher species look like a certain Rider? I'm interested. I'd like to go to the country of insect-kin someday. Well, if it's safe, that is.

And finally, there are the High Elves. Elves, because of their longevity, have a very laid-back personality. The older they get, the more relaxed they become, and by the time they are over 300 years old, they spend their whole day in sleeping.

However, sometimes there are individuals who show a curiosity and behaviour not like any typical elves, and continue to train themselves even as they age. These special elves evolve over the course of several hundred years by continuing to grow. That is the High Elves. There are only a few of them in the whole world, but all of them are said to have rank S level strength.

The elves, with their superior magical power, will continue to grow for hundreds of years. Their power must be overwhelming. Even though I've never seen it, I can imagine it.

「Oops, I'm getting off topic. Anyway, in the Kingdom of Kranzel, as long as you have dragonmen blood, you can't become a knight」

「However, as long as she was raised by Count Bailleys, he had to train Velmeria. As a result, she was raised as a covert agent.」

「And in the future, she'll be serving the sons of his wife and help Count Bailleys」

In other words, she can show that she can be useful to his wife, and she can also show that you she knows her place by being a covert agent under the knight.

「Nevertheless, she is the Count's only daughter. The truth is that he's very fond of Miss Velmeria. I'm sure he can't say it out loud to his wife, though.」

「Is that why, he remove her from dangerous mission?」

「Yea, that must be it」

「It seems that Miss Velmeria wasn't happy about it, though. They say you won't understand the heart of a parent, but in this case it's probably the other way around. He's obviously too overprotective.」

「...I know how you feel」

# Chapter 428: Pseudo Fanatic Sword

After hearing a little bit about Count Bailleys' situation. We were waiting for Velmeria to settle down with a cup of tea.

「...Colbert. Acquaintance?」

「No, I don't know any of those guys who will sneak up on you while spreading their killing intent. Frederick? Is it the Count's men?」

「I don't think so. I'm going to Velmeria. You guys take care of them. Take some of them alive if you can.」

The source of this conversation was the mysterious presence that was trying to surround the house while emitting their killing intent.

In all likelihood, it was an enemy attack. What's more, if I may say so——

『Fran, it could be that magic sword』

(Really?)

『They've got that eerie magic mixed in with their magic』

Even from a distance, there was no mistaking the disgust that welled up inside me. It is the same kind of magic that the magic sword was emitting.

(Understood)

『But...』

(But?)

However, there was a problem. For some reason, there were multiple sources of this sickening magic. Worst of all, there was the possibility that there was more than one of those magic swords.

(...Just crush everything)

『Well, you're right. When that magic sword comes out, I'll do everything i can』

(Okay)

Eliante, I'm sorry. But there might be some damage around here. But we can't leave that magic sword unchecked. We have to make sure we kill it when it appears.

「Is that okay? you can't make the first move to claim self-defence. Just keep that in mind」

So, we have to be passive. A few minutes later, Frederick left the room and headed downstairs to Velmeria.

Inside the mansion, the guards were on alert. The level of the soldiers in the house was high, and there was no one who hadn't noticed the mysterious presence that was narrowing their encirclement.

However, it seems that the attacker's first move was something beyond our imagination.

Guooooo!

「Su-suddenly they unleashed huge magic spell!」

Multiple magics had landed on the villa. The room we were in was unaffected, but through the window we could see tongues of red flame stretching out and turning the space orange. Perhaps someone had released an inferno burst from outside the premises.

In addition to that, it seems that wind magic and earth magic have torn holes in the villa. Colbert also looked surprised.

「How dare they make such a flashy moves in the noble district of the royal capital!」

「What do you mean?」

「Do you know! We're in the king's lap! And if he causes a disturbance in this place full of nobles, he'd be sentenced with death! Even if he was a marquis!」

That's why the people in the villa didn't think they would cause such a conspicuous commotion. They were probably thinking that they would try to assassinate and subdue them in close combat after they entered the villa.

The fact that they had been betrayed made them realize that the air in the villa was shaking.

Was Marquis Ashtner running out of time, or was he were on the verge of ruin? Either way, it seemed that the enemy was simply straightforward.

「Miss, lets split up. I'll take the front gate, can i leave the back gate to you?」

「Nn」

「Yoshi, lets go」

I really wanted to head in the direction of the magic sword, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't locate its presence. Its not like that magic sword had disappeared, but there were several weak reactions of it.

『For the time being, let's check it with our eyes』

「Nn!」

『Urushi, look for suspicious guys around the premises』

「woof!」

And when Fran arrived at the back gate, the enemy had already made their way into the villa. There were two men in front of us. They looked like adventurers. However, both Fran and I were stunned at the sight of their strange appearance.

『Wha-what are they...』

「Sword, stuck」

『And that impaled sword...It looks like a magic sword』

What can I say? There were swords stuck deep in the backs of the men. From the center of the back of their neck, it looked as if a sword had been inserted in place of their spine. Along the spine, an estoc-like sword pierced through the body.

(Note: エストック esutokku - a variety of swords)

The men were both in that state. Moreover, the hand cover on their estoc was familiar. An engraving of a man in agony. It looked just like the hand cover attached to that half-destroyed magic sword.

The appraisal worked for this thing. Well, all I found out was the name. However, the name was not something that could be ignored.

『Pseudo Fanatic Sword』

「Fanatic sword? I've heard it somewhere」

『That's from the scroll that Rumina showed us in Ulmut』

(Note: ルミナ rumina, author-san was really kind to mention who she is which i actually forgot)

That scroll contained the list of the name of divine sword that Rumina, the dungeon master of Ulmut and a member of the Black Cat tribe, carried. Its been on that list.

『Sword of blind devotion, Fanatics』

「So, that's a divine sword?」

『Pseudo means it's not the real one. Maybe it's a duplicate or something...  
Don't let your guard down!』

Yes, a pseudo. It's not real. But even if it was a pseudo, it was a divine sword. This finally smelled fishy.

「——」

「——」

「Here it comes!」

But then again, they're under mind control too! They have the same face as Hamuls and Gordon. They also have the same state of fanaticism and were using potential release. Their status is very high, and they have many skills. Not even the soldiers in the villa will be able to compete with them.

「Awakening! Brilliant Lightning Rush!」

But still, from the start, they are no match for Fran.

When we are facing both Hamuls and Gordon, we were too focused on wait-and-see and trapping approach. We were also too concerned about the damage to our surrounding. However, the current Fran was serious both in a good and bad way.

When she heard that the enemy had something to do with a divine sword, her switch must have been flipped.

The man on the right, who was about to unleash a sword technique, was sliced in half by Fran's void sword technique, which has closed the distance at lightning speed. The men were not even able to react to Fran's extreme speed.



(Note: 空気抜刀術 kūki battō-jutsu, vacuum air pulling sword technique, void sword drawing arts)

The sword is swung with a speed that doesn't even allow for a blink, then his body is shifted diagonally with a delay.

『Kuh』

「Master? What's wrong?」

『No, it's just triggered cannibalism』

The slash had cut down the pseudo fanatic sword as well. As a result, a sickening amount of magic power flowed into me. I had already experienced this once before, but the amount of magic I absorbed was much less than last time, so I only felt a little disgust, but it was still unpleasant.

The fact that I had absorbed so little power could be seen from my increased stats. In fact, the magic power I have only increased by 2.

『What's more is, there's another one』

「Nn! Haaa!」

「——」

The man swung his sword over his head, as if he had finally realized that his friends had been killed instantly. But by that time, Fran was already prepared.

Faster than the man's sword swung down, she unleashed void sword technique once again, cutting off both of the man's legs.

『Just lie down!』

I invoked my telekinesis on that guy...

『What?』

For a moment, the pseudo fanatic sword on the man's back seemed to glow, and I saw it suck the magic power out of him. And then my telekinesis is cancelled out.

『This guy——can manipulate magic huh!』

I tried to restrain it with earth magic, but that was counteracted as well. That pseudo fanatic sword was the user. No, parasite? The wearer? Whatever it was, it seemed to have the power to use the man's magic to counteract my magic and skills.

Seeing that my morphing and swordsmanship skills are still usable, it seems that the magic released to the outside world is being dissipated by that sword in some way.

In the meantime, the man's legs had finished regenerating at a tremendous rate. Abnormal regeneration and pain blocking made him a pseudo-immortal, and combined with the ability to cancel out magic power to blocks its opponent's attack. That was a nasty ability.

If we had run into them when I was weaker, we would have been in a pinch. But they're not much of a threat for us now.

Even though my magic and skills have been blocked, my swords skills have not diminished, and I am still in Fran's hands. That's enough for me.

「Haaa!」

「——」

The match is decided in an instant. No matter how good he is at regeneration and even if he feels no pain, if his hands and feet are cut off, there will be an opening. The regeneration process had already begun, but it would take at least ten seconds for the limbs that had been severed from their roots to be restored.

『Yosh, this is our chance!』

「Nn!」

Our target was the pseudo fanatic sword. Fran grabbed the hilt and attempted to pull the sword off the man's back.

「Muuuuu!」

『Hang in there!』

I would have joined in with telekinesis, but it would only be cancelled out. Naturally, I tried dimensional storage too, but I couldn't store the pseudo fanatic sword in this state, as it was treated as the man's equipment.

「Haaaaaaa!」

『Yosh, it came out!』

It had holding into his body quite tightly, but it could not resist Fran's strength. In about three seconds, the pseudo fanatic sword was pulled out of the man's body. I immediately tried to stow it away, and this time I was able to do so without any problem. At last, we got a clue.

「——」

But I couldn't be all that happy. The man whose sword had been pulled out of his back had died shortly after. It was going to be difficult to get any information from the attacker this time.

『Well, that simplifies the story.』

「Nn, cut them down」

When we pull out the pseudo fanatic sword, he will die, and if we leave him alone, he will die from his potential release. Then we can defeat him without thinking about capturing him.

『For the time being lets take down the assailant who broke into the premises』

# Chapter 429: Reppeling the Assailants

「Haaa!」

「——」

『Ugh』

When Fran cut down the assailants along with their pseudo fanatic sword, the magic flowed into me. Cannibalism was triggered.

Of course. Our opponent seems to be another copy of the pseudo fanatic sword. In other words, they're a fellow discarded divine sword.

No, maybe I can even devour on a divine sword...But, I don't think i can destroy those superweapons.

(Master, are you okay?)

『I'm fine』

(Cannibalism, why not turn it off?)

『No.....even if it's only a little, I won't miss the opportunity to be strengthened without resorting to self-evolution. I'm going with this.』

(Understood, let's find our next prey)

『Ou!』

(But, don't push yourself)

『Yea, I know』

Dooon! Dogogoon!

From inside the mansion, I could hear sounds of destruction and people's screams scattering, probably due to magic attack. Considering that all the assailants were being manipulated and didn't raise their voices, it meant that all these screams were coming from the soldiers of the mansion.

「——」

「Shiii!」

「——」

『This guy's strong too!』

All of the assailants were quite skilled. Almost all of them possessed sword saint skill, and they were in a state of potential release. In addition, they are also able to counteract our magic and skills.

In a small space, Fran's speed could not be fully utilized, and it was quite difficult to take them down with a single blow. It would be easier if she could use her magic to snipe from a distance, but it would only be dispelled.

And yet, the other side was freely unleashing their magic on us. It was quite troublesome.

「——Wind cutter」

「Haaa!」

We dodged the wind magic that woman unleashed, and Fran approached her at once. It was a purely a contest of once she got this close. After a few slashes, the assailant was defeated.

『She even have regenerative powers too huh』

「Nn. Annoying」

Because it was Fran, it was only annoying, but it would be hard on the soldiers. They can't say that they're strong because of their training, but they're still just a soldier.

「Guaa!」

『Fran!』

「Nn!」

A bloody soldier was blown through a nearby door. Fran quickly tried to cast a recovery spell on the soldier, but it didn't get invoked.

『It's useless! let's destroy that pseudo fanatic sword first!』

「Understood!」

「——」

I twisted and snatched the sword from the hands of the swordsman who had slashed the soldier, and kicked his jaw with full power. We killed him after smashing his heart and broke his neck. She struck me into his neck to crush the pseudo divine sword. It seems we can do it with just one slash.

(Note: author-san suddenly mentioned it as "pseudo divine sword 疑似神劍" instead of "pseudo fanatic sword 疑似狂信劍", but then he mentioned it again as pseudo fanatic sword.....)

『Yosh, as long as there's no pseudo fanatic sword nearby, we can use magic』

The soldier who was dying recovered in time. She tapped on his cheek to wakes him up.

「Are you okay?」

「Ugh...you are...」

「Healed your wound, does it still hurt?」

「I'm really grateful...What about everyone in the dining room?」

「Leave it to me」

Leaving the soldier, whose wounds had healed but couldn't move because of too much blood loss, Fran entered the room from which he had popped out.

As the soldier had said, it seemed to be a dining hall for servants and soldiers. I saw several maids and soldiers lying down in the large room. I wondered if the carpet was red, or if the grey carpet was stained with blood!

「——」

「Hmm!」

Fran was about to slash the assailant, but the other party took an unexpected action. To her surprise, he thrust his blade at the maid who were unconscious at his feet. Clearly, he was taking her hostage.

I was surprised because I hadn't expected these assailants to behave in such an intelligent manner.

「——」

But even if these guys themselves are incapable of thinking, there is someone controlling them. I don't know how they do it, or to what extent they can give detailed orders, but at least they can make each assailant make detailed and precise action.

「——」

The attacker does nothing, but just keeps the blade on the maid's neck. This would be a waste of time. Maybe he is trying to buy some time until his friends arrive.

『Fran, I'll do it』

「Understood」

Fran nodded lightly at my words and casually pointed my tip at the assailants.

「——」

The assailant braced himself lightly, as if on alert. But to no avail.

『Doryaa!』

We're far apart. We were at opposite ends of the large dining hall. This is the reason why the magic power cancelling effect has not reached us.

Then there is only one thing to do.

I jump out with my telekinetic catapult and shatter the assailant's head and pseudo fanatic sword into pieces. It seems that even with his strengthening, he couldn't react to the telekinetic catapult at this distance!

Even if it can counteract the skill, it doesn't stop the acceleration I got in the first place. That was what i aiming for.

『I don't know what these guys are up to, let's go to Count Bailleys for the time being!』

「Understood」

After treating the maid who was still breathing among those who had collapsed in the room, we decided to leave her to the soldiers and head for the Count's escort on the second floor.

The Count himself was quite skilled, so I thought he would be okay, but the enemy was stronger than I thought. Perhaps even the Count might be in danger.

We close the distance and slashes down the assailants who is aiming for the upstairs, dodging their attacks with her three-dimensional movements using the walls and ceiling as footholds.



As we rushed into Count Bailleys' office, I found him on his knees with wounds all over his body. His dominant arm was bleeding and he was unable to hold his sword.

Moreover, the assailant is about to give chase. It looks like we came just in the nick of time.

『Oh no! We have to help him!』

「Nn! Haaa!」

She approached the closest man among the assailants surrounding the Count from behind and cut him in half from his right shoulder to his left side in a surprise attack.

She also tried to horizontally cleave the torso of the man on his left, turning clockwise on the spot, but it was dodged.

『He can dodge an attack from behind!』

If we wanted to focus on flow, we should have used the momentum from slashing the man on the right and slashed counter clockwise. It would have been the fastest way to attack. However, that would have been a frontal attack for the enemy.

That's why she dared to kill her momentum and slash at him from behind in a clockwise direction. However, the attacker avoided the slash by twisting himself while losing his balance.

Apparently, the five of them here——well, four of them now. It seems that these guys are the most skilled among the assailants. They had Sword Saint Skills on lv 5, moreover, their physical ability was high.

「It's Black Lightning Princess! we are saved!」

「Get back!」

「Tsk, if i had a potion, i can still fight」

The Count mumbled in frustration and stared at the water stain on the carpet at his feet. An empty potion bottle was lying near it.

Apparently, he had sprinkled a potion on his arm in an attempt to heal it, but the magic counteracting effect had turned it into mere water.

『Fran! All of these guys can use magic. It's going to be a tough fight while protecting the Count』

「Nn! end this at once! Sword Deification!」

It's been a long time since we used sword deification, not in training, but in actual combat. I could feel the power dwelling within me. At the same time, my blade creaked from the inside, and I knew that the countdown had begun.

In a long-term battlefield where the number of enemies is unknown, it's hard to use a skill that will shave me down, but I can't say that here.

Besides, even if it could only be used for a short period of time, the sword deification, which simply increased her skill and power in swordsmanship, went well with their ability to counteract magic power.

Fran stepped forward, wielding the atmosphere of a powerful person, making the adjective "overwhelming" seem cute. Despite the power rampaging within her and the presence she wore, her face was calm.

I don't know if these assailants had any feelings of fear, but they must have understood that Fran had turned into something dangerous. They all attacked at once.

「——」

「Shi」

「——」

「Fuu」

「——」

「Haa」

「——」

「Teei」

And then it's over.

I feel so empty. It had been settled so easily. Each of them possessed sword saint skills, had no fear of death, we had defeated an opponent who would not hesitate to use them self as bait for his friends with just four swings of sword. It was said that the sword deification would give me divine attributes, but such a thing wouldn't have been necessary.

Each slash was as powerful as a Sword King technique. But when i thought about it, was it natural? The Sword King Technique is the ultimate slashing technique. The perfect slash that will blow everything, that is what a sword king technique is.

What if she truly mastered the sword and every slash, she made was perfect? Wouldn't even a casual slash be as good as the sword king technique? No, it may be that the sword king technique is a technique required for reproducing such slashes.

The swords god didn't really move Fran's body, but this is already above the realm the swords king technique.

Well, that's why the burden on us is so great. After we released the sword deification, we exhaled deeply and confirmed each other's safety.

(Master, are you okay?)

『I don't really know...Every time I sliced one of them, my endurance went down so much, I didn't feel so good. How about you, Fran?』

(Tired)

The reduced durability doesn't recover at all, and Fran wears out very fast. It was still a difficult skill to use in actual combat.

# **Chapter 430: Raid's Outcome**

## Chapter 430: Raid's Outcome

「Fuh...」

『We won』

Fran, who had released her sword god transformation, recovered the Count who was on one knee. Apparently, even though he was in a daze, he had seen the scene where Fran had defeated the assailants. Rather, he was so surprised by that scene that he lost consciousness for a moment.

Immediately after he recovered, he stared at Fran. The look on his face was not one of questioning, but one of pure admiration and surprise.

「Oi Oi Oi! What the hell was that?」

「Nn?」

「I don't know what happened, but I know something incredible happened!」

Apparently, thanks to the Count's dazed state, our sword god transformation has not been discovered by him.

「As expected of Black Lightning Princes...The one that His Majesty the Beast King favourite. No, more than that now is——」

「Guh!」

Interrupting the Count's words, Fran holds me up.

「There's more!」

There was still signs of battle in the house. The sound of broken windows and magical explosions echoed in the air.

「——」

「Count, go down」

「I can still fight! Damn, are you guys safe!」

10 minutes later

She had repelled the assailants twice and was finally on her way to rescue the others. The aftereffects of the sword god transformation had degraded her fighting strength, but she had managed to win because there was only one opponent and we were two.

「This room!」

「Nn」

We went to Velmeria's room. There was no sign of a battle from inside, but there was also no sign of Velmeria and the others.

「Are you safe!」

「Hey! Frederick」

The room was in a horrible mess. The remains of beds and bookshelves were scattered around, and there were deep scars on the walls and ceiling. Two dead bodies of the assailants were among them. And Frederick was lying on the floor.

His body was bleeding profusely, and he had a sword stuck in his stomach and back. The swords were blocking his way, so he was lying on his side in a slightly distorted position.

『Greater Heal!』

「Hang on there」

It seems that we make it just in time. The recovery spell worked. Fran hurriedly approached Frederick and pulled the sword out of his body at once. Oh, it's just a normal sword. It's not a pseudo fanatic sword.

「Gaaah!」

The intense pain from the sword being pulled out awakens Frederick, but it's hard for him to recover when it's still stuck in him. Sorry, but I can't deny that Fran was a little rough.

We used more recovery magic and succeeded in rescuing Frederick. However, Frederick, who must have lost his strength due to the loss of blood, forced himself to stand up and headed for the window.

「Don't, take a rest」

「Velmeria...! was kidnapped!」

「What! What do you mean?」

「Even though I'm with her...it's inexcusable」

To my surprise, one of the attackers had knocked Velmeria unconscious and escaped through the window. I thought their goal was to kill the Count, but were we wrong? No, they failed to do that, so they switched their goal? At any rate, it seemed that it would be difficult to track them down, since Velmeria had been taken more than ten minutes ago.

『If Urushi returns... No, maybe Urushi would have noticed it in the first place. Let's wait for him』

「...N」

I don't think we can catch up with them even if we recklessly chase them. Besides, there are still enemies left.

「...First let's eliminate the enemy around the premises」

「Your Excellency! But...」

「I will not leave my men to die in vain for the sake of my daughter!」

「Sh\*t! It's just like before...」



Half an Hour after we saved Frederick.

They had caused great damage to the soldiers in the villa, but we managed to defeat the assailants.

There were 25 assailants in total. The Count had more than forty victims, including his servants. There were probably about fifteen injured. Not a single person was unharmed. It seemed that the reason for the increase in damage was that the first magic attack had burned down the soldiers' quarters next to the house.

Colbert is also among the injured. He, too, was on the verge of death, but was able to survive. Had it been a little later, he would have lost his left leg. I'm glad we were able to take care of him in time.

「...It seems I need to train my martial arts further...」

Even Dimitris style martial arts techniques were blocked by the effects of the pseudo fanatic sword, but he defeated three of them by himself, which is amazing. Colbert looks frustrated. Seeing the changed appearance of his colleagues make his feelings even stronger. He gritted his teeth and endured the rage.

「...Who in the world, would do such a thing!...」

「I have many guess, but...」

Marquis Ashtner is the most suspicious one, but there is no evidence. I think we should just punch him in the face, but as long as we tried move our soldiers around the capital, we can't afford to be vague about the evidence. I'm not sure what to make of it, but I'm sure they are planning to revolt.

When Frederick and Colbert examined some of them, they found that they had been given large doses of narcotics, just like Hamuls and Gordon.

The narcotics is said to have the effect of stimulating the mind of the person who ingests it and depriving them of their ability to think, as well as making

it easier for them to be influenced with magic. Therefore, it is said to be very useful for brainwashing using magic.

「This guy...」

Colbert, who was checking the body of the fifth assailants, suddenly tilted his head. Then he stared at the face of the assailants. That's the swordsman that Fran defeated first, isn't it?

「What's wrong?」

「Miss Fran, do you recognize this guy?」

「Nn. defeated him」

「No, not about it...Oh yes! He is an adventurer!」

It seems that he was a rank C adventurer. So, they were manipulating high-ranking adventurers. There were a few other adventurers that Colbert recognized. All of them were rank C or rank B adventurers, as Colbert remembered.

Colbert, too, is tilting his head in front of the mysterious sword that was stuck in the attacker.

「What the hell is this sword...you know it Frederick?」

「Fran, do you still have that thing?」

「Nn」

「It's from the magic sword that attacked the inn. You'll never mistake this unpleasant looking hand cover for anything else」

Frederick explained to Colbert the similarities between the magic sword that seems to have been controlling Gordon with the magic sword that was stuck in the assailants this time.

「So you're saying that this magic sword has its own will and was controlling these guys?」

「That's a possibility.....It's hard to tell because the magic sword I saw at the inn was half destroyed, but I think it was a long sword, and it can freely move itself」

「A sword that can move on its own? But this sword doesn't seem to be moving」

「I guess that means they're not exactly the same thing. Its power feels so much weaker」

As we were talking, there was a sign of Urushi returns to the residence.  
Now we will be able to track down Velmeria.

「Urushi is back」

「Is that so!」

It was Frederick, the one who shout a cheer when he heard those words, not the Count.

# Chapter 431: Signal to Counterattack

「Whimper」

「Urushi, are you okay?」

「wuff...」

Urushi came back with wounds all over his body. He is healing himself with regeneration, but even so, the wounds must have been much deeper than before. It seems that there were assailants outside as well. He tried to chase after Velmeria, but the assailants seemed to have prevented him from doing so.

Urushi's method of fighting is to use a variety of skills to toy with his opponent. When his dark magic and skills were blocked by the pseudo fanatic sword, it seemed that his fighting style was quite limited.

In particular, it becomes difficult to evade and do surprise attack when he can't use shadow diving and shadow crossing. That alone would reduce Urushi's strength by half.

The fact that we were in the middle of the city in broad daylight was also a problem.

If Urushi, her follower, makes a scene, Fran will be charged with a crime. So, I've taught him to not run amok in the town and grow back to his original size...

Because of this, he was forced to go head-to-head with the assailant in his small size, and ended up grinding away at each other until the other party

destroyed itself by using potential release.

「Urushi, can you follow Velmeria's smells?」

「Woof! woof woof!」

Urushi pointed her nose at the attacker's pseudo fanatic sword and complained about something.

『Could it be, that they escaped to the same place as the magic sword?』

「Woof!」

「Marquis Ashtner's mansion?」

「woof!」

It seemed that he had already tracked them.

「We'll be right behind you!」

Fran said this with great enthusiasm, but it was none other than Urushi who stopped her.

「Grrrr! woof woof!」

He bites Fran's sleeve, desperately pleading for something. He was apparently trying to discourage her.

「What's wrong?」

「whimpering!」

Then, Urushi points to the pseudo fanatic sword again.

『Could it be that there was a sign of pseudo fanatic sword in the Marquis' mansion?』

「woof!」

He was sure of it. Moreover, Urushi must have felt that their number was enough to stop Fran. When the Count heard this, he questioned Urushi with a stern face.

「Could it be, that Marquis Ashtner's mansion has a large number of people with these mysterious swords stuck in them?」

「Woof!」

「That is unbelievable...」

But Colbert didn't quite get it.

「What's wrong? If we know where it is, let's crush it right now!」

Colbert had a good point. However, Count Bailleys

「...We don't have enough strength」

「What are you talking about! These assailants are all drugged! Maybe they can't be controlled otherwise. On the contrary, if you leave them alone, even Miss Velmeria!」

「I know that!」

「We are preparing our force to attack Count Olmes' residence!」

「They're just making preparations secretly in several bases. They haven't finished those preparation yet!」

「Then we'll go on our own!」

「It's useless, I can't allow it!」

Count Bailleys may actually feel the same way as Colbert. It was painfully obvious that his words were the exact opposite of what he really felt.

「But why?」

「Don't underestimate the enemy's strength. In light of this raid, I expect more frightening possibilities」

「What do you mean?」

「It is no wonder that the location of our base has been discovered this time. They must have gotten the information from those who were captured. But he's sending that much force to kill me? Depending on how he does it, that's enough force to turn the capital into a sea of fire. And all we get out of it is only one person, Velmeria? Even if he had succeeded in assassinating me, it would only bring the Count's family down by one notch」

I thought that the inspection scheduled for this evening could be postponed, but the Count has many excellent people under his command. He said that the mission would not be cancelled just because the Lord was dead.

「Rather, they will be motivated to avenge me. Some of the commanders are knighthood holders, so there's no problem in transferring command」

Besides, even if the inspection was prolonged in this way, the suspicion of the Ashtner Marquis would only increase. In the not too distant future, a thorough investigation will be led by the royal family.

「It was too much of a force to be used up just to buy some time...」

「I see. But maybe that's how cornered they are, you know?」

「That's true, but there's another possibility.」

「What is it?」

「It's possible that he didn't mind for such force being used up」

He must have immediately understood the meaning of Count Bailleys' words. Both Colbert and Frederick looked at him in surprise.

「In other words, they have a lot more stronger force in their mansion?」

「Yeah. The chance is high. The signs that the Black Lightning Princess's followers have sensed must be more than we can imagine.」

「Damn...that's worrisome!」

Colbert mutters in frustration. But it is so. We don't know how many of these pseudo fanatic swords there are. If they can mass produce it, it would not be surprising if there were dozens of them.

「...They are skilled swordsman who has the ability to cancel out magic and is not afraid of death. This means that you'll be dealing with a legion made up of these mad swordsmen」

Our force here is Fran, Colbert, Frederick, the Count, and a few surviving soldiers. At most, there would be a few dozen more knights.

However, the ability of the pseudo fanatic sword is too troublesome. It cancels out skills and magic, and the other side can use it as they please. No matter how you look at it, it's reckless.

There was also a high possibility that the pseudo fanatic sword had something to do with the fact that so many secret agents had been captured. Could their skills have been sealed off without their knowledge, blocking their ability to hide or block their presence? With that in mind, there was a possibility that it would be difficult to rescue her by sneaking in.

「Damn it. What the hell is that sword!」

「It's a pseudo fanatic sword」

「Black Lightning Princess! Do you know something?」

「Appraised it, but, only got its name」

「SO you can use appraisal huh...Pseudo—what was it?」

「Pseudo fanatic sword」

「Are you saying that it was the fanatic sword, but only a fake?」



「Nn. Fanatics Sword is a divine sword that was destroyed a long time ago. The Swords of Blind Devotion. Fanatics」

We didn't know much about it, but we pretended that we had heard about it from an acquaintance and told everyone about the ability that Alistair had taught us and I could see the astonished expressions on their faces.

However, he seemed to shudder more at the fact that it could be a dead copy of the divine sword than at its ability.

「Pseudo Divine Sword, you said...Ashtner has reached this far...」

「Oioioi. Isn't this sound bad」

「What if, he has a real divine sword with him?」

A divine sword is a super weapon mentioned in mythology. And now, it might be in the hands of our enemy. I can understand their tragic expressions.

I'm glad they trusted Fran, and didn't say that her word was a lie, but you've lowered their fighting spirit.

「From what I've heard, the Fanatics must have been destroyed」

「So, is it possible that they only got Fanatics manufacturing method?...」

「However, by just having a lot of those sword is worrisome!」

Just after Colbert shouted out in frustration. There was a sign that someone was coming into the house. However, it was not hostile. In the first place, he hadn't even tried to eliminate his presence.

「E-excuse me! I-is there anyone!」

「Th-this is bad...」

「Who is it!」

Count Bailleys shouted out who and what he was, and the men began to identify their affiliation. It was a patrol soldier. The one leading them was a knight. Come to think of it, after making so much noise in the noble town, they came too late.

However, according to their story, the attack was not limited to this residence only. This house and several other houses and homes were attacked at the same time, causing a lot of damage. They said that nearby station was also attacked.

It seems that the commander who was in charge of the soldiers in this area had died, so the handover didn't go well, and the new commander had finally dispatched the soldiers.

Count Bailleys told him about the attack and asked him to send personnel to treat the injured and so on.

As the soldiers rush out, they looked grim. I thought they were worried about the magnitude of the situation, having heard that other places had also been attacked, but apparently that wasn't the only reason.

「.....It seems that those who had been secretly preparing to investigate Count Olmes' villa have been attacked」

To my surprise, the mansions and private houses that were attacked were the hiding places prepared by Count Bailleys. It must mean that not only the information about this mansion, but all the information had been leaked.

「.....We need to assess the damage. But we're definitely short handed」

Frederick questioned in the dark tone to Count Bailleys.

「So you're saying you're going to sit tight until we have enough strength?」

「I didn't say that. I can't leave a rebel with that much power unchecked. If they start a rebellion in the capital, our prestige will be greatly damaged.

No, it can already be called a rebellion. We have to prevent the Marquis from running amok any further. Even if we have to be a little reckless」

Count Bailleys then gave a flurry of instructions to his surviving subordinates.

「I'm heading to the royal castle. This is very confusing. I'll have to explain what's going on. I'm sure we can get help from the other Knights. Frederick, you contact the inspection team of the Olmes villa! Tell them to rescue the survivors and give those who can fight two hours to finish their preparations! Tell them we'll avenge their friends. That should inspire them!」

「Yes, sir」

「After that, I'll put you in charge of the reconnaissance unit. Infiltrate in time for the battle on the surface. I'll authorize operation into the Marquis Ashtner's residence as well as Count Olmes'」

「Ha!」

「The fact that he went to the trouble of kidnapping Velmeria means that he doesn't intend to kill her right away. For now, just bear with me」

「...Yes」

When he had finished giving all the instructions, he finally turned to Fran and Colbert.

「Colbert, Black Lightning Princess. I need you both to connect me to the Adventurers' Guild」

「A connection?」

「Yes, I would like you to ask Eliante to send a force. Of course, I'm not trying to requisition you. I will hire them properly」

「I see. So, you're saying we should supplement our strength with adventurers!」

「Yeah. It can be any adventurer who is willing to help. No upper limit. I'll double the asking price. But make sure you explain to them that this is a dangerous mission. I don't want to scare them off on the way」

Double the market price. That's a lot of money. Colbert is also impressed. If we use adventurers, there is a risk that information will leak out, but for now, I guess they are prioritizing replenishing their forces first.

「No upper limit? What if we have to hire hundreds of people?」

「We have plenty of work to do, and the more forces we have, the better off we are. It's a small price to pay to have a better chance of rescuing my daughter safely」

「Heh. I see」

「The operation starts in three hours. I'll leave all the negotiating to you」

「All right, sir. We'll go to the guild!」

「Nn!」

「So far we've been completely fallen behind, but now it's our turn to fight back!」

# Chapter 432: Legacy Inheritance

Fran and the others were asked by Count Bailleys to set foot into the Adventurers' Guild, they seem to be busy today. There were several parties lined up in the lanes for high-ranked adventurers.

The town was in an uproar because of the commotion in the noble district, but the adventurers were as usual. I wondered if they had decided that it was none of their business.

In fact, some commoners were just talking anxiously in the traffic.

Fran was about to rush to the reception desk at once, but Colbert stopped her.

「It will take even more time. Besides, if we make a scene here, the adventurers will feel bad about us. We'll just line up like normal」

「...Understood」

While we were lined up in the lane, Colbert made small talk with Fran, perhaps to calm her down.

「What did you do after the fighting tournament, Miss Fran?」

「Nn? went to the Beast Kingdom on the continent of Krome」

「Hou? A request for a ship's escort? I've had a few of those myself, you know?」

He said that when he goes there on a ship escort request, he never goes outside the port town and comes back. So, he had been there a few times, but he is not very familiar with it.

「That's why i don't know the details」

「I went to a black cat kin village there」

「Then, did you also went to the royal capital?」

「Nn」

「Heh! How as it? Did you find any good food or interesting places?」

「There's a lot」

Fran talked to a curious Colbert about the food and scenery of the beast country. There are many stories that can't be told, but fortunately, Colbert's interest is focused on the climate.

Colbert, who enjoys cooking, was particularly interested in the cuisine of the Beast Country. When I gave him some recipes through Fran, he was very happy.

He was also impressed by what has we seen of the beast country from the back of Urushi.

「That sounds interesting. I want to go to the Beast Country too. Delicious food, and scenery I've never seen before. That's the best part of traveling, right?」

「Nn!」

These two are actually get along. It has been so since we first met in Barbra. It seems that they share the same wavelength, or perhaps they are of similar mental age, or perhaps they are moved by similar things.

After Fran finished talking about the beast country, she now asked Colbert a question. Actually, there's something I've been wondering about too. But I'm not sure if I should ask Colbert. It's a delicate matter.

But Fran put the question to him easily.

「Was Colbert excommunicated?」

「Guh...」

Yeah, I was actually kind of expecting Fran to ask this question without reading the air.

Colbert used to be a member of a martial arts school called Dimitris style. I don't know the details, but it is said that there is a test to receive initiation approval in the Dimitris style.

The idea is to become a rank A adventurer while your powers are sealed by a special magical device. I think it's going to be insanely difficult. I mean, he is going to get the same level of power as a rank A adventurer with his abilities sealed. If he really put his mind to it, he'll be a Rank S class.

I'm not sure every one of them will achieve it.

The seal can be lifted by the person himself in case of emergency. Originally, this was only allowed in emergencies, such as helping others or when one's life was in imminent danger, and if you lifted the seal for personal gain, you would be excommunicated.

However, Colbert broke the seal at the martial arts tournament. In order to win against Fran. It was a complete selfish use.

If the rumours are true, it would be strange if he hadn't been excommunicated.....

「How was it?」

「.....I」

「Nn?」

「I was excommunicated!」

Oh, so he was seriously excommunicated? Colbert's expression, which had been so happy until now, changed drastically, and his shoulders slumped

with a gloomy expression. Could this guy be crying?

「Ugh. Well, I was prepared for that. I knew I'd be excommunicated...」

「What happens when you are excommunicated?」

「What do you mean? Well, I'm excommunicated, so I can't use Dimitris style martial arts anymore」

「? What does that mean?」

Being excommunicated does not mean that the training he have done so far will be gone. His skills should remain, and if he practices on his own, it will be possible to raise Dimitris style martial arts level.

No, I can't actually see the Dimitrius style martial art when I appraised him, but isn't it just because it's in a sealed state?

Or did he made up his mind to seal his martial arts skills with magic tools in order to be righteous in front of his master, Dimitris?

Or maybe there's some kind of secret that can only be passed on by Dimitris himself? No, I don't think it mean that it can't be used.

「All martial arts school that are recognized by God, including the Dimitris style school, has special skills that are inherited only by the founder and his legitimate successors. The name of this skill is 『Legacy Inheritance』 (1). It is a skill that can only be used by the head of the school can use in this world 」

「Legacy Inheritance? What are the effects?」

「The skill has only one effect. The only effect of the skill is to erase the martial arts and martial arts skills of those who belong to that school. In case of Dimitris's, it will be 『Legacy Inheritance?Dimitris Style』 , it will have the effect of erasing the Demetrius style from the target's possession」

「Is that what they used on Colbert?」



「It's natural, because I was excommunicated」

As expected of a different world. If you are excommunicated, the skill itself will be erased.

「So Colbert is weaker now?」

「Well, you're right. No, the seal status has been lifted, so the status has increased, but the skills...」

It seemed that the reason he hadn't used the Dimitris style during the attack had nothing to do with the magic cancelling effect, but simply because he had lost his skills.

「I can't bring myself to join another school, so I'll just keep working on my martial arts skills and martial arts technique」

「Good luck」

「Ou!」

At Fran's encouragement, Colbert smiles back with a good face.

As a matter of fact, I was thinking a little bit about the possibility of him to held a grudge. There was no doubt that the fight with Fran was part of the reason. I guess its human psychology that makes us want to complain.

However, Colbert does not seem to have any hard feelings for Fran. Colbert is a good guy, isn't he? Perhaps the reason why Fran is so fond of him is because she is sensitive to that.

「Well, I'll be strong enough to beat miss Fran some day」

「Nn. Looking forward for it」

「Heheh, you can count on me」

# Chapter 433: Swamp of Works

We spent five minutes waiting in line at the Adventurer's Guild counter. It was finally Fran and Colbert's turn.

[Oh, Black Lightning Princess and Iron Claw, what's up?]

[I have something to do with Guild Master, is she available? It's an urgent matter]

[well, she's here... but I don't know if she can't meet you now]

Stellia looks at Fran with indescribable eyes. What's wrong?

[Well she's in the office. Why don't you go there by yourself? You already know where it is, don't you?]

[Can we go without permission?]

[Even if I tried to call her myself, she'd probably reject me in her current state. Is your business so important?]

[Nn]

[If that's the case, you'd better take the matter up with her directly. Just don't irritate her too much, because there's a lot at stake here]

IS she in a pinch? Oh, are you mean she's busy managing the auctions?]

Idiot! idiot Iron claw! It's not that simple! Don't do anything to make her angry, okay? You'll get us all in trouble too!]

[O-o okay, okay]

It seems that Eliante has been overwhelmed with work. The last time we came here, she

seemed to be overwhelmed with paperwork, but I guess it's getting worse.

At Stellia's request, we were allowed to enter Guild Master's office. There, I found Eliante buried under a pile of papers, moaning.

Her eyes look dead. Seeing Eliante like that reminded me of the time when I was still an office worker on Earth. She has the same face as I did that day when I missed the last train of the day and stayed up all night making documents for the end of the fiscal year, only to find out that the documents I had used as a basis were from last year and I was in despair.

[Uh- Who...?]

[Gu-guild Master? Are you okay?]

[Colbert? What do you want? As you can see I don't have time for idle chat, right?]

[Well, I'm here to report something.....He-hey miss Fran, you want to talk to Guild Master too, right?]

Oh, this guy! He got spooked by Eliante's presence and threw her to Fran!

[Fran...?]

Eliantel's eyes turned to Fran. Immediately after that, her expression changed drastically. Her eyes snapped open and he stood up vigorously on the spot.

[Fran! Fran you...! you said I can count on you!]

She slammed her hand on the desk and shouted. Her bloodshot eyes were scary.

[Nn?]

[I asked you not to make a scene like that!]

Oh no. This time, she broke down crying on the spot. Her emotions seem unstable now!

No, I know exactly how she feel. But she soon will realize that crying won't lessen her

works. Well, Eliante doesn't seem to have reached that point yet.

[Not making a scene]

[Yeah, we didn't making any trouble ourselves]

We was involved in the incident, though. Maybe Eliante has information that Fran was at the scene.

[The first is the underpass! There was something going on in the underpass! There were a lot of people hurt, it was a big mess!]

[Nn. Attacked in the underpass]

[I knew it! Then what about the inn? What about the incident in the inn you were supposed to stay in burned in flames? What about it?]

[That too, I got attacked, just like the one in the underpass]

[Aah! I knew it, you are related in it!]

It's related, but Fran is the victim. It's not like she willingly caused the trouble,

though.

[By any chance, are you related with the incident in a park in the noble's district too? The plants are dying, and there's a commotion about this too!]

[Nn. Got attacked too]

[I knew it! Why are they attacking you! Because of you, my work is doubled! Stacked with

that 3 cases too!]

That's unreasonable. I don't know why we are being attacked too. Well, I don't think the current Eliante is capable of making a sane decision right now, and I think she's just directing her anger indiscriminately. People who are stuck in the swamp of work, usually don't have any normal thinking ability left.

[The number of urgent requests is doubling, we're getting a lot of protests against adventurers, and why should we be the one to be offended about something that has nothing to do with the Adventurers Guild? If its a problem about the royal capital, complain to the Knights!]

Eliante shouts while half-crying.

[So, what on earth does the walking troublemaker, Black Lightning Princess want?]

[We were attacked in the noble's district]

[A-Again! another one! Whyy~!]

Ah, She is already started crying completely. She must have imagined a future with even more work. Colbert also felt that we couldn't go on like this, so he opened his mouth again.

[Ah, you know. There's been quite a lot of damage there. I'd like to hire some adventurers to replenish our forces, if you don't mind?]

[Was there that big of a battle happen?]

[Aaah, actually——]

Colbert gave a brief explanation of what had happened. Then Eliante's expression tightened. As expected, she was indeed the guild master, even if she was in a temper.

[In other words, Count Bailleys' villa was attacked by that idiot Ashtner. So, in order to fight back at them, you're going to use the investigation of Count Olmes' villa as an excuse to beat up that idiot Ashtner as well?]

[Well, yeah. That's what my Lords are after. Ostensibly, it's an on-site investigation into Count Olmes' residence. However, it will surely become a battle with

Marquis Ashtner]

[And while we're at it, we'll also rescue Master Gallus and Count Bailleys' daughter...]

[I'm sure you have your own feelings about Marquis Ashtner as well. He thinks adventurers are nothing more than disposable tools. I once had to pay them a commission for a job that He didn't want to pay]

[Of course! How many adventurers do you think have suffered because of them... Serdio Rezepts too has ruined our reputation... So we've finally reached the end of that fucking Marquis huh?]

Eliante show a dark smile on her face. She must be imagining for Marquis Ashtner being captured.

[A-ah, So what do you say? I'd like to make a secret request to the adventurers]

[Hmm. That's fine, but how many people would you take? Is it fine to set up something against a marquis family? And if we can't gather them openly, you'll just have to talk to the high rankers in secret]

[I know. That's why the request reward is high. And also——Miss Fran]

Under Colbert's gaze, Fran takes out the bodies of the swordsmen who attacked the Count's mansion, who were thought to be adventurers. Seeing this, Eliante's reaction was swift.

[That is! That's our missing adventurers!]

[He was a part of the assailants]

[It seems that the Marquis Ashtner have the tools to brainwash and manipulate people. In addition to these guys, some of Count Bailleys' men also became a part of the assailants too.]

[...Would you like to hear more about it? About this sword and the details of our opponent...]

It seems that Eliante has decided to listen to us. She had already agreed with Colbert to hand over the adventurer's body here.

The guilds would certainly cooperate if they knew that the adventurers under their command were being captured and manipulated. In some cases, some of their higher-ups might even accept the request for the purpose of revenge.

After listening to Colbert's story, Eliante has an angry look on her face.

[Fine with me... I'll let that Ashtner know who he sold the fight to! By when should I gather the adventurers?]

[In two hours, I will pick them up here]

[All right, then. I'll gather our forces before then. Count Bailleys is famous for his fondness for adventurers, and if I mention his name, I'm sure we'll attract a certain number of people]

[I'll be counting on you]

[Well, you can count on me]

[It's my pleasure]

Fran and Colbert shook hands with Eliante and were about to leave the room. However, Eliante called out to them.

[Wait a minute, you need a fighting force, right? I have an idea]

# Chapter 434: The Top Brass

Eliante said that she had an idea for more forces. When Colbert urged him to go on, Eliante called her men and told them to bring someone with them.

In less than five minutes, the guild member returned with a person. He got a short stature.

[Hey hey, did you called for me. What can I do for you?]

[Fran, Colbert. This man is Faize. He's an adventurer and a member of the Thieves' Guild.]

[What?]

Colbert stares at Faize with a surprised look in his eyes. Faize's eyes widened too as his identity was easily exposed.

[...Eliante-sama, if you expose me so easily, you may got various problems aren't Cha?]

[SO noisy, 11m in a hurry right now, Shut up]

It was a little better, but Eliante's bad mood was still there. A murderous glare hit him, and Faize sighed and fell silent. Looks like he is having a hard time.

As Eliante explained, Faize seems to be a watchdog for the adventurer's guild's watcher and link to the bandit's guild.

Even though there is an unspoken rule not to openly get involved with each other, it is impossible to have no relations at all when they are active in the capital.



So, it seems that there are several personnel who belong to both guilds, like Faize, and at least one of them is stationed at the guild. It seems that only the adventurer's guild's top brass knows who they are, though.

[It's urgent. Tell the top brass to gather. Tell them that there may be a disturbance in the royal capital. Anyway, they might already have a general idea of what's going on, so they'll know]

[.....Understood. Are they the ones who are going to bring us together?]

[That kid there, she is Fran the Black Lightning Princess, You've heard of her, right?]

[Hou? She is.....I understand. If it's her, the top brass won't say no.]

What does he mean? Does it mean that Fran's name is known to the Thieves' Guild? We've also met Kalk, maybe that's how they got the message.

[Then, let's make the arrangements right away]

He could tell from Eliantels attitude that it really was an emergency. Faize bowed and swiftly left the room.

[Guild master, can we trust the Thieves' Guild]

[I don't trust them. But I'm sure they can help us this time. Royal capital is a place they can't afford to lose]

Eliante nodded with certainty in her voice. Well, if she's like that, I guess she's sure.

[But the way you explained it earlier, it sounded as if Miss Fran was the only one going to the Thieves' Guild]

[Because I can't leave this place.]

[No, you have me here, right?]

[Colbert. I have a few places I'd like you to visit. Hopefully we can add some more strength to our forces]

[What?]

[The mercenary group "Tentacles and Shells". Do you know them? It's a small, elite group of mercenaries made up of half-insect kin]

[No, I don't know. But a mercenary in the royal capital? That's unusual]

Apparently, most of the ordinary mercenary groups are located near the borders as they cross the battlefield. This is probably because most of the battles take place along the border.

That's why it's very rare to find the main unit in an inland area like the royal capital, a place that is not involved in warfare. Normally, there are only a few liaison officers and logistical support personnel at the base.

[An acquaintance of mine leads that group, so if you have a letter of introduction, you should be able to at least meet the executives. The rest is up to you to negotiate. They have a rule about not taking children into battle, so Colbert should be better at negotiating than Fran]

[Thank you for that! In other words, I'll take the mercenaries, and the young lady will take the thieves' guild]

[Yeah]

As long as Eliante is busy gathering adventurers, it can't be helped..... She want Fran to negotiate with the Thieves' guild? Isn't it impossible for her. Is this really the right time to split up again?

After that we moved ahead of the others to the first floor of the guild. Colbert had Eliante to write a letter of introduction for him.

"Fran, don't let your guard down, okay? You're dealing with the Thieves' Guild."

(Of course)

However, whether or not they would be able to send out a force, the Thieves' Guild would probably have people infiltrating various laces to gather information, and there was a possibility that they would have some useful information. There was a loud commotion going on, and if they were not careful, there was a possibility that both the Marquis and Count families had ears somewhere.

"Urushi, stay hidden."

(Woof!)

After that, Faize come back in about five minutes.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. This way, please.]

[Nn]

He led Fran to a building that looked familiar. To my surprise, it was the same tavern where I had brought my request to Kalk. But instead of going through the front entrance, we went in through the back door, which was hidden from the street.

[We'll use the back door]

[Okay]

The watchmen looked at Fran, but said nothing in particular. It was probably because she was Faizels guest. After a quick word with the man, Faize and us walked further into the room and were ushered into a small private room. However, there was no one in the room.

[Here?]

[Wait a minute]

I wondered what he was going to do, but then he pulled the string by the entrance. To my surprise, the wall opened to the left and right, revealing a hidden staircase.

[Wow-]

Fran's eyes light up at this. Wow, a hidden passage is a roman, right?

Faize led the way down the stairs to a rather large basement, with an ornate round table in the middle of the room, big enough for about ten people.

There were three men and a woman sitting there. They were not necessarily our allies yet, so I felt free to appraise them. Although each of them had low combat power, they had an interesting skill set.

The scarred, bald-headed man sitting in the middle was a typical bandit in appearance and skills. He had a skill set similar to that of a scout adventurer. He also had the charisma and command abilities to be the leader of the bandits. However, the moment he saw Fran, he grabbed his cheeks pull into a big smile.

The handsome man in his early thirties sitting to his right was a complete marriage fraudster. He had acting skills and skills that might be useful for lying and threatening. He also has the skill of attracting the opposite sex and the title of woman killer. He looks a little like that Serdiols bastard. In addition, he seems to be able to use some magic.

The bewitching beauty on the left seemed to be the head of the prostitutes. In addition to her skills for cajoling men, she had a lot of skills related to poisons. A prostitute who knows a lot about poison. She's scary!

[Well then, I'll leave her with you]

[Ou. Good work]

Faize bowed to the three of them and left the room.

[Oh, I'm Fist]

[I am Honest]

[I'm pink]

They all were using fake names. No, they were criminals, so that was to be expected. The man in the middle was Fist. The con man is Honest. The prostitute is Pink.

Fist greeted us in a shaky voice, sweating profusely. He must have sensed Fran's ability and was terrified. I could see his eyes checking the walls and floor.

At first glance, it looks like there are no guards, but there are more than ten people around this room. There are hidden doors all over the place, and they must have a guard hiding in one of it.

It seems that Fist thought about how he could use the guards to get rid of Fran. Then he realized that it was useless. On the contrary, he seemed to have regained his composure.

[Adventurer, Fran]

[O, ou. Actually, we have some business with you. In fact, I was going to contact you even if this hadn't happened. Well, please have a seat]

# **Chapter 435: The Thieves' Guild and Gallus**

## Chapter 435: The Thieves' Guild and Gallus

Did the Thieves' Guild have their eyes on Fran from the start?

「What do you mean?」

「Please wait, let's have a little talk, shall we?」

「Don't have time for idle chitchat」

「So, it's fine if it's not wasting your time, right? Oi, Honest」

「Huh? Me, out of the blue?」

Honest's eyes widen lightly when Fist asks him to talk. Apparently, he was surprised. And he is suspicious.

「I can't handle this, it's too much for me」

「Well, if you think she's that strong?」

「.....Is it okay? Don't ever antagonize her. Unless you want to die. It's the first time for my danger sense has responded so much since I faced the Hundred Swords」 (1)

I see. Normally, the strong Fist would have threatened the other party, and the con man Honest would have taken advantage of the situation. However, it seems that Fist instantly realized Fran's strength and gave up trying to intimidate her with force.

「A-ah, miss, I'll have some tea prepared for you for now, so please have a seat」

「Don't need it, don't have much time」

「No no, A good negotiation is never complete without a good cup of tea.」

「I said, i have no time to waste」

「Ha-, haha. Is that so. No, I would really like to get close to someone as beautiful and capable as you」

Honest smiles as he brushes his hair lightly. He is emitting a glitter beam. If I were on Earth, He could have been the number one host of a show. But Fran's expression didn't show any change.

「Don't you heard what I said?」

Perhaps Honest is their trump card against women. It's true that a smile from this handsome man would make most women swoon, and the negotiations would go in the Thieves Guild's favour.

But it was a shame. My Fran is not interested in handsome men! In the first place, there is no way that roundabout negotiations will work. We are in a hurry, especially now. The fact that the other party is not an ally is also a big factor. The more vigilant we are, the more severe their response is likely to be.

I guess this is where the doppelganger comes in. If she said that I came in through transfer magic, it will be a good excuse for my sudden appearance.

「Wa- please wait!」

The moment Honest called out to us, an uncomfortable feeling hit me as if I had static electricity in my brain. I remembered this. It's exactly the same as when Solas the thief we caught in Ulmut's dungeon used his forced affinity on us.

Maybe he used the attract opposite sex skill. (2) It's a skill that attracts the attention of the opposite sex.

Fran can't notice it before, but now that she had become more skilled, she could feel it clearly. Her eyes narrowed.

She kicks the round table with a thump and flies off, landing right in front of Honest, who is still in a lightly raised position to stop Fran. The round



table creaked as she dared, perhaps to scare Honest.

And then she sticks me directly at his neck. Honest was rendered speechless by the cold eyes looking down at him from above. It was the two people on either side of him who spoke up instead.

「St-stop it young lady! What the hell is wrong with you!」

「Ye-yeah, that's right! You're suddenly being aggressive!」

「...Is it appropriate to use your skills during negotiations?」

「!」

Perhaps he didn't think that his use of the skill would be discovered, but Honest's face turned pale. However, Honest showed a strange pride here. I think it's best to apologize quietly, but for a guy like them, they can't afford to be licked at the negotiation table.

「How dare you draw your sword here! You'll regret it!」

「...Hou?」

Ah, this guy has done it. Even though Fist told him not to antagonize her, she was still somewhat underestimated because of Fran's appearance. Or maybe he felt ridiculed for being shunned by the young Fran, or maybe he was frustrated that his appearance didn't pass through at all.

In an attempt to regain control of the conversation, He uttered a hostile line.

Immediately after that, Fran glared at Honest. She hadn't used her skills to intimidate him yet. But she was already on the verge of recognizing this guy as enemies. Depending on what he said next, he would lose his head.

I could sense that the guards behind the wall were also getting nervous. They may not be able to sense Fran's strength through the wall, but they must have heard Fist's words and understood that the other party was overwhelmingly strong. Even so, if they ordered to fight, they have to attack Fran. It's the sorrow of a lackey.

I think this is bad. The negotiations are about to be a complete fail. No, I wasn't even in the negotiations. Maybe I should have come out from the beginning.

「Calm down!」

「Bubbeh——?」

What a surprise, Fist punched Honest in the face from the side to shut him up. Honest was blown up in a cone-shaped heap and crashed into the wall and become immobile. His chest is rising and falling, so he's probably not dead, but his commercial face(3) is in pretty bad shape.

Fist went straight down on his hands and knees and apologized desperately. Now all he had to do was lower his head and he would be in a perfect dogeza position.

「P-please wait! That was his bad! It was just his usual bad habit came out! We never think to be hostile with you! I'm sorry! So, please take a seat!」

Fist and Honest seemed to be of equal rank, but is that okay? Pink also seemed surprised by the sudden situation.

「Wha-what are you doing Fist? You don't want to get in trouble with Honest's group later, right?」

「Shut up! It's better than getting us all killed in here! I knew it when I saw her. The rumours are true!」

I guess He decided that it was better to have trouble with Honest later on than to have Fran go on a rampage. But still, killing everyone is.....I don't know what kind of rumours you've heard, but he seemed to be quite afraid of Fran.

「This is why, I was against making a pimp who has no ability other than his skill to run things as a top brass! Aaah! Damn it!」

「.....I didn't think you'd be that distraught...Haah. It's no use. The men are useless, so I'll do the talking. Just a little more patience, okay?」

Pink smiled and spoke to her, even though she must have known from Fist's attitude that Fran was dangerous. Fran, too, must have felt a pent-up when she saw Honest's devastation. I nodded my head.

「...Understood」

「I appreciate it」

Pink sits down in her chair again. Fran gets down from the round table, but remains standing. Pink is supposed to be in complete control of Fran, but she doesn't show any fear. I'm pretty sure it's this Pink who has the most grit out of all the top brass.

「Well then, let me be frank with you. Master Gallus is no longer at Count Olmes' residence.」

「! What do you mean?」

「Fufu, You're finally interested. Well, Master Gallus and us have a bit of a history」

She lightly explains why Pink has connected Fran to Gallus and has given her this information.

Apparently, the Thieves' Guild originally owed Gallus a debt of gratitude.

「A long time ago, a summoning magic tool brought to the royal capital by a rebel nearly went out of control. At that time, a large number of magical beasts with a threat level of D were almost unleashed in the capital」

Apparently, it was Gallus who was present at the scene and stopped the summoning by destroying the magic tools.

「We are doubted as the one who has summoned the magical beast in the royal capital, we wouldn't be able to say the opposite. The whole organization would have been crushed」

Because of this, the Thieves' Guild was greatly indebted to Gallus. And when they found out that Gallus was confined by Marquis Ashtner, they

tried to contact him.

「Someone from the Thieves' Guild is with the Marquis?」

Even the elite of Count Bailleys was captured? However, it's the Thieves' Guild. It seems that they already have their hand on them from long ago.

「Our ears and eyes are everywhere, and they don't know that they were working for the Thieves Guild. They diligently work like usual and occasionally sell information for a little extra money. That's all. So even if they are crushed, they won't be able to reach us」

「I see」

「And with their help, it's easy to sneak in. No, we don't need their guide, just a little bit of diligence in my rounds would be enough」

This is how the Thieves' Guild came into contact with Gallus and asked him to sell the sword scabbard he had secretly made while being confined at multiple auctions.

「We have a debt, so I couldn't refuse. In addition to the scabbard, I got a few other well-made weapons from him as well」

What a surprise, the item labelled as Master's scabbard was apparently sold in several auctions. They were selling them in multiple auctions to make sure everything was in order. Well, if someone bought it and didn't know anything about it, they wouldn't have noticed the code right away. And even if they did, they wouldn't know what it meant.

I thought he could use someone from the Thieves Guild to give Fran his message, but then he wouldn't know if she can be trusted or not. That's why he took such a roundabout way.

And it seems that Fran was the only one who actively bid on that scabbard. The Thieves' Guild must have been monitoring all the scabbards closely.

I wonder how he could make so many scabbards while being confined? I thought so, but apparently Gallus was given a workshop of his own to keep

his arms from becoming dull, and he could make armor as he pleased.

「So Gallus is safe?」

「I'm not so sure about that. According to the reports from the personnel who have been in regular contact with Master Gallus, it seems that a small amount of magic drugs has been mixed into his food, and recently it has started to affect him a little. It's hard to say that he's safe, because sometimes he can't even speak」

「...I see」

「I also heard that sometimes they make him hold a strange magical sword that was broke from its middle. Then, regardless of his will, his body would move and he would be forced to work as a blacksmith. To be honest, I thought he was hallucinating because of the magic potion. I did some research on that magic sword, but I couldn't find out what it was」

He is probably using a magic drug to make him susceptible to mental control and is manipulating him with that half-broken magic sword. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the broken sword is most likely the Sword of Blind Devotion, Fanatics, but it's not confirmed yet.

However, when skill and knowledge are required, as in the case of Gallus, the amount of magic drugs administered must be adjusted to preserve his consciousness and reasoning. A craftsman's skill is not just limited to his technique.

「And just the other day, I heard that he was transferred to a certain place」

「A certain place?」

「I think he's in the basement of the former Viscount Alsand's mansion, which is now uninhabited, but I'm not sure」

「Viscount Alsand?」

『He's the foolish noble, the owner of Principal of Falsehood』 (4)

I remember a guy like that. His father Count Olmes' mansion is being used by Marquis Ashtner. It wouldn't be surprising if Viscount Alsand's mansion is also being used.

「So what does it mean?」

「First of all, we have confirmed that Master Gallus has been taken out of the room where he has been under house arrest. Marquis Ashtner's residence, Count Ormes' residence, and Count Ormes' villa. The ears of the Thieves' Guild have entered there, but no sign of Master Gallus has been confirmed」

「Nn」

「Which means there's a good chance he's been moved to somewhere else」

「Is that the underground?」

「Oh. we've confirmed there's a large space and a large amount of what appears to be human presence」

「Enemy troops?」

「Maybe」

It might be a base for making pseudo fanatic swords. If so, there would be a significant number of forces there.

「But they don't know how to get into that underground space. No matter how hard I search, I can't find a way in or out of that underground space」

Are they using teleport magic to go in and out, or is there a hidden passage that is well concealed?

「How did you find out that such a place existed?」

「Fufu, A rat can go anywhere」

As expected of the Thieves' Guild. They even have spies in such a secret base!

「What's the exact number of troops?」

「I'm sorry about that. Because rats can't count」

It seems about the rats mentioned earlier was not a metaphorical expression, but really meant that they were using rats. It seems that no matter how secret the underground space is, there are air holes that rats can enter.

「But if we pieced together the information, we could make a guess. Probably no more than a hundred」

Note:

(1) 百剣 Hyaku ken

(2) 異性誘引 Isei Yuuin

(3) He is so handsome that makes his face was valuable.

(4) 虚言の理 kyogen no ri, principle of falsehood, reference: RNF-TSKD 365.1

# Chapter 436: Military Strength

「But if we pieced together the information, we could make a guess. Probably no more than a hundred」

「How do you know?」

「That is——」

The Thieves' Guild has apparently identified several mercenary groups that were hired by Marquis Ashtner in the last few years and are supposed to have been wiped out.

「It's not often that a mercenary group is wiped out. This country hasn't had a major war in years. So where are all the mercenaries that were wiped out?」

Until now, He was suspected with rituals involving human sacrifice and the like. However, today's commotion in the noble district brought to light the fact that a corps was controlled by a pseudo fanatic sword. Moreover, it seems that the members of the mercenary corps who were treated as annihilated were mixed among the brainwashed soldiers who attacked the soldiers' camp and destroyed themselves.

I'm sure of it. The Thieves' Guild is aware that there are more than 80 people in their ranks. If we add the missing adventurers to that number, we can expect about a hundred people.

「Be careful. It's going to be pretty hard to rescue Master Gallus; you know?」

「Why would you give me that information?」



The Thieves Guild is not on the side of justice, and I don't understand why they would go out of their way to support Fran and Count Baileys. I'm not saying this was a bad thing, but isn't there an option to join forces with Marquis Ashtner and suck the sweet juice out of it?

「Well, we can't afford to lose this royal capital. the Thieves' Guild has been protecting and nurturing the dark side of the city, just as the Adventurers' Guild has been protecting and nurturing the dungeons as hunting grounds. Just as the adventurer's guild protects and utilizes dungeons as hunting grounds」

Over a long period of time, the thieves must have established their own rules and created a place for themselves among the nobility and ordinary citizens.

As Pink said earlier, dungeons and magical places for the adventurer's guild. For the blacksmith guild, it's workshops and mines. And the royal capital is for the thieves' guild.

「If we lose this place, we can't move to another city. There are already indigenous people there, you know. No, it won't really matter for the top brass. But what about the people underneath? Pickpockets, burglars. Whores and male prostitutes. Many of them would have no choice but to become debt slaves」

I don't know how many members there are in the royal capital, but I do know that it's impossible for everyone to get a new job.

「I've always been a little suspicious, but Marquis Ashtner these days are completely crazy. I don't even think they can negotiate. That's no good」

「No good?」

「I'm sure he was ambitious to begin with, but.....In the last few years I can't help but think he's gone crazy. There is a chance that the royal capital could become a sea of fire」

In other words, Marquis Ashtner are unlikely to be their business partners, who seems to be out of control, and wanted him to leave as soon as possible before their precious royal capital becomes a battlefield.

「No, some fighting will have to be done now. But now, it can't be limited to just the noble district anymore」

As expected of the Thieves' Guild, they are formidable.

Apparently, the Thieves' Guild had been following Fran's movements in order to teach her about Gallus. They were planning to make contact with her at some point. In other words, even if they hadn't been contacted by Face (1), they would have approached Fran as soon as possible. In the process, they also recognized Marquis Ashtner abnormality.

「We may not be able to move our forces openly, but we can support you in other ways. We're not looking for a reward. Let's have a joint front. What do you think?」

『Fran, she isn't lying. I don't trust them completely, but I think we can cooperate』

「Nn. I'll tell the count」

「You don't have much time, do you? I'll send one of my men to bring thee info to the Count, okay?」

「Understood」

A small, elderly man with a smooth head arrived in about five minutes. His eyebrows, beard and moustache were long and white.

With his staff and robes, he must be a magician. But with his bent back, he didn't look like he could fight. Well, that's only from his appearance.

Even before I appraise him, I could sense the magic within him, and Fran and I were both ready for any fight. We would react to this old man's attack at any time and maintain a good distance to counterattack.

It wasn't just the strength of his magic. From the old man, I could sense the kind of intensity that is peculiar to the strong. To put it bluntly, he might be the strongest person I've ever met in royal capital. We can't underestimate the Thieves' Guild.

「Huh? You can understand my abilities at first glance? As expected of the nicknamed ones isn't it? You're not like the rest of them」

He hit the floor with the cane in his hand and mumbled something. He seems to be a dour old man. His eyes, which sometimes peek out from under his white eyebrows, are sharp, and he doesn't seem like a very nice old man.

「Strongest person in the Thieves' Guild」

「Eihwaz」 (2)

He is 73 years old, and because of that, his strength and agility stats are low, but he is a very high-level magician, with level 3 storm magic, level 2 ocean magic, level 6 ice and snow magic, and level 5 death poison magic (3). He even uses earth magic and auxiliary magic. No, wait. Eihwaz? That sounds familiar. Fran seemed to remember it too.

「Friends of Diaz?」

「You know Diaz?」

「Nn. know both Fermus and Gamudo too」

「I see. I'm Eihwaz, the Dragon Binder. I've been in a party with them for a while」

When she asked him about his past friends, he didn't even smile. Maybe they don't get along with each other, or maybe that's just the way he is. At any rate, he has been wearing a scowl ever since he appeared.

「And a weird secret society」

「A secret society? Oh, you mean the magician guild?」

「Nn. They were annoying」

「I'm sorry about that. But I've already left. I'm sure they're doing whatever they want with it now. Well, I'm not interested anymore」

『Fran, he's not lying』

Apparently, he's the type of person who doesn't care about anything except what he's interested in. I want to shout him to properly clean up his mess!

「Why a former A rank adventurer in the thieves' guild?」

「That old man was originally a thieves hunter」

It seems that he had appeared in the capital a few years ago and had been attacking the members of the Thieves' Guild and taking them away. And the reason for this was for human experimentation.

「I used to buy crime slaves, but that's expensive and I can't always buy them. But I can't just use innocent people as test subjects. Then it hit me. That's right, let's hunt the thieves」

It's a disaster of the worst kind for the thieves. But for the general public, it's a blessing. And yet, the reason why I don't respect him at all is probably because he is acting completely to satisfy his own needs.

「I used to hunt the thieves around for a while」

However, the number of thieves gradually began to decrease. It seems that this was the result of information circulating among the thieves that it was dangerous to work in the Kingdom of Kranzel because Eihwaz was hunting them down too much.

After that, Eihwaz came to the conclusion that there were thieves in the city, not bandits or pirates. It seems that he started to target the members of the Thieves' Guild. But the Thieves' Guild didn't happy about that.

As a result, they negotiate with Eihwaz and hire him as a guard for the Thieves' Guild in exchange for offering him a crime slave and traitor.

「All I have to do is defeat the occasional enemy and I can get as many lab rats as I want. It's an easy job」

Fran is frowning. She must have felt uncomfortable with Eihwaz. No, it's impossible to be nice to this guy.

「Oh, and just so you know, I didn't kill the test subjects. I just take a little peek of their inside, and then I let them go after they've recovered properly. Well, I do sell off the crime slaves again. Would you like to know what kind of experiments I do?」

「...Not really」

We are in a hurry right now. Besides, Fran doesn't really seem to be interested. Eihwaz frowns in frustration as Fran shows no interest at him.

「Hmph」

「Haah. He's a difficult old man to deal with, but he's a good fighter」

「...The enemy has the ability to counteract and block magic」

「What? Is that true?」

「Nn」

「Kukukuh. very interesting」

「No, Eihwaz. No matter how strong you are, wouldn't it be dangerous if you can't use magic are you?」

Pink asked that question, but it didn't stop Eihwaz from laughing. The advice she had given him had only aroused the old man's curiosity.

「Kukukuh. I don't care. If it kills me, it's because I'm weak. I was more interested in the sword. It may help me in my research」

I was worried about whether this old man would be useful with his magic blocked, but his motivation seemed to be at its maximum.

「Eihwazorth. Don't overdo it, okay?」

「I'll take care of it. Well, it depends on the other party. Kukukuh」

When he smiled like that, Eihwazorth's face was distorted with lust, and he had the expression of an evil person. He was no more trustworthy than the Thieves' Guild.

Note"

There are a few old stuffs being bring back here, to maintain naming consistency of the translation, please refer me any inconsistency with their respective tl group.

(1) Changed Faize name to Face

(2) エイワース Eiwa-su - Before: Ainsworth. On Previous TL : Aiwass, From anon-kun's suggestion : Eihwaz. Thanks to Sarrink and Anon-kun UwU

(3) 死毒魔術 Shidoku Majutsu

# Chapter 437: Eihwaz Ways of doing Things

She had intended to take Eihwaz with her to Count Bailleys' mansion, but Face burst into the basement, gasping for breath.

「Face, what's wrong?」

「It seems that the Knight Order has already begun to enter the Olmes' residence」

What! There should be more than an hour on the schedule!

「What do you mean?」

「It seems that the King ordered the knights directly」

Naturally, the King seemed to have taken this incident as a serious matter. After receiving an explanation from Count Bailleys, the king decided on the spot to summon Marquis Ashtner immediately. A messenger was dispatched.

It is said that the Marquis did not even show up to deal with the matter, although he said that he would be charged with treason if he did not comply. It seems that the housekeeper, who was spilling excuses, was captured and the knights were sent out to battle.

The fact that it has taken only an hour so far shows the strength of the King's sense of crisis. Also, his trust in Count Bailleys and his strong distrust of Marquis Ashtner seems to have contributed to the speed of his decision.

No, they can't even go into battle if they are not ready in the first place. Could it be that Count Bailleys had read this far? Marquis Ashtner's intelligence is not to be underestimated, and it's possible that he already knows about the Count's announcement to go out in three hours. If that's the case, they dared to say three hours later and attack before that time to take advantage of the situation. It's not an impossible story.

I remember the conversation Fran and the Count had before we left.

「If you are too slow, the Knights might just go off on their own, you know?」

「Nan」

「When it comes to that, move as you wish. You'll be better off that way. But don't forget to cooperate with the knights, okay?」

That's the conversation. Could that have been what you had in mind all this time?

「Count Bailleys is in charge, and he's leading the charge in the square in front of the royal castle」

The Thieves' Guild is also amazing for being able to grasp so much information in such a short time. They may not be able to match the Adventurer's Guild in terms of combat, but they have an overwhelmingly superior information network.

「It seems that fierce battles has already begun in the noble district」

It is said that swordsmen controlled by pseudo fanatic swords have emerged from Marquis Ashtner's mansion, Count Olmes' mansion and his villa, and are fighting fiercely against the Knights.

「What's the status of the war? What about those weird guys with a sword stuck in them?」

「They came out. It appears the Knights are inferior」



I knew it would happen. They are adventurers and mercenaries who are in a state of potential release with a pseudo fanatic sword. They are much stronger than knights and have higher regeneration abilities. If both magic and skills are cancelled out, it will be hard for them.

「About 20 adventurers from the Adventurer's Guild rushed out to support us. They are all mid-level adventurers and above, but we'll see how much of a force they are.....」

「Are they going to lose?」

「No. The guild master is still gathering other adventurers, and knights are gathering from all over the capital, so we won't be inferior any more than we are now」

If that's the case, where should we head to? Or should we take advantage of the opportunity and head to the rescue of Gallus and Velmeria?

Besides, I'm curious about something.

「Hey, did the enemy come out from the Viscount mansion with an underground space?」

「Did you mean Viscount Alsand's residence? Yes, they sent a knight to the house, but it was empty」

『Hmm. I suspect the opposite』

(Nn)

Besides, if there were no enemies, wouldn't this be a good chance to explore the underground facility? The Thieves' Guild seemed to think so.

「...Young miss. Why don't you leave the fighting to the knights and adventurers and go to Viscount Alsand's residence? We are also curious about the whereabouts of Master Gallus. I'm sure you'll be happy to hear that」

「Understood」

That's what we want too. Leaving the fight to the Count and the Guild, we decided to head straight for Viscount Alsand's mansion.

Although he was an old man, he was a former rank A. He was able to keep up with Fran as she ran along with Face. He didn't seem to be out of breath as he listened to Fran talk about the pseudo fanatic sword.

A lanky old man with a bent back who runs lightly is odd to look at. It reminded me of the urban legend of the Turbo old hag. The people we pass from time to time roll their eyes at us.

The former Viscount Alsand's residence was located at the edge of the southern section of the noble district. Since it was out of the way from Marquis Ashtner's residence and Count Olmes' residence, it seemed that no battle had occurred in this vicinity yet.

From afar, I can hear explosions that seem to be the result of magic, and the battle cry of knights.

「This is the former Viscount Alsand's residence」

The garden of the mansion, which had been abandoned for more than a month now, was gradually growing weeds and was starting to look a little rough. In the courtyard that Face led us to, the flowers in the flower beds and other areas were withered and wilted.

It seems that Viscount Alsand has ostensibly returned to his domain to recuperate from his illness. However, stories are spreading that he lost his skill to detect lies and was rude to the royal family, and many nobles and people in the underworld know the truth.

「Well, it was the Thieves' Guild that spread the rumour.」

There were many thieves who had been framed by Count Olmes and his son, and who had been blamed for the crimes of the Count and his faction. They were looking for an opportunity to retaliate one day.

「As a result, Viscount Alsand is now pushed into a corner of the estate」

「Hmmh」

Fran, don't seem interested at all. I'm pretty sure it's our fault that he's in that state, but whatever. He got what he deserved. Now we have to find the underground.

「There seems to be a space just below this」

「But you didn't know how to get in? You don't even have a guess?」

「Yes. The man who is using the rats also has no idea how they could have gotten in. There was a hole or a crack somewhere, and the rats just happened to find their way in.」

「That rats user. I never meet one, but what kind of ability that he has?」

「Umm, I think it's——」

The rats user is said to be able to sense where the rats are, slightly peek into their memories, and even read their surface thoughts. However, the intelligence of the rats themselves is not very high, so they can't hear the details of the story.

「What a useful story. If we use magic to destroy this area, we can destroy the underground passage as well, don't you think?」

「No, please don't do that. It might even kill Master Gallus」

「Is that so. It's a pain in the ass」

We had to do something about this before Eihwaz does something stupid.

『Hmmm...Certainly there's a large space. I also felt multiple vitalities... And this discomfort. There's definitely a pseudo fanatic sword in there』

(Nn)

However, I don't know the exact number. I don't think there are more than a hundred of them, probably because they devoted their forces to fought the

Knights, but there are probably ten or twenty. If we can get closer, we can go to... Maybe we can sneak up on them while digging a hole with earth magic?

It's possible to get inside using teleport, but it's too dangerous to have to deal with countless soldiers controlled by that pseudo fanatic sword.

『No, if we can teleport and immediately attack them before they can make a move and greatly reducing the enemy's strength.....』

While I was pondering like that, Eihwaz suddenly started chanting his magic. Then he dug a huge hole with earth magic.

「Wha. Eihwaz-san! What did you!」

「There's no point in sneaking around here, is there? If that's the case, why don't we just find that underground space?」

I looked into the hole and saw that it was incredibly deep. Moreover, I could see a pale light leaking out from its depths. Maybe it reached the mysterious underground space.

I did think about digging a hole with earth magic, didn't I? But if I do it in such a spectacular way, we'll be found out for sure!

「It's reaching it huh. Hmm, it looks like there was a barrier against earth magic, but it wasn't at a level that strong enough to prevent my magic」

Looking annoyingly calm, Eihwaz threw something into the hole. More than one. It looked like a bottle, but what the hell was it?

Fran asks Eihwaz, who has now started plugging the hole with earth magic.

「What was that?」

「It's a special drugs. It's made to vaporize and spread all at once」

Drugs? is it poison? Oh come on, there may be Gallus! Fran glared at Eihwaz as she put her hands on me.

「It's not just the enemy in there!」

「Kukukuh. Don't stare at me like that. Don't worry, none of these drugs can kill. They are a numbing drugs that causes intense pain in the skin, a corroding drug that only works on metal when it comes in contact with air, and a drug that stimulates the magic centers of living things, causing them to lose their magic rapidly」

「But...」

「The numbing drugs may cause pain, but it doesn't actually reduce life, and it only gives numbness to the limbs. It will not kill you due to magic power depletion. The metal corrosion drugs have no effect on the human body. A dwarf with a high tolerance to the drugs will not die. However, it may be effective against the soldier that controlled by a sword that you told me about along the way」

Even though the first two used magic in the production process, the finished product itself was apparently not a magic drug. Hence, there was a high possibility that the magic counteracting effect of the pseudo fanatic sword would not be able to counteract it. The magic power depletion drugs were a magic drug, but it also seemed to be intentional.

「If you want to prevent all three of these drugs, you will need to use the magic counteracting and potential release states that you mentioned. We can wear them out even before the battle, so they won't go to waste」

「.....」

『Well, what's done is done. Let's wait for the result instead of blaming Eihwaz now』

(Nn...)

『More importantly, don't let your guard down. Because in the worst-case scenario, we could be dealing with dozens of pseudo-zealotry swords!』

「Nn!」

# **Chapter 438: The Drug's Effects**

## Chapter 438: The Drug's Effects

It's been more than ten minutes since Eihwaz had gone ahead and scattered the drugs in the basement without permission. Fran and the others were checking the inside of the house. We wanted to see if there were any hidden passages leading to the basement.

We don't need hidden passages when we can use earth magic and teleport magic to get inside. However, Face's suggestion was that it would be better to find a regular route for later use.

However, even after Fran and I searched for hidden passages with our detection and sensing skills, but no suspicious places existed. If this is the case, it seems the passage wasn't from the Viscount's residence.

On the way back to the courtyard from the villa, we sensed the movement of magical power. I knew this magic. As we rushed out into the courtyard, we saw that Eihwaz had just dug another hole with his earth magic.

「Eihwaz!」

「Nn? What is it, young miss?」

When Fran runs up to him, Eihwaz asks her back, looking as if he doesn't understand why she is angry with him.

「Didn't i said to not do anything」

「Aah, I remember you saying something like that before we split up. Well, I wasn't interested, so I didn't feel like to remember it」

「Muh...」

Face had suggested that we split up and explore the area, and he had warned Eihwaz not to take any action. I had even confirmed that he wasn't lying in his response with the Principal of Falsehoods! He hadn't lied when he said

he wouldn't make a move without asking at that time. I'm sure about it but.....

No, it was certainly not a lie. However, he soon forgot about the promise he had made, and simply acted on his interest. We had underestimated Eihwaz's freewheeling nature too much.

「It doesn't matter. Let's go. Don't worry about the drugs. They should be wearing off by now」

「Ah!」

「Wha, Eihwaz-san!」

When Eihwaz used his wind magic to make his body float, he went straight down into the pit. He really is an old man who acts according to his own curiosity.

(Master! After him!

『Yeah, I know!』

For a moment, I thought about pushing it all to Eihwaz, but then I recalled that it might be dangerous if Gallus was in the underground base. I wondered how far Eihwaz would go to take Gallus' safety into account. After all, he threw poison into the pit without hesitation.

「Eihwaz, wait!」

「Ah, wait! M-me too——」

Oh, I forgot about Face. No, we might as well leave the less combat-ready Face behind. We don't know what kind of situation we'll be in.

We sliding down the almost vertical hole in one fell swoop, and killed the momentum with a leap in the air to land.

I don't know what's going on with Eihwaz's drugs, so I wear a wind barrier, but I don't feel like it's filled with poison. I guess Eihwaz was right, the



effect had already worn off.

「...A building」

『Yeah, I'm pretty sure this is the underground base』

It was a solid structure, as if we were inside some kind of fort.

『You never know where they're going to come from. Don't let your guard down』

「Nn」

For the time being, we decided to follow Eihwaz.

There was little vitality in the vicinity, but the magic of the pseudo fanatic sword could still be felt faintly. They must have noticed Eihwaz and Fran's intrusion and are removing their presence.

We kept going for about fifteen meters before I caught up with Eihwaz. He had stopped at the end of the aisle, in what looked like a large hall.

「What are you doing?」

「Young miss, look at this」

「...Stairs?」

What Eihwaz was looking at was a staircase for climbing. However, the stairs had hit the ceiling and had no use for it. Had they filled the hole to isolate the underground facility here?

But it wasn't. When Eihwaz lightly channelled his magic, the stairs glowed for a moment.

「I knew it. It's a kind of magic tool」

It seems if you channel magic powers, a staircase will extend to the ground. I guess this is how they go in and out. No matter how hard we searched, we

couldn't find the entrance or exit.

When they return from outside, they need to have the stairs appear from inside, the possibility of being attacked from outside is low. Well, it was forcefully invaded by Eihwaz

「We'll have to look into this later. Let's go to the other side」

「...Nn」

Fran nodded, although she was somewhat unhappy. She didn't like being led by Eihwaz, but she did recognize him somewhat when she saw how much insight he had into magic tools. For the time being, she didn't complain and started running ahead of Eihwaz.

But soon I notice the magic lurking ahead of us.

『Fran! Over there, behind the door! There's a magical power of the Pseudo-Rabid Sword! Maybe there's two of it』

(Nn? Understood!)

Apparently, Fran can't sense it. I may be aware of it in part because I feel the disgust more strongly than the magic.

「Eihwaz」

「Hmm? Did you feel something?」

「Nn」

When Fran called out to him, Eihwaz stopped and began to pay attention to his surroundings. The accuracy of his judgment was good, as expected of a former rank A adventurer.

「Behind that door there」

「Hou?」

Fran pointed to a door in the middle of the passage. She doesn't seem to know that someone is hiding in there, not even Eihwaz. But he doesn't release his guards. He honestly acknowledged that Fran's sensing ability was better than his.

「Is it the enemy?」

「I don't know. But there's two of them」

「...It seems that even I can't sense it. Let's make the initiative」

「Nn!」

Then Fran kicked down the door and rushed inside. First, she slashes one of them with her Sword technique! Worst case scenario, we'll use Eihwaz as a shield and finish him off with the telekinetic catapult after I get some distance. He's maybe an old magician, but he can at least buy us some time.

When Fran stepped into the room, the first thing she saw was a pile of black powder. A large amount of black powder is scattered on the floor and shelves.

It was probably an armory. However, the metal corroding potion thrown in by Eihwaz had corroded everything and it looked like nothing but a pile of black powder. There were only a few traces of leather armor, leather shields, and a leather belt that had been wrapped around the handle.

There are still two men inside. A pseudo fanatic sword was stuck in their necks. However, my plan to use the Eihwaz as a shield was never put into action. Because the enemy was already dead when we stepped inside.

「...Nn?」

『Looks like it's dead to me』

「Eei」

Just to be sure, we tried to cut the sword stuck in his back, but it still didn't move. Since the cannibalism was activated, there was no doubt that this was

a pseudo fanatic sword.

Eihwaz, who came into the room later, approached the corpse with a euphoric look on his face.

「He's dead, isn't he?」

An appraisal showed that he had lost all of his magic as well as his life force. It seems that Eihwaz's drugs did more than I expected. I don't know if it was the magic depletion drugs or the counteracting effect of the pseudo fanatic sword, but it must have used up all the magic.

The sword's magic is weak because it can no longer absorb magic power from its host.

「I figured it would be easier to fight if their magic power was somewhat reduced.....The enemy seems to be more stupid than I imagined. No, as long as their mind is being manipulated, it doesn't have that much accurate judgment left. Or is the sword's ability automatically activated by some conditions? But——」

Eihwaz is mumbling something as he inspects the body. He seems to be considering various things. But now is not the time to relax.

For the time being, I decided to store the corpse in a hurry.

「Tsk. It can't be helped. But I'll be sure to check it later」

「...」

「Oi, are you listening? You definitely going to give me the body later right?」

「...」

「Oi, little girl」

Is Fran having trouble talking to Eihwaz? She ignored him completely. In response, Eihwaz is shouting at her. This guy doesn't listen to others, but

gets angry when he's ignored. He's got a really good personality.

「Is it okay? I'm gonna dissect it, you know?」

# Chapter 439: Cunning Battle

Dissect, dissect, Eihwaz was annoying so she gave him the corpse to silence him. Fran's response was 「If you want it so bad, I'll give it to you」 And Eihwaz was overjoyed.

He took the body that was handed to him as he ran with ease and tucked it into his own item bag.

「Kukukuh. I've got a good sample. This will help me advance my research again」

「.....」

To be able to made Fran shocked, Eihwaz can't be underestimated.

As we drove on, the road ahead became brighter. There seems to be a hall ahead. I can feel the reaction of a large number of weak pseudo fanatic swords. It seems that the same tragedy happened there as in the armory earlier.

『So this place is full of dead bodies too?』

「Wiped out?」

『No, a few of them are still alive』

Even from here, I could feel the life force of several people.

『Stay alert』

(Nn)

When we stepped into the hall, I found it to be a slightly brighter room, similar in construction to the hall where the magic tool stairs had been installed. Originally, it was probably going to be a fierce battle with a large number of pseudo fanatic swords.....

Among the twenty or so corpses lying in the hall, four swordsmen stood. They were the ones who had poison resistance, etc., and the ones who had prevented the drugs with wind magic. But again, their magic power was already greatly reduced. Now is our chance!

『Fran! do pre-emptive strike!』

「Nn!」

The moment she saw me, Fran threw me into the air. Accelerated by the telekinetic catapult, I destroyed the head of the woman in front of me, along with her pseudo fanatic sword.

『Yosh! 3 more!』

I tried to use telekinesis to get back to Fran, but failed. It seems that the magic cancelling effect is already in effect.

But there's a way to do it.

「Woof!」

Urushi ran at me at once, bit my hilt and threw me to Fran. As it was, Urushi rushed at the nearest swordsman.

『One more time!』

「Nn! Haaaa!」

Due to the large size of the hall, the magic cancelling effect had not reached the entrance area. This meant that it was possible to telekinetic catapult again.

As if replaying the scene from earlier, the telekinetic catapult shattered the head of the swordsman who was fighting Urushi and the pseudo fanatic sword. Instantly, Urushi lifts me up and hands me to Fran.

I was going to finish the rest. I thought so, but I was interrupted by Eihwaz.

「Come on. Leave one for me」

「Muh」

I was thinking of ignoring him, but if I despise Eihwaz here, he might go off the rails later. With that in mind, it would be better to give him a chance.

Besides, while I was hesitating, one of the swordsmen came close to us. I need to get some distance again to use the telekinetic catapult.

『It's no use. We'll take care of this one, and let Eihwaz take care of the other one』

「Nn. Urushi, return!」

「woof!」

If we were not careful, Eihwaz could attack us all. Fran called Urushi back and cut off the dwarf who was running towards her. It was a blow aimed at his neck, but he seemed to be a defensive specialist and put up a strong barrier to block the attack.

For that reason, he is not very good at attacking. Fran dodges the counter-attack of his big sword with ease. Would it be easier to wait for him to self-destruct?

As Eihwaz watched, he stepped toward the remaining large man. His face was full of motivation.

「Fumu. Black Lightning Princess doesn't need any help. Then I'll take this one...Poison Fog」

「——」



「Oh! Is that the magic cancelling? You really did dispel the poisonous mist I created with my magic! Very interesting」

Old man, Sorry to burst your bubble but are you okay? If he can't block magic, you're at a huge disadvantage. However, Eihwaz's expression remained joyful.

Unfazed by the large man who approached him at once, he threw several bottles from his pocket. He must have an items bag or something inside his robe.

The moment the big man reaped the bottle, a tremendous explosion sounded. At the same time, smoke and flames rose up.

「——!」

Fran kept her distance from the dwarf, holding her cat ears with her hand. It was such an explosive sound.

「Fumu fumu. They can't cancel out phenomena caused by chemical reactions that are not borne by magic after all」

After interrupting his fellow, Fran, Eihwaz himself laughed happily and unleashed more magic. It is an AOE magic that freezes a wide area. But the big man's pseudo fanatic sword cancelled it out. He was able to frighten him for a moment, but he wasn't able to beat him.

「Umu umu」

He nodded a couple of times, as if he had already factored it in, and unleashed his magic again. This time, he threw a bottle of drugs at the same time.

Of course, the magic was cancelled out, and the broken bottle that hit the ground had no effect but only spread the liquid inside to the surroundings.

It looked like he was wasting his time, but it seemed that Eihwaz was getting excited. He swiftly began to blabber out his thoughts.

「I see, I see. It seems that the magic cancel can't specify the target so delicately. It's not like he can specify a specific area? The poison fog that I had just use, and the magic that I had just use, he didn't able to erase the effects of it on the places far away from me. And a potion turned into mere water.....」

After only a few tries, he was uncovering the effects of the magic counteract. It was frustrating, but amazingly insightful.

Still, lacking a decisive move, Eihwaz was not able to defeat his opponent. The big man slashed at him again. Eihwaz dodged the attack. That's right. This old man is not incapable of close combat. He had mastered the skills of hand-to-hand fighting and dodging. He may be inferior in status, but his combat experience is vast.

Eihwaz evaded the big man's attack with a flick of his wrist and took out five drugs bottles again. He then dropped the bottles at his feet. Naturally, the bottles broke and smoke spewed out from inside.

The smoke that seemed to envelop Eihwaz and the large man was completely dissipated in less than a second. The whole thing must have been a magic potion.

It was supposed to be a dire strait when his self-destruct attack was cancelled out.....Eihwaz's smile was the same as at first. But now, it even seemed to be deepening.

With a look of heartfelt enjoyment on his face, Eihwaz thrusts his arm out toward the large man and speaks.

「——Eternal Coffin!」

「——.....」

What happened immediately after that was beyond our imagination.

『Eh?』

「Nn? How?」

To my surprise, Eihwaz's magic was not cancelled out, and he freeze the big man.

No, So that's how. The potion that created the smoke that he used beforehand. He made the big man use up all of his magic power by daring him to cancel it out. And then, by making it impossible for him to use the magic cancel, he was able to activate his magic in a relaxed manner.

『Fran, after I saw that, I think I have an easy way to beat these guys』

(Really?)

『Yeah. After I casted my spell on him. Then, unleash Void Sword Technique on him』

(Understood)

They use their own magic to counteract it. I should have known that, but I didn't realize that I could take advantage of that phenomenon. That was my mistake.

『Here we go! Try to cancel this!』

I activate 10 magic shots simultaneously, and everything is cancelled out as intended.

「Haaa!」

Then, Fran's Void Sword Technique sliced away the dwarf's head and pseudo fanatic sword, which had used up all of its magic power. If you think about it, it was a simple matter. With the amount of magic power I had, even if it was a little inefficient, I should have just let him use up all of his magic by pushing him with my magic.

If there were dozens of opponents, it would be a different story, but if there were only a few, it would be easy to deplete their magic before my power ran out.

『Haah. I can't help but be dismayed by my own dullness. Well, let's find Gallus now. Reflection will come later』

「Nn」

「Hey, you don't mind if I take this big guy, do you?」

# Chapter 440: Heroes and Maiden

At the end of the hall, there was a place where a huge door had been sitting—or so it seemed, but only the remains of the door were scattered about. It was the work of the metal corroding potion that Eihwaz had used.

No matter how huge and airtight the door was, if it was a metal door, it would be ripped apart by the metal corroding potion, and that's how the other potion got in. Once again, it was a horrible potion.

Fran and Eihwaz stepped over the wreckage of the door and continued on. What lay ahead was a prison. A sturdy-looking metal grate was set into it.

The swordsman on guard was still alive, but one-on-one he was no match for us, who knew how to deal with him. He was killed instantly.

「Gallus!」

Immediately after stepping into the room, Fran started to run. Yes, there was Gallus lying in the prison. After appraising him, it seems that he is only unconscious.

「Hmm?」

Fran grabbed the bars and put a lot of pressure on them, but it wouldn't budge off. Apparently, it was a special metal and had not been corroded by the metal corrosion potion.

「It's probably a magical steel alloy. That potion doesn't work well on magic metals」

「...Shii!」

However, this level of grating would not be a problem if it were not for the magic cancel. Fran easily sliced through the bars and stepped into the prison.

「Gallus? Are you okay?」

「.....」

She shook Gallus lightly, but he didn't respond.

「——Grea—ter—He—al! How was it?」 (1)

『It's no good, he's not waking up』

It must be the effects of the narcotics. I don't think it was Eihwaz's potion. Maybe.

『In the meantime, let's get Gallus out of here』

「Nn. Urushi」

「woof!」

Fran straps the unconscious Gallus to Urushi's back. The burden on Gallus would be less if we moved while supporting him with telekinesis.

『What happened to Eihwaz?』

「Nn?」

Eihwaz was crouching in front of the jail. He seemed to be examining the corpse of the watchmen.

「Hohoho. So, he's inserting the sword into his back from here. Looks like it runs down the back of his spine. It's durability is...I see. It's not as powerful as a magic sword. Did they build it with this use in mind from the beginning? And about this technique? This is——」

He was dripping a mysterious liquid on the sword and checking the condition of the corpse. On the contrary, he was piercing some kind of needle-like tool into its eyeballs and cutting its wrists to draw blood.

「Eihwaz, back to top」

「Hmm. I see. Well, there doesn't seem to be anything here anymore. So, is the dwarves safe?」

「But, can't wake him up」

「Hmmm. Let's have a look」

With the corpse firmly tucked away, Eihwaz approached Gallus on Urushi's back. Fran was not sure if she should stop him or not. But in the end, she decided to let him examine Gallus.

「I see, I see.....」

Eihwaz is flipping through Gallus' mouth and eye lids, checking the flow of his magic.

「It must be the narcotics. He is mentally drained, and it's affecting his body」

「Will get cured?」

「From the looks of it, the contamination is quite advanced, but it hasn't reached the worst of it. With time, healing won't be a problem」

「Is that so. How can I treat him?」

「It could be a high level healing magic or detoxification with alchemy. Narcotics have a strong impact, but there are several medicines to deal with them. If you want, I can treat him for you? A dwarf affected with a narcotic is a very rare specimen」

Nonono, there's no way in hell I'm leaving him with Eihwaz! It's like throwing a roll of raw meat in front of a starving wolf. He would never get

away from it. I could only imagine a future where Gallus would be dissected.

「No need」

「Hmm, is that so?」

「Nn」

「Wa-wait. I'm saying that I'll cure him right away, right?」

「It's fine」

「Muh...」

Fran seemed to have thought the same thing as me, and rejected Eihwaz's words.

『With that said, what should we do now』

I'd like to take him to a safe place and ask for medical treatment, but where should I take him? The noble district is in the middle of a battle.....

『Fran, let's go to the Adventurer's Guild. It's far enough away from the noble district. They might have a fighting force and someone who can heal him』

「Go to the Adventurer's Guild」

「Hmm. It's not a bad decision. In your point, you can't just leave it in the hands of the thieves' guild」

Surprisingly, Eihwaz agrees with her. I thought he would insist that we leave it with the Thieves' Guild.

「Leave the dwarf to them and let's go to another battlefield. I'd like to observe them in action」

Was his matter of interest simply in the pseudo fanatic sword?



What's more surprising is that he doesn't want to go on his own. With his personality, I'm afraid he's going to leave Fran and go off on his own. No, I'm afraid to unleash Eihwaz alone, so it's better if he stays within my sight, though.

「The world's rarest thing, an evolved black cat kin...Its true value is not to be missed」

This guy was curious about Fran too! The way he looked at Fran held the same curiosity that he had for Gallus and the pseudo fanatic sword. It was the way he looked at his precious experiment.

『Fran, never let Eihwaz get to you, okay?』

(Of course)

Well, Fran has been keeping a wary eye on Eihwaz since a long time, and I'm sure she's fine. Maybe she has a wild intuition and senses the look that Eihwaz is giving to her.

After Fran and Eihwaz got out of the hole they had plunged into as it was, they picked up Face, who was getting anxious, and hurried to the Adventurer's Guild on their feet.

The commotion already seemed to be spreading, and people were looking anxious in the civilian and downtown areas. In fact, some travellers and vendors seemed to be hurrying to the gates to escape from the royal capital.

「This is a bad. If the battle drags on, it could cause panic as people try to escape from the royal capital」

It was no wonder that Face was muttering anxiously. The battle seemed to be getting more intense, with loud explosions echoing in rapid succession and mysterious lights emanating from the noble district.

「No one in here?」

When we arrived at the Adventurer's Guild, it was surprisingly deserted. Other than the receptionist, there was no one around. The first person to

notice Fran was Stellia, who was still picking at her cookies in her spare time.

「Oh, isn't it the Black Lightning Princess? what's up?」

「What happened to the adventurers?」

「The guild sent out an urgent request for security. All the people who have time to spare are out of town」

It seems that the guild is also working properly.

「I want you to take care of Gallus」

「Gallus...by any chance, the Honorary Blacksmith, Gallus?」

「Nn」

Fran told her that narcotics was keeping him from awake, and he needed medical treatment, and that in some cases the enemy might come to take him back. Then Steria raised her eyebrows and frowned. With no adventurers around, she must be wondering if she can keep him.

「What are you mulling over? Get on quickly」

「Haa? Who the hell are you?」

「I'm a former adventurer named Eihwaz」

The change in Stellia's face when she was told this by Eihwaz was dramatic. Her scornful expression changed, and she looked like a maiden in love. No, she's just an old lady.

「Ei-Eihwaz-sama? A-are you by any chance, Eihwaz the dragon binder?」

「That's right. This is the guild card I used to use」

「I-I'll take a look!」

Steria picked up Eihwaz's guild card with a slightly trembling hand. Then, with a serious face, she checked it for authenticity.

「I-it's the real one! It's the real Eihwaz! I-it's a honor to meet you!」

「Umu」

It's a class change from being a pouty old lady to an idol chaser. Stellia is staring at Eihwaz with sparkling eyes. The tone of her voice is probably a step higher.

The other receptionists stared in amazement at her transformation.

「So, can you take care of this dwarf and treat him?」

「Ye-yes! Of course!」

I guess she really admire him. Instead of being offended by Eihwaz's big attitude, she nodded happily, and her cheeks dyed red.

But, is it okay if it was this easy?

「Are you okay? The enemy might come here」

「I'm fine! Just leave it to me! I'm still a former rank B adventurer! Besides, I'll summon all the high-ranked adventurers who didn't respond to this call as soon as I can! I'll also call for a healer and an alchemist right away!」

Do the adventurers who didn't respond to the call would listen to her?

「Fufun. How many years do you think I've been in this guild? I at least have three or four adventurer's weakness. I didn't want to work for the noble, but for Eihwaz-sama, that's a different story!」

It seems that Aunt Steria was more powerful in the shadows than I had imagined. Well, I guess I can leave this one to her.

Besides, come to think of it, he's a blacksmith with the potential to make something as crazy as a pseudo fanatic sword. It might be a bad idea to leave him in this country. Mainly in terms of Gallus' freedom. If King Kranzel had big ambitions, he would not have the option of freeing Gallus. I can only imagine a future where he is forced into slavery and then forced to engage in the mass production of pseudo fanatic swords.

In this respect, the adventurer's guild can be a strong voice for the country. However, let's make a push. Fran takes out a million golds on the counter and tells Stellia.

「Then I'll make the request. I want you to take care of Gallus and keep him safe. And no one but us. In particular, do not hand him over to the country or anyone else. This will cover your expenses」

「Let's add my name to the list. I don't want to be ripped off by the state」

「Is there a reason for this? Well, that's okay. If Eihwaz-sama asks me to do something. I'll do it, no matter what! And the rewards are plenty」

It was a request made directly to the guild by an adventurer. The guild's reputation would be at stake if they lost Gallus. I'm sure they will protect him.

「Also, I'm leaving my follower. Urushi, if anything happens to him, take Gallus and run away」

「Woof」

Worst case scenario, Urushi should be able to protect Gallus.

「Well then, we'd better get going」

「Nn」

Our goal is to get to the square in front of the royal castle. I've heard that Count Bailleys is there.

Note:

(1) ——グレーターヒール gure-ta-hi-ru, i don't know why the use of spacing is, for intonation maybe.

(2) That was the longest Fran's line that i can remember lol...

# Chapter 441: Battle in front of the Royal Castle

When we stepped into the noble district, we were immediately confronted by men with pseudo fanatic swords stuck in them. However, as long as they were far enough, my telekinetic catapult would kill them instantly.

I had to give some of them away, though, because Eihwaz claimed them.

「Fuhaha. I still have some things to try」

He slurped down the potion he had taken out of his pocket. It seemed to be a body enhancing potion. He jumped into his opponent's bosom at once and began to fight with the swordsman.

「——」

「I see I see! Drugs and skill with body strengthening effect can be used——In other words, magic counteracting does not work for things that act in the body!」

He threw the medicine he had taken out at the enemy who was charging at him. At the same time, he plunged into the enemy with his fists clenched.

He's good. If he dodges the potion, he'll probably fall prey to Eihwaz's physical strengthened fist. If he wants to get rid of the potion, he needs to consumes magic power to activate magic cancel to cancel out the potion's effect and his magic would be drained Either way, Eihwaz had the advantage.

He then uses his ice magic to freeze the enemy, who has used up all of his magic by cleaving the medicine with his sword, he wins without a scratch.

It seems that Eihwaz true essence was the use of his magic, close combat and potion together. If we have to fight him, he is a very nasty opponent with no noticeable gaps.

Fran seemed to have thought the same thing, and was observing Eihwaz's battle with an eye as if looking for a weakness.

『Aside from magic and hand-to-hand combat technique, drugs is completely unknown to us...』

(Nn. Strong)

After a few battles, Fran and Eihwaz reached the square in front of the royal castle.

The plaza in front of the royal castle was made quite large in order to accommodate a military parade. However, there was a fierce battle going on there, more than I had imagined.

There were about 100 enemies. Among them, there were probably about 40 with pseudo fanatic swords stuck in them. Along with them, an ogre-like magical beast about two meters tall was running rampant.

When I appraised it, it came up as a Flesh Greater Golem (1). Apparently, it was a golem made from a corpse. It was also quite strong. Its agility was low, but it was sturdy and had regeneration ability. It would be quite a nuisance while being protected by the Pseudo Fanatic Sword's magic counteracting power. At least a few knights should not be able to resist it.

In contrast, there were probably about 200 knights. If you include those who had already fallen, there were probably more than 500. There were also adventurers in the crowd.

There's Colbert too. There's even an appearance of Eliante. I didn't expect her to be here. The two of them are still moving exceptionally well. However, there were five people who were showing comparable work.

Maybe the five of them were in the same party. They wore armor of the same design and fought in tandem. Maybe they were the half-insect kin.

『I think that's the mercenary group Eliante was talking about. I believe it was called Antennae and Shells (2) or something like that.....』

Well, it was just as the name implied. Some of them have antennae growing out of their heads, while others have parts of their bodies covered with hard shells.

The species are hardy shrimps, locusts, clams, dragonfly, and fanged ants (3). However, it seems that they are still struggling due to their inability to use skills and magic. Even so, they fought in tandem and seemed to have killed more than ten flesh golems, which was impressive.

(Master, there's the count)

『In the meantime, lets join him』

「Nn!」

Fran ran across the battlefield at once and cut down the swordsmen infested by the pseudo fanatic swords around Count Bailleys and the others.

The knights were stunned to see their struggling opponent defeated so easily. But when the Count saw that it was Fran who had appeared, he nodded approvingly.

「As expected of the Black Lightning Princess! How did you do that? You looked different from the time of the battle at the mansion」

So, Fran tells them what to do. The Count, however, has a difficult look on his face. If you think about it, it wasn't so easy to fire off a bunch of magic to drain the magic power, or to throw a bunch of magic potions.

「Lets collect all the potions we can find or go to...Anyway, I've heard good things about you. Can you help me eradicate this square first?」

「Nn. But, are the other place is fine?」



Enemies must have appeared from the Marquis Ashtner's and Count Ormes' mansions.....

「...They should be fine. Rank A adventurers are heading there」

「Heading there?」

「We've had a lot of adventurers come through here for the auction. Eliante talked me about it」

Is that so? If you're a high-ranking adventurer, you're probably interested in the auction. The auction has already ended, but I'm sure there are many adventurers still left in royal capital.

「What about Velmeria?」

「We haven't found her yet. Forget about my daughter for now. Think only of defeating the enemy. The safety of royal capital is more important」

After all, he was probably saying these words to himself as well. The Count told Fran with an expression as if he was holding something back.

「Don't worry. The adventurers will rescue her. She should be fine」

『Fran. Since we can't find her, all we can do now is reduce the enemy's strength』

「...All right. I'll take care of the enemy here for now」

「Well then, let's go, shall we? The flesh walls are just to attract our attention. It will be easy to be done with later. Let's ignore the meat wall and reduce the number of swordsmen first」

「Understood」

Then Fran and the others ran out into the battlefield.

「Awakening——」

We don't even know what kind of battle we'll have after this. Let's save Black Lightning Rush for later. But it seems for this battlefield, awakening alone was enough.

Although it was a melee, it was easy to distinguish friend from foe by using the pseudo fanatic sword as a marker. All we have to do is sneak up from their blind spot and strike the pseudo fanatic sword with all our might.

In some cases, barriers or other factors may prevent that attack from being determined, in that case, simply switch to a magic saturated attack.

「Eh? Why a child here——what!」

「What? A black shadow!」

The knights are surprised to see Fran suddenly appear and easily bury a powerful enemy. However, Fran ignores them and runs on the battlefield.

Boooom!

An explosion and a knight's scream. Apparently Eihwaz is hustling too.

「Haaa!」

From the middle of the battle, not only Colbert and Eliante, but also the mercenaries came to the aid of Fran. They dared to move flamboyantly to attract the attention of the enemy. This made the job even easier.

It took us less than fifteen minutes to clean up the pseudo fanatic sword holders. Then, against the last enemy, I tried to unleash a controlled amount of Kanna Kamui. I wanted to find out how much magic that sword could still counteract to.

『Hmm, It should be as strong as Thor Hammer (4) or something huh』

「Nn」

It seemed that a magic of Kanna Kamui class could not be counteracted as expected. Although the power of the thunder was considerably reduced, the

thunderbolt annihilated the enemy along with the pseudo fanatic sword, leaving a huge crater in the square in front of the royal castle.

『That was a bit overkill』

「It's better than being cancelled out」

Note:

(1) フレッシュ?グレーター?ゴーレム fuesshu gurētā gōremu

(2) 触角と甲殻 shokkaku to koukaku. On ch. 434 it was Tentacles and Shells. Changed into Antennae and Shells.

(3) 堅海老 Ken Ebi, 飛蝗 batta, 蜃 shen, 蜚蠊 kagerou, 牙蟻 kiba ari . I never thought shrimp and clams was an insect!? They are 蟲人 mushibito insect-men,.....or maybe, anything small and have carapace like exoskeleton counted as insect...? nvm

(4) トール?ハンマー Tōru hanmā

# **Chapter 442: In the End, There's Him Here**

## Chapter 442: In the End, There's Him Here

I thought it was better than being cancelled out, so I used it, but I think Kanna Kamui was a bit too much.

A hole about five meters in diameter was drilled in the square in front of the royal castle, and the surrounding knights and flesh golems were reaped by the impact.

It was much less powerful, but it has saved their life. If it had been as powerful as it was, it would have been quite a disaster. No, it may have been a bad idea to open a hole in front of the royal castle in the first place.

I can feel the knights' eyes on us. I wonder if they are angry with me for blowing a hole in front of the royal castle. However, it seems that they don't have time to talk to Fran as they are soon engaged in a battle with the flesh golem.

Eihwaz was staring at Fran, but he was quickly attacked by a flesh golem and moved to deal with that. It may be troublesome later huh.

『We'll do the golem too』

「Nn!」

After clearing out the pseudo fanatic sword wielder, we moved on to clearing out the flesh golem.

While they were certainly strong, they were no match for us at this level. Once again, I had enough time to observe the battles of the other adventurers and mercenaries.

Colbert has become like a normal fighter. It seems that the cost of losing the Dimitris style was great. His attack power seems to have dropped drastically, and he has been dealing damage to the Flesh Golem with a series of attacks.

However, now that he was no longer in a sealed state, his body movement itself would have improved. The loss of the Dimitris style must have led to more rigorous training. He probably has talent to begin with, and he will grow even more in the future.

Eliante was not what she appeared to be at all, she was a super power fighter. As if she was taking the stress of her job out on the fight, she was swinging a huge sword that was bigger than her with one hand and slamming it into the flesh golem.

「Ahahahahahahahaha! Horahorahorahoraa!」

I thought she didn't have antennae for a half-insect kin, but it seems she had hidden them in her hair. From between her untied purple hair grew a rather thick antennae that at first glance appeared to be long horns.

She appears to be a half-spider. She wraps threads sprayed from the palm of her hand around the golem, blocking its movement. It's like an American spider-man ability. Eliante ran into it and slammed her big sword into it, and the loud laughter that she kept raising gave her a great sense of being a mad warrior.

The five members of the mercenary group are strong individually, but they are also highly coordinated. It's enough to change the image you had of mercenaries.

『So there's such a strong mercenary huh』

(Nn)

That's natural, but it can't be helped because I hadn't encountered them before. If you think about it, the strongest mercenaries are probably on the battlefield, and conversely, it's no surprise that the mercenaries we usually meet of aren't a big deal.

The hot-blooded-looking man who had just slammed his fist into the flesh golem in front of Fran seemed to be the leader. He's giving orders to everyone. Hard shrimp? Maybe he's a lobster or lobster-type half-insect kin.

A red, slippery shell covered his face and the middle of his right hand. The shell around his fist in particular had a huge, aggressive form, like a hammer with spikes. He was fighting by swinging his fist. He was also using water magic to overwhelm a flesh golem that was equivalent to several knights by himself.

The legs of these half-insect kin locusts are very thick. The upper body is slender and beautiful, but only the legs have an unusual volume, as if they were cut out of a large tree and attached.

On his lower body, he's wearing a pair of dowdy pants like a bonton to accommodate the change, and now his bloated legs are squeezed tightly inside the bonton.

「I'm breaking it! Zeyaaaaaa!」

However, it seemed that his leg strength was even more tremendous than I had imagined. When the boy (1) kicked the golem with his foot, the huge body of the golem, which must have weighed well over a ton, floated. His movements were as fluid as Tae Kwon Do or Capoeira, and he seemed to specialize in attacking with the power of his legs.

The female spear woman was moving in a strange way. The thin wings on her back were not designed for flight, but she seemed to be using them to make sudden movements. In addition, her slender body was swaying and moving in an unusually tricky manner. The sleepy, half-eyed expression on her face made it difficult for even us to predict her movements. It may not mean much against flesh golems, but it will be very effective against humans.

The fanged ant half-insect kin are similar to a human in appearance, with the only differences being her antennae and eyes. It is a beautiful, innocent-looking girl of about 160 centimetres, who doesn't look particularly strong. However, her power is far from human. I've never seen a dual axe wielder before. In addition, she seems to be able to spit venom from her mouth. She attacks the golem's single eye with the venom precisely. It's a fighter with a few tricks up her sleeve, so it seems that the half-insect kin are not to be underestimated.

I'm not sure what it is, but it's a race of half-insect kin called clams. It seems to be a shellfish...I'm not sure if it's the same thing. I guess bugs even include that kind of species. He is a big man who seems to be a simple man. He's got a gentle but powerful air about him. It seems that he is not a warrior, but a magician who uses illusion. However, as he was of shellfish, the shell covering his shoulders and back seemed to have a high level of defense. He was able to catch the huge fist of the Flesh Golem with a curled-up stance. It was a strange way to be a tank and a magician.

Beside them, Fran was overkilling flesh golems with all of her skills and magic, as if to relieve the frustration of being forced to fight so inconveniently with her magic and skills blocked.

「Haaa!」

She slices off the golem's limbs, burns it with magic, and finally slices off its torso and head with sheaths of wind (2). I guess it feels good to be able to use all her strength without limitations.

「Oi! We can't lose to that beastman girl!」

「Well, we are getting high rewards after all! To get that reward we need to work hard!」

「Ou!」

It seems that the Insect Rangers (3) have gotten motivated. Since they are bugs, they seem to be more like modified humans, but there are five of them. What about the Antenna Squadron: Koukakuger? (4)

While we were fighting like that, there was a huge magical reaction in the middle of the square. At the same time, purple smoke covered the square with tremendous force.

『Fran, don't ever breath that smoke! My danger detection is ringing loudly!』

(Nn!)



It was clearly a poisonous fog. I hurriedly protected Fran with wind barriers and the like. The nearby insect kin rangers instantly gathered, and I could see them defending against the poisonous fog with wind barriers of the dragonfly and water barriers of the hard shrimp.

Then, after the poisonous fog clears, the flesh golems, knights, and adventurers appear lying in the square, convulsing. The old man's loud laughter echoed through the air.

「Fuhahahaha. I seem the paralysis poison is effective against flesh golems because it's made from human flesh」

It seemed that Eihwaz had unleashed a deadly poisonous spell on friend and foe alike.

「Don't worry. It's paralytic poison. I'll give antidote for it later. For now, whoever's still alive, destroy the flesh soldiers」

「That old man, even his ally too...」

「Guildmaster! The golem should be our priority right now」

I hope Eliante and Colbert were okay. Eliante was about to slash at Eihwaz, but Colbert was holding him back.

Well, it actually didn't do much damage to human, and it would be better to destroy the flesh golems as Eihwaz said.

The mercenaries follow his words, even though they are angry. But they are a reasonable one, I'm sure. In a way, it's a battle strategy that can only be done because Eihwaz doesn't even think of people as people.

「It's just going to take a lot of time if I didn't do this, isn't it?」

There was only one person who nodded in agreement with Eihwaz's words.

「I see」

Wha, Fran? Did he just impress you? You can't do that! Don't you ever imitate him!

Note:

(1) Author san mentioned him as shounen, maybe he looks like a kid

(2) On previous chapter it's Void Sword Technique, changed into Sheath of Wind (as cardboard tl use on TKSD chapter 199 thanks to Sarrink)

(3) 蟲レンジャー Mushi Renjā-

(4) 触角戦隊コウカクジャー Shokkaku sentai koukakujā

# Chapter 443: End of Battle in the Square

The battle has ended due to Eihwaz's outburst, and now relief is being provided by those who were safe. The paralysis has been lifted long ago, but some of them were wounded before that.

However, only Eihwaz rushed to Fran's rescue.

「Little girl! That's some serious magic!」

She asked Fran a question with a glint in his eye. But there was no hint of jealousy or a sense of defeat in his eyes. What was there was an intense curiosity and inquisitiveness.

「I didn't expect it, you are extremely good at thunder magic!」

「Nn」

「I-i never thought I could control that thing on my own.....Are you assisted by some kind of magic tool?」

「Secret」

「Ca-can you do something about it!」

「No」

「Kuh. Then how does it feel? How much magic is used? How hard is it to control? For example, How much is it consumed compared to other magic?」

Fran dodges Eihwaz's constant barrage of questions, answering them lazily. No, Fran is serious, but she only answers with 「a lot」 or 「really a lot」

For the theoretical Eihwaz, he didn't understand it at all. Eventually, he gave up.

「But still, what does it mean? Is this really a rank C...? Are the eyes of the guild that blind...? No, maybe it's because she's a child? By the way? which guild do you affiliate with?」

「Affiliate?」

「Are you traveling around? So, do you know the name of Klimut or Amanda? Or you are related to Allesa?」

「Know both, become adventurer in Allesa」

「I see」

Eihwaz seems convinced.

「What does that mean?」

「Amanda and Klimut are both negative about sending children into battlefield. They're really powerful in this country. If their backing is visible, not many people will be willing to raise your rank」

I guess they are not keeping Fran from ranking up. But, if a child is registered in Alessa and has information that she is close to Amanda, a normal guild master might not think of taking advantage of her badly.

「If you rise above rank B, the nobles will get annoying. I quit being an adventurer because of that」

To the extent that this very picture of insolence is annoying for him?

「Are noble, that annoying?」

「Hmm. Their intelligence network is foolproof. Their messenger will come out of nowhere when he hears that you've risen to Rank B. Some are low and some are high-handed, but they all have one thing in common: they want you to be under them. No matter how many times you say no, they won't give up」

「Even if I say no?」

「I guess they have special ears that can only hear what's inconvenient」

Is this what they said with disliking people similar to oneself? I'm starting to think they're like Eihwaz huh?

「No matter which town I went to, or even out from the country. There are nobles in everywhere. Especially since I've made a name for myself as a dragon slayer.....The more powerful you are, the more likely for you to be recruited」

「I have no desire to serve a nobleman」

「They won't care what you want. They're noblemen, remember? They never expect to be rejected. So, if you do, they'll resent you. Hmmph, that's ridiculous」

He was fed up with having to deal with nobles every day like that, so he quit being an adventurer. There was a way for him to become a guild master like Gamudo and Diaz, but he turned it down.

「That would leave no time for my experiment」

Other than that, it seems that the norm is to associate with nobles in moderation, receive support in moderation, and be shielded by other nobles, like Amanda and Forrund.

But I don't think Eihwaz is capable of that. And I don't think Fran can either. I can imagine a future where She'd blow it up and get in trouble. Maybe it's okay to leave things as they are until Fran grows up a bit more.

Anyway, was Klimut really that influential? He was strong, sure, but he didn't seem to be a top rank A adventurer. As a guild master, does he get a pass because he's been working for many years?

When Fran mentioned the question, Eihwaz snickered.

「Fun. How can you look at a high-ranking spirit user with mere status? It's like having dozens of transparent, covert magical beasts at your disposal」

I don't really know what a spirits is. I've only seen a spirits used by Klimut once. Eihwaz said that by using spirits that are difficult to detect, it is possible to fight in a variety of ways. He said that Klimut was a particularly skilled spiritualist.

「In the first place, do you know what his second names are? It's Calamity, Klimut the Calamity. A destructive force that brings destruction and misfortune to friend and foe alike. Kukukuh. Well, that second names are not true, but.....Still, his ability is outstanding even among Rank A. No, he's retired now and used to be Rank A, right? Anyway, depending on how he fights, he could probably go toe-to-toe with S ranker」

I-i didn't know he were such a great adventurer. Maybe spirit magic is even worse than I thought. When I think about it, we can find a dungeon on the Plains of the Demon Wolf, a grade A magical area, and Raidos Kingdom. Alessa is surrounded by troubles on all sides. It might be that you have to be pretty good to be the guild master of Allesa.

「Well, I don't really care with that story」

With that, Eihwaz looks at Fran.

「Hmm? Would you like to be dissected by me? I'll give you a million. I can guarantee your life!」

「Doesn't want」

「2 Million! How about 2 million? Just for a second I'll open up your head and observe the magic transmission in your brain!」

「Can't do」

「B-by all means?」

「Nn」

While we were having this conversation, Count Bailleys came running up to us.

「Black Lightning Princess. It's safe here now. I want you to head to Marquis Ashtner's residence with the adventurers. Can you please move?」

「Understood」

「I'm coming too!」

「No, I'll have you join the magician corps」

Eihwaz shouted without pause, but Count Bailleys did not agree.

「We do not have enough mages. I'll need you to instruct the mages on how to deal with the swordsmen, and then we'll head to Count Olmes' residence」

「You have a court magician right! No, wait. Is now the time for it huh?」

「That's right. Ashtner was probably aiming for a time when royal capital's troop strength would be reduced」

It seems that half of the knights and magician have been dispatched to a magical land near the royal capital. The magical land itself is not that dangerous, as it is said to be a class C area. However, once every four years, a large outbreak of locust-shaped magical beasts occurs. In order to exterminate the locusts, the strength of the royal capital would be reduced by half.

Marquis Ashtner naturally knew about it, of course, and he must have timed his rebellion to coincide with that period.

「As a reward, I'll try to lift the bounty that has been placed on you!」

「A bounty?」

「Umu. So much for being a free man, right? I'm sure there's a bounty or two on your head」

「I see」

I thought about it at the same time as Fran did.

「Fun. I don't really care about it, and I don't mind if you didn't lift it. But, well.....When you're done with this, you'll send me the materials you've confiscated. And I'll take a sample, okay?」

「...We'll do everything we can to accommodate you.」

「Kukuh. So be it, I'll take care of the magicians」

「Please don't do anything rash」

「I know」

「.....You don't seem to understand. That's why I had to remind you」

Count Bailleys exhaled lightly as he looked at the square where the rescue still continued.

It seems that Bailleys is aware of Eihwaz character. He probably doesn't want to use him, but there is no way to avoid using such a talented person in this situation. In the end, the only thing he can do is to fish for profit and nail him.

「I beg you, please」

「Kukuh. I know I know」

You're not going to comply with this, are you?



# **Chapter 444: Marquis' Residence**

## Chapter 444: Marquis' Residence

After Count Bailleys sorted the force, Fran was among the adventurers led by Eliante.

「Then, we are going too」

「I rely on you, Eliante」

「I know. Then come with me, Black Lightning Princess」

「Nn」

At the command of Eliante, the guild master, all the adventurers rush out at once. The core of the group was Fran, Eliante, and Colbert, but the other 20 were probably all rank D or higher.

On the way, he gives us information about the rank A adventurer who was sent to Marquis Ashtner's residence.

「The one who was sent to Marquis Residence was 『Sword of the West Wind』」

「Sword of the West Wind? Is that a party?」

「You didn't know? A small, elite party led by a rank A adventurer, 『Zephyrd of the Skywall』」

When Fran said she didn't know the name, the adventurers around her looked at her with astonishment and dismay. They must be a very famous adventurer party.

The adventurers around us are telling her more details as we go. It seems that Sword of the West Wind is a very powerful party, made up of rank B adventurers except for Zephyrd.

It is said that Zephyrd's individual abilities are inferior to Forrund and Amanda. However, as a party, Zephyrd is the best in the country and is said to be more stable than Forrund and the others who are solo.

「And they are usually famous among people with common sense」

「Nn? What do you mean?」

It didn't make sense at first, but now that it's been explained, I can understand it better. It's hard to say that high-ranking adventurers are sensible people no matter how you look at it. Among them, by having common sense will make them stand out.

「Forrund, Amanda, Eihwaz, and also, Fran. You're not exactly a person with common sense, right?」

「Nn?」

Fran is tilting her head, but I had to nod mine. Well, I'd like to tell Eliante to put her own name in there. I guess it just goes to show that no one really knows who themselves is.

『I'm looking forward to meet them』

(Nn)

Maintaining a fairly high speed while conversing like this, the group arrived at Marquis Ashtner's residence. There was still a fierce battle going on there.

「I can't see Zephyrd and the others around? It's no use. We'll take this place in one fell swoop——」

「Hold on. Leave it to me!」

「Eh? Wa——」

Fran interrupted Eliante's words and accelerated alone.

『The first thing we need to do is disable the pseudo fanatic sword』

「Nn!」

I think I'll imitate from Eihwaz ways here. No, As expected, I can't spread poison magic around like him.

The first thing I did was to try to shoot one magic shot, but it was cancelled just as I intended. After all, they don't just see my magic and cancel it out, but they are constantly activating their magic cancelling power.

『Yosh, we can do this!』

「Nn」

The magic I use was a magic that does not harm our allies when activated. It was healing magic. By putting in an excessive amount of magic power, the range is increased.

As I thought, I couldn't cover all of the vast garden that couldn't be called a garden anymore, but if we used it while moving around, we could cover a lot of ground.

We continued to run around the battlefield at high speed, activating our ranged healing magic. And we make sure that most of the enemies in the vicinity have used up their magic.

There may be a few who are safe, but with our strength, a few of them are not a problem.

『The ones in this garden have already lost their magic!』

「Eliante! You can use your magic and skills now!」

「Eh?」

When Fran used magic to show them in front of the bewildered Eliante, their actions were quick.

At Eliante's command, the adventurers headed towards the enemy at once. Together with the surviving knights, they annihilated the swordsmen who had been parasitized by the pseudo fanatic sword.

However, Fran's expression did not clear up. There was a reason why we were in such a hurry to get rid of the pseudo fanatic sword.

(Master, any presence inside the mansion?)

『There is!』

There was a strange presence emanating from inside the house. But Eliante and the others didn't seem to notice it. Fran couldn't sense it either. It must be the same kind of mysterious disgust that only I can sense.

The next moment, however, Eliante and the others changed their complexion. A powerful magic power was emitted from inside the house. It was enough pressure to make Fran change her complexion too. The adventurers and knights seemed to have noticed this as well.

It was right after that.

BOOOOOOOOM!

With a tremendous roar, something bursts through the wall of the mansion.

「Guh.....!」

It was a man with scars all over his body. His green hair and masculine face peeked out from between his shattered full face. It wasn't just his helmet. The metal armor he wore had holes in it, as if it had melted in places, and a lot of blood was pouring out.

Seeing the man, Eliante raises her voice.

「Zephyrd!」

How, this half-dead man was a rank A adventurer!

It is true that his abilities are tremendous. He seems to be a warrior who specializes in shields, and has a level 7 shield saint skill (3). In addition to that, he has a wide range of skills that increase his defense, such as barrier and body strengthening.

His attack power is low, but with this man, he can defend against most attacks. A rank A adventurer who specializes in defense is about to die? What the hell was he fighting?

「Gu-guild master...huh...?」

「Greater Heal!」

In a flash, Fran healed him with magic. However, one shot was not enough to make him fully recovered. After that, she used several shots of Greater Heal and managed to recover Zephyrd.

「...That guy is, a monster」

「That guy?」

「Everyone was, killed by him! It's coming!」

Is it frustration, fear, or despair? Zephyrd's face twisted into a scream. There was none of the dignity of a rank A adventurer in his voice.

「It's Marquis Ashtner!」

From: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-444.html>

# Chapter 445: Marquis Ashtner

Rank A adventurer, Zephyrd, screamed.

「It's Marquis Ashtner!」

Then, a figure slowly emerged from the large hole in the wall of the mansion that had been blown open by Zephyrd.

So, this guy is Marquis Ashtner. He wears magic armor and cloak made of orichalcon, it was so gorgeous and gilded as much as possible. You could probably have enough fund to build a small fort with just the armor.

He was a skinny, bald, and unhealthy-looking old man.

His skin has lost all moisture and looks like the trunk of a cracked old tree. His eye sockets are deeply sunken, and underneath are dark circles that look as if they were painted with black ink. He has no beard, let alone hair. This makes him look more like a fake.

Despite of his lackluster appearance, his back was straight and his figure radiated a strange sense of intimidation.

His appearance is fearsome, as if a vicious spirit has taken over a mummy and is moving it. If this were a Hollywood movie set in Egypt, he would certainly be the boss.

Eliante mutters in disbelief as she stares at the old man.

「Is, Is that, that Marquis Ashtner? It 's not at the level of sudden change anymore」

「What do you mean?」

「Cause, that guy, When we met a few years ago, he was a lot fatter」

Apparently, his appearance has changed quite a bit. No, it seems that it is not only his appearance that has changed.

「In the first place, that magic power.....Is impossible」

「Nn?」

「Cuz that guy, He was supposed to be a liberal aristocrat who had hardly ever been on the battlefield.....I'm intimidated by magic like that...」

I see, she means he shouldn't be this strong. However, the current Marquis Ashtner has gained tremendous strength. It was clear from the appraisal.

Name: Wenaria Gale Ashtner

Age: 66 years old

Race: Human

Job: Sword Saint

State: Fanaticism, Superhumanization

Status Level: 36

HP: 911

MP: 1208

Strength: 541

Physical Strength: 320

Agility: 520

Intelligence: 169



Magic: 778

Dexterity: 123

Skill

Intimidation: LvMax, Acting: Lv2, Flame Magic: Lv7, Singing: Lv3, Complete Barrier: Lv6, Crisis Detection: Lv8, Riding: Lv3, Vital Point Detection: Lv6, Court work: Lv7, Madness: LvMax, Presence Detection: Lv9, Sword Saint Technique: Lv7, Sword Saint Skill: LvMax, Negotiation: Lv4, Superhuman Strength: Lv7, Poetry: Lv5, Socializing: Lv3, Instantaneous Regeneration: Lv7, Instant Blink: Lv6, Abnormal Condition Resistance: Lv7, Life Steal: Lv4, Elemental Sword: Lv8, Earth Magic: Lv4, Poison Resistance: Lv7, Poison Knowledge: Lv6, Vigour: Lv7, Dancing: Lv3, Magic Resistance: Lv8, Magic Detection: Lv9, Magic Steal: Lv6, Magma Magic: Lv8, Enhanced Intimidation, Chant less, Enhanced Regeneration, Body Strengthening, Sense of Balance, Magic Control, Night Vision.

Unique Skill

Vitality Control

Extra Skill

Superhuman

Title

Weak Will, Marquis, Spender

To put it bluntly, he was stronger than a rank A adventurer. He was as strong as the Beast King. His skills were especially amazing. Sword Saint Skill: Lv. 10 is probably the highest level of our enemies this far.

Is the high status due to his extra skill of superhuman? As the name suggests, he really is a superhuman.

Moreover, the composition of his skills is strange. While there were high-level skills such as sword saint skill, flame magic, and magic steal, there were no lower-level skills that were prerequisites for them. It was as if he was suddenly given only those skills in one day.

It's like my skill sharing with Fran.

The Marquis opens his mouth in front of us, who shudder at his strength.

「——Kihihihhi, I got a lot of small fry here...」

His expression was completely unchanging, but the atmosphere of his words sounded like a lowly thug. To begin with, it was strange that he could talk, unlike the others who were controlled by pseudo fanatic swords.

More to the point, Marquis Ashtner did not have a pseudo fanatic sword stuck in him. And yet, he didn't have that half-broken demon sword in his hand either.

But since his state had become fanaticism, it was certain that he was being manipulated.

「So, you are Ashtner?」

「I wonder?」

I got the impression that something inside Ashtner was using his mouth to speak. No, maybe it was definitely something other than Ashtner.

「Well, why don't you just die anyway?」

「Everyone! Gather around!」

「Kuhahaha! Volcanic Gazer!」

Hearing Eliante's instructions, the adventurers tried to gather around Eliante, but it was a moment too late.

As if in response to Marquis Ashtner's words, a tremendous amount of bright red lava spewed out, breaking the ground of the Marquis' residence.

Magma rose up like a fountain from the deep fissures in the earth that had been created in every direction. The super-heated magma turned into a tsunami that swallowed the adventurers and knights in the garden. We quickly set up wind barrier around the area, but it couldn't protect everyone.

A few adventurers and knights were swallowed by the lava and disappeared without even being able to scream. After the magic ended, the lava vanished as if it had been an illusion. Not a single human corpse was left in its wake. It seemed that they had completely turned into charcoal and disappeared.

A few remnants of magic armor were all that remained of their existence.

「This is dangerous.....If he fires a bunch of magic, we can't do anything to block it off...! All adventurers of rank C or lower except Fran evacuate immediately! Evacuate the surrounding residents!」

They must have realized that the small fry would only slow them down. Eliante instructed the adventurers.

「You're not getting away!」

The Marquis readied himself to pursue the fleeing adventurers.

『Fran, I'll cover the adventurer's retreat! Go at once! If we do wait and see approach here, we'll only be killed!』

「Nn! Awakening! Brilliant Lightning Rush!」

He must have noticed the presence emanating from the awakened Fran. Marquis Ashtner stopped his pursuit of the adventurer and turned his gaze to Fran. But our preparations are already over.

『Superhuman or whatever he is, you can't ignore us right? Kuraaaaa!』

「Thor Hammer!」

My release of Kanna Kamui and Fran's Thor Hammer intertwine and rain down on Marquis Ashtner. No matter how strong he is, he won't be able to handle the speed of lightning. This speed and the high hit rate are the strengths of thunderbolt magic.

「Oaaaaaaaaaaaaa!」

The white lightning, we released hit the Marquis directly. However, to our surprise, the Marquis had clothed his sword, which he had pulled out of the item bag at his waist, with magic power and was receiving our magic. For several seconds, the Marquis resisted the extreme magic that poured down on him incessantly. In the end, the Marquis could not endure and his figure was swallowed by the lightning, but it is still an opponent that cannot be measured by common sense.

『Fran, Lets go!』

「Nn!」

I don't think we could have defeated it with just that. Just before the lightning struck its body, I saw that he had put up a barrier. Besides, he has high resistant to magic.

Defying the shock and blast generated by Kanna Kamui, Fran ran toward it's center.

『I knew it, there's still a presence! Its definitely Ashtner!』

「Nn! Haaaa!」

Fran unleash Sheaths of Wind to the presence. However, her attack was caught by Marquis Ashtner's sword.

Giiiiinn!

My blade clashed with his sword, and a high-pitched sound echoed.

『Tsk! Is that sword specially made too huh?』

I was going to cut the whole sword! It seems, the name of the sword was Pseudo Fanatic Sword, but the shape was a longsword. Its appearance was not that of an Estoc-type pseudo fanatic sword, but more like the half-destroyed magic sword.

「Kihihihi! That's hurt you know!」

「Muh!」

As expected of the holder of highest level of sword saint skill. His sword handling was on par with Fran's. He must have taken quite a bit of damage from Kanna Kamui, but the instant regeneration had healed his wounds.

But, that's not all.

「I'm losing my power...?」

『It must be his Life steal and Magic Steal!』

Due to the higher skill level of the other side, we were losing the battle of attrition. We were clearly at a disadvantage in endurance battle.

「Haaaa!」

「Nice work, little girl! I haven't felt pain in hundreds of years!」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-445.html>

# Chapter 446: Talkative Fanatic Swords

The Marquis's mansion burns up. With that as the background, Marquis Ashtner, who was engaged in a fierce slugfest with Fran, laughed vulgarly, still wearing the same expressionless face.

「Nice work, little girl! I haven't felt pain in hundreds of years!」

First pain in hundreds of years? I knew it, this wasn't Marquis Ashtner himself.

「What are you?」

「Well, I wonder? We'd love to know too. What are we?」

It sounded like he was trying to smoke me out, but strangely enough, I didn't feel that he was trying to hide it. He seemed to be serious about it.

「Was it 100 years, or Was it 500 years, or even 1000 years? I'm not sure anymore. But I vaguely remember that I was about to be destroyed by the Holy Order!」

Holy Order? I remember it! It's one of the divine swords that Alistair taught me about! Holy Order, the Spirit Sword - Holy Order. It's said to have been made to be used against Fanatics.

This is already clear. Fanatics are behind this incident. No, on the contrary, it seems that something inside the Marquis was Fanatics it self.

However, a question remains. The Marquis is holding a pseudo fanatic sword. Is it a fake or does he have a real one hidden somewhere?

But still, Fanatics was an Intelligence weapon the same as me...If that's the case, then it's possible for Marquis to be a puppet and the mastermind is Fanatics.

「Haaa!」

「Kuh!」

Naturally, the high-speed sword fights continued even during the conversation. The sword fights were so fierce that Colbert and Eliante could not intervene.

Marquis Ashtner, who has the Sword Saint Skill: Lv. 10, and Fran, who has not yet perfected the Sword King Skill. As a result, the two of them were almost evenly matched in their sword skills.

「.....Are you Fanatics」

「Fanatics? Come to think of it, do we have a name like that...? Hey, are we Fanatics?」

「I'm the one asking you」

「Kuhahaha! You're right!」

In the first place. We? Why "we" and not "me"?

「Why "we"?」

「Aah. We are. One in many. All in one. We're all of us! Ha ha ha! Even in your sword, there's us!」

What? They're inside me?

「What do you mean?」

「It doesn't even have an ego, it's just a fragment separated from us, but it's still us! That magic sword of yours, does it have the power to absorb magic power?」

Could it be that he was referring to the power of the pseudo fanatic sword that I absorbed through cannibalism? Maybe the pseudo fanatic sword was imbued with a small amount of the magic power from Fanatics.

As I recall, the Fanatics' ability is to take in the consciousness and memories of the person they cut and identify them with themselves. If that's the case, it wouldn't be surprising if he had more than one consciousness.

I'm gonna be okay, right?

「That's it! Give me that sword! It's made of Orichalcos isn't it? It might heal our wounds!」

「I refuse!」

「Kahahaha! Even so, you're pretty good, aren't you? I never thought you'd go this far with this special body!」

The topic has changed again. It was either too manic, or too talkative, or just talk too much.

As I slammed my sword into the Marquis, Fran asked a question. The Marquis, who had caught me with his sword, replied with a cool face in the midst of the tremendous shockwaves rolling around us.

「What do you mean?」

「This is a special body that has been adjusted over nearly 40 years!」

「40 years? Adjustment?」

「That's right. The only way to create a body with transcendent power is to slowly modify it with drugs and our abilities over time! Goddamn it! In the past, I could create as many strong troops as I wanted! Now I can only give them a few skills they're suited for!」

So, not only can Fanatics integrate the powers of others, but they can also give them? If they can give skills and experience as they please, then they could mass produce the most fearsome soldiers.



What if this legion of soldiers was as powerful as Marquis Ashtner were to work in perfect coordination under the Fanatics' consciousness? Moreover, given the Fanatics' capabilities, they could be replenished at any time. It would be terribly dangerous.

「I've experimented with his sons, his vassal's sons, and all kinds of random people I've captured in this town!」

Could that be Serdio or Auguste? I let Fran ask.

「Serdio? Auguste?」

「Ooh? You know them? In the end, I couldn't recover the mental manipulation skills and unique skills I gave them! Unlike swordsmanship and magic, which can be replenished as much as I want, those skills are very valuable!」

So, the skills that Serdio and Auguste had been given to them by Fanatics.

「On that note, this guy's has been modified for 40 years! Most of the skills we have can be transferred! Hyahahahaha!」

The Marquis laughs loudly. He talks a lot, doesn't he? It seems he can't stop talking even during battle. Thanks to him, I can get a lot of useful information, but it's difficult to know how much to watch. In addition to the Steal skills used by the Marquis, Fran's life and magic power are gradually diminishing due to the wear caused by the Brilliant Lightning Rush, even though it looks like an even fight.

Somewhere along the line, we had to stop gathering information and start pushing at once.

However, it was Marquis Ashtner who made the first move. He may have realized that this fight would get nowhere, or he may have grown tired of talking. The Marquis distanced himself from Fran.

「For Example, we could do something like this! Magma Wall! Earth Shooter! and, Sword Sonic!」

The Marquis shoots out a huge rock at the wall of lava that has been created and the bursting lava rained down on Fran like a spray. In addition, the shock waves created by the sword saint skills fly after her.

If we try to dodge the bullets and shockwaves of earth magic, we will be damaged by the rain of lava. If we try to catch them with barriers, our movements will slow down. If we try to completely avoid a wide range of attacks, our movements will become monotonous.

I guess they want to take advantage of that.

But we are also looking for an opening. We'll use this attack against them.

「Earth Wall!」

Blinding him with an earth wall——.

「Haaaa!」

「Kihihhi! You used teleport huh!」

「Tsk!」

He's as perceptive as a monster! A slash from behind was easily deflected! But I've already factored this in!

『Fran! I'm all set!』

「Nn! Haaaa!」

Fran slashed at him again, nailing the Marquis in place. The Marquis, who doesn't mind a prolonged battle, gladly responded to the slash. Without knowing what its aim is.

「I'm fine with it! Another slashing match huh?」

「Wrong」

『Eat this!』

There, I unleashed Kanna Kamui again, it rained down on him. And it was a converged and more powerful version.

「Wha, Even if you are in this too?」

「Won't let you go!」

「Damn!」

He can't afford to be in the middle of a slashing match with Fran. Fran has a thunderbolt nullification. I just need to use my Dimension Shift for a moment and pass it off.

「Haaa!」

「Little Girl!!!」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-446.html>

# Chapter 447: An Expert and an Amateur

A pillar of white lightning swallowed Fran and the Marquis, piercing the sky and earth with a roar.

When the huge amount of dust settled, there was a crater about five meters in diameter and Marquis Ashtner were groaning on one knee in the middle of it.

Unlike Fran and her equipment, which is protected by her thunderbolt nullification, the Marquis's orichalcon magic armor is half-melted and smoke is rising from his whole body.

The reason why the crater is smaller than I imagined is because the Marquis quickly created a wall with magma magic to reduce the power. In that time, Fran cut off his left arm. Well, half of it has already almost regenerated.

「Gogaah.....」

However, I think he knows that by getting down on one knee, he is showing the biggest opening. He turned his ghostly eyes toward us. He was ready for any move Fran might make.

Fran moved away slightly to avoid the lava barrier, but she took the opportunity and prepared for a follow-up attack.

She let the black lightning rack up and stepped in at once. With that momentum, she struck Marquis Ashtner with a slash from above.

「There's an opening!」

「Guooooooooo!」

Gagiiiiiii!

A moment of fierce clash.

Marquis Ashtner is far superior in terms of strength, but he is in the disadvantageous position of being on one knee and wielding his sword with one hand. On the other hand, Fran swung me from above while keeping her speed. In addition, the black lightning that flowed through my sword was damaging his arm.

As a result, the swords of the two sides were locked against each other, and both sides stopped moving. However, this was exactly what Fran were aiming for.

She didn't make eye contact, nor did she give any signal. But Fran seemed sure of it.

There was no way Eliante and the others would miss this opportunity.

「Dieeeeeee!」

「Sonic Blow!」

「Spiral Bash!」

In the face of the overwhelming power of Fran and the Marquis, Eliante and the others realized that they could not do anything about it, so they gathered their strength, looking for an opening.

Their attacks attacked the Marquis at once. Eliante's great sword, clothed in Ki, swung down at super high speed, Colbert and Zephyrd's mid-range attacks pierced him from both sides.

In particular, Eliante's blow was as powerful as Fran's serious Sheaths of Wind.

The Marquis——They are indeed strong (1). They have superhuman-level bodies and overwhelming skills. In addition, the way they fought, they were able to handle those skills perfectly. This is why his sword saint skill were able to clash each other evenly with her sword king skill.

But when it came to battle tactics, there seemed to be a breakdown. The Marquis is literary a civilian from the beginning, and the Fanatics-like beings who control his body are not considered to be professionals in combat. We can overwhelm him with our abilities in a head-on fight, but in subtle tactics, we're losing to him.

Zephyrd and his party member have been destroyed because they had confronted him head-on with a straightforward attack. In the first place, they were not expecting an opponent that would launch a series of attacks that would break Zephyrd's shield.

Moreover, he had the conceit of a strong man. He was clearly trying to get a handle on us. Eliante and the others didn't even seem to be paying attention. The fact that he drives the existence around him out of his consciousness was also amateurish.

「Guaaaa!」

Marquis Ashtner is blown away by the attacks of three people. Even so, he managed to keep Eliante's sword out of the way, which was impressive.

「GugaGAga...Small fry gaah! You're getting carried away!」

His speech is a little slurred, probably due to the broken bones in his neck. However, he glared at Eliante and the others who were standing around him with eyes laced with killing intent, intimidating them.

「I'm gonna kill you!」

I knew it, you're still an amateur. While you're talking about killing them, you should be taking action. My brother in Pro-sh○t (2) said something similar!

And Fran is a pro at that, you know?

「First, I'll mess this area with magma——」

As he turned his killing intent to Eliante and the others, his attention was diverted from Fran for a moment. It was only for a moment, but it was our chance.

It was more than enough of an opening for us. Fran, who showed superhuman reflexes, started preparing the moment the Marquis showed an opening. It is the preparation for unleashing the sword king technique.

She is not yet at the stage where she can unleash the sword king technique anytime, anywhere. She still needed to make a preliminary movement to swing the sword over her heads, and a comfortable posture to swing it out. In addition, she needed time to knead her magic power. She would need a few moments to prepare for this.

No, if the opponent was a small fish, there would be no problem. A moment of this magnitude could not be called a gap. However, if the opponent was an equal match for Fran, it was a fatal moment.

However, thanks to the gap Ashtner had shown us, we had time to get ready. Almost as soon as Fran finishes her preparations, I teleported her body.

From my teleport, Fran uses me to unleash the Sword King Technique - Heaven Judgement. If we don't count the self-destructive effects such as Sword God Transformation and Potential Release, this is probably the strongest blow we can unleash right now.

「——Heaven Judgement」

「Guu, Aaa.....!」

The Marquis reacted to this as well, his crisis detection and his sword saint skill gave him an insight. In addition, he sensed the presence of a spatial magic through his presence detection. That's what we are aiming for.

Thanks to the fact that the Marquis had quickly slipped his pseudo fanatic sword between himself and me, I was able to attack the sword and the Marquis with a single blow.

I was swung out by Fran, who easily cut off the pseudo fanatic sword and instantly pierced through Marquis Ashtner's right shoulder and his left side. There was no response, as if I had sliced through a mass of air.

However, right after that, the tip of the pseudo fanatic sword that was broke from its middle fell. Then, a line was drawn on Marquis Ashtner's body, and black blood spurted out from it at once.

「Li-Little, Girl.....」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-447.html>



# Chapter 448: Superhumanization + Potential Release

Marquis Ashtner fell into a puddle of blood as his body was split upside down. Beside him, the tip of a pseudo fanatic sword that had also been severed fell.

I braced myself, thinking that the cannibalism would be triggered, but the freakiness didn't strike me yet. In other words, the fanatics parasitizing inside Marquis Ashtner must not be dead yet.

Isn't the pseudo fanatic sword his main body? If that's the case, doesn't that mean we have to stop the Marquis from breathing in order to defeat him?

『Fran, not yet!』

「Nn! Haaaa!」

The stiffness caused by the release of the sword king technique has ended and Fran began to move again. Next, she unleashed Sheaths of Wind. It was aimed at Marquis's head. The Marquis's lower body could be seen growing out in a flash due to instant regeneration, but this attack was faster.

「You piece of shiiiiit!」

「Hmph!」

『Tsk!』

What a surprise, Marquis Ashtner put up a powerful barrier to block Fran's attack. He must have focused the barrier on a single point. She slashed his head deeply, but it wasn't enough to sever it.

No, normally a cut to the brain would kill someone instantly, but the current Marquis with his enhanced vitality still can't be defeated by this.

But even so, isn't it a little strange? It seems too strong for a barrier that was put up on the spur of the moment. I appraised the Marquis Ashtner again and found out why the barrier had suddenly increased in strength.

What a surprise, he had entered a state of Potential Release. The superhumanization skill had made him stronger, and now he had released his potential. His status was unquestionably rank S.

It would have been nice to be able to take away superhuman skills and such with a skill taker, but it was still impossible to use due to the fact that it was used to turn Asurasu (1) into a mad demon.

「You bitch, I'll kill you here! And I'll take that magic sword too!」

The Marquis tries to stand up while shouting it.

「This body will die here, but it doesn't matter as long as I have that magic sword and that little girl!」

Apparently, they can enter a state potential release, but they can't deactivate it. It's no wonder they haven't been used this much. Unlike other disposable bodies, they took 40 years to prepare. They must have regretted it.

『Don't give him a chance to stand!』

「Haaa!」

I tried to stop the Marquis from moving by unleashing a series of mid-level thunderbolt magic, but it had little effect. It is likely that his magic resistance itself has been strengthened.

『Tsk! A light attack won't do any good anymore!』

The Marquis who stood up concentrated a barrier on his left arm and thrusts it out against Fran, who was about slashes at him. The back fists of the Marquis and I collide.

A moment ago, Marquis Ashtner's arm would have been wounded. But now, the Marquis' power was overwhelming. My blade was easily flicked above and a pseudo fanatic sword was thrust into Fran's vacant torso. The shortened blade is covered with magic power to compensate for its lost length.

「Diieee!」

「Ghaah...!」

Thanks to the fact that she had twisted around at the last second, she had avoided being pierced through her heart, but the pseudo fanatic sword had pierced her abdomen deeply. The tip of the blade protruded from Fran's back.

In that state, I could sense Marquis Ashtner's hand getting stronger. I hurriedly made a short distance teleport.

「Oraa!」

It was just in time. Marquis Ashtner had swung his sword, which was still stuck in Fran's body, with all his might and was about to forcibly rip out her heart.

The pseudo fanatic sword wielded by the Marquis was cutting the sky in vain.

『Fran! I'll heal you now!』

「Nn...!」

「Hiyahahaha!」

「!」

Too fast! The next thing I know, he was right next to her. Now I know what it's like to fight Fran!

When she received the pseudo fanatic sword that strikes me, it alone reduces my endurance value significantly and blows Fran right out to the sky.

She must have been blown over ten meters. In addition, the Marquis had already moved to where Fran jumped and was waiting for her.

「Kuh!」

She leapt into the air, kicked her feet to get into position, and then accelerated to slash at the Marquis herself. This is the only way to escape from the situation.

The Marquis' eyes widened a little, as if he didn't expect Fran to attack him. Marquis Ashtner's sword was raised in a panic to intercept Fran and clashed again—but it didn't. Just before that, I teleported Fran.

In the blink of an eye, Marquis Ashtner had been outmaneuvered twice and was completely out of position. Her second sword king technique of the day was released on him.

「Haaaaaaa!」

「Hyahaaaaa!」

However, there was a gap between them that could not be bridged by a little trickery. The Marquis had even reacted to the God Speed of a Sword King technique and dodged it.

I was going to smash his brain, but I only managed to slice off the Marquis' left arm, while the Marquis' left leg, swung up in the opposite direction, pierced Fran's right side.

I activated my telekinesis to reduce the power, but Fran still spat blood and blew over 20 meters. As her body slammed into the ground again and again, she managed to break through the wall of the Marquis' residence and somehow stopping.

「Kuh...Gefuh...」

『Use regeneration!』

Fran writhes around, spitting blood and gastric juices back into her mouth. Not only were her internal organs in bad shape, but the rest of her body was in bad shape as well. She is bruised all over from the impact of her continuous bouncing on the ground, and she has some deep cuts. Both of her legs are probably broken as well.

It was amazing that she didn't let go of me in this state. Her eyes weren't dead either. After recovering her legs through regeneration, Fran stood up dazedly, fighting off the pain. She still intends to fight.

But I couldn't agree more. I was able to heal her wounds, but at this rate, she would definitely lose. In addition to the overwhelming difference in ability, Marquis Ashtner's latent ability has been released, increasing the power of his life steal and magic steal. Even now, Fran's power was being sucked out of her at a fairly rapid rate.

In this state, I can sense a large heat source coming towards the room where Fran is. If it can't be decided with my sword, we'll have to use magic! While using magic to prevent the tsunami of lava from avalanching into the room, I suggested to Fran that we make a tactical retreat.

『Let's get out of here! and get some distance!』

He doesn't have space and time magic. If we keep our distance, he'll just destroy himself! But Fran didn't nod her head.

(No! Eliante and the others are going to be killed!)

『But, if this goes on like this, Fran will——』

(There's something I haven't tried yet! If that doesn't work, let's run away!)

『Something you haven't tried?』

(Nn!)

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-448.html>

# Chapter 449: Brilliant Lightning Rush+????

(There's something I haven't tried yet! If that doesn't work, let's run away!

『Something you haven't tried?』

(Nn!)

「Kuhahaha! Diieee!」

「Kuh!」

With a determined look on her face, Fran managed to catch the swing of the Marquis, who had pursued her under the cover of magma magic. The impact was so strong that makes Fran frowned.

「Shaaa!」

「Guh!」

Marquis Ashtner slammed his left fist into her, taking advantage of her inability to kill the momentum. Fran flew backwards as fast as she could, but the fist dug into her cheek. It seems that she tried to twist her neck to further reduce the force of the blow, but there was no way she could completely fend off the attack of an opponent who boasted the strength of a monster.

Fran's cheeks were instantly swollen. But it's a good thing that the Marquis doesn't have any hand-to-hand fighting skills. She didn't have to be wrenched or let the impact penetrate.

However, the current Marquis was not so naive as to take a wait-and-see approach here. The fact that he was prepared to kill Fran by self-destructing probably made him feel less insulted by us.

「Volcanic Gazer!」

We could see the magma rising in a much wider area than the magic the Marquis had unleashed at the beginning. It seems to have doubled in power and range.

Not only the Marquis' residence, but also the surrounding mansions are involved.

I don't know what he's planning to do, but they'd better hurry or he'll push them away! This magic didn't kill Eliante and the others in the first place, right?

Honestly, I don't know which one I want more. I don't think I want her to be dead, but I thought that if she was, Fran might be more inclined to run away.

I know it sounds horrible, but that's what true intention.

When I searched the safety of Eliante and the others, It seems that the three of them are still alive and working together. If that's the case, they can probably prevent the magic.

I was a bit relieved.

While dispersing waves of lava with wind magic, Fran set me up. Her eyes are not dead. She's going to do something. What are you going to do? Do you want to bet it all on the combination of Brilliant Lightning Rush and Sword God Transformation?

But I had a bad feeling about this. For some reason, I knew I had to stop Fran. Had my crisis detection done its job?

『Wait, Fran—What happen to your body——』

But before I could stop her, Fran muttered in a strong voice.

「Potential Release!」

『Wha! Aa! Stop!』

Right now, you're still using Brilliant Lightning Rush, and your powers are being robbed by his skills!

An enormous amount of magic power swirled around Fran, radiating a tremendous presence. It was on a level comparable to that of Marquis Ashtner.

It can be said that her status are doubled. Her agility is over 1000, and her other stats are all over 800. Can they be enhanced this much? No, when I think about it, Fran is still a child. It would not be surprising if the latent ability that lies dormant within her is even more powerful.

The air around us vibrated violently as the magic power released by Marquis Ashtner and the magic power released by Fran collided.

「Here i come!」

『Aaah! Understood!』

I can't do anything about it anymore. The potential release that Fran had used could only be deactivated by her. So, there was no choice but to decide the fight before the destruction came.

I was tempted to ignore Fran's wishes and run away with teleport already, but I couldn't despise her determination.

「Haaaa!」

With her potential release, Fran has acquired a power that rivals that of Marquis Ashtner, and she unleashes slashes with a speed that even I can't see.



Fast! But not messy. It's just a mere slash, but it would exceed the sheaths of wind. Not just rank C or D, even a Colbert-class adventurer might not be able to react and be slashed one-sidedly.

「Thi-this is...!」

The Marquis was astonished when he saw Fran's sudden increase in speed. But even so, the current Marquis had the ability to react.

「Aaaaaa!」

「This brat!」

But while Fran had been outmatched earlier, this time they were evenly matched. Neither one of them was blown away, and both were in a tight competition.

A fierce battle that lasted less than a few tenths of a second.

At that moment, as if to shrug off the Marquis's efforts to push back, Fran teleported a short distance away.

Of course, I'm the one who made the teleport. But there were no instructions from Fran. But I knew exactly what Fran was feeling and how she wanted to move.

It seems that the potential release has strengthened the bond between me and Fran. To put it another way, Fran is perfectly capable of using me as her own sword.

『The image of me being an extension of Fran's arm flows in. Is this the feeling of being used as a sword by the wielder? .....』

I was being treated as a sword. But I didn't hate it at all. In fact, I even felt a sense of fulfillment.

「What?」

「Fuh!」

The moment he put in the effort to blow Fran away, she has teleported, and the Marquis' movements stopped for a moment. It's not as if the current Marquis was going to lose his stance, but he didn't have enough energy left to completely dodge Fran's slash behind him.

「Shii! Haa!」

「Sh\*t! So sudden!」

While repeating the ultra-short distance teleport and the high-speed movement by Brilliant Lightning Rush in succession, Fran continues to attack the Marquis in succession.

It was the final onslaught that burned Fran's life. However, it was not enough to defeat the Marquis. Seeing Fran's life force weaken rapidly, he must have realized that this attack would not last long. The Marquis continued to handle Fran's attacks while showing a look of impatience.

There's not much life left in her. No matter how he looked at her, everything will be used up.

The Marquis grinned, as if convinced of his own victory.

Without knowing that this was Fran's aim.

Fran had been inducing the Marquis to breathe while cutting herself down by continuing to attack at a certain speed and timing. Then, she suddenly made a move to disrupt that timing.

The Marquis held up his pseudo fanatic sword in a slightly unreasonable position in order to guard against the horizontal cleave blow that was fired from right beside him. However, the impact did not come at the timing the Marquis had predicted.

「Black Thunder Roll!」

Just before the attack was received by the pseudo fanatic sword, Fran's body turned into a single strand of black lightning and moved to the opposite side as fast as instant teleportation.

Thanks to the potential release, she is now able to use the Black Thunder Roll, which she could not use before.

Oddly enough. This was very similar to the attack Kiara had made on Zelos Reed. Even though I wasn't watching, I felt something hot and unfeeling when I saw Fran perform a similar attack.

『Gooo! Fraaan!』

「Haaaaaaaaa!」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-449.html>

# Chapter 450: Trade-off

『Gooo! Fraaan!』

「Haaaaaaaaa!」

What's released from the Black thunder Roll is the Sword King technique - Heaven Judgement.

It seems that the benefits from using potential release were not only limited to the black thunder roll, the enhanced status, and the improved coordination with me. What's more, it was now possible to perform the sword king technique from an unprepared stance, something that was impossible before.

A cut-up released from an impossible posture after using Black Thunder Roll. That cut-up was released as a Sword king technique.

But the cost was great. A deafening buzzing and bumping sound were coming from within Fran. All the muscles in her body were tearing due to the tremendous burden to her young body, mixed with the sound of something hard cracking. It seems not only her muscles, but her bones were also broken.

But Fran endured all the pain. She gritted her teeth and swing me out.

It's an attack that can be called a god speed, but Fran's ability to unleash it has been greatly increased by her potential release. It is her fastest attack today. There is no way to dodge it.

However, the opponent was also a monster outside of the norm. As soon as he realized he couldn't dodge, he gave up trying to avoid it.

Then, he switched to prepare for a trade-off.

The Marquis concentrated all of his barriers on his side just before the Sword King Technique hit him. Of course, there was no way he could prevent the Sword king technique, it would have only delayed the direct hit by a few tenths of a second or less.

However, in the current fight between Fran and the Marquis, that time could be a major factor in determining victory or defeat.

As the Marquis was being torn apart by me, he used the moment he had to thrust out his sword. It's a full thrust with everything he has left in him. It's a great way to make sure you're getting the most out of your money. You can see that not only the magic power but even the life force is poured into the sword.

And Fran, who was in the midst of performing the sword king technique, had no time to dodge this thrust.

『Kuh....』

It would be dangerous for Fran to take this thrust now that she has so little vitality left!

Teleport, telekinesis, and Potential Release. There is a way to prevent this attack. But only if we can do it in time. The attack was so fast that none of my skills would be able to activate in time. The sword is closing in on me even as I think about this in my thoughts that have been stretched out by space-time magic.

I'm already trying to activate the teleport, but I still can't make in time. It's too fast.

『Aaaaaaa!』

「AA——」

Marquis Ashtner, who was convinced that we were going to trade-off a blow with each other, had a dazed look of pleasure in his eyes.

Quickly!

O Teleport, please activate faster!!

Faster Faster Faster Faster——.

But I can't help at all, and the Marquis' thrust is sucked into Fran's torso.

Shiiiiit———?

「Wha?」

「Nn?」

It's not just me. Marquis Ashtner and Fran were also surprised. The Marquis must have felt the cut on Fran. And Fran is still feeling the impact of the cut.

Yet, for some reason, the wounds that were supposed to have been inflicted did not exist. Since there were no wounds, naturally there was no damage.

What's going on? No, no. That's not what's important right now. We should make the most of this opportunity. Of course, Fran would know that.

She had already sprung into action. She swung me up high and shouted.

「Haaaaa! Black Lightning God Claws!」 (1)

It seems that not only was the Black Thunder Roll available, but another Black Thunder technique was also available. I can feel the black lightning clinging to my sword blade.

Kiara created the sword of black lightning with this technique, but it is probably originally a technique to converge black lightning on the equipped weapon.

And this magic power. It had that holy feeling that I got when we use sword god transformation. It's not just a matter of gathering and solidifying black lightning, but it also seems to add a divine attribute.

「Thaaaaaaaaa!」

「Giiih!」

Marquis Ashtner, who was sliced into pieces by the sword king technique, is already dying. It was surprisingly easy to cut through the Marquis' body. At the same time, the black lightning scorches his body, and his entire body is carbonized.

But I didn't have time to look at the scene calmly.

「Gyaaaaaaaa!」

『Ugoooooh....! Th-this is...』

Immediately after the Marquis' desperate scream rang out, a tremendous amount of magic power flowed into me. At the same time, I felt an unbearable nausea.

『Uugh, Ugheeh! GuAghah...!』

Of course, I couldn't vomit, so I just had to endure the discomfort swirling inside. Because I still had a little bit of the feeling I had when I was human, I knew what it felt like to throw up and feel better after that. Therefore, I didn't think it would be this hard to endure.

『Guuh....』

But we're in a battle now. What happened to the Marquis?

I hurriedly looked around and saw Marquis Ashtner lying on the ground. There was no sign of regeneration, and he didn't move a muscle.

Did we win....? Apparently, we won. The last attack that she unleashed ended the life of the Marquis, and also stopped the Fanatics that were nesting within it.

(Master?)

『I'm fine. More than that, your potential release....』

(Already deactivated)

I see. that's Good....No, not good!

If I look closely, I can see that she has very little life force left. And she has almost no magic power.

Her complexion was at its worst, and her eyes were suspiciously unfocused to begin with.

「...Gohho...」

『Fran.....!』

Fran fell down coughing up blood! Are her internal organs damaged from repeated overexertion of her movements? She probably can't recover on her own due to her lack of magic power.

I still have a little bit of magic left in me. No, I've only recovered what I absorbed from the pseudo fanatic sword through cannibalism.

I put off my own recovery and used a healing spell on Fran. It was only a single mid-heal, but it would have saved her from dying. All at once, Fran's complexion improved and her ragged breathing became a little better.

『Fran...that was really dangerous!』

「But....」

『No but! If Ashtner's attack hadn't failed for some reason, you might have been dead!』

This was all due to the fact that she had used her potential release to force a decisive battle.

『Sure, it might have been necessary to win! But there could have been another way!』



「....Sorry」

『Don't make me worry.....I beg you』

「I'm sorry」

『Fran would be worried about me if she knew I might break, right?』

「Nn」

『It's the same for me. I thought Fran might die. I might going crazy』

「Nn....」

At first, Fran was indifferent, but gradually, a hint of remorse appeared on her face. She understood that I was really worried about her.

『....Do you understand now?』

「Nn. Won't use potential release anymore」

That's what she promised me. Fran is a girl who keeps her word once she says it. From now on, she will really refrain from using it without asking. I guess that's a bit of a relief.

『I hope you do understand. So, do you feel anything strange?』

The potential release skill come at a cost to use. For me, it's the magic stone value. So, what is it for Fran? I tried to appraise Fran, but I couldn't figure it out.

「Nn....?」

『You didn't know?』

「Nn」

Even Fran herself didn't seem to understand the cost. Is there something hidden? If it was a visible cost, i might have been possible to heal it.....

『You really don't get it, do you?』

「I'm Sorry」

『No, I'm not blaming you. But you know what? If you notice anything out of the ordinary, you tell me right away, okay?』

「Understood」

\_\_TLN\_\_

(1) 黒雷神爪 Kuro raijin tsume

(2) It's been a month since i started translating this series, if you have time, please take a moment to fill a survey by me about this website:  
<https://forms.gle/Z8mPsA1fLvVY8QV79>

(3) I posted this without linking it's link to novel updates or previous chapter, and it only got 3% of it's usual traffic. Thank you to those 3% who actually checked my site without those links.

# Chapter 451: Zephyrd of the Skywall

Fran escapes from the burning Marquis' mansion with a staggering gait.

It's no longer in original shape due to the fierce battle between the two of us. The debris and furnishings are scattered at our feet.

『You'd better drink this potion for the time being』

「Nn.....」

As she walked, she drank five high-grade potions I had given her and finally recovered about 20% of her life force and magic power. The potions didn't work so well. Could it be that her recovery power is decreasing due to potential release? Or is it because She has overworked her body too much?

Anyway, she was still in a dangerous state. Perhaps it was the accumulated fatigue, but her movements were dull.

Besides, my condition was pretty bad too. While not as bad as when I was in sword god transformation, my durability was greatly reduced and I was slow to recover from it. It was probably due to the divine attributes of the Black Lightning God Claw.

Maybe those who use divine attributes, besides Fran, are using their weapons as disposable. In fact, the Beast King said that he broke an orichalcon spear with his Spear King Technique.

No. Could it be that the divine attributes were affecting Fran as well? There was a possibility that this might be the reason for her slow recovery.

(Master, are you okay? You were screaming a while ago)

However, it seemed that Fran was worried about her partner as well. She asked in a caring voice.

『It was from the cannibalism, but I'll be fine』

(Really?)

『Yeah, the discomfort has subsided. Besides, that was a huge harvest』

Up until now, the pseudo-fanatic sword only increased my magic power and durability value by one even if it was destroyed and cannibalized. However, when i take the alter ego of the Fanatics that had possessed Marquis Ashtner, my magic power and durability increased by 300.

Although I didn't receive any self-evolution points, I was enhanced as much as a rank-up. I'm really glad I put up with the discomfort from cannibalism.

As I continued to the garden, I saw Eliante and Colbert holding Zephyrd, who was sitting leaning against the rubble.

「How was it?」

「Fran! Did you defeat it?」

「Nn」

Fran nodded and found Zephyrd smiling wryly.

「Is that so. You defeated him huh」

There was no hint of bitterness in Zephyrd's tone. However, he was bleeding profusely from his stomach, and his face was white beyond blueish. This is a dangerous situation. I don't know how he can keep a calm face and smile like this.

『Fran, use recovery magic』

「Nn. I'll heal you now」

However, even after the light of Fran's recovery magic enveloped Zephyrd's body, there was no change in his dying condition.

The wounds did not heal, and his vitality did not recover.

「Hmmh?」

「Even Fran's heal didn't work huh....」

「It won't heal?」

「Even the potion doesn't work!」

You mean a condition that completely nullifies recovery? That's wound is really bad, right!

「What's caused this wound?」

「This is——」

「I was hit by a stray debris」

Colbert was about to say something, but Zephyrd interrupted him with strong words. Don't you want Fran to know the reason for your wound? But Eliante remonstrated with him.

「You should tell her. She's maybe a child, but Fran is a full-fledged adventurer」

「But...No, you are right」

「I understand that you doesn't want her to be the one to blame for your own death. I think she's someone you can talk to, you know?」

I could already tell from Eliante and Colbert, Zephyrd himself was about to die. No, they can't move him in this state, and if recovery magic and potions don't work, I don't think there's any way to save him.....

What bothered me more was the word that the cause of the problem was Fran.

「What happened?」

「There is a technique in the shield saint technique that allows you to transfer the damage that befalls your friends to yourself. That's what Zephyrd used」

「....From me?」

「Zephyrd wants to help at least....He said that since the Marquise's mansion was destroyed in your battle and he can now see you, he can use his skills」

I had a guess. It was the last thrust that Marquis Ashtner had made in an attempt to counterattack. It was as if the attack, which had indeed pierced Fran, had been nullified as if it had never happened.

I have a physical attack nullification, but I didn't have time to activate it on the spur of the moment. In the future, I will actively use it, even if it is a bit risky, but I didn't have it on at the time. I didn't have time to think about it and returned to the battle before I could figure out what was going on, but it was definitely a strange phenomenon.

So, you're saying that was because of Zephyrd?

However, I know that there is a technique in the shield saint technique. I had suffered a lot when I fought Valkyrie in the Beast Kingdom. If it was a shield saint technique that could transfer even a life-threatening attack, it certainly could explain the phenomenon.

「Black Lightning Princess, thanks to you, I was able to avenge my friends. I thank you....Gobuh」

Zephyrd bowed his head in a quiet manner that did not seem dying. Still, the large amount of blood that he spat out at the end told us about his condition.

But neither Eliante nor Colbert would stop him from speaking. They know he can't be saved, so they want to let him talk as he pleases.

「Even if it was a little, do i be a help for you?」

「So much. If you hadn't saved me, I'd be dead by now」

「Is that so, I have one last piece of advice」

「Nn」

「You used some kind of powerful skill that have great backlash on you right?」

Zephyrd spun his words with the last of his strength. It seems that the recovery disabling condition that Zephyrd has fallen into should have originally fallen on Fran. However, Zephyrd seemed to have taken care of it.

He is highly skilled in the shield saint technique, and he understands that it is a backlash or compensation for some special technique that Fran used.

『In all likelihood, it's the price of Fran's potential release』

「Nn.....」

The price and some of the damage had been took over by Zephyrd. That was why Fran was only weakened. If it hadn't been for Zephyrd's help? Fran would have surely lost her life. We could call him a lifesaver.

「If you know what I mean, you should be careful....Gobuh....」

「Are you okay?」

「I'm a rank A adventurer. I'm sure my friends on the other side will laugh at me if I show my disgraceful appearance at the end of my life」

To be able to stay calm while his life continues to flow out of him is truly a tremendous mental strength. I admire him from the bottom of my heart.

Also, the man's smile of satisfaction while accepting his own death was similar to Kiara's last moments. It must have been the same for Fran. With a somber expression, she tried to bow to Zephyrd. However, it was Zephyrd who interrupted her.

「I'm sorry. It's because of me——」

「Wrong! Gobuh...that's not true. Rather, you're the reason I was able to have a peace on my mind. I can only thank you」

Zephyrd grinned at that. It was Eliante who took over the words.

「That's right. You are in no way responsible for Zephyrd's death. Maybe it was because he was protecting Fran. But it was still Zephyrd's responsibility and Zephyrd's achievement. In fact, you should be proud to send off your friends who did a great job against that monster」

「That's right. Litt-....Fran. You played a big part in this, but we did our best, and so did Zephyrd's. That's the result. And whatever happens, it's our responsibility. Thank us, but don't apologize」

「.....Nn」

They said so, and Fran seemed to agree.

(If it were the other way around, I wouldn't want to be apologized to either)

『Is that so』

She stopped her apologetic look and looked straight into Zephyrd's eyes.

「Thank you very much」

「Fufu.....Me-..too...In the end, i did a good job」

Those were the last words of the rank A adventurer, Zephyrd of the Skywall. We only talked for a little while, but he was a good man. If we had met him earlier, he might have been able to get along with Fran.



『Thank you very much』

「....?」

I wondered if he heard my words as he closed his eyes with a smile on his face.

\_\_\_NOT A TLN\_\_\_\_\_

(1) He was a good man :')

(2) This chapter marks my 50th translated chapter. I've translated 50 chapter worth of 72.235 words in 30 days, gj me! if you have time, please take a moment to fill a survey by me about this website:

<https://forms.gle/Z8mPsA1fLvVY8QV79>

(3) I got a pretty awful toothache, it also give me terrible migraine...the updates will be slowing down until i feel better.

# Chapter 452: Mercenaries and Adventurers

After witnessing the death of Zephyrd, Fran was unable to move. Fatigue and drowsiness seemed to have kicked in. Thanks to the adrenaline that had been pumping her, she had been able to forget her fatigue during the battle.

However, now that the tension of the battle had settled down, the fatigue was outweighing the excitement. She was too tired, and her body needed to rest. She was rubbing her eyes constantly.

「Munyaa.....」

『Are you okay, Fran?』

「...I'm...fine—」

『Whoa』

「Su—.....」

She had completely fallen asleep. I hurriedly caught her collapsing body with my telekinesis and gently laid her down on the ground. She's sleeping with a cute face.

『Hmm. What to do now...』

The battle was not over yet. From the direction of the royal castle, I could feel a tremendous magic power. The distance was too far to get a complete grasp of it, but it seemed that there was a being that radiated as much magic as the Marquis Ashtner in his potential release state. Moreover, I could feel more than one of them.

The occasional rumbling of the earth and the slight shaking of the ground were probably not unrelated. The fierce battle is still going on.

『If it's like this, I'm rather glad that Fran fell asleep』

It would be suicide to fight a strong enemy in her current state. However, Fran would still challenge them to a fight. In order to protect the capital.

『Even so, I didn't realize that the price of Fran's potential release was that she would be incapable of recovery...』

How long it will last is also a question. If it's only for a few hours, she might be able to manage to use it. That is, if she uses it only for a moment and kill the enemy instantly, she won't be driven to the brink of death.

However, the fact that she can't win without using the potential release means that the strength of the enemy is at a considerable level. I don't think it can be killed instantly.

And if they fought for a long time, Fran wouldn't be able to get away with anything. If she couldn't recover in such a condition, the probability of her death would increase.

A few minutes of inability to recover would be fine, but a few days would be quite dangerous. I don't think it would be for a lifetime, but it was possible that the effects could last for months.

I can't even try it carelessly. After all, potential release was dangerous. If the user body would never be able to recover when she used it, she would have to be prepared to risk her life when using it.

Because I'm a special kind of inorganic being with a will, I'm sure the cost of the magic stone value is something that can be recovered.

If it had went on like that, Fran might have died. No, if it hadn't been for Zephyrd, she would have died. Just thinking about it brings up some strange feelings. It makes me want to scream out meaningless words and scratch

my head. I hate myself for my inadequacy and helplessness, and I can't help but feel bitter.

I don't want to go through something like that for a second time. To do so, I must become stronger.

As I was making up my mind to do so on Fran's back, Colbert saw her sleeping on the ground and rushed over to her.

「Fran? Oi, are you okay?」

「Shu—...Shu—...」

「Don't do that, Colbert. She's too tired to stay awake, right?」

「A, aah. You are right. But, even so.....」

「What's wrong?」

「No. In her state, I can't think of her as the adventurer who defeated that monster」

「Well, you're right」

Eliante and Colbert stare at Fran as she sleeps, her face innocent sleepy face.

Colbert looked delicate. He realized once again the difference in power between him and the others. He still looks like a child. It must be complicated in many ways.

But then he remembered that now was not the time for this. He tightened his expression and stared in the direction where he could feel a great presence of magic.

「So, what should we do now?」

「First, let's take Fran and Zephyrd to the guilds」

「Okay」

Eliante carries Fran on his back, and Colbert carefully carries Zephyrd's body as they move. I'm glad Eliante didn't try to take me off Fran.

「There's been too much damage.....」

「Yeah, it is」

Eliante's muttering was probably directed more at the human casualties than the physical damages.

In the battle at the Marquis' mansion alone, nearly 30 adventurers of medium rank or higher were killed, and the life of Zephyrd, a rank A adventurer, was also lost. Fran, who she can rely on for strength, is still unconscious. Moreover, the battle in the royal capital is still ongoing.

「Young master Zephyrd is just like this...」

「That's what being an adventurer is all about. You never know when or where you'll die. Compared to that, Zephyrd looks quite content」

「You are right.....」

「He had avenged the death of his companion for 30 years」

It seems that Zephyrd and his party had been working together for 30 years. It seems that they were more like family than friends.

「Maybe it wasn't such a bad end for Zephyrd」

「You said it's not bad.....But it's always good for all of us to survive」

「I hope everyone can survive. But it was impossible against that monster. You know that. Besides, it's hard to lose your friends while you survive on your own」

「Aah...Is that so, guild master...I'm sorry」

Colbert, overheard Eliante's murmur, and bowed his head in fear.

「...Even if only one person had been saved here, he would have eventually lost the will to live, and would have lost his life prematurely by repeating his recklessness」

「...But you're still alive.....」

「Fufu. I've been through a lot.....」

Eliante smiles sadly as she says that.

「It's hard when I lose my friends, but it's painful afterwards. After retreating for my life. I was eating tasteless barley porridge in a fort full of wounded soldiers, I suddenly burst into tears and couldn't stop.....After all, the lack of that noisy conversation during dinner, I finally realized that everyone was gone」

「...But you're still getting back on your feet. Even Zephyrd's might.....」

「Maybe. But in our case, we weren't wiped out, some of us survived. We were able to lick each other's wounds. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be alive today. I really appreciate it」

「I've always wondered. Why did you go from being a mercenary to an adventurer? Couldn't you have continued as a mercenary with your surviving comrades?」

So Eliante used to be a member of a mercenary group that was nearly wiped out? After that, she apparently turned into an adventurer. That's how she made it to be a Guild Master, as expected, she's no ordinary person.

「In fact, your comrades are still working as mercenaries aren't they? They helped me this time too」

「A solo adventurer can carry the whole load by themselves, right?」

「Is that so?」

「That's what I thought.....Well, what I've learned is that as long as you're alive, you can't break ties with people, and you'll end up carrying a lot of things on your back」

「.....Even now, do you still feel like you want to die?」

「Well, I don't know. But I do sometimes dream about it. I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't retreated that day, but had launched a suicide attack with my friends against the Crimson Knights Order of the Kingdom of Raidos.....」

While listening to the conversation between the two of them, I also kept a vigilant eye on my surroundings. On the way, I saw many knights and adventurers in the town working together to evacuate people. Not only that, but there were also alchemists carrying large quantities of magic potions. Count Bailleys' instructions must have been properly conveyed.

Some of the enemies had pseudo fanatic swords stuck in them, but Eliante and Colbert worked together to defeat them. However, it was when the Adventurer's Guild came into view.

『.....!』

What is it? Something with tremendous magical power has appeared all over the royal capital. The number of them might be close to a hundred. The mysterious presence could be sensed even in our immediate vicinity.

Boooom!

Immediately after that, a tremendous fire erupts from the depths of the alley, and the knights are blown away in their cruel forms.

「Tsk. Colbert, I'll leave Fran to you!」

「Okay!」

Following the carbonized knights was a swordsman who was controlled by a pseudo fanatic sword. However, something was wrong. The magic power I can sense from it is too great.

And I shuddered as I appraised its state.

『Divine Swords Release...?』

What a surprise, the status of the pseudo fanatic sword showed that it was a divine sword release. However, the host's ability was poor. But he was as strong as Marquis Ashtner before his potential release.

I know it won't last long. After all, his vitality continues to decline at tremendous rate. It won't last more than three minutes.

「AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!」

And as if to confirm my fears, the swordsman began to indiscriminately unleash sword skill and magic. It didn't even seem like he had a purpose anymore. He just seemed to be trying to spread destruction until his life was over.

『What should I do...! No, if I didn't protect Eliante, Fran will be sad! Damn it!』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-452.html>



# Chapter 453: Side: Count Bailleys

What the hell is going on?

「GHaaaaaa!」

「Gyaaaa!」

「Hiiiigghh!」

My daughter——my beloved daughter, Velmeria, was laying waste to the knights. For some reason, her whole body was covered with light blue scales, and she looked almost like her ancestor like Frederick, but that was definitely Velmeria.

Whenever the transformed girl waved her arms, huge water bombs shot out and shattered the bodies of the knights, and when she swung her magic sword, which was broken in half, shock waves were released and cut up many adventurers.

「Don't fall back! Continue the attack!」

「Damn it! Why i can't hit it!」

「Why I can't see that attack coming!」

At my command, my men unleash their attacks, but none of our attacks hit. All of them were either evaded or shot down. Even if it did hit her, the power was greatly reduced, and the slightest of wounds were healed by instant regeneration.

The girl was now is an enemy of the royal capital. I must order my men to defeat her. But I can't defeat her. I wouldn't be pleased about that.....No, is

that really my daughter in the first place?

「Fucking lowly insects! Don't mess with me!」

She looks like my daughter, Velmeria. But what's inside is something completely different, isn't it? It doesn't just mean that she is getting stronger.

「Hyahahahaha! Diee Diee!」

What is that? What came out of my daughter's mouth was a high-pitched, grating voice that didn't sound like a man or a woman. Clearly, something different from my daughter was moving her body. That was all I could think.

「Sigh, General! Wh-what should we do...!」

It was one of the platoon leaders of the knights who asked for instructions with clinging eyes. The second-in-command was originally waiting at this location, but he had already lost his life in the attack by Velmeria.

His words probably had two meanings: Are we going to continue fighting at the cost of further sacrifice and Is it okay to attack my daughter?

But my answer remains the same.

「Keep up the attack! We have the royal castle behind us! If we run now, it may turn to the king and the people!」

The people and the king. I must not spare my daughter's life in the face of my mission to protect them both.

「Ha, Haha!」

「The adventurers, knights, and magician who have scattered to various places will surely come running! Until then, endure!」

「Is it not possible ask for help from the royal castle?」

As the platoon leader said this, he looked up at the royal castle behind him.

The most elite of the guards must still be in the royal castle. The best knights are gathered from each knight order. The commander in chief of that group is known to be the strongest in this country. He is said to be as strong as the Hundred Swords and the Hariti.

However, there was no way that we could ask them to go into battle. Their mission was to protect the king. Their place is the place where the king sits. If there was only one enemy, there was no way that they would leave the king's side when the enemy was in full force, as they were this time.

In the first place, they are the shields, and it was our job to defeat the enemy and protect the people. That is the enemy we must deal with.

「Starg. Can you see it?」

「Yes sir...Not all of it...But it's unbelievable」

「It's that bad huh?」

「I'm sorry master, but your daughter is truly a monster right now」

Starg, one of the knights serving our Bailleys family, mutters with a pale face. He has high combat power and possesses a high-level appraisal, so I always kept him by my side as my guard. It seems that this Starg took his time and managed to finish checking the abilities of Velmeria.....

Starg, a veteran knight, is frightened? Starg, who bravely fired his bow even when standing in front of a sub-dragon?

「First of all, I couldn't appraise that broken sword. It must be a very high-ranked magic sword」

「Is that so.....」

Could that be the sword of blind devotion - fanatics that the Black Lightning Princess was talking about?

「Also, I cannot measure your daughter's ability at present. The value is probably over 1000. With my appraisal, even i could appraise Lord Zephyrd

of the Skywall」

「So, in terms of ability values, she's more than a rank A adventurer.....」

「The skills are also enormous. It has nearly 100 high level skills such as Sword King Skill, Sword Saint Technique: Lv8, Ocean Magic: Lv8, Instant Regeneration: Lv8. He also possesses several unique and extra skills, and to my eyes, all I can see are Sword King Technique, Divine Dragon Transformation, Fire Absorption, Herculean strength, Swift steps, Chantless magic, Magic Control, and Spirit Control, but I'm sure there are more!」

The rest of the skills seemed to be in line with the high-ranking rare skills. If it hadn't been for the words of my trusted Starg, I would have laughed it off.

「What is that.....? How is it possible for a person to become that strong in such a short period of time?.....」

「Her state are fanaticism and Divine Dragon Transformation. Either one of these could be the cause of your daughter's condition.....」

Divine Dragon Transformation! I remember hearing about it. I believe it appeared in the mythology of the dragon people, as told by Tiranalaria, the mother of Velmeria.

It is the name of a super being that has evolved from the dragon man, and is positioned like a high elf for elves. The conditions for their evolution are not known, and only a few have been confirmed in the last 10,000 years, but it is said that they definitely exist.

And legend has it that they fought the High Elves head on and ended up going toe-to-toe.

What a nightmare. Not only did my daughter turn into an enemy, but her fighting strength is such that even rank A adventurers are hazy? If she really was at High Elf level, it would not be surprising if she had rank S level strength.

However, as long as the opponent had the devil's card, the fanatic sword, it was no surprise that anything could happen.

「Oi! Sent a messenger immediately!」

「Whe-where to send?」

「To the royal castle! Tell the king to evacuate immediately!」

「U-understood!」

I understood that this was not an opponent I could win against. Even if I add multiple rank A adventurer-level forces, there is a possibility that we won't be able to win. The five rank-A adventurers currently in the capital that I know of are Zephyrd the SkyWall, Forrund the Hundred Swords, Fran the Black Lightning Princess, Eihwaz the Dragon Binder, and Ruga Mufuru, the captain of the Royal Guard. They are the ones who can be called upon and gathered at the same time.

Even if you are in the royal castle protected by barriers, you are not safe. Let the king escape, then save as many people as possible. After that, leave everything to the strong.

All we can do is being left behind and earn more time.

「We'll keep her here as long as we can. Put your life on it」

「Yes!」

「Yes sir!」

The only saving grace is that the morale of my men is high. They responded to my orders with motivated faces, even when I was telling them to die.

It would be a shame to let these men die here, but it can't be helped.

I selected the youngest soldiers I could find and sent them out as messengers to various parts of the royal capital. The purpose of this is to convey my message that the enemy is formidable and that we need more

than one rank A to win. This way, my fellow generals will be able to take over after I am gone.

「I will come out too」

「Ha!」

「If only Master Demitris were here...」

The platoon leader's murmur was overheard.

「Master Demitris huh」

The only Rank S adventurer based on the continent of Zilberd, Demitris the Immovable. He is a martial artist who can kill a hundred enemies in an instant without taking a single step.

It is said that he still continues his training by traveling around the magical regions of the continent while using his own dojo in a small country in the south as a base.

He may be a difficult old man to deal with, but he is definitely a good man and has been helping people in many countries. He would be the most reliable person in such a case, but we had no information where he was currently.

「Don't mind with what's not here」

「I'm sorry, sir」

「No, it's fine. I had thought about it too. But we can't rely on Demitris, who we don't know where he is. We'll take care of this!」

「Ha!」

He scolded his subordinates and himself, and was about to go out to the front.

「I'm sorry I'm not the old man Demitris, but am I not good enough for you?」

「Huh?」

What the hell is going on? I didn't feel any sign of him at all! But there was a large demon man standing behind me, looking very relaxed. I could tell just by looking at him. He was no ordinary person. That was exactly the feeling I had when I met His Majesty the Beast King.

The big man pulls out a huge sword from his back. This sword is not just a magic sword either. The overwhelming magical power contained within it almost pressured me.

「I'll help you. Orraaa! Gravity Blows!」

The big man swung his sword down on the spot, and Velmeria, who was far above, suddenly began to fall. It was as if she was being drawn to the earth by an invisible force.

Then my daughter's body slammed into the earth with great force.

「Guaaaaah!」

Today, for the first time, I think that was the only damage was dealt to Velmeria today. Who the hell is this guy!

「Now, how long can I keep this up.....?」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-453.html>

# Chapter 454: Side: Ashwrath (I)

「The continent of Gilberd huh. It's been a long time since I've been there」

「You are a big guy! Are you from the demon tribe?」

「Ou, perhaps」

「Are you on a business on this continent?」

「No, it's not like a business.....」

It was on a whim that I crossed over from the continent of Krome to the continent of Gilberd.

「Well. I guess I just followed my intuition」

「Haah, intuition?」

I have a unique skill called 『Imbecility』, which is a skill that strengthens your intuition and instincts. With this skill, I could tell if the other person's words were a lie or not. I could somehow tell if they were speaking from the heart or not. Sometimes I am wrong, but many times this skill has saved my life.

My intuition was telling me that I should go to the continent of Gilberd. It was originally triggered by the words of an evil person named Murellia.

The last thing she said to me was that she wanted me to save a boy named Romio. I couldn't feel any lie in those words. It must have come from the bottom of her heart.



And then the man I fought afterwards, Zelos Reed. He was a vicious man, but I could also feel his deep sadness. I didn't know why at the time, but.....

Later, when I heard that Zelos Reed had kidnapped Romio, it became clear. Ostensibly, it looked like Zelos Reed had betrayed Murellia, but I guess that was just for show. I don't even know why he did it.....

With that in mind, it seemed only natural that Zelos Reed would act to fulfil Murellia's last wish.

I can also predict the destination that Zelos Reed will take Romeo to. The results of a survey of orphanages around the country had been compiled to determine where Murellia would leave Romeo.

Among them, an orphanage in the big city of Barbra was apparently being checked out as a promising place to leave the child. This is what I've heard from Miss Mea and the others, so I'm sure it's true.

It's not like there's anything in it for me to go after. I'm not sure if I want to save Romio or if I want to have a rematch with Zelos Reed. But I felt that I should see it through. And the next thing I knew, I was on a ship bound for the continent of Gilberd.

「But I didn't realize it was a vain attempt.....」

Once I got off the ship and started asking around, I quickly found out the location of the orphanage. It seemed to be a very famous place in Barbra. Recently, a rank A adventurer had taken shelter at the orphanage, and the name seemed to have spread even further.

I asked the strangely low-key woman who came out to respond about Romio, and to my surprise, she said he wasn't at this location.

「Zelos Reed took him, huh?」

It didn't end up here.....

「I had a bad feeling」

It felt like a small fish bone was stuck in my throat. Maybe I should leave it alone, but I couldn't help wondering. Where did Romio and Zelos Reed go?

Besides, it would be boring to cross the continent and come up empty. At the very least, I wanted to see Zelos Reed and Romio at least once.

「So where should i go to next...?」

Zelos Reed is a criminal who is wanted all over the world. It must be difficult for such a man to continue raising a child. If he has to keep running away from his pursuers, he won't be able to settle down.

But there is a place where even such a person can live without worrying about his pursuers. A place where criminals from all over the world flee for their lives. It is harsher than any other place in the world, but if you are as strong as Zelos Reed, you will have no problem in that place.

「A place where all of your past is forgiven if you are a capable warrior.  
The continent of Gordisia」

On the continent of Gordisia, as long as you join the allied forces and meet your daily quotas, your past criminal record is considered irrelevant. Losing a capable warrior for trivial reasons is a great loss in that hellish place.

Undoubtedly, Zelos Reed would have aimed for the continent of Gordisia.

「So the best thing to do would be to cross the continent of Gilberd and take a ship at a port town on the eastern coast」

On the way, I stopped at the royal capital of the Kingdom of Kranzel. It was indeed the royal capital of a great country, and it boasted a tremendous grandeur. It wasn't often in my long life that I had seen such a large wall.

To begin with, there are only a few places in this world where you can build a city of this royal capital level. This is because it is difficult to build a large city in a place that does not have the conditions for the generation powerful demonic beasts, is ecologically stable, and does not have bad transportation or water.

It is especially difficult to find a place where there are no strong magical beasts in the vicinity. It's impossible to build a city in a place where large magical beasts such as dragons and giants frequently appear, and even if you could, it wouldn't last long.

In that sense, the royal capital of Kranzel is a wonderful achievement. Most of the demonic beasts in the vicinity are of medium size or smaller, and it is not difficult to defeat them if you have a sufficient number of adventurers and knights.

It's hard even for a big country to have strong people. It's fine as long as you happen to have a strong people by chance, but for a country to last for hundreds of years. Considering this, a system that can always provide a certain level of defense with numbers and tools is more reliable.

I thought it would be very developed inside.....

「But I didn't expect to get caught up in the turmoil here」

I was in the middle of gathering information on Zelos Reed at the tavern. But I didn't get any information on him though. But apparently Fran and his master were in the royal capital. When I was about to meet them, I saw that there was a large-scale battle going on all over the capital.

I don't know if it's a civil war or a coup d'état, but people are fighting each other. Could it be that they were invulnerable to external enemies but vulnerable to internal disturbances?

But even so, there's still a lot of noise. While I was thinking about it, I was attacked too. They were weird guys with swords stuck in their backs. They were pretty strong. If these guys are on the rampage, the royal capital might be in a quite dangerous state.

I heard from the adventurer's guild that the Marquis had staged a coup d'état. The people with swords stuck in their backs seemed to be his army. The guild master and others seemed to be leading an elite group of people to various places for support.

「I can't just ignore this huh」

I don't know if it's fortunate or unfortunate for the people of this city that I'm here, but.....I want to make sure that Miss Fran is safe.

For the time being, I'm going to head for the royal castle where there are people related to the Knight Order. I'll go there and get some information, and if necessary, I can destroy the Marquis. Thanks to Fran and the others who held him down, there should still be enough time for her to run away. I'm sure I can help.

However, it seems that thinking was too sweet. In front of the royal castle, a girl with tremendous power was overrunning the knights. She's a dragon kin, but her magic power is comparable to mine. It's not as if she has a purpose, but it hasn't led to large-scale destruction, but if she's serious, even this royal capital should be cleared in less than half an hour.

I'll have to do it myself. If I leave her alone, it'll be a disaster for Miss Fran and Master. I called out to the pompous men who were talking about old man Demitris and gave them a bite, but it didn't do much damage. If I don't get serious, I'm the one who's going to get hit.

「Now, how long can I keep this up.....?」

The problem was that if I went out of control, there would be more damage. I had to get it over with before that happened.

「Oi! Get these people out of the area. They'll be involved into the fight」

「Yo-you are...?」

「I'm an adventurers, Ashwrath. You can call me a comrade in arms」

「Y-you are...Oi! All hands retreat! Use the royal castle to escape immediately! Hurry up and evacuate the residents」

「Ha!」

Apparently, he knows who I am. The knight who seemed to be the most important one moved immediately. This would make the fight a little easier.

「You, have you ever heard of the adventurer known as the Black Lightning Princess?」

「Do you know Fran, Ashwrath-dono?」

「Yeah, where she is now?」

「They're searching Marquess Ashtner's mansion」

「Is that far from here?」

「more or less」

It's good then. She's less likely to get involved.

「There's nothing to regret! Divine Sword Release!」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-454-1.html>

# Chapter 454: Side: Ashwrath (II)

「There's nothing to regret! Divine Sword Release!」

With my words, the divine sword in my hand transformed its appearance into something vicious. The gate that had been holding back the tremendous power was opened.

「Gravity Prison!」

「Ghaaa!」

The magic resistance is so high that restraining magic is almost useless. So, it will be a slugfest.

「Oiiii! Youu!」

I was surprised. From the looks of it, she looks like she's completely out of control, but I didn't know she could speak in this state. However, what came out of the girl's mouth was a croaky, man-like voice.

Oh well. If it can buy time to get the others out of the way, I'll join her for a chat.

「What is it?」

「That's a divine sword, isn't it? It's not the fake one that that little black cat kid had! It's a real divine sword, right?」

「The kid from the Black Cat tribe? Is that Fran by any chance?」

「With that divine sword.....we're.....」

「Oi!」

「If we take in that divine sword.....」

Just because she could talk didn't mean she was sane. Whenever the girl screamed, the broken sword in her hand began to emit a vicious magic. Apparently, the sword was controlling the girl?

「What are you?」

「I don't know! I wish I did! But I know! If we can get that divine sword, we'll be able to regain our original form! So, give me that divine sword!」

Her swords turned on me. But it's a good thing, too. This makes it easier to fight.

「It's time to get serious, huh?」

Almost all signs of people have disappeared from the area. It seems that there are still people inside the castle though..... It is true that I can fight more comfortably in the noble districts than in the commoner districts. It wouldn't hurt my heart even if I crush their house.

「Give me that sword!」

「Die, you bastard!」

I was in top gear from the start. It was probably the same for the other side. They unleashed a series of attacks that could turn even a large mansion into a ruin with a single blow. In just a few tens of seconds, the square was in a cruel state. The cobblestones were completely bald, and there were many large holes in the ground.

But even a fight like this is just a check and balance for us. From time to time, we would find an opening and hit him with an even bigger move, but it would not be enough.

Even though her arms were torn off, her legs crushed, and her bodies punctured, they instantly regenerated her wounds and slammed her

weapons into me.

「How come I can't control you?」

「Ahh? You want to control me?」

Apparently, he was using some kind of ability on me that would allow her to control her enemies. But I don't think that's possible. I've always been under the influence of the Abominable Madness. Unless he had more control than that skill, he wouldn't be able to control my mind.

「Tsk!」

The girl shows a slight expression of impatience. At first glance, we seem to be evenly matched, but she knows she is at a disadvantage. She realizes that the stalemate will not last long.

「Oraaa!」

「Gugha!」

We are evenly matched in ability. But they have slightly better regeneration. I was the better tactician. And the difference in weapons was obvious. I had the divine sword. The other side was a broken magic sword.

I start to get the better of the fight. If they wanted to beat me, they should have flown through the air and cut me down from a distance. However, perhaps they were too determined to take my divine sword, so he challenged me to a close to mid-range battle.

No, they must have been confident in his sword skills. In fact, if it was a normal slashing match, the other side was far superior. They had to slash me ten times before I could hit him once. And maybe he needed to cut me with his sword to control me.

However, the attack power of the weapons in her hand was too different. Gaia's attack, which was on a divine attribute by putting magic power into it, had gutted the girl's life force with a single blow.



Of course, I'm pretty much cornered myself. It's been a while since I've fought a rank A magic being like Lich.

「Gughaa!」

「You can't escape! Kiss of the Earth!」

In the next moment, the vast area was crushed at once. A super-gravity was being applied to a radius of about 200 meters. This was not earth magic, but Gaia's ability. The girl who was about to take off crashed and was plunged into the ground.

Before I knew it, the area around the castle had become a vacant lot and half of the castle had collapsed, but it was to protect the capital. I guess it can't be helped.

「Kiss of the Earth!」

「——」

Next to the surface point. The gravitational cage that stretched as if contracting towards the girl from all directions had captured her body perfectly. It's one of Gaia's special moves that crushes even the sturdiest earth dragons.....It's commendable that they're able to endure it, but there's no escaping her now unless they use teleport magic.

Just before she was about to stop the blow there.

「Divine Sword Release!」

「Tsk!」

With the girl's cry, the precept of gravity bursts forth from within. But still, a divine sword release? Was that magical sword a divine sword? No, the way it's broken, is it the same discarded divine sword as Master's?

Thanks to my relation with Alistair, I've heard a bit about the Divine Sword. There are six discarded divine swords that I know of.

The cherubim, meltdowns, and judgments that were ordered by God to be discarded have no chance of existing in this world. Even if they still have their outer bodies like masters, they would not have their original abilities.

So, is it more likely to be the Holy Order, Fanatics, or Eldorado, which were just destroyed by accident or in a battle between divine swords?

「God damn it! It's over! Why isn't everything working! It's been 40 years! Forty years we've been preparing for this!」

「Like I'd know!」

「A pseudo fanatics sword made by cutting and melting our swords, and a lineage of dragon maidens who can handle our most powerful skill, "Divine Dragon Transformation"! Why did a guy like you appear at time like this! Don't joke with meee!」

She was cornered and lost her temper. The sword was ranting and raving in an unseemly manner. Yes, the sword was talking.

The sword, which had been transformed by the Divine Sword Release, retained the broken part of the blade, but the hand cover had been enlarged to resemble a gauntlet covering the elbow. Numerous human masks were drawn on the surface of the gauntlet, giving it a strange air.

Then there is a sculpture of a man who has become so huge that he is almost as big as a human head, and he is screaming like a real person. The way its mouth and eyes move are no different from a human's.

「Did you orchestrate this coup d'état?」

「Hyahahaha! That's right! We caused it with Ashtner! But it had already failed!」

「What is your goal?」

「The divine sword of Philias, Diabolos! We're going to seize the capital and the king with our abilities, unite all the armies, and invade Philias at once! And we were going to take the divine sword!」

「.....To fix you?」

「That's right! If only we had a divine sword made with Oricalchos..... Besides, Diabolos was made by Dionysus, just like us! It's supposed to be highly compatible with us!」

I finally understand. This is the end of the fanatic sword Fanatics. It was destroyed by the Holy Order and lost its original ability, but it must have escaped without disappearing.

They are only trying to fix themselves, so they created this mess. Well, I guess they doesn't care how many people die.

The surprise was that it has a will, but it was less shocking thanks to the fact that I had met with master.

「If only you weren't here.....Even if I have to die here, you're the only one I'll kill here! Not only that! The people in this royal capital will go with you! You'll all die!」

Is this the effect of the divine sword release? His sword blade begins to crumble into sand as if it is weathering. The Fanatics will soon collapse from that. Well, he showed his power as a divine sword in an incomplete state, that can't be helped.

「I'm gonna destroy you, and then I'm gonna end all of this!」

「I'll kill you right here for interfering with me!」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-454-2.html>

# Chapter 455: Self-Destruct

A swordsman who burns down his surroundings with flame magic. And it wasn't just a simple flame magic. He had activated multiple techniques to create large explosions at the same time without chanting.

More than ten shots of magic that could destroy several houses with one shot went off at the same time, blowing the surrounding houses to smithereens.

People who failed to escape were engulfed in flames and screaming.

「That guy...!」

Eliante jumped out of the way to stop the swordsman. At this rate, she would sacrifice herself to stop the man in order to buy time to let the civilians escape. Looking at Eliante's tragic face, I knew that she was prepared to not win.

「Stop it!」

「Ghaaa!」

「Guuoh!」

However, the swordsman now, for some reason, had gained a more strength from the pseudo fanatic sword being in the divine sword release. Even if Eliante had risked her life, it would have been difficult to even stall for time.

The shockwave from the sword he had fired had flung her nearly ten meters and she was groaning. The blade of the greatsword in her hand is split in half, but I guess that's what saved her from being blown away.

In addition, flame magic was mercilessly applied to it. Countless flaming bullets rained down on Eliante with no place to escape.

『Tsk!』

I jumped out of the way as quickly as I could and used telekinesis to blast away the flame magic.

「Eh? What...?」

Eliante is surprised to see a sword that moves on its own. Well, I have no choice!

I used my doppelganger to get in front of Eliante and the others. It would look suspicious, but I couldn't let them know I was an Intelligence Weapon!

I pretend as if I've just been teleported and grabbed my handle.

『I'm not some suspicious guy. I'm an acquaintance of Fran's』

「Aren't you the Curry Master!」

Apparently, Colbert remembered me, even though he had only met me once before. Hearing Colbert's words, the suspicion faded from Eliante's face.

『If you didn't fight him properly, he'll kill you instantly! You know that right!』

「But, even so...!」

『I'll face him! Even if i look like this, I'm still Fran's master. I can at least buy you some time! But you have to make sure Fran gets away! I beg you!』

「Ah, wha——」

I saw the swordsman's eyes turn to look at me. There was no time for more questions and answers. I didn't wait for Eliante and the others to reply, and ran toward the swordsman.

I don't want Eliante and the others to hesitate because of me——

As expected of an adventurer. She made a quick decision and began to retreat.

『Well, the problem is, will he stick with me until he kills himself?』

Red rays of light rained down on me. It must have been the simultaneous activation of about twenty flare blasts that converge and shoot out flames.

The stone building behind me melted into mush, filled with holes, and finally exploded.

But I hadn't taken any damage. I had used the little magic power I had recovered to activate the Dimension Shift.

Then, winds began to swirl around me, quickly growing into a giant tornado. It must be storm magic. It gets thicker and bigger, engulfing the surrounding debris.

I jumped up and exposed myself in the air by teleporting and jumping in the air. If I don't, the damage to the town is going to be bad. From his point of view, I was full of opening.

There was no expression on the swordsman's face, and I couldn't tell if he was surprised that I was okay or not. However, I'm sure that the point of the attack was directed at me. A spell was fired at me.

A huge pillar of fire, fused and amplified by the simultaneous release of Inferno Burst, engulfed my figure. It was the same type of attack that Announcer-san had unleashed against the Lich, yet it was several times more powerful.

But even that vicious attack couldn't hit me who is using the Dimension Shift. My magic power is decreasing, I knew that I could hold out for a few more minutes.

『Shii!』

I'll also counterattack to draw his attention to me. I unleashed a lower level thunderbolt spell. I don't think it will work, but it was flashy and eye-catching.

Sure enough, the swordsman strikes back at me. This time, red fireballs surrounded me, and then they all expanded and exploded at once. With the simultaneous activation of the Flare Explode, a flower of flames bloomed in the sky.

『It won't work on me!』

Boooooom!

My counterattack was followed by more counterattacks.

I knew he was out of control and his ability to think has declined. If he still had the ability to make good decisions, he would ignore my lack of effective attacks and attack his surroundings.

His ability is on par with a rank A adventurer. But his head was an idiot. He was an easy opponent for me to deal with.

『I'm going to keep his eyes on me and let him keep wasting his time!』

Since I can use space-time magic, I've been able to do something about it. But I wonder how much damage has been done elsewhere.....

And about three minutes later.

When I started to worry about my remaining magic power, his life force finally hit the bottom. It was a really long three minutes.

The reason for this was that his attack was more violent than I had expected, and I had used a lot of magic to spend on dimension shift. If he hadn't died ten seconds later, I would have tried to attack him.

And it was at that moment when the swordsman's life force ran out.

Boooooooooooooomm!

『Uwooh!』

Suddenly, there was a huge explosion. A violent blast whips the rubble of the houses far up into the sky.

I thought that he had unleashed some kind of flame magic, but that was not the case. It was not a flame, but an explosion caused by a large amount of magic power released.

It seemed that with the death of the swordsman, the magic power of the pseudo fanatic sword that had been raging within him lost control and overflowed all at once.

From above, I could see that a huge crater had been created. More than forty houses had been destroyed, and the surrounding area was heavily damaged. If the furniture that scattered due to the shock wave was counted, the damage would reach hundreds of houses.

But shortly after I descended to the ground, a series of explosions echoed through the royal capital. When I looked over there, I could see the released magic power rising up like a pillar.

It seems that even outside of this place, controlled swordsmen are falling down, leaving behind a huge explosion. The sound of explosions continued to echo intermittently, and we could see more than fifty pillars of magic power rising up. There are many explosions in the noble districts, but there are also explosions in the residential and commercial districts.

The area that is particularly intense is near the royal castle. In particular, the magic explosions are concentrated in the vicinity where the tremendous magic power is colliding with each other.

『It's not like they're a suicide bombers. What the hell is their goal?』

Is their goal being to destroy the royal capital?

『I hope Fran is safe!』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-455.html>



# Chapter 456: Rank S that Appeared

As the massive explosion of the pseudo fanatic sword continued to cause great damage in the royal capital, I was searching for any sign of Fran.

We have a magical connection that allows us to sense each other's presence even when we are quite far away. Relying on this connection, I used the long-distance teleport.

「Wh-who is it!」

The one who was surprised by my sudden appearance was Stellia, the receptionist at the Adventurer's Guild. She was wearing bright red full-body armor, it's perhaps her equipment from her active days, and she was holding a huge mace.

Maybe, it's bigger than it was when she was active, but thanks to the size-adjusting magic, it seems to be equipped without any problem. It seems, magical equipment was like a living thing in many ways.

『I'm the master of Fran, the Black Lightning Princess. I'm not an enemy!』

「Hee...」

I'm quite suspicious. My body performance was at its lowest. I can't even move my mouth, so I has to use telekinetic, and my status is so low that it's hard to believe for someone like me to be Fran's master.

Furthermore, my doppelganger was dressed very poorly. Because I had created it into human form on the spur of the moment, I hadn't bothered to

dress it. Because of this, my doppelganger was dressed only in shabby clothes, like a slave's.

It's pretty hard to believe for someone like me to be Fran's master huh.

「That little girls' master? Hmm...you don't even look like a human tho...」

Huh, I didn't know Eihwaz was here too. Unlike Stellia, there's no hostility in his gaze. Instead, his eyes are those who looks at their Guinea pig though. He seems to intuitively understand that my body is different from that of a normal human. As expected of the mad scientist who likes to dissect things.

「Everyone, we will evacuate to the city outskirts! Hurry up!」

「I'll carry Master Gallus. You take care of Fran」

「woof!」

Eliante and Colbert appeared from the back. Colbert was carrying Gallus on his back, and Fran was strapped to the back of Urushi.

「Oh, Master Curry! So you're safe!」

Colbert notices me and rushes over to me, please stop with that Master curry!. however, it seems ease the suspicious glares from Stellia.

『A,aah. I see you're fine too』

「Yes. But the crisis isn't over yet. We're still evacuating the royal capital」

Eliante shared with me the information that Eihwaz and the others had brought. It seems that Velmeria is being controlled by the broken magic sword and is untouchable.

He said that Forrund was also there, but both of them almost died. She was so strong that makes Eihwaz had no idea what he can do, and showed Forrund her overwhelming power when he saw her.

In my mind, these two people are at the top of the list of people I don't want to fight. To put it bluntly, they're probably better than us. I can't imagine them losing. But even with the two of them working together, they were kicked to the curb in less than ten minutes.

In the end, he said, Forrund pursued Velmeria and Eihwaz came back to the guild to report the scale of the enemy. However, it seems that Eihwaz was able to contact Forrund through the use of a familiars, and he understood the situation right up until a few minute ago.

「Well, it seems that something happened to Forrund, and the familiars has died. It can't be helped」

『What happened?』

「That little dragon girl named Velmeria and a rank S adventurer started a fight. Looks like the Hundred Swords got caught up in it」

『A rank S adventurer? Was there such a guy in this country?』

As I recall, there was a rank S adventurer named Demitris in the Gilberd Continent. A genius martial artist who is the master of Colbert and the founder of the Dimitris style.

However, he said that it was not Demitris who appeared in the royal capital.

「It's not the immovable Demitris. It was my first time to saw him, but the one who started the fight with the little girl were also causing friendly fire. That was from Hundred Swords, then it must be true」

『Friendly fire! Ashwrath was here huh!』

「Do you know him?」

『Yea. So, he's fighting Velmeria?』

「That's right」

Isn't it pretty bad for Ashwrath to fight with Velmeria, who can easily managed two rank A adventurers? The damage to the surrounding area will be horrendous.

Well, if Ashwrath hadn't come, the royal capital would have been destroyed by Velmeria by now.....

But there is a problem that cannot be ignored.

『Is Ashwrath...still sane?』

「Hou? What do you mean?」

『I can't explain it in detail, but Ashwrath was dangerous, he will going out of control the more they fight. It doesn't matter if you're friend or foe, When Ashwrath is out of control. He's really dangerous!』

No, you know that, don't you? That's why Eliante and the others are trying to escape in a hurry.

But will it save us? If Ashwrath were to go on rampage, the damage would not only be the capital but also the surrounding areas. Unlike that underground dungeon, he should be able to wield his power here without any restrictions. Will Eliante and the others be able to escape?

The best thing to do would be for all of us to get out of here, and for Ashwrath to defeat Velmeria early so he doesn't go out of control. It would be great if he could also save Velmeria's life.

The worst thing that can happen is that Ashwrath will go out of control during the battle with Velmeria, and the battle between the two causes great damage to the royal capital and its people. In some cases, Fran's and Eliante's live are also in danger.

What should I do? The easiest thing for me to do would be to get out of royal capital right now with just Fran and Urushi. Even with the rest of my magic power, I should be able to get pretty far away using teleport.

But if Fran woke up and found out that she was the only one who survived, abandoning Eliante, Gallus and the others.....She'll be sad, she'll be devastated. Fran might not be able to forgive herself.

『If that's the case, I guess the least damaging method would be to take down Velmeria as soon as possible and prevent Ashwrath from running amok』

I'm not sure how far i can fight that monsters without Fran.....It can even be said that I only have half the number of moves and half the power now. The only way I can beat her now is only with stealth.

No, in this case, stealth is important. It's impossible to attack her from the front anyway. If that's the case, the best thing to do would be to sneak up on the battle, and strike an effective blow at Velmeria, and give Ashwrath support.

『Understood. Then, I'll go』

「Wa-, it's dangerous, even for you!」

『I'll be fine. I'm just gonna check on her. I leave Fran with you』

「Woof!」

I'm anxious to leave Fran's side, but I have no choice.

『It's in front of the castle huh』

I can still feel the huge magic power. I heard that the Count and the others have already evacuated the area, but Forrund must still be there. He seems to have been caught up in some unforeseen situation, but that man would not die so easily.

In some cases, we might even be able to fight together.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-456.html>

# Chapter 457: Battle Between the Transcenders

The ridiculously large magic power in the town is already gone. The pseudo fanatic swords must have all self-destructed. All that's left is Velmeria.

I tried to approach the square in front of the royal castle to check the current situation in Velmeria, but it was impossible. After all, the place was already in a state of hell.

I mean, how big was the square in front of the royal castle?

Originally, there was supposed to be a beautiful square with neatly laid cobblestones.....But now, it's only a bare ground, with lots of craters and bumps stretches on and on.

No, some of it is so flat it looks as if it's been graded with a road roller. I've seen this before in Beastman country. It's definitely the work of Ashwrath.

The surrounding mansions and the royal castle, which was supposed to have been protected by strong barriers, had completely collapsed, and I couldn't tell where the square was from where I was. Moreover, the destruction was still ongoing.

Boooaaam!

Boooooom!

Ashwrath wields Gaia in its released state, spreading destruction. As soon as a large area is crushed by gravity, a huge rock projectile shoots toward the sky. And then they fall to the ground, spreading a great deal of damage. Even now, a nobleman's mansion was destroyed in front of me.

I thought he might have already gone on rampage, but I couldn't see any sign of it even from a distance. I couldn't see the blood-red, ominous and disastrous aura that had enveloped Ashwrath when the mad demonization was activated. It must mean that the opponent is strong enough that he has to fight without worrying about damage to the surrounding area.

In contrast, Velmeria - is that really Velmeria? She is moving at high speed, and I can barely make out her figure the moment she stops moving slightly, but her appearance has been transformed too much.

Her light blue hair was still remained, but her entire body was covered with hard scales. The arms were also enlarged and knotted, clearly out of the human category. Moreover, she had huge wings on her back. If they were the same kind of wings as a dragon's, it would be able fly at high speed with magic power.

While Ashwrath fights mainly with earth magic, Velmeria unleashes a wide variety of magic. I don't know why she doesn't fly, but she was firing a series of magic while running around on the ground.

Then, Velmeria manifested a pseudo sun.

It was just like the sun that had fallen to the earth, scorching the air and vaporizing the land. Even from a distance, a tremendous heat was beating down on me. It was so hot that my body would disappear in an instant.

The remnants of the stone pillar rolling beside me were bubbling and starting to melt and crumble. I could feel my endurance dwindling even though there should still be some distance between us, and I hurried to get away from it.

The magic contained in it would easily surpass even my Kanna Kamui that I unleash with all my might. I'm not sure if it's a flame magic or not. No, the current Velmeria might be able to do this with a Lv. 8 or 9 skill.

Either way, it's a destructive magic that's impossible for me to do.

Ashwrath popped out of the miniature sun. Smoke billowed from his entire body, and parts of his arms and face were burned off, but his life was intact. I can't imagine how he could escape from that thing without losing his life.

Ashwrath turned to face the pseudo-sun, leaping with gravity manipulation. Immediately afterwards, Ashwrath sidestepped Gaia, and the pseudo-sun contracted all at once, easily disappearing. The super gravity must have cancelled out the pseudo-sun.

In its wake was a beautiful spherical hole. The size of the hole was several times the diameter of the pseudo-sun, no less than fifty meters. It seemed to have vaporized not only the area it had touched, but also the surrounding land, making it disappear.

Then, Ashwrath launched a counterattack.

In the place where the pseudo-sun was, a small black sphere is now created. It was really a small sphere, about 30 centimeters in diameter. However, something strange happened immediately afterwards.

The surrounding rubble and earth began to gather towards the sphere with tremendous force. Apparently, the super gravity was pulling the surroundings together.

『That's dangerous!』

I was also pulled slightly. I used my teleport again and moved away from the scene. In terms of impact, it's more than Velmeria's flame magic.

In the meantime, the sphere continued to expand and grow to a huge size as it was covered with the earth and debris that seemed to have belonged to the royal castle. The unceasing earth tremors were probably caused by the distortion of the earth over a wide area, not just in this vicinity.

『And Velmeria is.....』

There she is! Right underneath a huge rock floating in the air. She was crawling on all fours on the ground, trying to hold on. However, she was



caught up in the debris that was being pulled toward the rock lump one after another, and her body finally separated from the ground.

The new debris immediately covered Velmeria, who had been slammed into the rock, and swallowed her up inside. The pressure would be tremendous due to the super-gravity and the weight of the rock mass that had been pulled in.

I thought this was going to be a victory for Ashwrath, but.....

Booooooooooom!

A small mountain-like mass of rocks floating in the air exploded from within. The rocks of various sizes that burst apart poured into the surrounding area. The range of the explosion must have reached the entire noble district.

Although they were small, they were still rocks that had been compressed and compacted together. The roofs and walls of the houses would be pierced with ease, and people would be seriously injured at the very least if they were hit. The nearby area was already in a hellish state to begin with, so it was a little late for that.

Although they may not have been attacking each other in turn, Velmeria next unleashed her water magic. A huge water snake with eight heads was created and attacked Ashwrath.

The head of the water snake alone was nearly ten meters long, but it was blown away by one swing of Gaia's sword. However, that was not the end of Velmeria's attack.

The eight-headed water serpent restricted Ashwrath's movement, and then she unleashed her main attack. It was a technique that I was familiar with. No, I don't know if I can say that it's the same as the one I use but.....

『Kanna Kamui huh...!』

It was the same sense of defeat that I felt in the battle with Murellia. But at that time, it was a sense of defeat with hope that I would catch up with her someday.

However, when I saw Kanna Kamui released by Velmeria, what I felt was a sense of emptiness that I could never catch up with her. I can't even picture the vision of catching up. I don't even know if I can call it a defeat in the first place. From the very beginning, there was an overwhelming difference that was not even able to be called as a match.

It is denser and more powerful polar thunderbolt than the convergence-type Kanna Kamui used by Murellia, but it is several times thicker.

A huge pillar of lightning pierced the earth and caused a huge explosion. It was so powerful that the blast even hit me right where I was.

I see, so that's an extreme magic. This is what extreme magic is all about. It is a magic that exceeds the limits of human being, capable of destroying an army with just one blow. This must be the true power of Kanna Kamui.

I'm sure I've been unorthodox in my own way, but the battle in front of me was unorthodox even from my perspective. They unleashed a wide range of mass destruction attacks on each other, and still there was no sign for it to be settled any soon.

I can see some damage, but the regeneration ability is so high that it would be difficult to get to the point of taking each other's life if not for an instant kill.

But I can't just sit back and watch until the battle is over. I now has a reason to end this battle early, even if I has to be a little reckless.

『Aswrath's horns are started to emit a reddish light, aren't they?』

I could see the signs of an outburst from Ashwrath.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-457.html>

# Chapter 458: Talks with Forrund

『I have to end this fight somehow, before Ashwrath gets out of control.....』

Actually, I was thinking that if we escaped outside of the royal capital, maybe there would be no damage..... After seeing the battle between the Transcenders, my wishful thinking was blown away.

There was no way we could let it run amok. The damage wouldn't be limited to just the royal capital if Ashwrath went out of control.

『Should i support Ashwrath...』

However, as I found out when I watched the two of them fight, both of her defenses and life force were too massive for a few attacks to take kill it.

Even if I managed to create an opening, I wasn't sure if that would be enough to help Ashwrath defeat Velmeria.

『When it comes to that—I have to aim for the Fanatics huh...』

The broken magic sword that Velmeria is holding. That is definitely the main body of the Fanatics. The moment I saw it, I immediately knew.

It's a divine sword. There's no need to appraise it. Is the announcer-san inside me secretly whispering to me?

The Fanatics were bizarre even from a distance, and its presence was no less than Gaia's in its liberated state.

『If I could just do something about it.....』

As I was thinking about that, I noticed something. The Fanatics were getting shorter. In the short time since I started observing the fierce battle between the two, the blade of the Fanatics had shortened.

If I take a close look, I can see its blade crumbling away as if it were weathering. It must be a reaction to the divine sword release. Because I'm often affected by skills with strong repercussions, I could be sure of that.

Do I have to do something? If the collapse continues at that rate, it won't be long before it destroys itself. But before that happens, there is a possibility that Ashwrath will start to run amok too.....No, it's too dangerous to bet on wishful thinking.

『I guess I'll have to take the risk and intervene huh』

If I hadn't seen Gaia before, all I would have been able to do was shudder at the thought of a battle between two divine swords. The idea of a battle between two superior divine swords gives me such awe.

『But, still——』

I have to do something.

『However, what should I do?』

I can't break into that fight without a plan.

As long as I can only expect to damage it with a full-blown blow, I will have to prepare a blow at the perfect time.

I can't use potential release. Because I can't stand it now.

I can use telekinetic catapult after teleporting? No, It won't work. Against a strong opponent, there is a high possibility that it can detect my teleport. In fact, some of the rank A opponents I've fought in the past have avoided it. I should assume that Velmeria will naturally react as well.

This is where the bad side of not having Fran came in. I would teleport, Fran would aim, and the two of us would attack. We were able to minimize

the gap because we were able to divide our roles in this way.

『Then, do i have to use telekinesis to catch the opponent?』

If I can use telekinesis to block your opponent's movement, even for a moment, I may be able to hit them. At the same time, if I use the telekinesis with a guider, the possibility of missing an attack will be even lower. However, that would make it impossible for me to use telekinetic catapult.

『No, if only I could use magic together...Hmm?』

As i was worried, I felt the presence of a person somewhat far away. he seemed to be using his stealth skills, but his stealth must have wavered for a moment as he tried to dodge the huge debris that had fallen nearby. In terms of location, he was in the shadows of the rubble, about 20 meters away from me.

The owner of the presence was Forrund. I didn't think he'd be this close. He seemed to have immediately normalized his stealth skills, when I caught his presence.

Still, I'm pretty sure that Forrund had almost no stealth skills when I appraised him before.....His current stealth skill is quite good. It's not inferior to its higher ranks.

But I soon found out why. It was the sword that Forrund currently held in his right hand. It was probably a magic sword that Forrund had created with his extra skill, the love of the Sword God. It seems to have the ability to grant the wearer a stealth skill. In addition, the magic sword in his left hand has the same type of stealth ability.

When i think about it, that was amazing. It would be possible to handle any situation by creating a magic sword with the most appropriate ability for the situation. Moreover, Forrund can create more than 100 swords at the same time, right? That would be like suddenly having 100 more skills.

It's quite bad if he was our enemy. Well, I suppose it's the same for me and Fran's skill sharing.

Should I fight with Forrund here? But as long as I'm not using the doppelganger, it will reveal my true identity.

Forrund huh.....I don't mind revealing my true identity to this man. I've met him many times before, and I've never had a bad impression of him. He's usually very intimidating because he's often involved in combat, and he sometimes can be scary. However, he never once had any negative feelings towards Fran or me.

That's probably why Fran has a strange fondness for Forrund. Although they hadn't talked that much, it was clear that Fran liked Forrund.

No, this is an emergency. There was no time for hesitation. If fighting together would increase our chances of survival, then we should have fought together.

『Forrund...Can you hear me?』

(Hmm? What's this voice? Who are you?)

『Aah, I'm not an enemy. I'm the master of the Black Lightning Princess. I'm talking to you with telepathy』

(Is that so, then I'll believe you. I don't sense any malice in your words)

Somehow, he believed me so easily. No, I don't have time for useless thoughts right now, so I'll just be thankful.

『I have one favor to ask』

(What is it? Ask me anything)

『Velmeria-do you have a back-up plan that could take down the dragon girl?』

This made me think that if Forrund had a powerful special move, I could just cooperate——.

(No, I don't have the offensive power to finish that thing off. It's beyond the human realm)

『I see』

(How about you?)

『There is, but.....Hey, that sword-shooting skill. What's the point of that thing if it's not your equipment or a sword under your control?』

(No, that's not the case. It's an ability originally created by my skills to control swords, but the effect is to manipulate swords within a certain range)

So, it's like a sword-only telekinesis. If so, maybe we can cooperate.

With Forrund's firing ability, I would be able to direct all of my telekinesis to restraint Velmeria.

Anyway, wasn't Forrund more of a quiet guy? I thought he was a man who always said only a few words. However, when I used telepathy, he talked normally. Maybe he's just not very talkative in general, but he's thinking a lot in his head. I felt a little closer to him when I thought about that.

『I need Forrund's help. Can you lend me your strength?』

(Yea, fine with me. What should I do?)

That's a quick decision. I can count on him.

『Let's meet up first. I'll go over there. Don't be surprised, okay?』

(?)

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-458.html>

# Chapter 459: Forrund and Strategy Planning

I teleported under Forrund.

「Huh?」

『Oops, don't be surprised——is that too much to ask huh? Well, I am Master, an Intelligence Weapon』

「...I see」

『Eh? Aaa...』

「Hmmh」

Is that all? Isn't it too early to be convinced? I'm ashamed of myself for saying 「Don't be surprised!」 with a smug look on my face.

『Ma, maybe you know other intelligence weapon besides me?』

「No」

『I-is that so huh...』

Anyway, aren't you talking too much differently than you did during telepathy?

『Uh, when you're connected via telepathy, you can talk with your mind. You're better off this way, right?』

(Is that so? I don't mind if you do)



『Everyone says you don't talk much, don't they?』

(A few often said me like that, but not everyone)

Yeah, maybe some people are too scared to point it out. Well, I hope we can cooperate well. Then I told Forrund about my plan.

What we need to do is simple. Accelerate with Forrund's abilities supported with my magic and skills. We'll use the Dimension Gate to try to surprise her. The target is the Fanatics equipped by Velmeria.

It would be best if we could destroy it, but what we are aiming for is to weaken it through cannibalism. It is a skill that absorbs part of the abilities of the person you kill, but this is not the case with Fanatics, I should destroy it.

It seems that the personality of the Fanatics is a kind of collective consciousness. their words and actions, as well as their ability to take the minds and memories of the people they kill and integrate them into themselves, would certainly confirm it.

And when my attack damages a part of their consciousness, a part of the collective consciousness dies and is absorbed by me through cannibalism. Even if I can't completely destroy the pseudo fanatic sword or the fanatics themselves, the cannibalism is still in effect, so this must be true.

If that's the case, I'll be able to weaken the Fanatics' abilities by inflicting a painful blow with my attack, and provide cover for Ashwrath. If I'm successful, I may be able to greatly speed up the Fanatics' self-destruction.

The only question is whether I can stand it or not. But now I had no choice but to do it. Cannibalism is the only way to ensure that I can damage the Fanatics.

In truth, it would be quicker if we could tell Ashwrath about our plan and get him to cooperate, but we needed to get closer to deliver the telepathy. But if I got any closer, Velmeria would notice me. I couldn't take that risk.

『The question is, can we do any damage in the first place? we're dealing with an opponent who hasn't been destroyed by Ashwrath's super attack. If i can't do any damage, it won't even trigger cannibalism』

(Then———what do you think?)

『But then———』

(Even so———)

『I mean———』

And with each other's input, we formulate a strategy.

(That would give us a chance)

『Are you sure you want to do it?』

(I don't care. As long as I'm the only one who can help to take him down, I'm all yours.

『.....I'm not going to sacrifice you, but I'm not going to go easy on you either, okay?』

(Of course. You don't have to worry about me)

To be honest, it's a lot of burden for Forrund, but it's a better idea than my plan.

『Also, a word of advice. If anyone but Fran equips me, they will die. I'm serious. If you just hold me in your hand, you'll be fine』

(Huh? Got it, I'll be careful)

『...Are you sure?』

(About what?)

『No. you are not afraid to just hold me?』

(If I don't equip you, it wouldn't be a problem, right? What does it matter?)

As expected of a rank A adventurer. He has great courage. I'm counting on him.

(I also have one piece of advice for you)

『Eh? What is it?』

(I have the ability to analyze and duplicate magic swords. In this case of you, master, I knew at first glance that it was impossible to duplicate you.....However, analysis will be possible to some extent. This is done automatically, so I have no control over it. In some cases, things like the Master's secrets might be revealed to me)

『I see』

However, as long as Forrund had the love of the Sword God, I was prepared for that. In fact, it would be a blessing just to not be able to duplicate me. In order to increase the odds of victory, there was no choice but to not borrow Forrund's power.

『Aah, if you figure out something, I'd appreciate it if you'd keep your mouth shut』

(Of course)

Forrund's words are trustworthy, even though I was not using the truth of falsehood. I wonder why it is? Is it because he is like a man without his backbone? (1)

『The aim is the moment when Ashwrath stops Velmeria from moving』

(Oh. Let's put all our energy into this one blow)

『I counting on you』

(That's my line. We need to stop that girl)

『Leave it to me. I'll give it my all』

(Umu)

First, Forrund created about ten new magic swords. The first is the invisible sniper's sword, which has a sniper function that increases the accuracy of long-range attacks, the second is a telekinetic sword, and the third has the ability to control the wind.

It seems that thanks to the love of the Sword God skill, he can use his ability to create a magic sword without holding it in his hand. He thrusts his magic swords up against the ground around him.

The last thing Forrund created was a magic sword with a short blade but a powerful presence. It was a jet-black sword breaker with a row of animal fang-like protrusion on its back.

If I didn't know that I was a discarded divine sword, I might have harboured a rivalry with it. That's how vicious its atmosphere is.

『Is that, your ace card?』

(Yeah, its name is 『Agito the Demon Wolf』 . It's a high-grade magic sword that was made by grinding the fangs of a Fenrir, the demon wolf that devour everything) (2)

『Fenrir...』

Seriously? When I heard that, I felt a sense of familiarity to that magical sword. I can't help but be curious about this sword. Is there really a Fenrir in me?

(What's wrong?)

『Aah, no. Don't mind』

(Is that so? This magic sword has two abilities: one is to weaken the barrier of the person it touches. The other is the ability to absorb the durability of

the armor it touches, making it more fragile. On the other hand, this magic sword is getting stronger and stronger)

That's pretty cool. If the sword had those two abilities, it would make something strong even stronger.

『Surely, if we have it, that would really help.....』

(I didn't expect it to be the Fanatics, but it should be effective against that sword too. I don't know how far I can go to reduce the durability of that thing, though)

『Still, I'm starting to see some hope』

(If so, then)

『Yeah, let's go』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-459.html>

# Chapter 460: Cooperative Attack

Forrund, who had grabbed my hilt, staggered lightly as if he were dizzy.

He's not equipped me, why!

「Guh...」

『A-are you okay?』

(The amount of information from analyse was too much...For now, let's just focus on the attack)

『A, yeah』

Thank God. The goddess' curse had not fallen on him. What did he can see? Well, I'll ask him when the battle is over and we're both still alive.

Forrund quickly regained his stance and aimed me with his right eye. As Forrund's magical power enveloped my blade, my body left his hand and slowly floated into the air.

So, this is what happens when someone used telekinesis on me huh. It's a strange feeling.

Forrund pulls his right hand back and takes a stance as if to deliver a punch. I'm floating as the extension of his palm. his left hand was thrust forward as if to keep me steady and straight.

I also used my shapeshift skills to transform into a cone shape to reduce air resistance. I'm going to put all my strength into the tip of my sword.

「All sets」

『Okay』

Somehow, I started to understand him a little. I feel like we're on the same page. Is this another ability of the Love of the Sword God? It would not be surprising if he had the ability to communicate with the sword or something like that.

As I stared at Ashwrath's aura, which was growing redder, I suppressed my impatience and continued to observe Velmeria.

『Not yet...a little more...』

「.....」

My current state, where I've built up my strength to the limit, must be a tremendous load. The blood vessels on his forehead swelled to the point of bursting, and I could hear his arms creaking. However, he clenched his teeth and endured the pain. I guess he's similar to Fran in this way too.

As I watched for the right moment, the moment finally came.

Ashwrath's attack knocked Velmeria to the ground. She got up instantly, but was held in place by super gravity.

『...Now!』

「Here I go, Master!」

At the moment I shouted, Forrund's magic power surged and exploded. I was shot out of Forrund's palm at super high speed.

『Uwooooooooooh!』

I opened the dimension gate over Velmeria. It wasn't directly above her, because I needed some distance to accelerate.

I simultaneously activated flame magic, wind magic, thunderbolt magic, and space-time magic to accelerate myself. The effect is enhanced as much as possible by controlling fire and wind magic.

In order to increase my speed and power as much as possible. I also used Gravity Pressure on myself to draw me into the target.

I also did not neglect to increase my attack power. In addition to Super Gravitation and Vibration Fangs, I used the Dark and Light attribute swords at the same time. Dark attribute was chosen because it attacked the opponent's spirit directly, increasing the activation rate of my cannibalism as much as possible.

As for light, it was a gamble. I can see that Velmeria has high resistance to the four basic attributes and the composite attribute. So, I thought that light, a rare attribute, would be better.

Not only that, but I was also able to copy the rapid acceleration by magic release that the Fanatics were using back then.

While being pushed out by the telekinesis of Forrund, I instantly gained an unbelievable amount of acceleration due to the multiple activation of his skills at the very limit of his control power. Normally, I would lose control and be blown away.

However, with the guidance of my telekinesis, i went straight

The tremendous recoil caused by the simultaneous use of magic and skills is quickly eroding my durability. However, this was to be expected. Forrund is risking his life, so I have to risk everything!

『Wraaaaaa!』

Velmeria's eyes are looking at me. She's clearly reacting. But she won't be able to intercept. Because Forrund was standing in front of her.

As soon as he shot me, he dove through the other dimension gate I had opened and attacked Velmeria. Because she was able to react to my sudden appearance in the sky, she was only a moment too late to respond to Forrund who had appeared behind the scenes.



Taking advantage of the opportunity, Forrund had succeeded in blocking Velmeria's movement. Forrund used the sword breaker in his hand to tightly secure the Fanatics.

Of course, with the power of Forrund alone, she would be easily shaken loose. However, it was the super-gravity of Ashwrath that held her to the earth. It was impossible to shake that off in an instant.

Not even Velmeria could shake off Forrund, who had challenged her with the determination to throw everything away.

「Gaah!」

「Won't let you escape!」

『UWOOOOOOOO!』

Then, I turned into a super-fast bullet and pierced the Fanatics, along with Forrund's arm and his magic sword. It was probably thanks to Agito the sword of demon wolf. The Fanatics, which had boasted such great defensive power, were shattered into pieces.

Forrund was blown away by my blow, spraying a lot of blood. Still, at the moment we crossed, Forrund was certainly smiling.

But I don't have the luxury of caring for him right now.

『Gyiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii—!』

Is it mine, or the Fanatics', or a combination of our screams?

I was screaming unconsciously at the tremendous torrent of magic power flowing into me.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-460.html>

# Chapter 461: The Black Things that Devours Everything

『IiiiIIiiii——!』

Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no!

What is this!

Unbelievable magic power is...!

Hot! Hot, hot! Something is burning inside of me! I'm burning, burning,  
and seemed to pop!

『GUhGHaaaaghaaaaaiiiii!』

It's disgusting! A strange feeling as if countless bugs were crawling around  
inside my head, inside my body, and all over my body.

『UwaaaaAaaaAaaa!』

Help! Help me!

I will break...!

『Gha, GHaah.....』

Gkiiiiin!

『?』

Suddenly, there's a sound like something cracking. What was it? what's cracking——.

It was right after that.

『UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA——!』

Black stuff overflows from deep inside me.

It hurts, it's hot, it's cold, it's painful. It's just that something black is covering and invading my insides. No, this is me too. It's an entity that makes up myself. I understood this intuitively.

『Devour it』

『Ghaaaa...!』

『Devour it』

『AAAAAghuh...?』

『Devour it, Devour it!』

『Ghuh...What is this? Ghaaa!』

Devour?

『Devour it! Devours everything!』

Devour what...? Everything...? You're a part of me, but you're not me. Who are you?

『Listen to my voice! Surrender yourself to me! Surrender yourself to me!』

A voice echoing directly in my mind. The image is black. An evil and terrifying thing is screaming inside me.

『Devour it! Devour the Heaven and earth, gods and demons, people and beast, devour them all, devour everything!』

What came through in his voice was an intense sense of hunger. The word "devour" means exactly what it sounds like. Its to eats flesh, slurps blood, swallows the earth, and even bites through the heavens. This black thing is capable of that.

『Ugh!』

What I felt in response was tremendous anger. My mind was filled with anger.

You can't just say whatever you want! You want to devour everything? And by people, you mean Fran too huh!

Don't mess with me! I won't allow anyone to kill Fran, even if it's me! If you're going to kill Fran, you'll have to kill me first, me! Oh, sh\*t! I don't even understand it! I don't know what I'm talking about! My thoughts are all jumbled up!

『AAAAAAHH! You're so noisy! Shut the fuck up!』

Maybe because of my anger, but the pain and discomfort went away.

『Why don't you obey me! Obey me!』

『I said shut the fuck up!』

『.....!』

What? It did shut up? I guess i just have to command it to...

The lord of that voices—I could see that the black evil thing was clearly confused. Then, it rapidly lost its power. It didn't disappear, nor did it leave me, but I could feel it receding deep inside me.

Anyway...how did it work?

It was right after I thought that. I heard a high-pitched voice, different from the one I had just heard.

『Kehihihihi! It's funny to see what the guy who ate us was like!』

『You're next huh——』

I don't know why I know who they are. Maybe there's something that the discarded divine sword can communicate with each other.

『Fanatics huh?』

『Kihihihhihi! Now what? We are what we are! But you've got one hell of a thing going on here!』

Every time the Fanatics speak, their voice tone changes. It could be a man, a woman, an old man, or a child. But the fanatics were inside me. It seems that cannibalism was triggered and ate the Fanatics. I was in so much pain that I didn't even notice it.

However, this was the first time that I could feel so clearly the being I had absorbed through cannibalism. As soon as I became aware of it, a sick feeling came over me.

『Ughooh...!』

『Guhahahaha! You were originally a human! So pitiful!』

『Wha-what do you mean...?』

『Someday, you will definitely go crazy! The body of a sword, the mind of a man! There's no way you can stand it! One day, you will go mad! Just like we did!』

『I won't go crazy!』

『That's impossible! We're going to watch you from the inside. We're gonna watch you went crazy! And finally, you will kill your own wielder at the end!』

『Sh\*t! You are so noisy!』

『Gyaha——gha! What the...!』

The Fanatics, who had been ranting and raving about the joke inside me, suddenly writhed in agony.

『Wha-what the hell is going on inside of you?』

Fanatics raise a frightened voice. It's Announcer-san who bites into that spirit. I can see that Announcer-san - or what's left of Cherubim - absorbs the Fanatics.

『Wha-what the hell is this! Why is there a being of our kind inside of you...! Stop it! Don't devour us! Stop! We're not going away! We won't going AWAAAAAAaaaaay————』

With that exclamation, the horrible feeling of disgust that had overtaken me completely disappeared. Just like that.

『.....It's finally over?』

『.....』

There was no one to answer my mutter. I thought that maybe announcer-san would answer me, but no. However, I could feel its presence increase slightly. Perhaps, if I continue use cannibalism, Announcer-san might come back one day.

But my condition is pretty bad. The blade is completely shattered, and to the casual observer it would appear to have been broken. I'm not sure if I'm still under the influence of the divine attributes, but my regeneration is slow.

However, my durability value was slowly recovering. I guess I survived just in the nick of time.....

『No, rather than about me, what happened to Velmeria!』

Had her rampage stopped? I hurriedly checked my surroundings.

『Velmeria is——there she is!』

At some distance away, I saw Velmeria lying on the ground. Her body had returned to its original human-like form. I could see her chest rising and falling lightly. She seemed to be alive.

The super magic power emanating from her body had vanished and she was rather dying. Her right arm was blasted off, along with her fanatics, and the right half of her body was torn to shreds.

On the opposite side of Velmeria, I could also see Ashwrath lying on the ground.

『Oi, Ashwrath?』

「Shih, Master, huh?」

The words come back to me, albeit weakly.

『You're not out of control, are you?』

「It's thanks to you.....」

Apparently, the worst had been averted.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/01/tenken-461.html>

# Chapter 462: Handling Ashwrath

『...Forrund is!』

Forrund was lying on the ground some distance away. I somehow managed to control my telekinesis as I flew low, occasionally scraping my hilt on the ground, and managed to get close to Forrund.

『This is...』

He makes it, but he's in bad shape. The area from the right clavicle to the right ribs was completely gouged out, exposing internal organs and bones. The left arm was also missing from the elbow up. The ground, which had been levelled by the fierce battle, was stained black by his massive blood loss.

「Uggh...」

But he was still alive. His remaining left lung was moving slightly, and I could hear his heartbeat faintly. I hurriedly continued to use recovery magic on Forrund which was about to be lost his life.

I was really glad that I had recovered my magic power from cannibalizing the Fanatics.

『Forrund! Forrund!』

「I'm fine, now...」

He makes it huh? Forrund raised himself up on his own, still flooding with a lot of blood from the section of his shredded shoulder.



As it was, He immediately produced several magic swords. Then his arm started to regenerate slowly. He must have created magic swords of the recovery and regeneration type. Forrund ability to respond is still amazing.

『You're safe. Thank God』

(It's been a while since I've had a conversation with my dead friend)

Does that mean you almost went to the other side?

While I was recovering Forrund, Ashwrath, who was now able to stand up on his own, was checking on Velmeria's condition. Then he suddenly held up Gaia, still in the open.

『Ashwrath! She's not rampaging anymore! You don't have to kill her!』

「It's fine. Well, have a look」

I can't feel any killing intent. It seems that he is not trying to kill her. Ashwrath held Gaia above Velmeria.

「Smile of the Earth」

As Ashwrath muttered it, gentle magic power overflowed from Gaia and enveloped Velmeria. The dying Velmeria's complexion improved, and the wounds all over her body began to heal. Its recovery power was probably even greater than Greater Heal. It seemed that Gaia had not only the power to attack, but also the power to heal.

It also means that there's a powerful means of recovery for a rampaging Ashwrath right.

「...Ugh...」

「Miss, are you okay?」

「...i...where is this...?」

There was a possibility that the Fanatics would absorb her spirit and she would never regain consciousness, but apparently the worst had been avoided. The Fanatics seemed to have lost their original power due to the damage, and they might not even have the power to integrate other's spirit into their own.

If they could completely integrate their mind into their host, there would be no need for a magic drug to manipulate them. No, Gallus and the others were not supposed to wake up because of that magic drugs.....

「You don't remember anything huh. It's all right. Now go back to sleep」

「.....Shyu—.....」

Even if she survived, she must have been on the edge mentally and physically. She fell asleep again as if she had fainted.

『Hey, Ashwrath. Does your current recovery technique have any effect on healing the symptoms someone under a magic drugs effect?』

「Magic drugs? No, it one only heals wounds」

『Then how did Velmeria wake up? Isn't she suffering from the after-effects of the magic drugs?』

「Master, maybe it's because she haven't taken the magic drugs for long enough right? She had just been taken, hadn't she?」

『I see』

Although a large amount of magic drugs was used to manipulate her mind, the aftereffects may have been small due to the short period of time it was administered. The amount of magic drugs that accumulated in her body was probably very small.

「.....Thanks for the help, you two」

I'm sure he meant what he said. Ashwrath is wounded to the bone. The wound itself has healed, but the drain on his magic and life force has not yet

recovered. In addition, the demonization has progressed considerably. The mental exhaustion must be more than we can imagine.

「She was a bit of a strong opponent. I don't know what I would have done without you guys」

『That's our line. If it weren't for Ashwrath, the damage would have been much worse. Well, I wouldn't say the damage was small though.....』

It's a pretty extensive wasteland. Half of the noble's district is probably in this state. I'm sure that none of the remaining mansions are undamaged. In addition, there was no trace of the huge castle that had been standing there as the symbol of the country.

There are also the suicide bombings of pseudo fanatic swords in civilian areas and slums, and the damage done to this royal city must be unimaginably huge.

『Still, we were able to defeat the Fanatics, thanks to Ashwrath』

「Yeah」

「Well, I guess it's mutual then. However, I've gone a little overboard. I'd better get the hell out of here」

『Eh? Ashwrath?』

「I'll take the little girl, okay?」

『Wha-wait a moment! What do you mean?』

Sheathing Gaia, Ashwrath carries the still-unawake Velmeria on his shoulders. He means he's leaving like that? And with Velmeria with him?

But Forrund seemed to agree with him.

「It's for the good of this country」

I don't know what Forrund's words mean. For the good of the country?

「Well, if I do say so myself, this battle caused a lot of damage. I'm not saying that I'm not to blame. But, you see, if a country tries to capture me and bring me to the courts, it won't just end up being this country's problem」

Ashwrath and Forrund explain it to me. In other words, it seems that the existence of Ashwrath is too big for them.

Let's say they've captured Ashwrath for the destruction of the royal capital. And make him pay for his crime. But that's the hard part.

First of all, a death penalty is out of the question. If he were in a danger of dying, the mad demonization will just be triggered on its own and cause great damage again. He can't even kill himself.

They can't even enslave him. He will also be protected by mad demonization. Unless if Ashwrath is willing to serve on his own. But how can this country would use a monster that could go on a rampage at any moment?

If Ashwrath wanted to, he could probably do most of it. But it comes with a super-strong bomb with a time limit waiting until it explodes. If it explodes, it will wipe several cities off the map. And no one knows when the time limit will come. If there is a politician who wants to keep this in his country, he is either a fool or a madman.

Then send them to the enemy? That is also out of the question. They can't let Ashwrath get involved in a war. If they do that, the Adventurers' Guild will turn against them. If the guild, which takes the stance of not being involved in wars, were to use its rank S adventurers to a war, they would do whatever they could to destroy the country in order to save face. Otherwise, the organization pride itself would be tarnished.

No, it was a problem before that too. In the first place, it was difficult to unilaterally accuse Ashwrath of a crime.

This incident, in large part, was a coup d'état by Marquis Ashtner. Many adventurers have lost their lives, and the responsibility for overseeing them

lies with the country. Depending on their point of view, Ashwrath's fight to stop Marquis Ashtner's trump card could be said to have saved the country.

If they charge Ashwrath with a crime, the Adventurers' Guild will come to his defense. If the country opposed it, a conflict would break out between the two. It was the country that would lose out.

Furthermore, the neighbouring countries would also react sensitively to the situation. After all, Ashwrath possessed a divine sword. It was not surprising for them to think, for the Kingdom of Kranzel wanted that divine sword.

Instead of reparations. Or to take it away after his death penalty. Whether it was feasible or not, just being told that that was what they were aiming for could have been a lead to diplomatic problem.

On the other hand, what if they put all the blame on Marquis Ashtner and hold up Ashwrath as the hero of the nation's salvation? That's too, will become another problem. There is a possibility that they might think that they are trying to get rank S adventurers into their country.

Rather, this was more of a problem. The fact that they were trying to possess a superweapon could be seen as having some kind of ulterior motives.

After all, Ashwrath was an untouchable existence that was beyond their own power no matter how they handle him. The smartest thing to do would be to stay uninvolved with him. Even the Beast King had left him alone.

The safest course of action for both the Kingdom of Kranzel and Ashwrath would be for Ashwrath to voluntarily leave the country and be exiled.

When a mass destroyer with the nickname of "Friendly Fire" were to roam the world as usual, I guess all countries will respond in a similar way.

If this were anyone other than Ashwrath, this would not be happening. They will be captured and enslaved. No, the normal route would be execution.

In other words, Velmeria was at high risk of becoming one. She was the Count's concubine's child, and she didn't have a lot of power. Moreover, she was the party responsible for the greatest act of destruction. She was not going to go unpunished.

To be honest, I have no ill feelings toward Velmeria. The residents of the royal capital would probably have a different opinion, but all I felt was pity. I think she was just caught in the middle of it, she was dealing with a marquis and a divine sword that had spent forty years preparing for this. I don't think they could have gotten away with it. If Ashwrath was willing to help her, then I was fine with that.

『Please take care of Velmeria』

「I guess this something i have to do. You can leave her to me. I won't let anything bad happen to her」

『I was hoping you'd go see Fran too though』

「That will be difficult. Well, Se you soon then」

When she wakes up, Fran must be disappointed.

『Where are you going?』

「I was originally planned to follow Zelos Reed to the continent of Gordisia. It's the perfect place to hide her daughter, and I'll be hunting demon beast on that continent for a while」

『Is Zelos Reed on the continent of Gordisia?』

「I'm just saying it's highly possible he might be there」

The continent of Gordisia is recruiting talented warriors to fight against the Rank S demonic beasts, and it seems that if you are strong enough, your past history wouldn't be an issue. It is said to be the last place criminals from all over the world flee to.

『I see』

「Then, I'm going? Master, Forrund, see you again」

「Yea」

『See ya』

Although he must not be in his top form, Ashwrath leaves with a firm steps. If it weren't for Velmeria on his shoulder, it would be a perfect picture.

He went to different direction from the gate, but.....Well, I guess he'll find a way.

『Forrund, what will you do now?』

「I'm going to guild master」

『I see. Then I'll go with you. I mean, I'd appreciate it if you could carry me. If i stay like this, I'll looks like a sword that flies and moves on its own』

「Yeah, understood」

His wound finally healed, but he's still dizzy, Forrund carried me on his back and started walking toward the main gate.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-462.html>

# Chapter 463: The Images Forrund Saw

After sending Ashwrath off, I was moving along with Forrund on his back.

『Hey, It's about Ashwrath, but can't we just say that the country or something made the request in advance? That way, the country can say that they anticipated the coup and took countermeasures in advance? It would protect their prestige a little』

Fran actually did so in the beastman country. But Forrund shook his head.

(If it weren't for Ashwrath-dono, that might not be a problem. But when it comes to that man, it's a different story)

『Because he have a divine sword huh?』

(Rather, it is probably because he specializes in mass destruction. In the case of Ashwrath-dono, most of his anecdotes are about mass destruction and genocide. Of course, most of the stories were told on the battlefield, and many of the older anecdotes have been passed down as heroic tales.....)

The fact that he favored Ashwrath, who could destroy a country by himself, would be called ambitious in the first place. In peace times, they might not have cared so much. Other countries would have had the option of treating Ashwrath with diplomatic excuses.

However, the Kingdom of Kranzel, whose major cities, the Royal Capital and Barbra, were damaged one after the other, had suffered a major blow to its national power and prestige. In this situation, it was dangerous to do



anything that would antagonize other countries. Especially with the ambitious kingdom of Raidos in the north, relations with other countries would be important.

(Of course, it is possible that the government's decision may be different. It's just that Ashwrath-dono has made that decision.....If he turn himself in, he may have a trouble with the government. But if he walks away without saying a word, nothing in particular will happen. The latter would be the safer option)

『Such a thing huh...』

(Yeah, it's a shame, though)

I never think what Ashwrath and Forrund have thought of? Besides, they've been doing this for decades. I'm sure that Ashwrath himself knows best what to do.

In the first place, I don't think that Ashwrath, who fought against a terrorist and stop them was guilty.

(No, even though it was an act of force majeure (1), he attacked the royal castle where the king resides and caused great damage to the noble town. How can he not be charged with a crime?)

I have a soft spot for Ashwrath, so my judgment may be a little bit on Ashwrath's side. Let's cool down a bit and try to put this into Japanese perspective.

One day, a defective super robot weapons owned by the Self-Defense Force was manipulated by a terrorist suddenly appears and starts wreaking havoc in Tokyo. They unleash beams and missiles, and if left unchecked, Japan will be in danger! Just then, the same type of Super Robot #2 appears. Super Robot #2 uses the same super weapons to defeat the terrorist robots. However, the area around the Tokyo Metropolitan Government was burnt to ashes, and hundreds of people lost their lives.....

Yeah, it's bad. If the pilot of No. 2 appeared on the side of justice, there would be many people throwing stones on him. The internet would go up in flames, and there would be far more people who would be against it than support for it.

No, I don't think I can use modern Japan as comparison in the first place. This is an aristocratic country, not a law-abiding country. After all, it might be better to just walk away and avoid the commotion. Well, Ashwrath has already left, so there's no point in thinking about it any more.....

『Haaah, let's change the mood and see my changes after cannibalism』

Then I checked my status and let out an involuntary squeal of surprise.

『Ugghhh?』

「Hmmm?」

『No, sorry. Don't mind me』

「Very well」

My ability had grown much more than I had imagined. To my surprise, my magic power had increased by 5000. That's almost 1.5 times more. My endurance value had also increased by more than 3000.

I had eaten the divine sword, even though it was nearly broken. Perhaps this much was natural. And it wasn't just the ability value that I gained from the cannibalism.

I had added a new skill to my skill set called Magic Power Supply. This is a skill that allows you to share your magic power with your user. Fran had always been able to draw out my magic power, but with this new skill, she would be able to reduce her losses and increase her efficiency significantly.

As I check my abilities in this way, I soon see a line of people being evacuated. The one leading the people in the hall is Count Baileys. I can also see Eliante and Colbert.

Fran's presence was already outside the city. It seems that Urushi has went exactly like what i told him to.

(Master, I'd like to report to the Count. Do you mind?)

『I think it's better that way too』

The evacuation of the people will proceed in vain if we do not inform them of what is going on. I don't know if there is no more danger in the city, but we should tell them that we have killed the Marquis and the Fanatics.

So Forrund approached the counts who were desperately trying to take command. Eliante was the first one to notice us. She called out to Forrund with an anxious expression. Count Bailleys soon approached as well.

「Forrund! So, you're safe!」

「Yeah」

「So what happened.....? I can't hear any battle anymore.....」

「It's over」

「Does this mean that Ashwrath-dono has won?」

「Yeah」

Oh, no. He can't make a proper report with Forrund's complexity to talk! Telepathy. I'm used to it with Fran, so leave this to me.

「Ashwrath has won. Marquis Ashtner has fallen. The swordsmen under his command blew themselves up and died」

『Oi, there's more to it than that. Report properly!』

(It can't be helped. I can't speak any more fluently than what I already do)

I guess it was hard for him to come up with long lines out of nowhere! But you have to do your best here.

「What happened to the girl who was fighting Ashwrath-dono?」

「Ashwrath defeated her」

「! Is-is that so.....」

「And Ashwrath is?」

「Already left to avoid trouble」

Even if we were to tell the Count the truth, there are too many people's ears in this place. I'm sorry for the Count's shock at hearing of his daughter's death, but please bear with it for a little while longer.

「Forrund?」

「Forrund-san?」

Eliante and Colbert were looking at Forrund with puzzled expressions. After all, it seemed strange to see the normally quiet Forrund talking for so long.

Still, Forrund did his best and managed to convey the information we knew to the Count and the others. Based on this information, the Count and the others began to discuss the situation in the city and how to guide the evacuation in the future. I guess we can leave the rest to them.

『Then, Forrund. Let's head to Fran』

「Okay」

As Forrund turns himself around, Eliante rushes to keep him back.

「Hold on! Where are you going? I was hoping you could help me with this, if you don't mind」

「No」

Forrund shook his head and put his hand lightly on my back. Eliante must have seen me before. He is looking at me lightly.

「Return Fran's swords」

「That swords is...」

「He leave it to me」

「I-is...that so. Then it can't be helped」

「Yeah」

Eliante looked sad. Colbert was also drooping for some reason. Oh, did they think I'm dead? The way Forrund said it, it was like my last wish when i was about to die.

But before I could get him to correct it, Forrund had left the. Well, we'll have to correct him later.

On the road, I asked Forrund a question that had been bothering me.

『Hey, what kind of information about me were you able to analyze with the love of the Sword God skill?』

Then Forrund answer back with a difficult look.

(Normally, I'd be able to learn more about the maker and the sword's capabilities, but this time, I just saw a strange sight)

『A strange sight?』

(.....That was the scene where a man is led by someone and sealed inside a sword that emits an evil aura. The sword seemed to resemble Master's, but the details were a little different)

『Wha-What kind of sword was that?』

(The blade and other parts of the blade were very similar to Master's, but the design of the handle was different. I think it was a four-sided woman shape, not a wolf)

No doubt about it. It's the cherubim. I'm not sure what the aura of evil is, but it's a dangerous divine sword that the gods ordered to be destroyed. Maybe it has something to do with that. And the scene where the man is enclosed in it is.....

『Wh-what did the man look like?』

(Fumu...)

『What's wrong?』

(He was a simple man with no distinctive features other than his black hair and black eyes. In fact, the fact that he was so plain might be a characteristic of him)

『I-is that so...』

My heart aches.....But I'm pretty sure it's me.

『Maybe that was me』

(Was Master originally a person?)

『Yeah. I was the human soul that is sealed inside this sword. Well, I'm not exactly sure who did this to me though』

If I talk to Forrund in detail, he might be able to tell me who else was involved in my making besides Elmera.

『What did it look like?』

(You don't remember?)

『Yeah, not at all. So, I need to know』

(I see. But I didn't see everything either. It's like I was looking through a haze, like a vision)

『I'm okay with that』

(Then. The first thing I saw was the three pillars)

『Three pillars? Not three persons?』

That's a pretty exaggerated word.

(This is what happens when a god or his family is involved with the sword I analyze, but the analysis doesn't work and I can only see strange sights)

『You think that's what happened when you touched me?』

(That's right. A disturbing image appeared in my mind, a god, or three people who seemed to be his family members, were having a conversation with Master)

『Do you know what they says?』

(I'm sorry. It's just, the Master was smiling)

Apparently, there was no sound in his vision. Still, it must be a big clue. I asked Forrund to explain as much as he could remember.

The location is unknown. The image seemed to be as if the characters were floating in the sky. There were three characters, but their faces were unknown. But they looked like women. Are they goddesses, or are they members of a female-formed deity?.....

I was brought in by one of them, and after some conversation, I was enclosed in the sword. To Forrund, it looked as if I had agreed to it of my own free will, as I smiled.

(Then a strange thing happened. One of the goddesses held up her hand, and a strange image appeared in the air, as if it had been pulled out of Master)

『What was it?』

(I didn't see Master in that sight.....I'm looking up at an amazingly tall, rectangular tower of buildings in a neat row. Maybe the owner of that gaze is lying on the ground. But it looked like he was badly injured. Because when I moved my gaze, I could see his body and hands covered in blood)

Could that be a memory from when I died? Actually, that part is fuzzy. I remember being hit by a car, but then I found myself in a sword and.....

(I also saw a scene where he was staring at a woman in a beautiful dress on a bed, and another scene where he was walking hand in hand with a young woman)

No, maybe it's not my memory. I don't remember it at all.

(Then, in a strange square board, a naked woman and a man are glamorously——) (2)

『Wha-wait stop!』

How to explain it. It's that thing. No, but this is an important clue. I can't just cut it off because I was embarrassed.....

『I'm sorry, keep going』

「Okay」

Forrund describes a few other scenes that he saw. Apparently, they were a memory of a meal or a movie, or sad memories of being rejected by a woman. The rest of the memories seemed to be sexy - well, erotic.

I don't remember any of them at all. No. Did God take my memory away? Is that why I have no memory? But even Forrund doesn't know the details he says. Considering the fact that I was smiling as I was sealed in the sword, it seems I had convinced myself.....

If it was a memory from the time of my death, it may still have some meaning, but I don't see the point of taking away other memories as well.



(The rest, yes...I see a coat of arms)

『Coat of arms?』

(Yes, the gods have their own symbols, and the three women wore emblems representing those symbols)

Forrund saw that it was a symbol of three pillars: The Goddess of Chaos, the Goddess of the Silver Moon, and the Goddess of the Underworld.

『So you're saying that it was those three goddesses or their families that created me?』

(I think so)

Hmmm, I guess I'll have to find out more about these goddesses. I've heard of them by name, but I don't know much more about them.

(However, Master is a great sword)

『Why not? No, I'm a discarded divine sword, if I do say so myself, and I'm sure i was a great sword, but...』

(Even if it is a divine sword, it only has the power of one pillar. But if the will of three pillars is involved, then that's ridiculous isn't it? For what purpose was it created?)

『That's what I'd like to know too』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-463.html>

# Chapter 464: Curry Upon Waking Up

Ten minutes after we leave the Count and Eliante.

With my guidance, Forrund had reached Fran. This is where the non-combatants of the Adventurer's Guild gather.

Fran and Gallus were lying on a blanket on the ground, and beside them, Eihwaz was sitting on a chair he had brought from somewhere. In his hand was a destroyed pseudo fanatic sword. He seemed to be observing them.

And that wasn't all. There was a bundle of documents in Eihwaz's hand. He seemed to be comparing the documents with the pseudo fanatic sword. I took a quick peek and saw a drawing of a pseudo fanatic sword. Could it be that he had taken some kind of research material from somewhere? I'd like to have a look at it later.

(Is here fine?)

『Yeah, Thanks for helping me』

Forrund put me next to Fran.

『Fran, Fran』

「.....Shu—Shuu—」

Still no good huh. She's sleeping with an innocent face. There is nothing wrong with her body, and she will wake up naturally when she recovers from fatigue.

Next to us, Forrund is explaining the situation to Eihwaz.

「Hmm? the Hundred Swords huh? Is it Over?」

「Yeah」

「Is that so. Then, what happened? Did the friendly fire win?」

「Yeah」

As expected from an elder wisdom. He let him answer with yes or no to his questions and get the exact information about what happened.

Stellia was also listening, but she didn't seem to have the guts to interfere in the conversation between Eihwaz and Forrund.

Well, I'll leave Forrund to deal with Eihwaz.

『Urushi, good job』

(woof!)

I also give a word of encouragement to Urushi, who is resting in the shadow of Fran. Then, Urushi let out a pitiful voice.

(Kuun)

『What's wrong? Are you injured somewhere?』

Groowl!!!

Hmmm, he's just hungry huh. But, come to think of it, he hadn't eaten in a long time. It was no wonder that Urushi complained of hunger. It's a good thing he didn't pick up and eat anything on the ground or steal from the burning residence.

『Haah, it can't be helped then. Urushi, hide me from the eyes around us』

「woof!」

Urushi jumped out from Fran's shadow and quickly made a blind with his dark magic. In the meantime, I took out a bowl of very hot curry and served it to Urushi. He didn't take part in much of the battle this time, but he had done his best to protect Fran. I guess he needs a reward.

『Don't spill anything okay』

「Woof woof!」

「What? Where the hell did that came out from? No, if it's dark magic, he can hide in the shadows.....」

Eihwaz is tilting his head, but he doesn't seem to be suspicious of him. Forrund must already know that I did something, but it's probably too late now.

「woof woof!」

As Urushi devours the extra large and extremely spicy curry makes his mouth all red, Fran, who is lying next to him, cringes.

First her nose moved a little, followed by her ears twitching. Then her eyes fluttered open.

「Muh...Curry smells...」

「Woof!」

「Urushi...Curry...unfair...」

She just woke up.....Eh? Isn't the power of curry amazing? No, is Fran's eating behaviour that amazing? Well, I guess it's because she was stimulated by the aroma of her favorite food when she had recovered from fatigue.

「Master.....Curry...」

『Fran! There's another people here!』

(Nn. Curry)

『Yes yes, I'll give you too, here』

「Nn...Nom Nom」

I'm going to serve her a very large curry, pretending that Fran took it out. It's topped with pork cutlet and fried chicken. It doesn't matter if she's fully awake or not. This is really a piece of cake for Fran.

「Munch Munch」

「Oofu Oofu」

「Hey, What is it?」

Eihwaz is looking at Fran, who has just woken up from sleep and started to shovel in a mysterious dish with a spicy aroma. His eyes were curious. There was no way that the curiosity monster, Eihwaz, would not be interested in curry.

「Hmm? Is it delicious?」

「It's super delicious」

「Hohou」

Fran turns away lightly to hide her curry from Eihwaz's intense gaze.

『Fran, why don't you share one with Eihwaz?』

(Muh)

『Don't look so unhappy. This time you've been taken care by Eihwaz. Even after Fran went to bed』

「...Understood」

Still reluctant, Fran placed a small serving of curry in front of Eihwaz.

「Want some」

「Umu. With pleasure! Fumu Fumu?」

Eihwaz observed the curry he received with great interest, and after sniffing it lightly, he began to eat it immediately.

「Houhou! This is interesting! And It's delicious!」

He began to gobble up the food, but his tongue was apparently much more sensitive than I had imagined. No, He's good at handling medicine, so it was natural for him, right?

「The spices used are 8.....or 9 kinds? I'm guessing four kinds of vegetables in a broth made by boiling the bones of a pork-based demon beast」

He has completely guessed the material. If I'm not good enough, he might be able recreate it, right?

「Don't worry. I won't spread the recipe. But you don't mind if I make enough for my own consumption, do you?」

Well, if it's only that much then. Forrund is looking at Eihwaz with envy. I can't not serve it only to him in this situation. I gave him a large portion of it. After all, Fran also seems to have a good opinion of Forrund.

As everyone was eating the curry, I told her the story since Fran had fallen asleep.

(...Muuh)

『What's wrong?』

(In the end, I was useless)

『That was inevitable. Besides, we're not directly gotten into the fight with Velmeria』

(But, Forrund fight alongside with Master)

Fran's mouth furrowed in sulk.

『That was.....only possible because of Forrund's special abilities.  
Besides, that guy almost died too. It was a real gamble』

(...Master)

『What is it?』

(Is Forrund strong?)

『Ah, yeah』

(I see...)

Could this be that she's jealous? I'm sure there are a lot of emotions swirling around inside Fran. The disappointment of missing out on a battle with a powerful enemy. The disappointment of not being able to play a role in that fight. But more than that, she seemed to be jealous of the fact that Forrund and I had fought together.

The rest are, strangely uneasy.

(I'm still weak.....I couldn't fight to the end. Unlike Forrund.....)

Apparently, she is worried that people will compare her to Forrund. I understand that feeling. I'm also afraid that Fran will compare me to the divine sword.

『Forrund had abilities like my telekinesis, and he was a trustworthy guy.  
That's for sure』

(Nn.....)

『But Fran is still the best for me. I can't tell you how many times I wished to had Fran on that fight. I realized how weak I am without you』

(Master is not weak!)

『Surely, I may be stronger than an ordinary sword. But with Fran, I can be even stronger. Because it's Fran who understands me the most, and who can bring out the best of me』

This is not a consolation or anything. It's just something I've thought about a lot.

『I'm going to get stronger and even stronger to become a sword worthy for you』

Fran's goal is to break the curse of the entire Black Cat tribe so that everyone can evolve and improve the status of the Black Cat tribe. In other words, it is to defeat the evil being of threat level S.

That meant, defeating an enemy that was more than just the transcendents I had just witnessed.

As it is now, it is just a dream. But I don't think Fran will ever give up. And I am confident that Fran will continue to grow and one day reach that level.

In order to continue to be worthy of being Fran's sword, I need to become even stronger than I already am. This time, by cannibalizing the Fanatics, I was able to greatly strengthen my magic power. The next step would be to learn the skills and how to use them.

『Fran, we're getting stronger. But there's still someone stronger than us, and there's a lot of people we can't beat if we keep doing what we're doing. Not me, and even not you can』

(Nn)

『So let's be stronger』

(Understood! So, go training?)

『That's right. I have magic stone value. Fran, has experience point. Let's train in order to get more than we have now. Fortunately, I know a good place』



(Where?)

『The place where it all began for me. The Plains of the Demon Wolf. We had to go there once anyway. So, let's do some training there』

(Nn! I'll get stronger and even stronger. Next time, I'll fight with Master until the very end!)

Well, that would be when the commotion in the royal capital have calmed down.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-464.html>

# Chapter 466: Relief

By the time Fran had finished her curry, the talks between Eihwaz and Forrund had just come to an end.

「In other words, the fights brought down the Count's daughter, and the friendly fire had already left to avoid trouble」

「Yea」

「I see.....Well, the damage was only concentrated on the nobles district, and for a monsters of that level to fight, the damage was rather small, wasn't it?」

Oh, I see? It seems that Forrund is on the same opinion. He nodded at Eihwaz's words.

「There was a lot of damage」

「Hmm. If he were not careful, there will be more damage to the surrounding areas, including the royal capital. But the fact that only a part of the city was leveled, I'd say the damage was less than expected」

I see..... But even so, it was clear that the damage was enormous. There must have been some injured, and many people must have lost their property.

Eihwaz is the one who says these words out loud when he doesn't even know who's around to hear him.

「Huh. I wonder what's going to happen to the royal capital」

Stellia's expression was gloomy.

「Besides, if the Marquis were to revolt, there would be a great deal of confusion..... There's been quite a few injuries and deaths」

When Fran heard Stellia's words, she stood up.

(Master, let's go)

『Where to>』

You're not trying to go into training right now, are you? Even though you're awake, you're not fully recovered yet. If possible, I'd like you to rest a little longer.

(Helping the injured)

『Uuumm.....』

That would be hard work. It requires magic and physical strength. It's not a job for a sick person. But Fran is saying that she wants to help people on her own volition. I can't stop her.

『.....very well. Then let's go to Eliante first』

If there is a place where the wounded are being collected, we can go there. We must also hurry to rescue the injured who have not yet been found, but the guild and the knights will do their best on that.

However, there is one problem.

『What should we do about Gallus huh...』

(Bring him on Urushi's back)

『No, that's not going to happen』

The unconscious Gallus is quite weak. It will be difficult to take him around. So far, we've forced him to evacuate, but we can't force him any further.

「Muh...」

「What's wrong?」

「I want to go help the injured. But I can't take Gallus with me」

「Master Gallus' body is in pretty bad shape. And I wonder what will happen to him in the future.....」

Stellia, who had been watching Gallus, sighed in annoyance. In fact, I wonder how much of a crime Gallus will be charged with? Even though he was manipulated by the power of a magic drugs and a divine sword, he also caused a lot of damage with the pseudo fanatic sword that he seems to have been involved in making.

Will there be excuses? Or will he be declared a felony? The law and political decisions will have a lot to do with it, and I have no idea.

「Regardless of what happens, your request is still valid, and even without it, I won't treat the current Master Gallus disrespectfully. Don't worry, the Adventurer's Guild will protect him well」

「She's right」

Forrund nodded along with her. So did Eihwaz.

「I think it would be a waste of time to punish him in the midst of all this chaos, would it? It would be better to ingratiate him and make him work for the country」

I see, does that make a point huh?

「And my employers have sent me to protect him. You can trust me. There's no one else who can cure the potion. Leave him to me」

『Fran, I don't trust Eihwaz, but I do trust Forrund and Stellia. Let's let the guild take care of Gallus』

「.....Understood」

Fran seemed convinced. She nodded slightly, staring at Eihwaz.

「Stellia, I'm counting on you」

「Yeah. Take care of everyone there too」

We then headed to Eliante and she showed us where the injured were being housed.

Apparently, there were several different locations. The first aid station for the injured we went to looked like a field hospital.

Parmachist, Magician, and alchemists are running around, desperately healing the injured. Everyone looks exhausted, but they seem to be doing their best by drinking magic recovery potions.

(Master, let's go)

『Yeah, well, we'll have to talk to whoever's in charge first』

(Okay)

If a child suddenly appeared and started using recovery magic, it would only confuse them. It was one of the court doctors who was giving instructions to everyone here.

They seems to be medical specialists with expertise in medicine, recovery magic and alchemy. It is said that all of them, except for the chief physician, go around to rescue the people by order of the king.

The woman who was showing me around called out to the busy court doctor man.

「Excuse me—」

「Hmm, is there any problem?」

「No, this girl here offered to help」

「Hou? You seem to be an adventurer. Can you use recovery magic?」

「Nn」

「That's good to hear! Because right now we need as many healers as possible! How much of the technique you can use?」

「I can make it up to the Greater Heal」

「What? So you're a healing magic user? Re-really?」

「Nn」

「Ooh! Wonderful!」

I was afraid that she would be rejected because he seemed to have a lot of pride, but he accepted us easily. But this is not the time to be worrying about pride now.

「Can you take a look at the most urgent patients first? I'll prepare as many mana potions as I can!」

「Understood」

Then, we flew around to the first aid stations inside and around the capital, healing patients. If it wasn't us, they would have run out of magic, but thanks to the harvest after cannibalizing the Fanatics, my magic power was greatly increased. Fran healed patients at a rate that amazed the court doctors around the city.

In the latter half of it, they were quite worried about us. Apparently, they thought she was overexerting herself by guzzling few mana potions.

If we include the people we rescued from the piles of rubble along the way, we must have healed over 500 people. Many of those who were healed stayed on to help at the relief station, and some even clasped their hands in worship when Fran came back again.

Apparently, she was recognized as a girl from the black cat tribe who devoted herself to healing people. However, she didn't have time to respond to them individually, and could only wave lightly.

And then, she was starting to get tired, but her motivation was still at its peak. She is happy to save everyone and to be thanked.

『Are you sure you don't want to take a little break?』

「I'm fine!」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-465.html>

# Chapter 466: Those Who Inherit the Will

It was midnight and Fran had finally returned to the guild.

Fran had planned to work a little harder, but the court physician had begged her to rest.

The emergency patients have been healed for now, and the first aid station can now be run by people other than Fran alone. Surely, Fran could take it easy now.

However, when Fran tried to enter the guild, three men stood in front of her.

I think, they were a small fry, they didn't even know how to hide their presence, but he seems to have some business with Fran.

「Oi! So, you're the rumoured black cat kin healer!」

「?」

The small fat man in the middle spoke to her in a haughty manner.

「You use recovery magic to heal the commoners, don't you?」

「Nn」

「Rejoice. I will welcome you as a vassal to my baronial family! From now on, you may use that power only for my benefit!」

Recruitment, No, an order huh? But, with his attitude, I don't think anyone would say 「I'll be your vassal!」 Well, he doesn't seem like a good



nobleman.

「I heard you're treating the commoners for free now! If you come to me, you won't have to do that anymore! You can do business with nobles and merchants」

「What do you mean?」

「You can only use your healing power on those I choose! There are many who would like to benefit from powerful healing magic. You can raise the price as high as you like. With the help of my family's backing, you'll have no shortage of business partners. Oh, and don't worry, I promise you'll get plenty in return」

「What about those who can't afford it?」

「I don't care about the poor. A few deaths of people who can't afford medical treatment won't affect the tax revenue either!」

Oh, he's such an idiot huh. He tried to get Fran with money. If he had gathered the information properly, he would have known that Fran was actually refusing to accept gifts from the patients.

More to the point, I can tell that he is a typical idiot noble, and with his haughty attitude, I can't tell if it's a recruitment or an order. I can see that even his guards have a dumbfounded look on their faces.

「Don't you want to continue to work in vain like you did today?」

「.....」

Fran is quite angry, isn't she? I would have ignored him if he hadn't recruited her with just his slightly haughty manner. But she's tired, and she's not in the mood to be make fun off.

But Fran was furious with this guy for his comments about devaluing the weak.

(...Kill him)

『Wait! Wait wait! I understand your feelings, but you shouldn't kill him!』

(He says I saved them all for nothing. Everyone was so happy. Now I can help others too.....That's why!)

Oh, this is pretty bad. Fran is angry. I guess she feels like what she cares about were being tarnished.

At this rate, she might seriously cut him down. I have no choice but to use my telekinesis here.

「Oi」

「Muh? Colbert?」

「The nobleman there. This girl is currently employed by Count Bailleys. If you want to recruit her, you'll have to go through the Count, won't you?」

Oh, he's right, the contract has not been terminated yet. Formally, Fran was still being employed by the Count.

In this situation though, has become more than just a raid on the Marquis' house.

「What? Bailleys...?」

「That's right」

「Ha, haha. I'll take the responsibility for it」

「So, you will force yourself to recruit the girl? And ignore the Count?」

「Ugh.....」

The baron and his guards were visibly flustered. The Baron, who was incompetent by all accounts, and the Count, who was one of the country's most prominent warriors, although there was no telling what would happen in the future. It would be a no-win situation no matter how you look at it.

When the baron glanced at the two guards, the men shook their heads to the side with blue faces. They seem to know that they can't take her by force.

I don't think these guys can see what Colbert is capable of, but they probably knew about Colbert from the beginning.

In the end, the Baron run away and was not cut down by Fran.

「I was just in time huh」

「...Nn」

「What's the matter? You look unhappy」

「He got away」

「Oi oi, There are going to be a lot of guys like that coming out to you. If you beat them all up, you'll be on the wanted list in no time. Just ignore them」

Yeah. Tell her that!.

「Oh, I also have something to do. The Count has a message for you. I'm sorry for everything that's happened. The contract is considered complete at this point. However, you may mention Bailleys' name to refuse any recruitment from other nobles」

That's helpful. It'll keep them away while we were in the royal capital. Well, it would lose its effectiveness if Count Bailleys house was destroyed though.

「I'll go then? There's still a lot of work left for me to do」

「Nn」

「.....I'm sorry, about Master Curry」

「?」

Oh, that's right, I still haven't cleared up the misunderstanding. Colbert must think that I was dead after fighting Velmeria.

「He was a good man.....」

『Fran, Colbert is under the impression that I'm dead. You have to clear the misunderstanding』

「Master is not dead.」

When Fran said that, Colbert gave a confused look for a moment and then quickly nodded with a look of realization on his face.

「Yeah. You're right」

「Nn」

「As long as there's someone to carry on the will, that person hasn't die yet」

Aah. She didn't clear up the misunderstanding at all

But before I could get Fran to correct it again, Colbert had left.

「.....Colbert looks weird」

『Next time we meet him, we have to make sure to tell him properly』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-466.html>

# Chapter 467: Letter from the North

After parting with Colbert, we were about to enter the guild.

「Ungh」

Fran pulled herself up and took a step to the side from in front of the door. Immediately after that, something flew out of the door with tremendous force.

It rolled along the ground and stopped in the middle of the road.

「Ugh...」

It was something, or rather, a person. An adventurer. And quite strong. I'd say he's at least a rank C. I appraise him, he's just unconscious. But I don't think he'll die.

「Ga, Gareth! Are you okay!」

The adventurer who blew up, Gareth, is followed by another man, this time a small fat man, who comes running out. I wonder if he's one of the fellow adventurers. What in the world is going on in the Adventurer's Guild?

「Muh, blood thirst?」

『Could it be an attack by the Marquis' remnants?』

「Nn. Let's go!」

『Be careful!』

Fran cautiously opened the door to the guild———.

「Look what you've done in this emergency, wasting our time with your nonsense! The theater's been destroyed, and we're all in despair! You should be thankful you're not dead!」

It seemed that Eliante was the one who was letting out the blood thirst. She was shaking his purple hair and glaring at the entrance of the guild with the expression of a madman.

「What happened?」

「Oh, Fran? I'm sorry. I kind of mistook you for those idiots.」

「The ones who just walked out?」

「That's right. They've wasted so much time!」

She's pretty angry, and her eyes glared fiercely.

「What happened?」

「Those guy———」

Still angry, Eliante quickly rambled on about what the men had just done.

From what I could summarize, the fat man's name was Desla. He seems to be the guild master of an inn town near the royal capital.

He came in himself, bringing adventurers and relief supplies with him. He's an enthusiastic guild master about his work.....

It seems that the guild master has always wanted to be the guild master of the royal capital. He also doesn't like the fact that Eliante, a woman, is in charge of such an important place.

As a result, he was always sarcastic when they met, but today it didn't end well. Desla was accusing Eliante of being responsible for the incident and pressuring her to step down from her position.

In addition, he went on and on about how 「It's not suitable for a woman」 and 「The adventurers are pitiful when a woman is their guild master」. To top it all off, he even threatened her with a rank C adventurer.

「Threatening Eliante?」

And a rank C? No, there are rank C's like Fran, but.....That guy was quite worthy for rank C no matter how you look at it, and he threatened Eliante with him?

「He thought that a woman from a mercenary background was no big deal? Well, I made him pay for it!」

So that's what happened to the man before huh.

「Guild Master, What should we do?」

A man under her command asks Eliante how she would like to treat them. But Eliante, finally feeling refreshed, dismisses the men with a light wave of her hand.

「Let's just leave the idiot who tried to confuse the situation by saying something stupid in this emergency situation alone. He may look like a big shot, but the rest of the Guild masters don't like him, and if we reported him, he'll be dismissed anyway」

「Very well」

Fran, who was not interested in the situation, didn't hear Eliante's words at all. Right now, Fran's interest was in Eliante's hair.

「Why is your hair color changing?」

Yes, Eliante's hair is usually blue, but it seems to change to purple in battle. And it's still purple even now.

「Oh, this? It's called "battle colors". I've inherited a little bit of it from my parents. It changes color when I'm in a hostile mood」

It seems that not all insect-kin are like that, but only some of them. Furthermore, there are large individual differences among half-insect kin, and even if they inherit the power of the same kind of insect, their abilities and appearance are said to differ greatly.

「 Sometimes they transform into combat form, sometimes they don't change their appearance at all 」

「 Like the mercenaries in the square? 」

「 You met them? Yes, that's right 」

The hard shrimp and the locusts are apparently the type that usually look more like humans, but transform when they want to show off their abilities. The dragonfly and clam are usually characterized as insect, but they don't transform any more. And the fanged ants are said to have a human-like appearance and do not transform at all.

「 Eliante's Friend? 」

「 .....Well, old friends, I guess 」

Actually, I've heard a bit of a story about them. It seems that she is a survivor of a mercenary group that was wiped out. It would be better if I didn't mention it too much.

『 Fran, in the meantime, you can dismiss my death theory 』

「 Eliante, Master is—— 」

「 Guild Master! A hawk has arrived! 」

As if to interrupt Fran's words, a man came down from the second floor of the guild and shouted. In his hand, he holds a letter. It's a little crumpled, as if he's excited. It seems to have been carried by a messenger hawk from elsewhere.

「 From where? 」



「From the northern border. The sender is——Allesa's Guild Master」

「! Maybe it's about Raidos?」

「Yes! A force believed to be a reconnaissance unit from the Kingdom of Raidos attempted to cross the border, and the Knights of Alessa went to intercept them」

Seriously? Isn't the timing too good? Could it be that the Fanatics were also connected to the Kingdom of Raidos?

「And then! What happened!」

「Y-yes. The knights were accompanied by rank B adventurer Jean Doobie, and they annihilated the forces of Raidos Kingdom!」

At that moment, the guild was filled with the admiration of the adventurers. And the cheers soon followed. Not a single adventurer seemed to think it was a lie.

No matter how well they work with the Knights, I don't think it's very likely that a rank B adventurer would be able to destroy a unit of the Raidos Kingdom by himself.

「Fuh. No wonder he killed them all!」

By the way, Jean was a disturbing nickname.

「Jean is amazing」

「He's a guy who's been granted a special rank of A in military battles. Even the main force that was supposed to be waiting after him can be buried single-handedly, so a reconnaissance unit is probably no match for him」

Apparently, that suspicious necromancer saved the Kingdom of Kranzel with a smirk.

「I'll take this report to the king! And you, tell to the citizens! We need at least one good news right now!」

When Eliante gave instructions to her men, she himself ran out of the guild.

『Hmmm. We lost our chance to clear up the misunderstanding again.....』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-467.html>

# Chapter 468: The Fate of Crime and Punishment

Two days have passed since that fierce battle.

Although the capital was still in a state of unrest, it seemed that there were no more of the Marquis' men left. At the very least, there was no one who was organizing to revolt.

But it's not without conflict. A place to live, daily food, medicine. Everything was in short supply. It was impossible not to have trouble with this situation.

The most important thing is the living space. Tents were temporarily erected for the people who lost their homes, but there were not enough of them. One of the main reasons was that a small number of nobles occupied one tent. I thought they should be squeezed into the same tent, but apparently that's not the case.

Well, I understand that it would be rather torturous for commoners and nobles if they were forced into the same place. It would be better to just get a blanket and sleep on the side of the road.

However, it is said that even among nobles, if they don't differentiate the nobles based on their rank, it will be a problem. And it seems that noblemen are even more concerned with their prestige. A count and a baron cannot be given the same treatment. The fact that this was an emergency situation doesn't make them able to disregard it.

In the end, most of the commoners managed to get out of their tents as soon as they could, relying on their acquaintances for shelter.....Some of the

nobles were so stupid that they started to complain about the tents that had been given to them and asked how they could stay in such a place.

Some nobles even tried to seize houses from commoners, using their power to their advantage, and skirmishes broke out. The rift between the commoners and the nobles only deepened.

Other than that, a strong dust cloud was also bothering the people. It was said to come from the wastelands of the former noble district, blown up by the wind. When we put up wind barrier in shelters and other places to prevent this, they were very pleased.

Well, the shortage of supplies will be alleviated somewhat as support should be sent from various places. It seems that we have already received food aid and more guards from neighbouring towns. From now on, supplies and manpower will be sent from all over the country.

Adventurers and soldiers have been sent out to clear away the rubble, and knights are working to maintain security.

The royal family also seemed to be safe, and they were conducting their affairs at a nobleman's villa in a residential area. I've often seen kings who stay behind in a castle on the verge of falling, saying, 「A king has a responsibility to protect his subjects!」 But unless he was as strong as the Beast King, that's a foolish idea. In all likelihood, it would be better for the country and its people if he escaped and quickly took charge of the reconstruction afterwards.

「Sorry I kept you waiting」

「I'm fine」

「Yeah」

We were currently visiting Count Bailleys. However, the Count's mansion has disappeared. He had taken up residence in a corner of the Knights' quarters.

I thought they would be dismissed or something, but apparently it was an emergency and they hadn't been told yet. That's where Fran and Forrund were called in.

「So, what do you want?」

「Yeah, I just thought I'd let you know how it went. I'd like to thank you all for all your help」

I have already told the Count that Velmeria is actually alive and that Ashwrath has taken her. His grief was great, but he understood that it was better than being dead. He said he would not go after him.

However, only Frederick, the half-dragon, had disappeared right after he heard about it. His allegiance was probably more to Velmeria than to the Count.

「I don't know where to start with.....As for Gallus-dono, he will not be blamed for this incident. But he will be under guard and surveillance for a while」

「Really?」

「Yeah. He had been manipulated and settled in a way that he was innocent. Well, we can't waste time punishing him in the middle of all this chaos」

「What does that mean?」

「His Majesty the King, is a man who puts the interests of the nation first. Now that both national power and prestige have been damaged, any further damage will be impossible to be overlooked」

Well, there's the Kingdom of Raidos to the north, and there's no guarantee that the nobles won't betray the country this time. I'm sure they don't want to see their national power decline further in this state. But what does that have to do with Gallus?

「They say he's the closest being to a divine level blacksmith, and this time he's the blacksmith who actually touched the divine sword. It would be more beneficial to dismiss the charges and let him work for the country. Besides, there is the matter of the Adventurer's Guild」

「？」

Fran tilted her head, but Forrund seemed to get the idea.

「Gratitude」

「That's right. There are many adventurers in the royal capital who feel indebted to Gallus-dono. If we were to charge him with a crime, there would be many adventurers who would not find it amusing」

As was the case in Alessa, where we met Gallus, Gallus was traveling around the kingdom of Kranzel, selling his wares to adventurers at a discount. If he thought there was something worth seeing, he would make good equipment, even for lower-ranked adventurers.

It seems that many adventurers in the Kingdom of Kranzel are indebted to Gallus for his help when they were just starting out.

「This country is home to a large number of adventurers. The reason for this is that the country was originally able to attract adventurers who had been spirited away due to Raidos' misadventures, but it has since succeeded in settling them through policies that favor adventurers」

「Hee—」

「You doesn't know? It's rare to find a country with so many adventurers. In the first place, there are not many other countries that have five current rank A and more than ten former rank A. Well, the number has decreased.....」

We only know that the Kranzel Kingdom and the Beastman Kingdom Kings, were an adventurer himself, but it seems that there are very few

countries where adventurers are treated so well. The taxes are especially low, making life easier for adventurers.

「Though, there's also the problem of how low the knights and soldiers level is. Well, that's okay」

I see. I guess there are many adventurers and not many opportunities for the knights to hunt magical beasts. Is that why it's so hard for the knights to raise their level?

Originally, the knights were mainly dealing with humans, but in this country, it seems that there is a clear distinction between the two.

「Anyway, in a country where adventurers have always had a strong presence, we will need to rely on them even more in the future. Inevitably, adventurers will become even more important」

In such a situation, they could never afford to spoil the adventurer's good mood. It was probably because of what Gallus had done so far that he had saved them.

Count Bailleys himself will not be punished too severely. Although he will be relieved of his position as Knight Commander, the Count's family will only be required to pay some money and provide some labor.

「I myself was prepared to have my territory taken away and to be placed in a camp.....」

They were unable to prevent the revolt and allowed mass destruction in the royal capital. Moreover, his daughter was the one who carried out the crime. As the leader of the knight order, he must think that he should take the responsibility.

However, the king's decision was different. He thought it would be more constructive to put all the blame on Marquis Ashtner and the Fanatics to calm the situation down quickly and let them work on the reconstruction afterwards, rather than causing more confusion by charging them with crimes or neglect of duty.

With the current shortage of manpower, I guess they avoided the folly of wasting their efforts on unnecessary things. This is monarch country, isn't it? To a certain extent, it can be controlled by the king.

If that was the case, wouldn't Velmeria be allowed to do the same? I thought so, but it wasn't that simple.

「My daughter has caused too much damage directly. What's more, she destroyed the royal castle. No matter how much she was being manipulated, it's not like she can be easily forgiven. And there were quite a few people who saw her」

Indeed, the damage caused by the self-destructing swordsmen and Velmeria was too great. In both monetary and human terms, Velmeria had gone too far.

「Eventually, the territories of the former Marquis Ashtner and his allies will be temporarily placed under the king direct control and will be redistributed」

In this way, they will be able to compensate the nobles for the losses they suffered this time.

「So, the two of you have actually received a summons from the king. You are requested to come to the mansion where he is holding his office today」

Huh? King? You mean the King?

「Why?」

「Don't you realize the influence you have?」

Originally, Forrund was the one who renowned as a hero, but it seems that Fran's fame has also grown as she has gone around healing people. Moreover, word quickly spread that Fran was the Black Lightning Princess who had won a prize in the Ulmut martial arts tournament.

Because of this, she is now as well known as Forrund in the capital.



We didn't know anything about it because we've been out clearing debris and stuff for the last two days where there no more people around. Even when we went out into the town, we were moving fast by teleporting and jumping in the air. There was almost no opportunity to be cheered on.

「And I heard that your master was helping Forrund?」

What's more, it seems that the story is spreading that Fran's master---that is me. gave up his life to save the capital. It was definitely the work of Eliante and Colbert. We've been too busy to clear up the misunderstanding, but I didn't expect this to happen.

「His Majesty said that he wanted to pay tribute to the heroes who saved the royal capital. Well, I guess he wants to show off his good relationship with the heroes to the people here」

Is there still politics involved huh?

「Aah. It's okay. His Majesty doesn't expect perfect courtesy from adventurers. In fact, the Adventurer's Guild wouldn't take kindly to the idea of offending you two heroes. I'm sure they know that, and you'll just have a little conversation」

Either way, there was no way we could refuse the king's invitation. If I had heard the information beforehand, we might have been able to escape, but being told face to face that he was inviting her would bad if we escaped. It was a bit of a hassle, but we had no choice but to accept.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-468.html>

# **Chapter 469: Audience • Front**

## Chapter 469: Audience?Front

A few hours after hearing from the Count that the king was calling for us. Fran and Forrund went to a mansion. This is the place where the king has taken refuge and is currently conducting his affairs.

As this was an emergency situation, we were told that we didn't have to wear formal wear, so the two of us were dressed as usual. However, since we were not allowed to carry weapons, I had transformed into a bracelet. This way, I wouldn't be taken away.

In terms of time, it was a little early for dinner, and I was grateful that we would only have to have a really brief conversation.

『Fran, use honorific to address the king, okay? I'm serious』

「Nn」

『And also, don't talk about unnecessary things. I don't know what would be considered disrespectful』

「I understand」

Apparently, Forrund is used to it, but as expected, this is Fran's first time. No, she has met the Beast King before, but I don't think that should be included in the category of kings. At the very least, he's not a normal king.

『Forrund, if she makes a mistake please give her a follow up! I beg you!』

(Leave it to me. The king of this country is not a fool. As long as you don't aim to be rude, you won't have a problem)

『Yeah, but—』

Because it's Fran, right? A girl who talks as she usually does to a nobleman on the first meeting? No matter how much I worried, I couldn't worry

enough.

『Worst case scenario, we'll have to consider leaving the country』

「It's all right. I got it」

「Worrying excessively」

You guys, how can you be so calm...

But no matter how worried I was, the time for the audience would come. The attendant man who was leading Fran and Forrond stopped in front of a large door.

「The king awaits you ahead. Please do not be rude」

「Nn」

「Yea」

「.....Very well」

The old attendant gave us a look that said, 「will these guys be fine huh」 I agree with you!

『Fran, it's just like we practiced, okay?』

(Nn)

And when the door was opened from the inside, it was a simple audience room. Had it been renovated after the king had occupied the mansion?

A red carpet stretched straight out from the door, which must have come from somewhere, and there was even a throne at the end of it. Compared to the throne I had seen in the Beastman Kingdom, it looked rather plain, but it was big enough and luxurious enough to be called a throne.

On the throne sat a middle-aged man dressed in luxurious clothes that looked a bit out of place. It may be a simple type for daily use, but he really

does have a crown on his head. I was a little impressed.

I'd say he's about 50 years old huh? His hairline is a bit receding, but his body is reasonably well trained. Well, not quite at a warrior level. At least he seems to be in decent shape. He doesn't seem to be a tyrant type.

In my mind, royalty in this world is the image of a strong man, but apparently this king is different. Well, the comparison is with the Beast King, who is a rank S adventurer, or the royalty of Philias, who possesses a divine sword.....

On either side of us were knights and noble-looking men. I could tell that half of the noblemen looked down on Fran and Forrund, or were bitter about it. But the other half were clearly welcoming Fran and Forrund.

Moreover, among the noblemen, the higher-ranking noblemen who wore more luxurious clothes seemed to have a greater tendency to do so. Many of them are smiling.

As expected, the knights guarding him were expressionless. Among the knights, there was a very strong man who was closest to the king.

His skin is as white as snow, and he has beautiful silver hair. He was only about six feet tall (180 cm), but his intimidating presence made him look bigger. In addition, the magic power he emitted was unbelievable.

I have heard that SPs intimidate their attackers by showing a stern appearance, and I guess this is just another form of intimidation. By showing his strength from the start, he's silently warning us not to do anything stupid. (1)

On the other hand, if the opponent is not able to sense this intimidation, it is probably not even worthy of caution.

『Even so, he has no gap huh.....』

He's probably at a rank A class. It's a pity that I can't appraise it since it's in front of the royalty.

As expected of the king's bodyguard. They are in a position to attack Fran and Forrund while protecting the king at any time without a moment's delay.

「Both of you, step forward」

At the attendant's words, Fran stepped forward alongside Forrund, bowed, and knelt. Okay, you're moving as what we have practiced beforehand.

The nobles were especially surprised by the elegance of Fran's manners. They probably didn't expect a little adventurer girl to bow so beautifully in accordance with the manners of the nobility. I could see their eyes widen.

Yes. The court etiquette that we got from Viscount Alsand is still exist. And then, Forrund made his speech.

「It is a great pleasure to have an audience with you」

Fran just nodded her head silently. The chamberlain said that was fine. I was wondering what was going to happen, but I think they can manage somehow huh?

「Raise your face」

「Yes」

「Yes」

At the king's words, Fran and Forrund raised their face.

「You've done a great job」

「Yes」

「Yes」

Well, it was a typical audience scene from here. The king said a few firm words, then Forrund and Fran nodded. This was repeated. At the end, the king gave another word of praise, and that was it.

There was almost no unnecessary conversation. It's so simple, it's almost feels disheartening.

『I was expecting him to bring it up to the point of taking you into the Kingdom of Kranzel, but he didn't said anything at all』

(Nn)

『I thought he might at least offer you a knighthood or a medal...』

In fact, she had discussed it with Eliante. It was obvious that if she refused the offer of a knighthood at the audience, it would cause a lot of trouble. So, if she was offered a knighthood, she planned to present the Order of the Golden Beast Fang Medal that she had received in the Beastman Kingdom.

It was not limited to this audience, though. Starting with the baron who was turned away by Colbert the other day, various noblemen have flocked to the audience. It seems that the purpose is to take in Fran, who is started to be called the cat-eared saint.

I thought that they should help with the reconstruction before they came to recruit her with their guards, but it seemed that they were miscellaneous nobles who hadn't been assigned any important work.

Well, judging from the dim-witted attitude they took when recruiting, I could tell he wouldn't be valued to any work. However, there were so many of them, and some of them did not back down even when she mentioned the Count's name, so we consulted Eliante about what to do. The conclusion was to use the medal.

Apparently, it was a more powerful medal than we had imagined. When we showed it to Eliante, she literally jumped up in surprise.

Since it is a medal of another country, it does not have a strong influence in the Kingdom of Kranzel, but the people who are shown it are likely to think that Fran has ties to the Beast Kingdom.

As a beastman, it was not strange at all that Fran belonged to the Beastman Kingdom, and the Beastman Kingdom and the Kingdom of Kranzel were friendly countries. It was at Eliante's opinion that they would not be so arrogant as to forcefully give Fran a title.

It's still can be treated as a string attached.....to the beastman country, it is a good place for Fran to live, and it's much better than being forced to give her a knighthood in another country. In fact, they might have given her the medal in anticipation of such a situation.

Well, it seems I was worrying too much. However, it was soon after Fran and Forrund had finished their audience.

「You two!」

The man who approached us was the chamberlain. I had a bad feeling about this. The words I didn't want to hear came out of his mouth.

「The king is waiting for you in the other room. This way, please」

Without saying a word, the chamberlain turns and walks away. He didn't think that Fran and Forrund would not follow him. No, we will follow him though.

『Fran, please still use the honorific』

「Nn? I understand」

Perhaps, you didn't get it, huh? Oh God! Please call out to her!

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-469.html>



## **Chapter 470: Audience · Back**

## Chapter 470: Audience?Back

「This way」

「Yes」

「Nn」

Fran and Forrund sat down on the chairs that had been prepared for them, just as the chamberlain had told them to do.

What Fran and Forrund were taken to was a room that looked like a drawing room. The room was much smaller than the hall they had used for the audience, and was quite cozy.

But my nervousness was nothing compared to what I had just experienced before.

「You may make yourself comfortable. This is an informal meeting」

How can anyone really ease up when the king tells them to――

「Nn」

There she is! That's my girl! No, she's still hunched over, just a little out of position! We could still recover!

『Fran! Don't really take it for granted!』

(?)

『Uh, anyway, just keep your spine a little straighter here!』

(Understood)

Fuh, that was a close one. Look, she already got her back on straight! Don't stare at her like that, silver-haired knight! If a strong person like you stares

at her like that, my Fran will be thrilled! It's not a good idea to get involved with this knight who looks very strong and seems to have a high rank.

「I am Wissola Bred Kranzel」 (1)

The king himself, whom we met in the audience hall. Isn't he too careless for this? I searched for any presence around us, but there was only the king, two knights, and a chamberlain in this room. I was under the impression that there was usually a hidden door or something and an escort waiting inside of them.

Fran also tilted her head, but it seems that the king saw through it.

「My daughter, what's wrong?」

「.....You don't bring more guards with you?」

「You mean that huh. My knights said it was unnecessary. He said that if he were to be serious, the other knights would be a burden to him」

As he said this, the king looked at Fran.

「You're not that strong in my eyes huh.....」

I can't be sure, but it seems that the king himself has appraisal skills. And it seems that the effect of the appraisal disguise makes her look like an ordinary adventurer.

However, the silver-haired knight beside him would not be able to be easily deceived.

「She's more than equal with me」

「If Ruga says so, I'm sure he's right. Let me introduce you. He's captain of the guard and knight of the King. Ruga Mufuru」

「Nice to meet you」

Ruga Mufuru bailed lightly, not taking his eyes off Fran and Forrund. He's not showing any gap.

「You are two of the most powerful people in our country. There's no harm in knowing each other's faces, right?」

The king put a strange emphasis on the "our country" part. I guess he wants to bring Fran and Forrund into the Kingdom of Kranzel.

He's very different from the Beast King. The Beast King was more like a high king, or a king with a majestic air. However, the man in front of me does not radiate any sense of intimidation. He's the politician type huh?

However, it was not like he did not have the dignity of a king. I haven't made a clear hierarchical relationship with him, but I naturally felt that he was the most superior person in this place. He had the presence of a king, or perhaps I should say that he was a born superior.

It's a good thing that he's not a fool, but I'm not going to let my guard down.

「Now, let's get down to business. We're running out of time」

Then the king gave some instructions to the chamberlain with a glance. Then the chamberlain brings out two small boxes, about 30 centimeters long. The boxes are placed in front of both Fran and Forrund.

Inside the box was what looked like a jewelled medallion.

「You are hereby granted the rank of first class baron. You may accept」

Uwaah, you've hit the nail on the head. We can't use a roundabout way of saying no or anything like that anymore. Is he doing it on purpose? Or is it just plain? I can't read his expression at all.

(Master?)

『Aah, wait a minute. Forrund, what do we do』

(...Hmm. Fran doesn't want to accept the title, does she?)

『It's obvious』

(Very well)

Then Forrund nodded lightly. Oh, how dependable!

「I'm grateful for this, but.....」

He shook his head as he said it.

「You want to refuse?」

「By all means. She's too」

「Nn. I have to refuse」

Wait a minute, Fran! Your words! Thanks to her court etiquette skills, her movements are fine, but her words is!

I panicked and made her rephrase it.

「I'm sorry. But I want to continue becoming adventurer」

「Even after I said that I'm giving it to you?」

The king frowned in displeasure. Ruga Mufuru also increased the intimidation he was emitting. Are we going to do this?

This situation would definitely make a weak-minded or power-hungry person nod their head. The room was filled with that much pressure. Ugh, my stomach hurts.

「...I'm sorry」

「I'm sorry」

With Forrund bowing with a short apology, Fran also bows her head.

「...」

Kuh, the silence feels heavy! The King is still looking at Fran and Forrund with a sullen look on his face.

「...Hmm. It's as you said huh, Ruga」

The king sniffs lightly and sinks down on the sofa with a bored look on his face.

「Yes sir. Because they are adventurers」

「It's correct to do this in a place without any lower ranked nobles. I can just see them making a scene」

Hmm? Apparently, the king and Ruga were expecting Fran and Forrund to decline.

「Too many people don't realize how much adventurers have contributed to their territories. These days, even the nobles of the great domains are becoming more and more incapable of caring for adventurers.....」

Apparently, the nobleman, who doesn't like adventurers, wanted to give Fran and Forrund a knighthood so they wouldn't antagonize them. Could it be that the sullen attitude is an act? However, he still maintains his uncomfortable expressions.

「As for Forrund of the Hundred Swords, he had turned it down several times in the past, so I knew it would happen again this time. But, Fran, the Black Lightning Princess? Why do you refuse? It's a title, remember? In addition, being a first-class baron is like being a count without a territory. You don't want to be bothered with running a fiefdom, right? A first-class baron has a nobleman's annual salary attached to it, but you do not have to run the estate. Are you sure you won't consider it once again?」

In other words, it's probably a title for adventurers. By giving her a nobleman's annual salary, she would be bound to the country as a war power in case of emergency. Since they are no longer adventurers, they can be used for war. In exchange, the adventurer gets the backing of the country and honor.

「What is it that you are dissatisfied with?」

However, Forrund's reply to the king's words was short.

「It's freedom」

「...Hmmm. That's a word I'm not familiar with. But aren't you interested in money and power? What about you, my daughter?」

「...I don't need such a thing」

「Such a thing huh...This is why an adventurers is.....! I had enough of this. Go away」

Have we offended the king? However, there was no sign that Ruga was going to do anything about it. After all, he probably already knew that he would be rejected. Even so, if he was refused, he would still be dissatisfied huh.

Then, as Fran and Forrund were leaving, a voice called out to them.

「Forget everything that happened in that room. And I will do the same too」

Does that mean you're not going to question the fact that he lost face? His anger didn't seem to subside yet, but he didn't want to antagonize her.

『Huh. We manage it somehow huh? To be honest, I was ready to flee this country』

(As I said the other day, the king is a man who puts the interests of the nation first. He won't make the mistake of antagonizing us. Of course, if he judged that it would be in his interest to retaliate against us for destroying his face, he would have ordered an attack without hesitation)

How's that working out for him? He was a scary opponent, in a different way than the Beast King.

『Well, I hope we made it through』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-470.html>



# Chapter 471: Rank Up

After we managed to get through the audience with the king, we came to the adventurer's guild. In fact, we had been summoned by Eliante.

The Adventurer's Guild is incredibly densely populated. It may not like a crowded train, but it's about as dense as an elementary school playground during breaks.

In fact, the number of adventurers in the town has temporarily doubled due to the adventurers who came from neighboring towns to help out. In addition, many of them are sleeping and waking up in the corners of the guild floor because there are not enough places for them to sleep. The guild is crowded with these relief adventurers.

Fran was already famous among the adventurers in the royal capital, but some of the adventurers from other towns would still try to get involved with her.

To begin with, most of the adventurers sent to clear away the rubble in the royal capital are of low rank. Some were adventurers with special skills or magic, but about 80% of them were just starting out as manual laborers. In other words, they were all people who could not see through Fran's abilities.

Moreover, once they get to the royal capital, it is much harsher than they can imagine. Maybe they were just longing for the royal capital. But in reality, it was just a repetition of plain labor covered in dust.

It was no wonder that there were idiots who wanted to relieve their sorrows by picking on the girl.

But today, they don't seem to want to get involved. Well, I guess it's because yesterday and the day before, there was a guy who got involved with her

and she give him a bit of flashy treatment.

Ah yeah, we can't afford to reduce our workforce now, so I made sure to recover them with recovery magic, okay? In addition, she threatened him that if he didn't work diligently, she would give him a bad time. I'm sure he's working up a good sweat by now.

Perhaps the word had spread, but there was no sign of any newcomers getting involved today. Rather, they gave her a look of fear.

「Stellia」

「Aah. Go right ahead!」

「Understood」

It seems that Stellia has been busy today, as they eliminated the high ranked adventurer's lane and added a new temporary low ranked adventurer's lane.

She certainly doesn't seem to have time to guide her.

By the way, there's also a line at Stellia's place. In terms of the image of adventurers, I think it's a line of the beautiful woman's place and a deserted scene at Stellia's place.....

「You guys! Get in line over here! You're so noisy! Do you want to be stripped off!」

I see. So that's how it is. The newcomers who were exposed to Stellia's intimidation skills were moving to Stellia's lane with blue faces. Well, good luck to everyone.

We continued through the crowded floor and entered Eliante's office.....

「It's endless.....I can't finish this work.....」

『Uwaaah—』

「Mountain of paper」

This is a miserable scene.

A mountain of papers had doubled in size since the other day, and Eliante at her desk surrounded by the pile, working like a ghost.

「Eliante?」

「Aah...You're here huh.....Wait a minute」

「Nn」

Five minutes later.

Eliante, who had calmed down a bit after a cup of tea, was presenting some papers to Fran.

「What's this?」

「You've been promoted to Rank B. Here are your official promotion papers」

「Nn? Rank up? Why?」

That's very sudden. I'm sure we haven't contributed enough at all to move up in rank. Besides, she doesn't want to stand out and get tangled up with the nobles.

「You.....How much do you think you've done this time? You defeated a monster that wiped out Zephyrd's party, you healed hundreds of people, and you helped clear away the rubble.....I can't even begin to count your other minor accomplishments」

If she said it like that, I guess she's right. As long as Ashwrath's achievements are pretended to have never happened, the most meritorious adventurer is Forrund. After that, it will be Fran huh?

「I know you don't like trouble, and I know you've been reluctant to rank up. But, you know, all the reasons that have been holding you back from moving up have now been cleared up」

「What do you mean?」

「Originally, I had no problem with your combat prowess. There was no doubt in my mind that you had the ability of an A ranker. In fact, I'd say that this commotion has confirmed it」

Eliante, the guild master was able to watch our fight with the Marquis. It's the most reliable way to confirm her ability. It's not a mock battle, but a real battle, and it proves that she can do it.

「And one of the problems was your lack of achievements. You have made a name for yourself in the royal capital, and you even received a medal from the Beast Nation」

I see. So at least she had got a good track record for a rank B.

「Then there was your attitude towards the nobles. You had managed through an audience this time, too, and it's proven that you have at least a minimum of courtesy」

Oh, I see. When she become a rank B, she will meet more nobles, so she must have said that she's worried of Fran, who is obviously not courteous. It's a rather valid opinion. However, by having had an audience with the king, the pinnacle of the nobility, that problem has been eliminated to some extent.

「I talked to a nobleman I knew, and he told me that you had perfect manners. I was surprised to hear that you were much more elegant than those lower-class nobles」

He must have been one of the noblemen who lined both sides of the room at the first audience.

「It looks like you were able to refuse the title from the King, right?」

「Nn. But the King was angry」

「The king wouldn't be that mad about it. No, he doesn't want to be taken as a fool by the adventurers, so he pretends to be angry.....? Well, he's not

a straightforward guy, but he's not an emotionally driven one, so that's not a problem. He's not going to do anything stupid like making an enemy of you. You can trust him」

Was it an act, after all? Or perhaps he was just acting to show his dignity as a king. And yet, he didn't make Fran and Forrund uncomfortable any more than necessary. In other words, he showed them that he was dissatisfied, and then he made no questions about it.

He generously showed mercy to the adventurer who refused the king's extraordinary offer. That's how it works. For example, let's say that the king asks you to do something in the future. There is a high probability that he will think 「You turned down an offer of a title before, so you might as well accept this request」

『Hmmm, I was a bit down on him for allowing the Marquis to revolt, but he's indeed the king of a great nation』

But the other party is Fanatics. It may be more difficult for them to notice.

「Well, I'm not going to do anything rude to someone who has the medal of the Beast Kingdom. From now on, diplomatic relations with that country will be of utmost importance. It is said that Count Bailleys was punished lightly out of consideration for the Beast King」

「Is that so?」

「His relationship with the Beast King is well known. There are even rumors that he was relieved of his post as a lord in order to send him as an envoy to the Beast Kingdom」

Not only did they lighten the punishment, but they want to use it to further strengthen their relationship with the beast kingdom.

「The medal is also a factor for your rank up. The guild was reluctant to throw out a kid with no backing in front of the nobles, but now they know that she actually has tremendous backing」

There is no shortage of ability, she was able to show courtesy, and she has a great deal of backing. Indeed, I don't see any reason not to raise her to rank B.

「Honestly, if I don't rank you up, it's going to make me question the decency of the guild. I mean, the other guild masters are pushing me to make sure you rank up. That's why take your rank up!」

If we listen to Eliante's lines, she seems to be saying so, but her eyes are shaking with anxiety. In fact, Fran had the right to refuse this offer.

And Fran has her own reasons for refusing. The guild will not remember this well, but the fact that she won't get into trouble with the nobles is too big of an advantage. Even though she has the backing of the guild, she won't have zero contact from the nobility.

『Fran, what do you want?』

(Nn? Accept the rank up)

『Are you sure? Honestly, there will be a lot of trouble, you know? Stupid nobles, stupid adventurers...』

(If they're idiots, just blow them off)

『...I see』

I'll have to make sure she doesn't overdo it. But if Fran is willing, I have no problem with it. We'll thankfully rank up here.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-471.html>

# **Chapter 472: Gallus'**

## **Determination**

## Chapter 472: Gallus' Determination

It's been a few days since the rank up. Fran had been summoned to the Adventurer's Guild again.

The adventurers make a lot of noise when they see Fran, but there are few malicious glances. Is that being an admiration or fear? The former are the newcomers who admire Fran, who is the youngest B rank adventurer. The latter are probably those who have been blown away by her or those who have witnessed the scene.

Anyway, it's nice not to get tangled up with the small fry. It seems that rank has a big impact on this.

Moreover, the number of recruitments from nobles has decreased drastically lately. This is because rumors have spread that she has the backing of the Beast King. Apparently, it was the king's words at the dinner that triggered the spread of this rumor. He must have dared to spread it.

Still, that doesn't mean we don't have any contact with any of them at all, though. It seems, those who think that they are special was everywhere huh. In the first place, there is no way for a nobleman who is in the royal capital and has not been given a good job can be competent.

When she intimidates them, they won't come back, so it's not that annoying. There was almost no hindrance to our work. Well, in the last few days, most of the work that Fran had to do was gone.

The treatment of the seriously injured patients was almost finished, and the rest could be left to the court doctors and magician. The removal of debris can be left to the adventurers who came to help. The Knights have regained their functions and are now in charge of maintaining the peace.

Still looking for work, Fran advised the Count to use earth magic to build temporary housing, but he refused.



The area outside the city walls is not a safe place to live, with magical beasts roaming about. The commoner's area is densely populated with houses, and there was not that much extensive damage. Therefore, there was no space to build temporary housing in the first place.

Even if it were to be built in the noble district, the temporary houses that cannot be moved would be a hindrance during the rebuilding process. It would be very labor intensive to demolish several temporary houses. A tent that can be moved quickly is better.

I've been thinking about this from a different perspective, but it's difficult to build temporary housing here. We don't have the technology to build prefabricated houses. If we stay here until the reconstruction, we can help, but we don't intend to stay that long.

In the end, Fran's major tasks were to help the injured and set up a wind barrier to prevent dust, but that was mostly done and she was completely out of ideas.

That's why she was able to answer the guild's call in the middle of the day. But it wasn't Eliante who called Fran, it was Forrund.

「I came」

「Yeah」

As usual, the two were able to understand each other. Forrund took her to a place that was not Eliante's office.

「In here」

The room looked like a private room in an inn. It seemed to be a room used to accommodate adventurers who had come to the capital on business from other adventurer guilds.

They have these rooms because they may not be able to use the lodge depending on the time of day, the nature of their work, or the time of year.

「Gallus' room?」

「Yeah」

Gallus was supposed to be lying low now. The Adventurer's Guild was still protecting him, although the government had decided not to impose any punishment. It was said that this was largely due to the cooperation of Eihwaz, who could cure magic drugs, and also as a result of the king's decision not to offend the Adventurers' Guild.

Well, as for us, we're going to let Gallus decide what to do after he wakes up.

When Forrund walked in, we found Eihwaz, Eliante, and Gallus waiting for him. Yes, Gallus had gotten himself out of bed and was here to greet Fran.

「Gallus, already awake?」

「I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused you. Let me show you my gratitude. Thank you」

His face is still pale, but his tone is firm. I wonder if the after-effects of the magic drug are safe?

「Are you okay now?」

「Of course. I cured him, didn't I? I used the finest elixir I could find. Oh, don't worry about the price. The Guild and he himself have already agreed to pay for it. Besides, I've gotten some interesting data」

He grinned and laughed at her. It's not like he's hiding his embarrassment, but he's serious. He must have really conducted the experiment in parallel with the treatment. I'm not complaining, though, because it's cured him.

「Besides, I also have a deal with the country」

「What do you mean?」

「Hmm. Why should I complain when I've made these weak magicians a little more useful?」

It seems that this old man had drugged the magician entrusted to him by Count Bailleys. The drugs increased their muscle strength and stamina and allowing them to work sleeplessly and without rest, and after its effects wore off, the users would suffer from hellish muscle pain and insomnia.

「That's why there are fewer mages available for reconstruction, you know? Isn't that obvious?」

「If we hadn't killed the enemy, more damage would have been done」

「You know that, and that's why the king said he'd wouldn't care with Gallus' treatment」

「I know what I'm doing」

「Rather than that, what to do about Gallus' future. That's why I asked Fran to come here to discuss it」

I see, more or less, it's because of Fran has issued a protection request.

It seems that Eliante and Eihwaz have already explained the whole situation to Gallus. Everything, including what he himself can't remember.

「What does Gallus want to do?」

「Umm.....」

When Fran asked him, Gallus grunted in distress. Even though he had been manipulated, he probably regretted having a hand in a major incident that shook the royal capital.

「I'll help you escape」

「The Thieves' Guild said they'd help us out」

「And the Adventurers' Guild too」

「Me too」

After all, it seems that the guilds are not optimistic about Gallus' situation. If he is taken into custody by the state, he may be forced to work on the divine sword in captivity.

But Gallus shook his head and refused Fran and the others' proposal.

「I'll stay in the royal capital. It may not be enough to atone for my sins, but I will help rebuild the royal capital」

「Are you sure?」

「Umu」

Gallus understands everything. Still, he chose to entrust himself to the country. Once she saw the determined look on his face, she knew that it was impossible to reverse his decision.

「Is that so.....」

Fran muttered in disappointment.

「You did everything you could. I'm sorry」

「No. If Gallus had decided, so be it」

「Don't worry, I'll give some push on him from the guild!」

「I'm sure the Thieves' Guild won't stand idly either」

「Me too」

If all these guys are willing to back Gallus, will he be okay? I don't think he'll be under house arrest. At any rate, if they make enemies with these people, the country will be in trouble this time.

「I'm sorry」

At these words, Gallus bowed deeply.

However, even in this somber atmosphere, it is Eihwaz who can't read the air. After listening to Gallus's resolve, Eihwaz takes out something and starts asking Gallus questions.

「I'm not quite sure about this part——」

「Aah, that parts huh——」

「Hou. In other words——」

「That's right here——」

What Eihwaz took out was a document on the pseudo fanatic sword. It seemed that the Thieves' Guild had been holding it. He seemed to be looking at it and asking questions about the technical aspects.

The others, especially Eliante, seem to be quite curious and start asking more questions to Eihwaz, who asks Gallus questions.

「——that is why」

「So you can't mass-produce pseudo fanatic swords anymore?」

「In the first place, they were using the fanatic sword as a raw material」

The pseudo fanatic sword was apparently made by mixing pieces of the fanatic sword with the consciousness of the fanatics when it was made. Originally, it was said to be a magic tool that sucked the magic power of its surroundings and strengthened the user. Moreover, it was a failed product with unsteady abilities.

By mixing it with Fanatics and inhabited by its consciousness, he was able to strengthen and stabilize its abilities, making it a pseudo fanatic sword.

The ability to counteract magic is a product of the magic-absorbing ability of the tool.

The reason why it was stabbed in the back was because the original magic tool was a type of magic tool that was worn on the back in the first place,

and the Fanatics' consciousness could not display its abilities to the fullest unless it was in the form of a sword, so it had to be in the form of a sword.

In other words, now that the sword of blind devotion-Fanatics had disappeared, the pseudo fanatic sword could no longer be made.

「Well, I don't know if the country will believe this story」

「It's not easy to forge that much of evidence. Besides, after a while, various information will be discovered in the Marquis's territory. If they look at them, they must be understood, no matter how foolish they are」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-472.html>

# Chapter 473: The Great Spirits User

In addition, the materials collected by the Thieves Guild included the diaries of the family members and servants, which revealed how the Fanatics came to be in the hands of the Marquis and his plans. The Thieves' Guild, they must have done their best.

There were two things I was curious about. Hamuls as the street murderer, and why Velmeria was targeted.

As for the first, why did Hamuls attacked Fran, he was simply looking for a strong host. They discovered that I was made by orichalcos, and they were relentless in their pursuit. That's when they discovered Velmeria.

Apparently, Velmeria had a special bloodline among the dragonmen and had the potential to use a powerful skill called the Divine Dragon Transformation Skill. For this reason, the Fanatics kidnapped Velmeria.

「So, just before the Fanatics' plan was about to be executed, they got their hands on the most powerful host huh」

「Plan?」

「Kukkuh. That's a pretty big deal, you know?」

According to Eihwaz, the fanatic sword was discovered 40 years ago in the Marquis territory, in the basement of a 1000-years-old fort that had been turned into ruins during a survey to build a new facility.

It was presented to the Marquis by a person from the research team because it was imbued with magical power.....I'm sure the Fanatics' plans began at

this time.

Moreover, the Fanatics' plan was not a simple one, such as limited to manipulating the Marquis to seize power.

「Haah, to team up with the Raidos Kingdom and to take over the Philias Kingdom?」

Even Eliante was surprised.

Even for the Fanatics, it is impossible to control all the people in a half-destroyed state. Hence, there were some people who were not controlled and just received orders, and some of their subordinates seemed to know what the Fanatics wanted.

「Or more accurately, It's going to get its hands on the divine sword Diabolos」

「They are the same kind, right?」

After they taken control of the country, they planned to invade the Philias Kingdom by taking control the military. It seems that they wanted to use Diabolos to repair itself.

I guess it wanted Gallus not just to have him create a pseudo fanatic sword, but also to be involved in its own restoration.

「Then the invasion from the Raidos Kingdom that is happening now is...」

「It must have been planned in advance」

「.....I have a bad feeling about this」

Eliante mutters to herself. Could it be some kind of insect sense? I'm a little scared when half-insect kin tell me that.

「We're not hiding the fact that the mass murderer Jean is in Alessa. In fact, I'm sure he's even actively spreading the word in order to intimidate them.



And yet, they attacked us.....」

「They have prepared for this in advance huh」

Isn't this situation pretty bad? No matter how strong Jean is, there is always a possibility that he will lose if they have taken countermeasures in advance. The other side is said to be a military superpower, so isn't the possibility of losing rather high?

「Wh, why are you so calm about it!」

「Hmmh. There will be disaster for that city」

「That's why I'm telling you this is bad! If that Klimut guy fought seriously.....」

Eihwaz too, called Klimut a calamity before.....Eliante also seems to be more afraid of Klimut than the Royal Army of Raidos.

「Hey, What do you mean?」

「You're already a B ranker, so it's fine huh.....Klimut's second name is Calamity. He is a spirits user who specializes in mass destruction, destroying friend and foe alike」

I see. So, it's a calamity because he attacks both friend and foe in a wide area. I guess it's a similar story to Ashwrath the Friendly Fire.

「But it's fake nickname, given over 50 years ago. Adventurers who didn't know any better started calling him that, and it stuck to him. Now, many adventurers believe the alias to be true.....No, Klimut is a trump card for the guild as well. We've never dared to correct that mistake」

「Mistake?」

「Well, technically, he stopped a weapon of mass destruction and saved a city」

A long time ago, there was a small country in the northern part of what is now the territory of the Kranzel Kingdom. It belonged to the Raidos Kingdom, which had long been an enemy of the Kranzel Kingdom.

However, that small country was sandwiched between two major powers and at the mercy of the political situations of both sides, it's unstable. The country and its people must always be prepared for war, not knowing when it will become a battlefield.

Even with a small national budget being squeezed by military expenses, the country was unable to increase its strength and had to continue receiving support from the Raidos Kingdom as a poor country.

The king of the time tried to break through this situation. He turned his attention to spirit magic as a low-cost means of warfare. He tried to develop spirit magic by inviting excellent spirit magicians.

However, spirit magic is very difficult to handle. There are only a few who have the talent, but it is extremely unstable. Even if the same spirits magician uses the same spirits magic, the effect will fluctuate drastically depending on the physical and mental condition of the practitioner and the mood of the spirits. Furthermore, spirits were fickle and had a different mental structure than people, and they sometimes did not understand commands accurately.

It was recognized by the adventurers and military, but it is too unstable. It is difficult to unless they are a high-level magician. That's how they feel about it.

Especially important is the part about its instability. They can easily go out of control. Even for Elves and the others that have accumulated thousands of years of study in spirit magic are said to have difficulty in trying to control it.

Then, that small country also made a big mistake. A few spirits user attempted to summon and use a higher-level spirit, whether it was a miracle or a nightmare, it was a great spirit that was summoned, and it easily got out of control.

There are different ranks of spirits: miscellaneous spirits, lower-grade spirits, middle-grade spirits, high-grade spirits, great spirits, and spirit's king, with great spirits having power equivalent to threat level A.

What if it gets out of control? The small country would be easily destroyed. In fact, at that time, the Great Spirit of the Wind, which had been rampaging for five days, had cleared more than half of the country, killing and injuring more than 50,000 people in total.

The person who quelled the Great Spirit at that time was Klimut, who was already the Guild master of Alessa. He himself did not take part in this experiment and only cleaned up the mess by himself, but from the onlooker it appeared as if he had summoned the Great Spirit.

What's more, he made a contract with the Great Spirit at that time, and the fact that the scene looked like he was giving orders to the summoned spirit accelerated the misunderstanding.

「In fact, He just managed to save the people of a small country from being wiped out. It's insane to go to the trouble of infiltrating a hostile country and attempting to make a contract with a great spirit with a low chance of success. Well, since he succeeded, he must be a genius as a spirits user」

「But, it had weakened Klimut greatly」

「Why?」

If he made a contract with a great being like the Great Spirit, he must have gotten stronger, right? That's why he was a rank S adventurer right.

「He are constantly on edge to hold down the great spirits that lie dormant within his bodies. The amount of magic power he can use is limited, and his life force is being drained away. On top of that, it seems that his body is also becoming weak」

「Originally, his fighting style was supposed to be using multiple spirits, but I'm told that's also difficult now」

In order to keep the Great Spirit sealed inside of him, his abilities have been weakened. Moreover, it's difficult to summon spirits because he's constantly devoting his control and other resources to it.

「But that doesn't mean he can't fight. If it comes to it, he can use the Great Spirit」

「Kukukuh. The great spirit of the wind that will blows everything from the ground huh」

「If that happens, there will be a lot of damage in the area. And Klimut won't be able to get away with it either. I heard that he used it once in the past in a battle with a dragon, but that time he had wandered between life and death」

So, neither the people around Klimut will be able to get away from it huh.

I wondered why they had such a person as the guild master of Alessa, but it seems that the Raidos Kingdom is an irreconcilable enemy of the adventurer's guild as well.

There were no adventurers in that country, and if there was an adventurer's guild member in the area they controlled, they would execute them all and confiscate their property.

In order to prevent such a country from moving south and weakening the Kranzel Kingdom, which favors adventurers, the guild has placed Klimut as a trump card.

「However, a trump card is something you save until the last minute. That's why we're putting Amanda and Jean in Alessa's so Klimut doesn't have to fight too much」

In other words, he's probably even more destructive than Amanda and Jean. Apparently, Klimut was even more awesome than I thought he was.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-473.html>

# Chapter 474: Gallus and Equipment

Eihwaz and the others left, leaving Fran and Gallus alone in the room.

No, they were very thoughtful, as they knew there would be a lot for us to talk about. Only Eihwaz was still fussing about having something to talk about, but Forrund took him out.

After watching Fran put up a barrier to prevent eavesdropping, Gallus opened his mouth again. I'm sure Eihwaz or someone else will try to eavesdrop on us in ways we can't even imagine.

「Once again, thank you for your help. So, you found the scabbard huh?」

「NN」

『Because of its name and shape. I knew there was definitely something to it』

「I was worried you wouldn't notice it, you know?」

But that's not the main issue.

『No, but...There was always a chance we wouldn't make it to the royal capital, right?』

I don't know if we'll be able to keep our promise. We might have other things to do, and as adventurers, we might have lost our lives on the road.

But Gallus shook his head lightly and smiled.

「It's okay. I knew you guys would keep your word」

「Of course. I keep my promises to my friends」

「Ghahaha. Friends huh! Yeah, we are friends!」

「Nn」

Gallus was laughing as he said that, but his face soon became serious. No, I think he's a little bit down? I feel like I can see a bit of sorrow in his eyes. What's wrong with him?

「So, umm, can I ask you one question?」

「Nn?」

「That equipment, is it originally from my Black Cat series?」

So that's what he's looks down huh? I explained to Gallus how we had acquired this equipment. The repair function was deteriorating due to the continuous battle with strong enemies. It had been torn to shreds by the fierce fighting. A blacksmith we had met by chance had repaired it for her.

「You met a blacksmith by chance.....Is he a divine level blacksmith?」

I knew he'd noticed it huh. She makes the work of Gallus, the world's greatest blacksmith, even better, there are only a few people who can do that. The reason why Gallus was a bit down was probably because he was comparing his own work with Alistair's.

『Aah—.....』

What should I do. No, she has taken the liberty of improving Gallus' best work. Even though it was necessary for Fran to do so, I should apologize to Gallus with a goodwill.

『That's right. Alistair, a divine blacksmith, altered the armor that Gallus made for her. I'm sorry. We didn't ask for your permission first...』

「No, don't apologize! In fact, I'm impressed!」

『Ugh. Y-you will forgive us?』

「I don't care about it, but anyone who gets angry at the sight of this works are disqualified as a blacksmith!」

Gallus seemed to be seriously impressed. His eyes sparkled as he stared at Fran's Black Heavenly Tiger equipment.

「Modifying a named item and making it into something more powerful is.....Amazing」

『She's a divine blacksmith after all~』

「Damn it. If it weren't for this incident, I would have asked for an apprenticeship.....」

『An apprenticeship?』

For someone like Gallus, the honorary blacksmith of the Kranzel Kingdom? But come to think of it, the other party is a divine blacksmith. It wouldn't be strange for him wanted an apprenticeship huh?

She is supposed to be in the Belios Kingdom now, but I don't know how much information I can give him about Alistair.

『Umm. I'll let her know the next time we meet』

「Really!」

『Ah, yeah. But I don't know if she's going to agree to that, you know?』

「I know, I know. Just the possibility of making us acquainted is enough!」

Well, I'll just tell her about Gallus. After that, it's up to Alistair.

『Also, Alistair doesn't seem to want to be used by those in power...』

「I won't tell anyone! Don't worry!」

Gallus said he wouldn't tell anyone about it. We can rest assured.

「Can't you show it more to me?」

「Nn」

「Fumu fumu.....Is this look your thing, little girl?」

『No, Alistair made it look like this』

「I see.....So that person is really a woman huh?」

『Yeah』

「I see. I'm impressed with its perfect appearance. Maybe it's a woman thing」

But the first piece of armor she got from Gallus looked pretty girly, didn't it? That's what I thought, but I heard that that equipment was just made according to a client's wishes.

Apparently, it was the boyish black cat series that reflected Gallus's taste.

「Besides, a change in appearance is a small price to pay for the improvement of its ability. It's not every day I can see a piece of armor like this」

『Is that so?』

「Umu. Considering the original materials, this is on an incredible level. Even adventurers of rank B or higher don't have equipment of the same level as this」

It's just as I expected from a divine class blacksmith who modified it. I thought it would only improve its performance, but it seems it's worth more than I imagined.



「Besides, Master has gotten pretty awesome too」

『Eh? Is that so?』

「Umu. You're considerably strengthened, isn't it? Even with my god's eye, the information I can get from you were very little this time. It's a sign that you're stronger than the last time we met in Alessa」

『I'm sure my appearance hasn't changed though』

「The presence that emanates from within is completely different. When you're like me, you can see it clearly」

The old man Gallus is now snickering as he observes me. It's nice to be praised, but I feel nervous. I feel as if I'm being evaluated by a great appraiser.

「Are Master handled by Alistair-dono too?」

『Only on some parts, but there are various thing too』

「Is that so.....I won't ask for details. However, not only Fran, but Master also has grown a lot」

『I felt a little embarrassed』

This may be the first time that someone other than Fran has praised my growth. I think I'm a bit of a simple-minded guy, but I can't help but be happy about it.

『Th-thanks』

「That's my line. The best of the best swords, and the best armor made from my work. It was a feast for the eyes」

After that, we spent the rest of the day talking about various things with Gallus.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-474.html>

# Chapter 475: The Five with Antennae and Shells

『It's probably the time for us to head to Alessa huh?』

「Nn」

A few days after the incident. Fran's job was already gone, and Gallus and the others had decided to move on. I think it's safe to say that we've almost finished our business in the capital.

As for me, I was thinking if we could stay a little longer.

「Finally, training」

Fran is motivated. Besides, I'm curious about what's going on in the north.

In the end, we decided to head to Alessa. I heard that we had to apply for permission from the guild before entering the Plains of the Demon Wolf.

There are no penalties for entering without permission, but if we have permission, we can get support from the guild in the worst-case scenario, and complete a request for investigations and such.

In particular, the Plains of the Demon Wolf is a Grade A magical area, so it's not easy to get permission to explore it solo unless you're a rank B adventurer or higher.

Come to think of it, I've heard a similar story about the Crystal Cage near Barbra. It seems that not only were they able to receive higher level requests due to their higher rank, but also the restrictions on exploring magical areas were lifted.

『We've already received our reward, so there's certainly no reason for us to stay in the royal capital any longer』

「Nn」

『For the time being, let's greet the guild』

「Okay」

In case you're wondering, we received bounties and special rewards from the guild and the country. But the amount we spent on Gallus' protection request and the auction. Also, considering the amount of money that Fran donated to rebuild the orphanage and relief center, we are completely in the red. Even so, we still have about five million goldes in our pocket.

Besides, it made Fran's reputation even stronger. Fran's reputation for not only saving people with her healing power, but also for investing large sums of money to help the weak, was now beginning to be known as the Black Cat Saint.

I've heard that Fran likes the Black Lightning Princess better because it makes her seems stronger. But in the royal capital, the name "saint" has become overwhelmingly more popular. Wherever she goes, she is called a saint.

Even now, on our way to the guild, she was being approached by many people. At that time, everyone would call her 「Saintess-sama」 or 「Saintess-san」 .

Well, Eliante will be begging her to stay in the royal capital. As long as Fran is here, the reputation of the Adventurer's Guild will remain high.

That state of affairs was no different in the guild. Right now, it's just the royal capital, but sooner or later, the name of the Black Cat Saints might spread to the surrounding towns. Although Fran would be unhappy about it.

「Stellia」

「Oya, what can I do for you today?」

「I'd like to speak to Eliante」

「Then you can go up yourself. If it's you, we won't have to worry」

「Nn」

It was a complete face pass already. It's not so much that her rank has risen, but that her trustworthiness in the capital has increased. Although it was highly possible that Stellia thought it was a hassle for her to act as guide for her.

『There's a sign of someone coming from Eliante's room. Maybe she has a visitor』

「Nn」

I guess we'll have to come back later huh? Well, for the time being, we'll just say hello and let her know that we'll be back later.

Fran knocks on the room door.

『Ooh. So, you're able to knock on the door now huh』

(Fufun)

I couldn't help but admire her, and Fran stuck out her smug little chest. No, it's not that big of deal. But for me, it was an event that made me feel that she had grown a lot. Because it's Fran, you know? She's knocking, right? Isn't that amazing?

「Who is it? Come in」

It didn't seem like an important guest. When Fran entered the office, she saw a group of familiar warriors chatting with Eliante. They were the half-insect kin mercenaries who had stood out during the incident.

「Ara, you've come at the right times. We were just talking about you」

「About me?」

「Yeah. These are old acquaintances of mine, members of the mercenary group Antennae and Shells」

「Hi, there. I'm Robin. I'm the sub-leader of Antennae and Shells」

The refreshing man who asked her to shake his hand is a half-insect kin of a hard shrimp. Unlike when he was in battle, his shell has disappeared, except for his eyes and antennae, he looks no different from a normal human. His ability is also much lower than in battle.

「I'm Hobbs」

「Effie...」

「I'm Anne!」

「My name is Shingen」

They introduce themselves in the order of locusts, dragonfly, fanged ants, and mirages clam.

Hobbs, in his boyish form, has a cool, rugged air about him. Like Robin, he has a human-like appearance.

Effie of the dragonfly looks like a rather quiet—or rather, shy type of woman. Anne the Fang Ant is a girl who seems to have a lot of energy. Shingen the mirages clam, as I felt about him before, is probably a gentle and powerful type.

「We usually active in the small nations to the south, but this time we happened to be working in the north. We were lucky enough to be in this city」

「Lucky?」

Isn't that the correct word for this is bad luck? You almost died, remember?

「It's luck. Thanks to it, we were in time for our friends in her predicament」

「Well, It was a good money too」

Robin seems to be a hot-blooded man, just like his image. Hobbs seems to be the oblique type.

「.....It was a good fight」

「It's been a while since I can rampage as much as I want」

The two women also seem to be the type to enjoy combat. They are happy to talk about fighting a pseudo fanatic sword wielder.

「I'm glad we all survived」

Shingen-kun. He looks like he's having a hard time, but hang in there!

「Eliante told me about you. She said she fought with you against a powerful enemy and saved her life. Thank you. Let me give you my gratitude」

「Wha, Robin! You're acting like a guardian!」

「She saved my friend's life. Isn't that a proper courtesy?」

「You're always so hot-blooded though!」

While saying that, Eliante's face looks not so happy. I guess there is a kind of bond that can only be shared between them.

「Th-then? What can I do for you?」

「Nn. Going to Allesa」

「Eh? You're leaving the royal capital?」

「Nn」

「Wha-wait a minute! I still have a lot of work for you to do!」

Eliante lamented, but Fran's resolve remained unchanged. It's a job that could be done by any other adventurer, and it's not like the nobles have completely stopped messing with us.

She must have understood that. Eliante nodded reluctantly with a pitiful look on her face.

「I understand then.....So, when do you leave?」

「Tomorrow」

「To-tomorrow? C-can you at least stay for another weeks——」

She was probably calculating in her head how to get Fran to complete the request before she left. But it was Robin, who had been listening to the conversation, who admonished Eliante, who was so shocked that he thought she might cling to her and stopped her.

「Eliante. Don't interfere with a warrior's departure」

「Uuh. You guys don't know how much work I do, so you can't say that!」

「We're going to stay in town for a while and take some jobs」

「Re-really? You sure about that?」

「Yeah」

「Yes, I heard that! I got your word! You won't get away with this!」

Hearing Eliante's words and actions, her friends gave her the same wry smile.

「Haah. You're the same as always huh」

「...Really」

「She never change huh——」

「You're right」

Eliante.....She is a deplorable person huh. She's a woman with a good appearance but her personality is pretty bad.....

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-475.html>



# Chapter 476: Departure from the Royal Capital

『Yo...』

『It's you again huh』

I'm wrapped up in a feeling as if I'm dreaming, even though I shouldn't need sleep. I don't know how many times I've got this, but I'm getting used to it. At least I've experienced this situation enough to not be distraught.

The place was the familiar white space. Standing there was a man I recognized. He was a stout man with silver hair, and was dressed in a kimono-like robe.

『Come to think of it, the Moon Festival was coming up huh』

I've heard that there's a big Moon Festival held every year in the royal capital, but now it's on an emergency. This year, it seems that only a simple ceremony will be held.

『Hey, who are you? Is the mysterious spirit inside me, is you? What are you? Are you Fenrir?』

『Sorry. I'll get back to you on that next time』

『Didn't you say you'd tell me the next time we met?』

『Whose fault do you think it is.....? Anyway, things have changed a bit. It's not safe to give you information about me. If I'm not careful, my memory will be.....』

『What do you mean?』

『Anyway, for now, listen to me』

『...Okay』

Hearing the serious tone of the man's voice, I understood that it was some kind of urgent matter.

『But you look really tired, don't you?』

The man, however, looked a little different from when I had met him before. I'm sure he looked a little more domineering or spirited expression back then.....

The man in front of me now, was incredibly exhausted. He looked pale and had terrible dark circles under his eyes. Did he have hollow cheeks too?

『It's a lot of things. Including the fact that there's something unusual going on with you』

『What?』

『You know about it yourself, but you're in a bit of a--No, it's quite dangerous information』

『The, uh, mysterious voice huh?』

Something inside me were screaming at me to devour everything. Heaven and earth, gods and demons, people and beast, devour them all for nourishment, was it?

『That's not all』

『Is there anything else?』

『Too many of it. I just don't have the power to solve it right from here』

Then why did you bother to show up in here.

『Anyway, here's what I want you to do, come to the Plains of the Demon Wolf within 20 days』

『...Do I have to go to the altar? In 20 days?』

『That's right. Because in that period of time, the moon's magic is still powerful』

The moon's magic huh. I wonder if she's a member of the Silver Moon Goddess' family, since her power increases during the Moon Festival. I know he's not the goddess herself, because he's a man.

『So, at that time, I'm going to reveal myself. And a whole lot more things too』

『Ah, Wait——』

The man just says it and disappears.

And at the same time as the man's figure dissolves into the void, my vision became clearer. The white space disappears in an instant, and I'm back in our room at the inn.

Or rather, I'm not moving at all to begin with, and only my spirit is being called into that white space.

『Good grief! It's so one-sided, every time!』

Nevertheless, I've heard some important information this time.

『The Altar of the Plains of the Demon Wolf huh』

It was the place where I first woke up in this world. I knew there was a secret there. Not only for the sake of Fran's training, but also for myself, I now have a reason to go to the Plains of the Demon Wolf.

「.....Master?」

『Fran, did I wake you?』

「...Nn. Something weird」

『Actually——』

I told her everything that had just happened. I've already told Fran all about the mysterious voices and the Fanatics when I cannibalized the Fanatics.

She was pretty worried, but I appeased her by saying there was nothing to worry about it.....

「We have to get to the plains!」

Well, this is what's going to happen huh. After this, we planned to go and say hello to the head of the court physician, but I'm afraid she's going to ignore that too.

『Wait a minute, we still have 20 days. We can travel to Alessa in a few days, and the Plains of the Demon Wolf are not that big. There's no need to rush』

「But it's dangerous, right?」

『That's what he told me, but if it was a urgent matter of minutes and seconds, he would have said something more urgent. He'd say, Come to the altar right now』

So, I think we need to hurry, but we don't need to rush.

『Besides, it's better to say something to the higher ups first, right?』

「.....I undertand」

She managed to understand me. I thought so.....No, I didn't expect her to cut off the meal with the court physician so quickly. There were some important people here too, like the chief of the court physicians and the chamberlain, who praised Fran's achievements, but they were almost completely ignored.

Maybe the meal was about 30 minutes long? I never thought for that Fran, would leave her meal.....When asked why she was in a hurry, Fran told him that she had to go to Alessa, but for some strange reason, he was convinced.

Apparently, he had received a secret message from the adventurer's guild, and they thought she was heading to Alessa to help prepare for Raidos Kingdom's attack. Well, I didn't dare to clear up the misunderstanding because it was better to be misunderstood than to offend them.

「Master, we're going to Alessa!」

『Yes yes. I know』

Nothing will stop her anymore.

「Urushi, go for it!」

「Woof!」

With Urushi's legs, we would be able to reach Alessa in four days without straining ourselves. However, we didn't set off immediately. When Fran jumped onto Urushi's back in front of the main gate, a voice called out to her.

「What's wrong?」

「You know.....Well. I just wanted to thank you for all your help. I really appreciate your help this time. On behalf of the adventurers on the royal capital, I would like to say our gratitude for you. Thank you very much」

Then Eliante bowed deeply, and the others too, one after another, shook Fran's hand and bowed their heads.

Then, for some reason, a crackling sound began to rise from the surroundings. It was the sound of soldiers, adventurers, and civilians clapping their hands as she left the royal capital.

「Saintess-sama! Thank you for saving us!」

「Come back again!」

「Saintess-san! Thank you!」

Isn't this the first time she had so many people blessed her on our journey?

「Fran, come again! You're always welcome here!」

「Come back and show me your equipment too!」

「You've saved us!」

With these blessing, cheers, and bittersweet words at her back, Urushi begins to run under Fran's direction. She is nonchalant, but I know she hides her embarrassment. I can see a faint smile on her face.

『A lot has happened huh.....I hope they will recover soon』

「Nn」

『Next up, the nostalgic Alessa huh』

「Looking forward to it」

「woof!」

Although, it's actually not even been six months.

「Urushi, Let's go!」

「woof woof woo-f!」

『Aah, Don't push yourself too hard』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-476.html>

# Chapter 477: Side: Alistair

This was an urgent matter.

「This presence is.....a divine sword!」

What a surprise, the power of the divine sword has been unleashed on this continent. As a divine level blacksmith, I can sense the presence of a divine sword.

Especially when it's on released state, I can sense it so much better. What's more, surprisingly, there were two divine sword's presence.

I knew one of it. It's probably Ashwrath's Earth Sword, Gaia. However, I had no idea about the other one.

Does it mean, it was a divine sword that even I have never touched has appeared.

However, there is also some strange feelings about it. There was an obvious distortion in the presence of the divine sword that seemed to be fighting Gaia. There was a possibility that it had already been damaged, or for some reason it had not been able to display its true power.

「No, I will know when I see it」

Anyway, I have to go. That's my mission and my purpose in life. However, there was someone who interrupted me as I started to act.

「A-chan? Where the hell are you going?」

Blonde hair and white skin. Slender body with pointed ears. She has all the features of an elf, and she looks like a gentle woman.

「Winnarhyn...! Since when!」

But don't be fooled by her gentle appearance and her voice tone. This woman is one of the people I'm least able to compete with in this world.

「This is my house, remember? If you're sneaking around and acting suspiciously, I'll notice, right?」

「I even went to the trouble of using a tool to remove my presence though!」

「Oh my? But it didn't hide your presence quite well huh? Isn't it a failure?」

「This is why i hate a high elf! Making a fool of a divine level blacksmith's tool is...!」

Yes, this woman is not just an elf. She was one of the High Elves, one of the strongest races of elves in this world. She was also one of the most famous of the High Elves.

The exact number of High Elves is unknown. In addition, while many High Elves are keeping their activities hidden from the public, there are a few who are actively involved with humans.

One of those few High Elves was this Winnarhyn. The other two known names are Willow Magnus, a historical researcher. The other one is Wigan Wigan, a wandering botanist.

It is just a coincidence that all three of them have "wi" at the beginning of their names. There is a time when names beginning with "wi" are popular among elves, and all three were born at that time. Well, in elves sense of time it's hundreds of years ago already.

The reason why the latter two have family names is because they were once nobles. The reason it was because the country that had anointed them as nobles had already gone.



In the first place, a High Elves couldn't be accepted by the country's nobles. There is even an anecdote about Wigan Wigan who, when asked what he wanted to name his family, replied that it was too much trouble and that Wigan was fine.

Well, the fact that the country was destroyed so easily shows that the High Elves were not interested in running the country. If they had been able to use their power in any way, it would have been easy to avoid ruin.

Although the three High Elves are well known for their various anecdotes, Willow Magnus and Wigan Wigan are usually wandering the world for research and only occasionally submit their research results to the guild. With that in mind, Winnarhyn was the only High Elf in the world whose whereabouts were known.

There are two famous titles for Winnarhyn. The first is "The Seven Sages" which is the name given to a group of seven people who are said to be as strong as rank S adventurers. Well, none of the seven sages have ever taken that name themselves. In the first place, there were only two mages in the group.

This is just a self proposed organization by countries that have become really concerned about the rise of the guild's influence, in order to keep them in check. Some of them have never even been to the battlefield. It's just seven people who are thought to be extremely talented. The reason why they named them "The Sages" was to counter the rough image of adventurers.

However, from what I saw, these seven sages were not foolish.

First, there are three divine sword owners: The Knight of the Gods, Owner of the first Divine sword Alpha. Although only his job title has been revealed, there is no doubt that he exists.

On the other hand, the owner of the Mad Sword, Berserk, was under the "Queen of the Night". This isn't a person name, but the name of a special organization for the operation of the divine sword.

Furthermore, the last one is the king of Philias, the owner of the Demon Sword, Diabolos. However, this isn't true. There is no way for the owner of that Diabolos can casually appear in public. As royalty, they have the right to command the demons, so they are probably using that to hide the true owner. Even the king is treated as the shadow warrior of the owner of the divine sword. I believe that someone from the royal family who is said to be dead is actually still alive and is the master of the divine sword.

Of the remaining four, three of them are kings of powerful nations. The king of the land of demons. The king of the land of the Insect-kin. The king of the Dwarf nation. As for these three, I don't know what they're capable of. Their countries are too powerful to be attacked, and they've never experienced a large-scale war. However, they are probably not weak.

And the last one was the High Elf Winnarhyn. I'm well aware of her abilities. I once had her accompany me to a dungeon to gather materials a long time ago. However, in the case of Winnarhyn, her other title is probably far more famous than the seven sages.

Her title was "The Director of the Academy of Magic".

In a special area of the Belios Kingdom, where autonomy is granted, there is a magic academy where children with magic talents from all over the world gather. The director of the academy was Winnarhyn.

Well, it's directed by a High Elf who is said to be the world's greatest mages. That's why she's popular.

There are magic academies and magic schools all over the world, but the term "Academy of Magic" simply refers to the magic academy where Winnarhyn is the director.

「You still have a lot of work to do, don't you?」

「Y-yeah」

「I'm so sad. I can't believe A-chan is going to be the kind of girl who breaks her promises」

「Ugh...」

I'm currently renting a room in a corner of the academy of magic. Since the chief, Winnarhyn, knows who I am. It was a place where I could stay quietly and comfortably.

My title is temporary blacksmithing instructor. Well, it's an easy job, just a little light instruction for the chicks.

And in exchange for a temporary identity, food, and shelter, I take care of the maintenance of the magic armor and equipment on the Academy of Magic. It can even be said as a perk. It's a great way to get a feel for what's going on in the world of magic.

「B-but...I can't let the presence of the divine sword go unchecked」

「Umm. I guess so. The divine sword is dangerous」

「That's right」

「But, If you don't finish repairing my armor, I'm not going to be able to teach my advanced classes~」

「Well, that's true.....」

I can't be too pushy on her because she has been a great help to me when I was young and still is. I knew how scary it would be if she lost her temper.

「Besides, you haven't finished repairing and maintaining that golem, have you? Without it, we're going to be very late for the mock battle class」

「C-can you do something about it! You can get by without it, right? Why don't we let them deal with Winnarhyn directly?」

「It can't be helped huh. I understand. Well, I guess you owe me this time」

「I'm grateful!」

「But, I'll give you one assignment」

「A-assignment?」

Oi oi, what kind of impossible task are you trying to impose?

「Yeah. I've asked you to introduce the Beast King or Ashwrath as our instructor for the mock battle, right?」

「N-no, But, that is.....」

A mock battle against rank S adventurers? What kind of enemy do you have in mind? Are you trying to train people to fight the evil gods? But when I told her it was impossible, Winnarhyn surprisingly backed down.

「I understand. So I'll compromise」

「Compromise?」

「Yes. If they're not at the level of those two, can you go find someone who is somewhat strong? If they're adventurers, at least they must be a B ranker or higher」

「Uh, okay...I don't have a choice huh. I'll take care of it」

「You promise? I'm hardly ever away from here, so I don't have that kind of connection at all」

Well, if push comes to shove, we'll have to rely on the Beast King's. Worst-case scenario, I can sell off some magical equipment to the guild and ask them to introduce me to an adventurer instead.

「We can't hold a high-ranking adventurer for a long time, you know?」

「I know, I know, It will only takes about a week or so」

「By when should I bring them here?」

「 Lets see. I need it as soon as possible.....Can I have it within 5 years? 」

Thank God, the High Elves have a screwed-up sense of time. It's a hassle, but I'll figure it out somehow. More importantly, it's time for the divine sword now!

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-477.html>

# Chapter 478: The Nostalgic Alessa

「I can see it! It's Alessa」

「woof woof!」

『Well, it felt strangely nostalgic』

Was it because this was the first town I visited after coming to this world? This town felt special to me.

There were not many people lined up in front of the gate. This is a normal sight in Alessa, which isn't that big of a town, but after seeing the royal capital, I felt quite lonely.

But as usual, there were no signs of war. There was no sign of the usual soldiers coming and going, no sign of the troop merchants who were looking to take advantage of the special wartime demand.

It was perfectly normal. They looked the same as they did when we were there.

『If we suddenly descend in front of the gate, there might be confusion』

「Nn」

So, we descended to a somewhat remote area and walked to Alessa. The merchants and adventurers who were waiting for their turn, of which there were several, were looking at us with horrified faces.

They were surprised to see Urushi.

However, the reaction of the soldiers guarding the gate was different from that of the merchants.

「Oya? You're Fran-chan right?」

「Nn?」

「You've come back to Alessa?」

「Delt」

It was Delt, the gatekeeper we had gotten to know best when we were in Alessa.

Apparently, Fran remembered his name too. I had forgotten about Cruz too until we met again at the martial arts tournament. Does she remember Delt?

In Fran's case, it seems she never forgets a strong opponent. It's almost certain, if they had crossed swords before.

The other important thing is whether they are friendly to her or not. If they are friendly from the start, like Delt, and she have been in contact with them for a reasonable length of time, she probably won't forget them.

In Cruz's case, he wasn't that strong, and he didn't make much of an impression because he was neutral rather than favorable. Well, he was good-looking, but he was so plain.

「Well. Welcome back」

「Thanks」

For Fran, this town, where she registered as an adventurer, must be very special. She nodded happily at Delt, who greeted her with a smile.

「Well, then, show me your ID cards」

「Nn」

「Yes, thankyou—Oooohhh? Eh? Fran-chan, this is.....!」

「Nn?」

Delt's eyes widen as he looks at the guild card. He also alternates between the card and Fran's face, and reads the names on it again.

「Th-this is without a doubt, is Fran's card! H-how did you get to B rank in such a short period of time?」

「Nn. Ranked up in the royal capital」

「The royal capital.....! I heard, there's a big uproar and it inflicted quite a lot of damage to the royal capital.....There are rumors flying around that the royal castle has been destroyed, that the royal capital has been obliterated, and so on」

Apparently, the details of the damage are not being conveyed. No, it seems that the information is so mixed up that they don't know which one is correct.

「A lot of people died.....」

「Aah, so it's true there's a terrible mess there huh. But I'm glad that Fran-chan is okay. Well then, Welcome back to Alessa」

「Nn. Thanks」

We came back to Alessa, it was still the same as before, even from the inside. I don't see any effects from the battle with Raidos at all.

『For the time being, let's go to the guild』

「Understood」

「Woof!」

That's how we arrived at the adventurer's guild, and it was just like before. No, it's rather lively, isn't it? the number of adventurers seemed to have



increased a bit. Well, I guess it depends on the time of day.

「Pardon—」 (1)

『I've said this to you every time. Isn't that wrong?』

When she entered the Adventurer's Guild, all eyes turned to Fran. Some were cautious, some were surprised. But half of them seemed to know Fran from before, and there was a sense of surprise and respect.

Some of them even tried to make a trouble with Fran, but they were stopped by the adventurers around them.

「Ulmut's——」

「Martial arts tournament's winner——」

Apparently, they don't know that she had been promoted to Rank B yet. It's a bit far from the capital, and I guess they don't bother to announce information about adventurers in other cities. It would be a different story if she were ranked A or higher, though.

However, it seems that she is known to have won a prize in the martial arts tournament. Hearing the story, the man who had stepped forward was turning back in a hurry.

「Welcome. Ummm, is young miss an adventurer too?」

I didn't recognize the receptionist. Perhaps she was a newcomer hired after Fran had left. I could see that she was confused when she saw the Fran appearance.

「Nn」

「What can I do for you today?」

「I want to enter the Plains of the Demon Wolf. What do I need to do to apply?」

「Huh? The Plains of the Demon Wolf? You see, it's a grade A magical area and normally only adventurers of Rank B or higher can enter」

「I know」

「Eh? Then young miss should know you can't enter it, right?」

Half of the adventurers around her are laughing at Fran's words, aren't they? When she was in Alessa before, she was a D ranker, so it can't be helped.

「This」

「Guild Card? Eeeeh? Eeeh?」

She had a similar reaction to Delt. This girl was more intense, though.

「No way, this child is a B ranker?」

The moment the receptionist muttered, the adventurers around her made a commotion. Then, all at once, they became noisy. I guess they couldn't believe it. Well, of course they are. After all, it means, she's stronger than them.

This is not going to go away for a while, is it? That's what I was thinking, but then someone appeared from the back of the guild and clapped his hands lightly, and the whole place went quiet.

「Hai hai, stop making a commotion」

「Aah, Nell-senpai」

The person who showed up was Nell, the receptionist who had taken care of us before.

「Long time no see huh, Fran-chan」

「Nn」

「We welcome you, Fran, the Black Lightning Princess. Or, would you prefer the Black Cat Saintess instead?」

「The Black Lightning Princess is cooler」

When Fran replied with a sullen expression, Nell chuckled.

「Well then. Fran, the Black Lightning Princess, please come this way. The guild master wants to see you」

「Okay」

Hmmm, I guess guild master already heard about our arrival. Well, it's convenient that we'll have to talk to guild master in order to enter the magical area anyway.

Nell's admission must have made them realize that she wasn't lying. The adventurers were staring at Fran with shocked faces. Well, no matter how you look at it, she doesn't look any stronger than they are, so it can't be helped. With the quiet astonishment of the adventurers at our back, she starts walking behind Nell.

「I heard, you play a great role in the royal capital」

「.....That's not true」

Hearing Nell's words, Fran shook her head with a reluctant expression. Well, it was a battle that gave me a lot to think about in terms of combat.

Seeing Fran's reaction, Nell quickly changes the subject. As expected of a receptionist who is skilled at reading people's expressions.

「And before that, you were awesome at the Ulmut martial arts tournament! Congratulations on your win」

「I didn't win」

But this wasn't the best result for Fran either. She experienced a good fight, but she was outclassed by Amanda. She showed her an overwhelming

difference.

Nell looks at Fran with dismay, who is more disappointed that she lost than that she did well.

「Fran. Before I know it, you're just like Amanda huh.....」

Does that mean she's a battle junkie too? Well, it's recently been discovered that most high ranked adventurers are combat enthusiasts. In fact, if they doesn't like combat, they won't get any stronger.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-478.html>

# **Chapter 479: Klimut's Melancholy**

## Chapter 479: Klimut's Melancholy

「Guild master. I've brought Fran-can with me」

「Yeah, come in」

When we entered the office, she was greeted by Klimut, the elven, spirits user guild master. He's looking at her with the same stern expression as usual.

After Nell left, he offered Fran the couch and sat down across from us.

「Long time no see」

「Nn」

「Haah...So much things happened in such a short time.....Even the word "genius" sounds dumb」

I guess Klimut's words are not just about rank. We didn't know much before, but Klimut is pretty strong. I don't need to appraise him to know that.

It's not about his status, but about the presence that oozes from within him. And Klimut must have felt the same way about Fran.

He looks at Fran in astonishment. Well, she much stronger than she was when she left Alessa.

「Anyway, congratulations on your ranking up」

Although he said congratulations, Klimut's face did not look like he was congratulating her at all. Rather, it was more of a frown.

「Good grief, even if they have the ability to do it, it's not like we can take advantage of a child.....Well, what's done is done」

After all, he was against the idea of putting children in danger as adventurers. The other adventurer's guilds don't have tests in the first place. If a child comes to the guild, the guild will scare them away. After that, they are treated as apprentices and taught the basics.

「So, what brought you back to Alessa?」

「Training」

「Training? Are you still trying to get stronger?」

When Klimut looked stunned, Fran nodded her head with a serious face.

「Nn」

「You've reached B rank at age 12 you know? That's one of the top five in the guild's all-time record」

Top five, does that mean there's others above Fran?

「Who is the number 1?」

「Hmm? Are you talking about the historical rankings?」

「Nn」

「The youngest person to reach A rank is the old S ranked adventurer,  
『Battalion』」

「Battalion? It's a nickname?」

「Yeah. However, because the records are too old, only the alias is now transmitted. His abilities are also unknown. However, it is said that this person became B ranker at the age of 8, A ranker at the age of 10, and S ranker at the age of 14」

What the hell is that? I thought it was a strange nickname, but what kind of monster he is? As expected of a genius with a long history.

「Even though you are not as strong as that person, you are growing faster. Do you still want to be stronger? Aren't you already strong enough?」

「I'm not strong enough」

Fran shook her head and muttered in frustration.

「I kept losing. If I hadn't gotten help, I would have lost every battle. And there are a lot of strong guys out there」

She must be thinking back to the battle with the Marquis and what I told her about the battle between the strong.

「Besides, I haven't beat the Beast King or Ashwrath yet」

「Haah. It looks like you've had a very intense few months huh. And you still can't win against them?」

He was even more dismayed. Come to think of it, Klimut doesn't seem to be a battle junkie, which is unusual for a senior adventurer. If you're asking me if he's a person with common sense, I think he's not.

「Is that why you're going to training huh?」

「Going to the Plains of the Demon Wolf to train」

「.....Are you going to go in there? By yourself?」

「I'm already a B ranker, I should be fine」

I know Klimut won't look any better. But he can't stop her, because she's fulfilled the rank requirement.

「You're right.....Haah, it can't be helped. Even if you don't get permission, you'll still go in there anyway, right?」

Fran nods to Klimut, who shrugs his shoulders in resignation.

「Of course」



「Then there's no point in stopping you huh. But that place has become quite dangerous lately, don't push yourself too hard」

「Understood」

「...Your prompt answer smells fishy...Dont push yourself too hard, okay」

「Haaah. Also, please don't go to the north. It's very confusing at the moment」

「Confusion?」

It seems that the skirmish with the Raidos Kingdom has not been settled after all.

「Yeah. Honestly, I don't want to send a child to war」

As he said this, he gave a light explanation of the current situation.

「First, the first Raidos Kingdom army was prevented by an adventurer named Jean Doobie」

「I know it」

「Ah, by the way, did you and Jean know each other? He writes about being together with you on his diary」

「Nn」

「However, Raidos' invasion did not end there. It seems to have been done sporadically, on several occasions」

The reason for this seems to be an experiment in necromancy. It seems that the enemy is using an army of undead.

「I guess it's a countermeasure against Jean. They can't reach Jean, but there's so many of it. Jean and the adventurers he hired to guard him are running around to counter them」

Donadrond, who was an instructor for newcomers in this guild, is also out there.

「Klimut isn't going? You're Klimut of Calamity, right?」

「...Haaah. I'm not that big of a guy to be given such a big name, though. Well, when I get serious, the surroundings might be destroyed」

In other words, you're not going to go into battle with Raidos just for a skirmish huh.

「Anyway, you are allowed to enter the Plains of the Demon Wolf. But please stay away from the skirmish with Raidos. Is that clear?」

Klimt tells her with a sigh, rubbing the wrinkles between his eyes. Guild masters in every town seem to have a hard time huh. Well, Fran is making more work for them.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-479.html>

# **Chapter 480: Let's Find Out About the Plains of the Demon Wolf**

## Chapter 480: Let's Find Out About the Plains of the Demon Wolf

After we greeted Klimut, we went to the adventurer's guild's library room. We were going to read the information on the Plains of the Demon Wolf.

I've heard that the magic beast is even stronger than when I was there. It would be dangerous to go in there without any information.

We looked around and found a good amount of detailed information. After all, it is a magical area near the town, and it seems that there is a certain amount of research and consideration being done in Alessa.

『Then read as much as you can, Fran, okay?』

「Nn」

Now, how long will Fran be able to stay awake?

First of all, the types of magical beasts in the Plains of the Demon Wolf, it was concluded that there were no certain rules.

The chance of encountering rare magical beasts are not zero, but it also means that the materials and ecosystems we can obtain are not constant. Moreover, if the monsters that appear are different each time, it is difficult to plan countermeasures.

In a normal magical area, a magic beast lives under a certain ecosystem, so as long as we take the proper measures, we can fight them. However, in the Plains of the Demon Wolf, we had to deal with them randomly.

This is probably another factor that increases the threat level of the Plains of the Demon Wolf.

There was a list of magical beasts that had been confirmed to have appeared in the past, but there were so many that I gave up trying to remember them.

It was that diverse and inconsistent.

In addition, it is said that the cycle of magical beasts being born in that plain, where the Forest of Exhaustion makes it easy for magic power to accumulate, is extremely fast. The cycle of magical beasts is said to be several times faster than elsewhere. There is a competition for survival, and the victorious monsters will evolve to become area bosses.

However, the higher-ranked magic beast, needs more magic power to survive, so it was concluded that as long as the Forest of Exhaustion existed, no magic beast would be able to get out.

It is said that there have been a few times in the past when magical beasts with excellent flying ability have gone out beyond the Forest of Exhaustion. However, the phenomenon of magic power absorption in that forest extends into the sky, so unless there is a great deal of trouble inside, magic beasts will not try to approach that forest.

Also, several times a year, the guild conducts regular inspections, and it is said that the magic beasts change quite often.

It is said that in a normal magical area, the same individual that has grown up to be powerful will often reign for decades. However, in the Plains of the Demon Wolf, even vicious demon beasts of threat level C and above are frequently replaced.

Even a threat level A magic beast would have difficulty surviving for decades in that plain. It seems that the speed at which the magical power of magic beasts' recovers is very slow in that plain. I don't know if it's because of the effects of the Forest of Exhaustion or if there are other reasons, but it seems that magical beasts need to absorb several times more magical power than other places in order to survive.

As a result, if they do not constantly fight and eat other magic beasts, they will not be able to recover the magical power they have consumed and will become weak. However, if they become too strong, other magical beasts will not be able to get close to them, and they will have a hard time hunting them. Moreover, their magic efficiency would be lower.

As a result, the stronger they become, the more they have trouble recovering their internal magical power, and when they are weakened, they can be defeated by lower-ranked magical beasts.

It should have the same effect on humans, but they won't get such significant results in a short period of time. I guess it's because it's a grade A magical area and it's difficult to stay there for a long time, so they haven't been able to conduct any experiments.

Could it be that I had also suffered from this phenomenon when I was in the Plains of the Demon Wolf? To be honest, I didn't notice it. After all, it was the first place in this world where I appeared. I didn't have anything to compare it to, and in my case, I was able to absorb the demon stone and recover.

Also, when I escaped, my rank went up and I just assumed it was because of that, my magical efficiency got better too.

What's more, the most important thing for me is the pedestal in the middle of the plain, but I couldn't find any information about it. We asked the old man who was in charge of the library, but he said he had never heard of such a thing.

They know that there is something that looks like ruins in the middle of the plain, but no so-called altar-like object seems to have been confirmed.

『What do you mean...?』

(Has disappeared?)

『Hmm. I guess that's what happens when you think about it normally』

But that mystery man told me to come to the altar, didn't he? No, no? He just said to come to the Plains of the Demon Wolf. Maybe he didn't say the altar.

『Well, I don't know what to think, I guess we'll find out when we get there』

(Nn!)

The next thing I looked at was the material on the Forest of Exhaustion.

However, there were no new facts that surprised me that much.

What caught my attention was the fact that the phenomenon of magical power absorption was considered to be caused by something underground.

It is a phenomenon that is less effective in the air and much more powerful on the surface, but it is said that the rate at which magic is sucked out of you increases even more as you dig into the ground.

However, the more they dug, the less magic they could use, so the more they had to dig by hand. It seems that the investigation was abandoned because it was too dangerous to proceed in the forest where goblins and other creatures were running rampant.

That was why it was so troublesome. A low-level adventurer would fall behind even against goblins.

Well, a genuinely skilled high-ranking adventurer like Fran, for example, wouldn't have problem at all. I'm not worried about that. It's just that my trauma will be stimulated a little bit.

I don't want to stay there for too long if possible, but depending on the strength of the magic beasts that appear in the Plains of the Demon Wolf, I may have to consider using the Forest of Exhaustion as a base of operations.

As I was thinking about this, I felt a presence approaching our side. It was clearly aiming for Fran, but I didn't feel any hostility or malicious intent.

「Hey. Is that you, Fran-san?」

「Nn? Who?」

「Oi Oi! Don't tell me you forgot me! It's me!」

「...?」

The man spoke to her in a familiar way, but Fran completely forgot about him. She could see the man's head tilted back with a scowl and a pathetic look of shock on his face.

「...Who?」

「Ha, hahaha. We dove the dungeon together, remember? I am Clad-sama, leader of the Dragon's Roar!」

「...Uumm」

It was Clad, an adventurer who we had dived into the dungeon with before. He used to be a yankee who would come and mess with Fran, but his attitude has changed completely. He had learned a lot about reality during that adventure, and in the end, he recognized Fran's abilities.

I'm just sorry, but Fran is seriously forgot about him. He had a bad attitude, and he was weak. But I'm kind of impressed with him. He was a lot stronger than last time.

Name: Clad

Age: 23 Years old

Race: Human

Job: Spear Warrior

Status Level: 27

HP:148 MP:104 STR:86 PHY:70 AGI:74 INT: 55 DEX: 49 Magic:50

Skill

Transport: Lv2, Acrobatic: Lv4, Crisis Detection: Lv4, Fasting: Lv3,  
Presence Detection: Lv1, Martial Arts: Lv1, Spear Technique: Lv2, Spear



Skill: Lv5, Intimidation: Lv3, Climbing: Lv3, Poison Resistance: Lv1, Ki Manipulation

## Equipment

Fine steel spear, Armored lizard Armor, rock bull Armor, Armored lizard boots, stone spider cloak, detoxification ring.

He can be said as a full-fledged D ranker already.

「So, what do you want?」

「Aah, no. It's nothing. Haha...」

Maybe he was expecting a conversation like 「Long time no see!」 「Hey, it's been a while!」. But Fran's attitude seemed to have broken his heart. He left, looking sad.

I'm sorry, Clad-kun. But we don't have much time to bother with you. Stay strong.

「Ara, you're done?」

「Nn」

「Is that so」

「Nn?」

As she was leaving, I thought I'd say hello to Nell at the reception.....Next to him, the receptionist who first greeted Fran, had both her cheeks red and swollen. I don't know how people's cheeks get this peachy. It seems that the adventurers have been punished to the point of being quiet.

「Well, I give them a good punishment」

The smiling Nell is scary!

「I'm sho shorry」

Keep up the good work, newbies-san!

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-480.html>

# **Chapter 481: Alessa's Current Situation**

## Chapter 481: Alessa's Current Situation

The day after Klimut gave us permission to enter the Plains of the Demon Wolf. Before we left, we went to the market.

We've been handing out a lot of food from our dimensional storage in the royal capital instead of cooking it out. We're going to replenish that. I didn't expect Fran would give out curry as well. I guess that's how much she wanted to help the people on the royal capital.

We didn't hand out all of them, but I would like to replenish them if possible.

『Well, it's faster to get the meat ourselves』

「Nn」

In the first place, I don't think there are that many magic beast's meats in Alessa's market. I thought so, but when I actually saw the market, I realized that I was wrong.

「This is, what kind of meat is this?」

「Ooh! You've got a good eye! This is the meat of a magic beast with a threat level of "D" called Gullinbursti!」 (1)

There was a good amount of meat from a very powerful magic beast on display. Speaking of Gullinbursti, it was a magic beast that we had used for curry bread in the cooking contest at Barbra. It's a golden boar beast, it's quite tasty, and strong too. It appears in here too huh?

There are also other kinds of magic beast meat in the market. Moreover, this wasn't the only store that sold meat. I don't remember Alessa being a city with such an abundance of meat.

When I was wondering about it, the lady at the store told us a lot before we even asked.

「Amanda-sama's generosity is being passed on to us」

「Amanda? She's in Alessa?」

「Yeah. She's been looking around this town and actively hunting for us」

Amanda has hunted around Alessa, and the magic beast's meat that was sold to the guild as material was also being sold to the town.

「Amanda didn't go to war?」

「I heard that an adventurer named Jean is active, so Amanda-sama is staying behind to protect this town, you know? With her here, there will be fewer people who will do bad things」

「Is that so?」

「Well, there was some confusion because of the war, but the knights are reliable these days. There was less confusion than I thought」

Since the death of Augusto, the vice commander who had been monopolizing the Order, it seems that the Order has been reborn as a much better entity.

「The knights have become well-behaved lately, and the noblemen with dark rumors have been taken down by the authorities, so Alessa has calmed down a lot」

「A nobleman with a dark rumors?」

「It was the noblemen who were involved in the coup d'état in the royal capital. Thanks to the disappearance of Count Olmes and other noblemen who originally had a bad reputation around here, business has become much easier」

Until now, they had to pay a kind space fee for stalls on top of other payment. Now that this is no longer necessary, it is much easier for retailers.

After that, we stocked up on meat, spices, seasonings, and vegetables, and headed to our next destination.

「Oya oya? Are you Fran-san by any chance?」

「Nn. Long time no see, Randell」

It was Randell the general store owner, he's the one who give Fran a ride with his carriage before we reached Alessa. He hadn't changed a lot huh.

「I never expect for the hottest topic, the Black Lightning Princess to be here!」

「You know?」

「Hahaha. For a merchant, information is a weapon. Well, in my case, I knew and concerned about you more than most merchants」

「I see」

If he already heard the information from his acquaintance, things will be easier.

「I never thought that the girl from that time would climb so high. But I'm relieved to see that she hasn't changed」

「Hasn't changed? I'm stronger than I was then」

「Aah, that's not what I meant. I'm talking more about what's inside. Some adventurers tend to become overbearing when they rise in rank」

「Hmm?」

In Fran's case, whether it's high or low rank, she never treated someone with proper respect in the first place. She has always been like that even

when she was still low in rank, so it would be better to say that she is still the same person as before even when her rank rises.

「So, what are you going to do now? You won't just come to say hello to me just because you're back in Alessa, right? Well, I'm still happy to see you though」

「I need pots and tableware」

「Pots? Tableware?」

「Nn」

When we cooked out in the capital, we often had to give away the pots along with the dishes and the tableware, so even if we cooked new dishes, we did not have enough vessels to hold them.

She asked if Randell's general store have a few of it.

「How much do you need?」

「A lot」

It was a little difficult to explain, but she managed to tell him the size of the pot I wanted.

But, of course, Randell's store did not have everything we needed. However, thanks to Randell's help in contacting other stores, we were able to get the necessary amount.

Some of the shopkeepers even went to the trouble of carrying the tableware and other items on a cart. I guess it was a good thing that we paid generously without haggling.

In addition, there were even people from the Lucille Commerce Association among them. It was a large business association that we had dealt with in Barbra. We heard that they also have a small branch in Alessa. It seems they had branch office on every major city and town in the Kranzel Kingdom.

『Well, now that we have the ingredients and tools, let's go outside the town and cook』

「Nn」

In the past, I had to borrow an inn's kitchen to do any cooking, but now I could handle it with my magic. In fact, I don't have to worry about doing it if it's outside the town.

I can't use magic and cook in the Forest of Exhaustion.

When it comes to that, I will be fine if I cook just right before the Forest of Exhaustion right?

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-481.html>



# **Chapter 482: It's Somehow Related**

## Chapter 482: It's Somehow Related

『Aah, do it like this』

「Nn?」

『How is it? Can you do it?』

「Like this?」

『Yes yes. That's the correct lenght』

「Okay」

We were now cooking on the plains just right before the Forest of Exhaustion. I don't know if we'll have time to cook after we entered the Plains of the Demon Wolf.

In an improvised hut as a kitchen I made with earth magic. I used fire magic, water magic, and wind magic to mass produce food.

Fran is also helping out. I don't mind with her helping, but for some reason, Fran's seems to be motivated. No, maybe she just wants to get to the Plains of the Demon Wolf as quickly as possible by helping me.

As I continued to cook in the hut, there was a knock at the entrance of the hut.

『I wonder who is it? Someone brave enough to come near this place』

Well, there were signs of adventurers wandering around the area several times. However, a stone-built hut that suddenly appeared on the plains was too suspicious. In the end, we ignored it.

If it tried to get closer, it will notice Urushi lying in front of the door. Even if he was wearing a follower's tag, he was still a powerful beast, they would

run away after seeing him if they just wanted to rob us. But, if they tried to use force, Urushi as a watchdog will get rid of it.

But the fact that it was knocking normally meant that it had somehow managed to befriend Urushi. There was no sign of a fight, so maybe they knew each other?

『From the sign, it's just one person, but...Its magic power is quite high. It was not a novice adventurer huh. Who is it i wonder?』

「I'll check it out」

『Yeah, I leave it to you』

Fran sprinted over to the door. Even though it was an improvised hut made with magic, it had a door. Well, it was just a stone cut to look like a door. With Fran's strength, she can open-or perhaps, shift it.

I hadn't expected to really use that door, I had planned to finish cooking in a couple of hours and make it disappear with earth magic.

I told Urushi to turn them away unless it was an emergency. The exception to this is when an adventurer or traveller is being chased by a magical beast.

But would the owner of this sign ever be in danger around this area? It seem to be strong enough to get out of here.

『Fran, how was it?』

「Nn. It's Alistair」

『Huh? Alistair? You said?』

「Nn. Alistair」

『Ummm...Let her in for the time being』

I'm almost done with the cooking. The only thing left to do is to wash the dishes, but that can be done later.

It was really Alistair, a divine level blacksmith, who led by Fran into the hut.

「Hello Master. Long time no see」

『It's really Alistair huh. What are you doing here? I thought you were in the Belios Kingdom』

「It was supposed to be.....I sensed a battle between two divine swords. I couldn't stay there any longer」

『Aah. Come to think of it, Alistair can detect the whereabouts of a divine sword to some extent huh』

That's probably why she knew I was here.

「Once it's in a released state, I can feel it from quite a distance. I can feel the reaction coming from the royal capital of the Kranzel Kingdom」

Belios Kingdom was a country in the northeast. Certainly, if she really aims for the royal capital from there, Alessa would be a good place to pass through.

『So, you're saying you're on your way to find out about the divine sword?』

「That's what I'm talking about. Hey, Master, do you have any information for me?」

『I don't know really know much about it, but I got caught up in it and almost died. Or, should I say I'm about to break huh?』

「What? Can you tell me more about it?」

Hmm. Well, it's about the divine sword. I think it's best to share some information with Alistair. She's kind of has a relation to it right.

『Okay. I'll tell you everything I know』

「That's helpful」

That's how I told Alistair about Fran's adventures, from her arrival in the capital to her departure.

「.....」

『Alistair, what's wrong?』

「No, I'm well aware of Fran's exploits, but the important part of the story is about the divine sword...」

『Oops, sorry』

About halfway through, I got overly enthusiastic and started talking more about Fran. I told her again what I knew about the Fanatics and the fierce battle that followed after Ashwrath showed up.

「Fanatics huh...I never thought it would be still alive after being destroyed」

『It looks like it was half destroyed, and not at its full potential』

「Anyway, did the Fanatics talk? As far as I know, that divine sword doesn't have such a function, but...」

『I think, it was a collection of various human thoughts integrated into the Fanatics』

「I see」

Just like that, we exchanged some information.

「So, Fanatics have been completely destroyed huh」

『Yeah, Umm, sorry.....』

I know that Alistair has strong feelings about a divine sword. I wonder how she would react if I destroyed it.....However, there is surprisingly no grief

on her face.

「...No. Fanatics that have become nothing but spreading disasters must be destroyed. Besides, Master is one of the discarded divine swords. I won't blame you」

She looks a little sad, but she also seems to be convinced. As for the Fanatics, who have become an entity that maliciously manipulates even their own wielder and spreading chaos, I guess she understand that we have no choice but to destroy it.

『When I destroyed the Fanatics, I absorbed their power through cannibalism.....From Alistair's point of view, is there a change on me?』

「Hmm? Changes? In Master's case, I'll have to analyze you carefully to be sure」

『Ahh. No, but we can't do it right now. Sorry』

「Are you in a hurry?」

『Well, a little』

I'm going to find out a lot of my secrets after this, but I'm not sure how much I'm allowed to tell Alistair.

I feel like I could tell her everything, but I'm not quite sure what he's dealing with.....If it has something to do with God, would I be allowed to divulge the secret to Alistair?

He hasn't told me not to talk about it, but won't it backfire and cause trouble for Alistair? The other party is God. I don't even know what kind of logic or thinking they have.

『Actually, there's a place I have to go after this. There, maybe you can find out a little bit about me』

「What? Are you sure? Come to think of it, this place is close to the Plains of the Demon Wolf huh」

『Yeah』

「Ugh. If it weren't for the divine sword thing, I'd go with you too.....I can't even ignore the whole pseudo fanatic sword thing」

Apparently, for a divine level blacksmith, a pseudo fanatic sword is a problem that cannot be neglected. Come to think of it, I've got a broken pseudo fanatic sword. I think I'll give this to Alistair.

『This is a pseudo fanatic sword』

「Wha! You have it huh!」

『But, I think, it already lost its ability huh?』

「Umm, still, this is.....」

Alistair did a quick analysis and then sighed.

「Haah. It's no good. I don't know if the loss of its ability was a result of the destruction or the disappearance of the main body. If there's some kind of collective consciousness of the Fanatics left, there's might be a chance for it to react」

I honestly never thought about that. I thought we'd just need to defeat the Fanatics main body and all will be done.....So there's a possible that the pseudo-fanatic sword could remain act independently huh?

「I still wanted more information after all」

『I see...Speaking of which, the blacksmith who was manipulated by the Fanatics into helping it make the pseudo-fanatic sword also wanted to see Alistair』

「Hou?」

『It's Gallus, the honorary blacksmith of Kranzel Kingdom. Do you know him?』

「Of course. His ability is said to be close to a divine level blacksmith」

『I'm sure he'll be pleased to meet you, so please talk to him. Just give him Fran's and my name and I'm sure he'll meet you』

「Understood. Could it be, he knows about master's true identity?」

Oh yea, I haven't told her about it.

『Yeah. I'm indebted to him. He's the blacksmith who made my scabbard and Fran's armor』

「I see! Oh, by the way, you said her armor was made by a blacksmith named Gallus right! I'll have to apologize for taking the liberty of altering his work」

『Well, give him my regards when you meet him』

「Understood」

Gallus's request to introduce him to Alistair was apparently accomplished sooner than expected. I hope he doesn't shocked when a divine level blacksmith suddenly comes to see him.

「Oh right. Fran is an adventurer, right?」

「Can you get in contact with any B ranker or higher?」

「Nn? Why?」

「Actually, I have a small request. It's a very simple request, but it will be well compensated. I'll also vouch for the client's identity」

『It's a simple request, but you need adventurers of B rank or higher?』

「Well, you see. The content is easy, but the rest of it can be difficult. An adventurer with a high rank but a troublesome personality would only be a problem. So, I was wondering if Fran could introduce me to someone who might be a good match」



I see. But an introduction, or whatever it's called is--

「I'm a B ranker」

「What? You used to be a rank C, right?」

「Nn. Ranked up in the royal capital」

「I see! Hey, what do you think? Would you accept my request?」

「Umm...?」

「No good huh?」

「I'm going to train in the Plains of the Demon Wolf. In the meantime, I don't have time to take on unnecessary requests」

It's not the same as doing a little bit of work for Alessa.

「It doesn't have to be right away, you know. I mean, my client wants me to bring someone back within five years」

『Five years? That's a very long time』

「Just think of it as a lax request」

Alistair explains the nature of the request, but I don't think it's suitable for Fran.

『Becoming an opponent for a mock battle in the Academy of magic?』

「Yeah. Your opponent is still a child——Well, some of them are probably older than Fran, but they're not too strong」

If it's like that, i guess it's fine then. On the other hand, if they're incredibly strong, that's fine too, and Fran will be happy. But it's not the same as training an adventurer like a Spartan, is it? I don't think Fran can handle it.

「It's okay to overdo it a little. In fact, it's a good experience to be beat them to a pulp. Well, you don't have to answer now. You can do it when you feel like it」

「Okay」

We should think about it when we done with our training huh.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-482.html>

# Chapter 483: A Walk in the Forest of Exhaustion

After parting ways with Alistair. We went to the Forest of Exhaustion.

I was a little nervous going in, but that was about it. Apparently, I was less traumatized by this forest than I thought I was. Well, maybe it was because it was also the place where I met Fran.

『How is it, Fran?』

「Nnn...Feels weird」

Although it can't absorb magical power in our body, but we can recover our magical power in here. In addition, skills such as presence detection doesn't work well.

It also feels different from before, and it feel strange. When she met me in here, she couldn't control her magic power yet. So, she must not have been able to sense the abnormalities in this forest before.

『It would be difficult to use our magic and skill in this Forest of Exhaustion. Be careful』

「Nn」

『How about you, Urushi?』

「woof...」

Urushi, who was currently walking slowly in her original huge size, let out a pitiful whine.

In Urushi's case, it must have been more of a burden on his body than Fran. He unconsciously uses magic power on his own body for his daily life, but now he has to do it manually.

First of all, he can't use his body change and shadow diving skills well. He can barely activate the body change, but he can't seem to maintain it for long periods of time, and he can't seem to adjust his size properly.

In addition, it seemed that he had unconsciously strengthened his body with magic power to support his large body, but since he could not use it, he could not control his huge body well.

『It didn't drain magical power in me and Fran's body though.....』

In Urushi's case, it seems that his magic power is constantly being drained. Not only is he unable to activate his abilities to strengthen his body, but he is constantly losing his magic power. If I hadn't supplied him with magic power, he would have been unable to move long ago.

Maybe there is a part of us that we don't understand were unconsciously using magic, and the cycle of that magic being drained is repeating.

It seems that Urushi himself cannot stop it even if he tells it to stop. I guess it's like skin respiration in humans, a kind of life activity that takes place on its own.

「woof...」

『Come on, we're almost reached the end of this forest—Fran』

「Nn!」

Even if we can't use presence detection, we could clearly tell by the rustling sound. There was something big approaching us.

「Ghroaaa!」

A bear with two heads jumped out of the bushes.

『Twin-headed Bear huh』

「I remember this one」

『Oh, really?』

「Nn. The first beast I defeated using Master」

As expected of Fran, she remembered it huh. Well, it was killed instantly by Urushi in front of the motivated Fran though.

No matter how weak it is, their status is different. There was no way that Urushi could lose. However, looking at the bear's vitality, I guess lower level magical beasts that can live without relying on magic power are better suited for activities in the Forest of Exhaustion.

「Woof—!」

Urushi puts his foot on the twin-headed bear, which is knocked down by a blow from his paw, and looks triumphant. However, Fran's face is dissatisfied as she watches.

「Guh...」

「woof?」

「Even though I was going to take it down myself...」

「Wo-woof...」

Well, it was a nostalgic opponent huh? Fran, who had intended to take down the twin-headed bear she hadn't seen in a long time, puffed out her cheeks when her prey was snatched from her.

Fran glares at Urushi with jealous eyes as he hurriedly slips away.

「Woof...」

「Hmph」

「Kyain!」

「...Next one is for me」

「Woof!」

Fran was still upset, but she seemed to have forgiven him by pulling his tail.

『Just bear with it for now』

「Nn」

『Yosh. We're good to go then』

I put the bear away in my dimensional storage. It is still possible to activate it for a moment in this Forest of Exhaustion. However, the effect of the magic absorption phenomenon is stronger when the bear is lying on the ground, so I had it lifted a little. No, it can be stored even while it lying on the ground, but that would unnecessarily consume more magic power.

『But then again, normally, magic beast in this area won't attack us』

「What does it mean?」

『You know, with Urushi's smell and presence around us, no small fry magic beat would come near us』

They would rather run away. However, we already had several battles in this Forest of Exhaustion. We had encountered the Twin Headed Bear we had just defeated, twice with goblins, and once with a kobold.

「Nnn...They don't know how strong their opponent is?」

『That was—possible huh』

Because they can't use skills like presence detection, they can't gauge the strength of their opponent. However, not all of the magic beast that attacked us had those skills.

No, even if they don't have any skills, can they have similar abilities if they have a magic stone? I've heard that even if they don't have magical power manipulation or energy manipulation skills, they can still use magic and other magic technique thanks to the magic stones that take the care of those skills.

If that was the case, it would not be surprising if they had abilities similar to skills such as presence and magic detection. They could tell where their opponent was, but they might not be able to measure its strength.

『Also, it seems magic beast that live in this Forest of Exhaustion are only small fry, so their ability to sense danger has been greatly weakened』

「I see」

This might be a bit of a hassle to set up a tent in this Forest of Exhaustion. We have to be constantly on the lookout for attacks by magic beasts.

Well, it's not like we're going to stay in this Forest of Exhaustion for a long time. The outer perimeter of the Plains of the Demon Wolf is inhabited by higher level magic beast.

It is said that there have been confirmed cases of magic beast with a threat level of A. In such cases, there is no choice but to flee. In any case, a threat level of A is the same level as that Lich. Even if we had become stronger, we couldn't say that we could beat him. It was unlikely, but if there were a large number of magical beasts of that level, we would not be able to enter the Plains of the Demon Wolf without a fight.

『Well, lets leave it until we reached the Plains of the Demon Wolf. Come on, we're gonna get out of here』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

We are going to the nostalgic Plains of the Demon Wolf. Well then, I wonder what its current situation is?

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-483.html>



# Chapter 484: Smoke Beast

『Fuhahaha! It's the plains! I came back!』

「？」

『Sorry, don't mind it. More importantly, can you feel the presence around us?』

「...Is something's wrong?」

After passing through the Forest of Exhaustion, we had stepped about a dozen meters into the Plains of the Demon Wolf. In terms of location, it would be in the northeast area of the Plains of the Demon Wolf.

There is definitely something out there. I know that, but I couldn't find out the exact location of the presence. There was a tense feeling around me, and the flow of magic was somewhat unnatural.

『How about you, Urushi?』

「woof...」

『You can't feel it too huh』

Does it have stealth level that can even fool Urushi's noses, or is it a type of magic beast that has no scent at all?

「Stay alert, let's go」

『Yeah』

「Woof!」

We proceeded like that for a few minutes, using our exploration skills to the fullest. Well, we didn't gain much distance. Would it have been quicker to go through it at full speed rather than proceed with caution huh?

But apparently, it's not that easy.

「Master!」

「Woof!」

Fran and Urushi jumped up at once. A moment later, I finally realize.

『From below huh!』

After all, the less I'm in contact with the ground, the weaker my ability to detect what's underneath. How many times already, did I lose to Fran and Urushi huh.

「Smoke?」

『It could be poison gas. We need to get further away』

「Nn!」

What came up from the ground was a large amount of white smoke. I could tell that it had a lot of magical power.

And the smoke is coming towards us as if it had a will of its own.

『This smoke—I knew it! It's a higher species of magic beast from the Gust type』

Upon appraisal, the smoke itself was part of the magic beast. A threat level B magic beast, the Greater Venom Gust. In addition to being immune to physical attacks, it has high levels of stealth and regeneration. It also had high levels of magic absorption, life absorption, and stealth. (1)

It was a magic beast that will regenerate endlessly unless its smoke is completely extinguished or its magic stone is destroyed, Moreover, the

smoke also contains a deadly poison.

It doesn't have the ability to kill us with a single blow, but it's a nasty opponent that will continue to wear us down as long as it's attached to us.

Well, we have high poison resistance. If it was a weaker person that exposed to its deadly poison while having their life and magic power absorbed would be fatal.

Moreover, from what I saw, the smoke was quite extensive. Judging from the fact that it caught up with Fran, who was already quite far away from the ground without any problem, but it probably can't cover 100 meters area. Wouldn't it cover a small town with this? It was no mistake that this being was ranked as a threat level B that could even destroy a country.

『Fran! Urushi! Find its magic stone!』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

I try to hit the smoke with magic. I tried thunder magic, flame magic, and wind magic, but I think flame magic is the most effective because it can attack on its surface.

Also, magic and life steal skills are effective. I could see the smoke that had lost its power dissipate into thin air. However, it would soon be replenished by the smoke that kept coming up from the ground.

『How was it? Did you find out where its magic stone is?』

「I don't know」

「woof...」

It seems, magical power from its smoke had distracted them, making it impossible to examine its surrounding in detail.

『I'm pretty sure there's a magic stone under the ground though...』

「Then, why don't we blow the whole ground with magic?」

『You're right, there's no other choice huh』

「Nn!」

『Then, let's go! Haaaaaaa!』

「Muuuu!」

What we activated was an earth magic called Gravity Pressure. This is a technique that uses super gravity to crush a certain area, and we activated it in a way that covered the area where the main body of the Greater Venom Gust might be, lining it up without any gaps.

We can see large areas being crushed and compressed. It's a scene similar to Ashwrath's Gravity Blows, forcibly recreated by firing a series of magic. Well, this one is inferior in power and range.

「Did it works?」

『No good huh. The smoke's still going strong』

「Then, give it more!」

『Ou!』

We're going to compress the earth even wider and deeper. Not only that, we also bombarding it with flame and thunder magic is an added bonus.

However, the smoke still did not disappear.

『Tsk. Even after all of this huh——』

Kaboom!

「Kuh!」

『Uwoh!』

Immediately after, a tremendous impact shocked off Fran's body, which was still in the air. The moment I heard that sound, I immediately guarded Fran, so she wasn't injured, cause a direct hit would have caused serious damage.

I grabbed the mysterious object that was bouncing off my blade with telekinesis as soon as I could.

『A crystal. No, a scale huh?』

The scales were made of a transparent material like crystal. These crystal scales seemed to have the effect of reflecting magic power, making it quite difficult to detect its presence. If it hadn't been for its sounds coming at us, I wouldn't have noticed it.

While I was checking, I heard a series of wind noises. It seemed that it had launched a series of attack.

「Muh!」

But, if it wasn't a surprise attack, the covert nature of these scales would be halved. Fran was already able to deal with them. She knocked some of them away and blocked some with dimensional storage.

However, the enemy is too far away. I could tell that they were attacking us from the northwest, but I couldn't sense any sign of them or their magic. It seems that they are sniping at us from outside our search range.

「Master, Urushi. Let's go!」

『Okay!』

「Woof!」

Fran tried to get close to the mysterious sniper, but her opponent was not half-hearted. The more we move in the direction of the sniper, the greater the number of crystal scales and the more powerful they become.

In terms of power alone, each shot would be enough to instantly kill a D rank adventurer. Moreover, the smoke from the unexpectedly fast-moving

Gust was still persistently chasing us.

『Fran, at this rate, we'll have to deal with both the Gust and the mysterious attacker!』

「.....Muh. What should we do then?」

『We can either shake them off by teleporting to the Forest of Exhaustion. But, if we simply shake them off, there's a chance that the gust will keep coming after us』

「.....Understood. Let's return back to the Forest of Exhaustion」

Fran looked frustrated, but she immediately accepted my suggestion and began to leave from the area. I think she understands that she is in a troublesome situation.

『I knew this wasn't going to be easy huh』

「...Nn」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-484.html>

# Chapter 485: Invisible Sniper

We escaped from the troublesome magic beast and retreated to the Forest of Exhaustion; we were discussing countermeasures as we moved.

『As expected, that Ghast won't follow us to this Forest of Exhaustion』

「Nn」

Apparently, due to its smoke body structure that uses magic power to move, it cannot live in the forest of exhaustion. The being who sniped us with the crystal scales didn't attack us in the forest of exhaustion either. No, it might just be that it can't aim at us because it can't use its magic to search for us in here.

「What should we do?」

『We can bypass the area where the ghast live, and go through it all at once』

The more we go to the center of the Plains of the Demon Wolf, the weaker the enemies become. The reason for this was not clarified even in the archives of the Adventurer's Guild yet.

There was also a theory stated that Fenrir's magical power was affecting it, but that seems to be just a speculation without any basis.

The important thing to remember is that this phenomenon does exist. After all, I've experienced it first-hand.

『In other words, if we go through them all at once, the higher level magic beast won't follow us』

In fact, I gradually conquered the Plains of the Demon Wolf by running back to the center of it when I was in trouble.

But it was also a strategy that only I could do because I was a sword. I was an inorganic material that is highly concealable and does not stimulate the appetite of magic beast. To put it bluntly, I was not worth for the magic beast to chase after.

But what about Fran and Urushi? she has soft flesh with high magical power. Wouldn't they seem like easy prey for a magic beast? There was even a possibility that they would come after her beyond my expected habitat area.

Nevertheless, there is a danger in daring to defeat a powerful magical beast. After fighting with the ghaist for that small amount of time, it has exhausted us a little.

If we want to be on the safe side, we should start by gather information on the magic beast camped around the periphery of the plain, and either kill the ones we think are the easiest to deal with, or dodge them and force to enter to the center of the plain.

『What should we do huh?』

「....For now, the first priority is to get to the center of the Plains of the Demon Wolf. Training comes after that」

『In other words?』

「Take the safest way and hurry up」

『Ooh? You think so?』

「Nn」

I was a little impressed. I mean, it's Fran, you know? Fran is a girl who love fighting isn't she? But in the face of a strong enemy, she would avoid fighting to achieve her goal.



I'm loved, aren't I? Well, I guess that's not all, Fran is also growing up. Come to think of it, she didn't even doze off in the library. Well, she did get bored and zoned out. But, there's a big difference between dozing off and almost dozing off.

「Let's confirm its identity first」

『Understood』

What Fran is referring to are the crystal scales. No, I used the word "crystal" because of its transparent appearance, but the hardness of the scales is far greater than that of a crystal, so much so that Fran need to give more effort to break them.

『I agree with you. If it's a magic beast that's good at long-range attacks, it might not be so good at close combat』

It's the kind of magic beast that would fire a series of high-precision sniper shots from over a kilometer away. Its threat level must be high, but how strong would it be in close quarters combat?

We were moving to northwest, observing the Plains of the Demon Wolf from within the Forest of Exhaustion. And at a certain place, Urushi reacts to something.

「Grrrr!」

「Did you found something?」

「Woof!」

Urushi's nose twitched as he turned his sharp gaze to the plains of the demon wolf. As a wolf, he has a keen sense of smell, even if it cannot be enhanced by magic. It seemed that his nose had caught a target.

『Hmm....where?』

「Muh? I don't know」

To be honest, Fran and I had no idea where that magic beast was. However, Urushi is very confident.

「Urushi, take the lead」

「Woof!」

『Fran, be careful』

「Nn!」

It was just after we had set foot on the plains of the Demon Wolf, with Urushi as the lead.

Shudder!

「Kyain!」

「Urushi!」

Urushi shrieked and stopped on his tracks. It was definitely the sniper. But the way Urushi was looking right now, he could totally see the attack, right? And yet, he took a decent damage and.....No, if Urushi had ducked like that, there was a possibility that his huge body would have blindsided Fran and delayed his reaction. That's why he dared to use his body as a shield.

『Urushi! Good job! Aah, it broke your bones huh...』

「woof....」

While she casting a recovery spell on Urushi, whose torso was bleeding profusely, I gave her instructions.

『Fran, it will be dangerous if we hide right behind Urushi!』

「Nn!」

So, Fran dared to move diagonally behind Urushi, keeping her distance. This way, Urushi could avoid the attack without any problem, and Fran

could react.

After that, the attacks became fiercer, but Fran and the Urushi did not get hit. Fran had no problem without my help, and Urushi can dodged it skilfully.

As a result, although our progress was slowed down, we were pushing forward across the plain without taking any damage. However, no matter how far we advanced, we still could not capture the enemy. But, Urushi seems to be concerned of something.....

『Where it is.....』

「Nn.....」

And then Urushi stopped in his tracks. It seemed that there was a magic beast in his line of sight, but Fran and I had no idea what it was. The other side has also stopped attacking to prevent its whereabouts from being discovered.

However, the dark magic that Urushi had unleashed brought his opponent into view. As the veil of dark magic that Urushi used covered the entire area, an anomaly occurred about 20 meters away.

What to say about it, A heat haze? No, a mirror with a strange refractive index? Anyway, the scenery behind it started to distort, as if the space was distorted.

『I see, optical camouflage huh』

It seems that it had been refracting the light to assimilate its figure into its surroundings. However, the light was suddenly blocked by dark magic, and it must have been unable to adjust in time.

「A weird lizard?」

『A dinosaur clad in crystal?』

What I saw there was a 10-meter-long, four-legged magic beast. It resembled an Ankylosaurus, a dinosaur that I had seen in dinosaur picture books before I reincarnated. However, its scales were all translucent crystal.

Its stealth ability was incredible. After all, even at this distance, I can't clearly detect its magic power or its presence. On top of that, it can even use optical camouflage.

But I can clearly see it now, so I can appraise it!

『Invisible Death! It's a magic beast with threat level of B』

I guess the overall strength of magic beast is really on the rise huh!

# Chapter 486: Close Combat

The magic beast that had disguised itself with optical camouflage was a threat level B magic beast called Invisible Death. It was said that an army had once invaded its territory and annihilated without being able to find it.

Well, an ordinary soldier won't be able to handle sniper's shoot of that power from over a kilometer away.

Not only it has its high status, but it also has magic skills such as light magic, thunder magic, and fire magic.

In addition, the crystal-like outer shell that surrounds its body is a tricky thing, it seems to have the property of reflecting magic power. In addition to this, it has a wide variant of covert skills. And if it used its optical camouflage, it could be right in front of us without noticing it.

What I hate about this guy is that it can make a tactical decision, he's probably intelligent enough to stop attacking when we get closer to it.

In this world, the more powerful a being is, the more capable they are of sensing magic and presence with their skills. And they are used to it. The covert nature of Invisible Death will only be ineffective against such beings. Just like we didn't realize it until Urushi taught it to us.

When dealing with a strong being with a Urushi-level sense of smell, it would rather snipe us from a distance.

On the contrary, it is highly likely that it is not good at close combat. It seems to have high defense, but its movement seems to be slow.

「Ghruoooo!」

Urushi shoots dark magic at Invisible Death. However, it seems that the crystal is also resistant to magic. The huge jet-black spear easily dissipated on the surface of the crystal.

「Wruoooh!」

Invisible Death braced itself, probably realizing that its position had been discovered.

This is where the real battle begins.

「Master, use magic!」

『Ou!』

「Urushi attacks from behind!」

「Woof!」

Fran rushes in at once while giving instructions. She jumped back to the right in an attempt to attack.

Immediately after, the place where Fran had been caved in heavily.

『It used its tail huh!』

「Nn!」

The Invisible Death looks like an Ankylosaurus, but what i find the most similar was its head and tail.

Its tail had a weight like a hammer, and as far as I could tell, the blow would be quite powerful. And it's fast.

The attack, in which it swung its tail in succession, was incredibly fast, it was also very accurate. When we dove into the spider dungeon before, where Fran and Amanda had a mock battle, Amanda's whip handling might have been the same speed. Fran is desperately trying to avoid its tail.

Moreover, Invisible Death's attack was not limited to just swinging its tail.

It shoots sharp crystal scales that grow all over its body at Fran and Urushi. I don't know how it does it, but it seems to be able to shoot out all the scales it can. In addition, new crystal scales immediately grow in the marks where they were shot out.

「Haaaa!」

Kiiin!

Fran, who approached Invisible Death while dodging the scales, cut it down, but as expected, a serious attack is the only way to do any damage. Its ability to disrupt magic power is troublesome, although it is certainly hard. The power of attribute swords is weakened.

Fran braced herself for another attack, but then she heard a high-pitched sound as if a powerful dust collector was running at full power.

Kiinn——boom!

「Kuh!」

『I see! It was shooting from its tail huh!』

The scales that shot out from his entire body didn't seem as precise as when he was sniping, but the sniper scales were apparently specially made to shoot from its tail as a barrel. In addition to its exploding burst of magic power, it seems to use compressed air and thunderbolt magic as well. Furthermore, it also manipulated airflow to stabilize its trajectory.

I was wondering why he didn't just use his thunderbolt magic when he had the skill, but I guess it was only for sniping. The sniper scales were quite fast and powerful even at this close range. Furthermore, the Invisible Death that rushed forward tried to crush Fran with its foot.

Its movements are certainly not that fast, but because of its huge size, each step it takes is large enough, and its rushes are surprisingly quite fast.

「Wruoooh!」

「Guh!」

Who said this guy was bad at close combat! Good grief! Not only does it have two types of scales attacks, it also able to attacks directly with its tail. This guy might be even stronger in close combat.

『Haaa!』

If that's the case, we should keep our distance and use magic instead. Even taking into account the crystal scales' ability to disrupt magic, a very strong spell should be able to pass through.

I unleash the thunder magic "Thor's Hammer" and the flame magic "Flare Explode" in succession. Although the power is a little lower, the damage still seems to be able to pass through.

Some of the crystals were destroyed, and Invisible Death shout out a scream from its mouth. But it doesn't take much damage.

「Wruoooh!」

『Oh no!』

「Muh?」

I felt a strong convergence of magic power and immediately performed a short distance teleport. At the same time, a dazzling beam of light pierced the place where we had been.

It was an attack with light magic. Or rather, it looks like a laser beam already. The ground was heavily gouged by the impact and heat. Is light magic this strong?

But before I could even think about it, Invisible Death sensed where we were moving to and shot scales at us.



Fran was unable to dodge the scales that were shot at her immediately after she teleported, and I was only able to parry the scattered scales that exploded at close range. However, I managed to protect her vitals. She was hit in the arm and leg several times.

「Kuh!」

『Greater Heal!』

Fran has suffered not a few injuries. But it's better than being hit by that light magic.

(Master, thanks for saving me)

『We'll have to dodge that light magic first, okay? Stay on guard after teleporting』

(Okay)

The troublesome parts are not only the speed of its activation, but also its attack speed. In fact, I don't think I could react after being shot. The only way was to detect the prior convergence of magic power as much as possible.

「Master, use magic! This time, we're going to defeat it!」

『Understood!』

We unleashed the Thor's Hammer and Flare Explode again. This time, however, we have prepared multiple activations. Urushi, who had been waiting for another chance, unleashed his dark magic to match ours.

A large explosion enveloped Invisible Death's body, causing even more damage than before. More than half of the crystal shell that covered its back fell off, and smoke rose from its body.

「Wruooooh!」

「Break in! Finishing blow!」

『Ou!』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-486.html>

# Chapter 487: Fierce Battle Against the Magic Beast

Invisible Death was badly injured by our magic, but even we didn't know what it would do next.

「Muh? What?」

『Not only it has an Ankylosaurus-like body part, but also an Armadillo-like body part too huh!』

To my surprise, it shrunk and curled up as if it was holding its head and limbs. Moreover, the crystal scales regenerated and enlarged all at once, as if a huge lump of crystal had been placed on the ground.

Moreover, I can see magical power growing inside its body. It must be a form of defensive fortification while preparing for an attack.

「...What should we do?」

『Let's just throw some magic at it for now. Just be careful with its counter attack』

「Understood. I'll leave the magic to Master」

The opponent had stopped moving. It's too dumb to follow suit and just watch.

I cast my magic once again.

However, Invisible Death didn't just simply curl up its body. It seemed to have increased its defense against magic, and this time neither the Thor's

Hammer nor the Flare Explode could damage it.

Moreover, it also unleashes its light magic and crystal scale attack almost simultaneously with our attack. I see, it is difficult for any human or magic beast to use magic while moving at high speed huh. It's a counter strategy to lure the opponent into a big move and exploit the gap.

Well, it's not a problem for us. Because Fran can move fast enough to dodge the attack and I can unleash my magic at the same time.

『We're going again!』

「Nn」

『I don't want to call this one a Kanna Kamui after what I saw before.....』

The most powerful technique I can use is Kanna Kamui. It's just like a replica compared to Velmeria's Kanna Kamui that I saw in the royal capital though, but it's still the best spell I can use right now.

White lightning rained down and struck Invisible Death. It doesn't seem to be able to withstand a technique of this power huh. Invisible Death's defensive posture was forcibly broken by the crushing lightning strike, and it was turned over by the huge explosion that followed.

「Bumoooh!」

「Now!」

「Woof!」

Its stance had collapsed, and nearly half of the crystal covering its body had been shattered. Although the damage was surprisingly small for such a direct hit from the magic, much of the armor protecting its body had been lost.

「Grrrruo!」

Urushi launches an attack.

He dared to bark loudly, attracting Invisible Death's attention. The Invisible Death's consciousness was completely pulled away by Urushi, who wandered around in front of him, changing sizes in vain. His target was the place where the crystal scales had been removed by Kanna Kamui. Smaller scales have already begun to grow like a thin skin, but it's better than the other places.

Taking advantage of the chance, Fran charged in from the side. She unleashed the Sword Saint Skill: Spiral Fang. It is a powerful thrusting technique with added rotation.

My sword blade pierced through the crystal scales and the hard-shell underneath, gouging the body of the Invisible Death deeply. Due to the nature of the crystal scales, I couldn't locate its magic stone, so it wasn't a one-hit kill, but the life force of the giant beast was greatly reduced.

『Haaaa!』

「A bonus!」

We also unleashed flame magic in that state. The explosion of flames engulfed us, but we were able to block it with a barrier.

「Vumoooh...!」

Invisible Death, whose body had been pierced with a deep hole, let out a weak moan. Although the internal organs had not yet been reached, pale bones that seemed to be its spine were exposed

Even so, crystal scales immediately sprouting from around the wound, trying to seal the area. These scales are really troublesome.

「Awooooof!」

「Urushi?」

『Wha?』

Urushi took over for Fran, who had once distanced herself before being swallowed by the regenerating crystal. But the way he did it surprised both me and Fran.

「Ghrooaaaa!」

What a surprise, he jumped into the body of the Invisible Death in his small size. As the crystal scales regenerated, he was trapped inside, but he didn't care about that.

Within the craters in the giant beast's body, he would eat muscle fibers, flesh, and bones, and dig deeper.

「Bhuoooooooooooooh!」

The giant beast, which had endured even a direct hit from Kanna Kamui with a short grunt, was writhing around, thrashing its limbs. Then it let out a roar that sounded like a scream as if it was crying out.

Being devoured from the inside must be a painful experience that it never imagines.

「It's full of opening」

『Ou! We're gonna stop this thing!』

I aimed for the head. Thanks to Urushi, Invisible Death had left a huge opening between us, and I was going to use the Sword King technique to stop him at once but——

「Bhuoooooooooooooh!」

I could feel magic power growing inside Invisible Death's body. The crystals all over its body began to emit a white light.

『It looks dangerous! Let's take some distance first!』

「Nn!」

『Urushi.....are you okay?』

As we escaped into the sky by teleporting, I saw a tremendous light springing up below us. A dome of light was being created around the Invisible Death. Just looking at the way the ground around the dome was turning into glass-like substance by the high heat. (vitrification)

Immediately afterwards, the dome swelled and enveloped a large area. That wasn't all. The giant dome popped, and causing a huge explosion.

The tremendous impact and the stormy wind raised a cloud of dust and reaped the grass, flowers, and shrubs near the hypocenter. The petals of the white flowers that had been growing in clusters at a considerable distance were all flown up at once, creating a beautiful scene that did not belong in the middle of a battle.

「.....Gururu...」

「Urushi! I'm coming!」

After Invisible Death's attack was over, there's Urushi's figure on the ground, he collapsed and smoke was billowing from his whole body. His entire body was burned to a crisp, his hair crumbling into tatters and his flesh gouged out in places. He must have been hit hard by the heat and the explosion.

At the same time, Invisible Death had been badly wounded. It seems that in order to remove Urushi from its body, it had involved itself in the attack. It was probably its last resort, as it was highly resistant to magic.

We rushed over to Urushi in a panic, only to be met with a follow-up attack. But it's not the Invisible Death.

「Get off!」

「 「 「Ice Javelin」 」 」

A large number of ice spears rained down on Fran and Urushi.

「Tsk!」

Fran quickly activated her barrier to the fullest extent and took a stand to protect Urushi. She doesn't care if she gets hit herself, she only takes care the magic in the trajectory that will hit Urushi.

『I'll use recovery on you both!』

「...Guh...Who is it?」

「——What a tasty looking little girl.....」

『It's a bunch of undead huh! The Wight King!』 (1)

It was a threat level B magic beast, the Wight King. It seemed to have attacked us in an attempt to catch us. I wondered how it had gotten so close, but since it also possessed space-time magic. It seems to have approached us by simply teleporting here.

The Wight King is a magic beast that will summons countless weak low-grade undead. However, the Wight King that attacked Fran had only six underlings with him.

It's a magic beast with a threat level of C: four Wight High Wizards and two Wight Imperial Guards instead.

Apparently, they are choosing quality over quantity. I guess there is such a type of a Wight King huh.

「I've been setting up a net here in the plains to detect any signs of teleportation.....What an excellent prey!」

「Bhuoooh!」

Invisible Death is still alive and well. In fact, if left unchecked, it will recover in no time at all.

「Damn it...」



「woof...」

After sealing their wounds with magic, Fran and Urushi stand up, looking worn out. Should we really continue fighting like this?

「Master! That is!」

『Hmm?』

Suddenly, Fran shouted sharply.

『Oioi, even to a place like this.....It's still following us huh?』

As we looked, we saw a white smoke figure approaching us, wriggling in the sky.

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-487.html>

# Chapter 488: Super Inazu ○ Kick

Beyond our line of sight, there's a white smoke figure approaching us while wriggling in the sky. It was the Greater Venom Ghast.

In addition to the Wight King, Invisible Death was still alive.

We were surrounded by three magic beasts with a threat level of B.

One of the criteria to raise into a rank A, adventurers should have been to be able to defeat one magic beast with a threat level of B in solo. In other words, in front of us, there were three opponents that Amanda and Forrond would have to fight one-on-one with all their might in front of us.

『This is bad』

Shall we continue to fight? Invisible Death is still pretty banged up, but Ghast is troublesome too but it's not very aggressive. It's not impossible for us to fight them all though.....

(Master, where's the magic stone of that smoke?)

『I can't detect it! How about you guys?』

(No good)

(Woof...)

Does that mean, its magic stone is hidden somewhere around, so it can still reach this far? Or does it hide its magic stone in its smoke so we can't detect it?

「Then, what about the magic stone of the undead?」

『I can't find it either!』

It is said that a magic beast with a threat level of B has the ability to hide the location of its magic stone. I couldn't even detect the magic stone of The Wight King and its underling. Well, this guy is a sorcerer type, and it's probably very good at hiding its magic power.

「Icicle Burst!」

「 「Icicle Burst!」 」 」

「Haaa!」

『They won't give us time to think huh!』

I quickly used fire magic to block it, but it seemed, they won't give us any time to think.

「Master! Above!」

『I see, okay』

「Nn!」

I did as Fran instructed and ascended at once with teleport. After that, I used the telekinetic air ride to gain even more altitude.

『How is it?』

「That smoke will follow us」

『But, the Wights won't be able to follow us though!』

「Dodging huge beast is easier」

Invisible Death's attacks seem to be the easiest to dodge at mid-range. The distance is just enough for us to detect its magic when it preparing an attack, and there is enough room for us to dodge it. If we are too close, we

won't have enough room to move, however, if we are too far away, we won't be able to detect it.

And it seems, the wights' does not have the ability to fly and their magic can not reach this altitude. We must have already climbed more than 100 meters. But somehow, their attack can still reach us, but as expected, it's difficult to aim accurately at an opponent at this height.

We can't defeat the ghast, but we can ignore it for a little while. Besides, the wights and a ghast should be incompatible with each other. The undead wouldn't be able to maintain their existence if their magic is absorbed.

In fact, the Wight Kings are making a move to avoid the white smoke.

If that was the case, we might be able to deal with the Invisible Death while the ghast and the wights were restraining each other.

「Woof woof!」

『Urushi? What's wrong?』

While dodging their attacks, Urushi tries to tell us something.

「Gurruu!」

「Maybe, you've figured out where that huge beast's magic stone is?」

「Woof!」

『I see!』

It seems that he had not just simply dealt damage to Invisible Death when he invaded its body but had also identified the location of its magic stone.

「Master, let's only kill the big one here」

『.....Understood』

I think it's better to start all over again, but if Fran is willing, I'll just go along with her.

「Don't use the Sword God Transformation」

『Wha?』

「Using the sword god transformation here would only be a temporary solution. We must win without using it. What should we do?」

In Fran's own way, she thought that she had to reduce the exhaustion in order to fight through another battle. However, she didn't know how to defeat the Invisible Death without using the Sword God Transformation.

『Understood. Then, how about——』

「I see——」

I explained the plan I had come up with to Fran. It was quite difficult, but Fran seemed to be on board with me.

『You think you can do it?』

「I'll do it!」

『Urushi, attack the location of its magic stone and tell us where it is. We'll attack there』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

First, Urushi shoots a spear of dark magic while descending at full speed. This was not to deal damage to it, but to show Fran and me the location of its magic stone. I see, it's a little bit closer to the tail than the center huh. That's where the crystal is thickest.

「Grrrr!」

Urushi then ran straight towards the Wight King. This is a way to keep them in check and to attract their attention. The Wight King was successfully attracted to Urushi, who used a lot of shadow dive and evasive maneuvers.

「Let's go」

『Ou!』

And then, Fran and I start to act secretly.

『First, let's stop its movement!』

「Nn」

My earth magic made a hole under the Invisible Death's limbs, blocking its movement. That's pretty quick huh. In order for us to carry out our plan, we have to stop it from moving.

All of Invisible Death's limbs are firmly stuck into the ground, and I then tightened it up to make it unable to move for a moment.

「Bumoooh?」

「HAAAAAAAAA!」

Fran's Kanna Kamui rained down into it. A thick pillar of lightning stripped away the crystal of Invisible Death. It was less powerful than my Kanna Kamui, but it succeeded in stripping the crystal as we planned.

Fran took charge of the skill so that I could focus on my next attack.

『Good one, Fran!』

I used a full throttle of telekinetic catapult combined with wind magic, flame magic, and even thunder magic to create magnetic manipulation.

I've been using magnetic force to accelerate objects for a long time. Even when we were trying to stop the Fanatics in the royal capital, we used it as a

combination. But it wasn't that big of a deal compared to the acceleration with flame magic and wind magic.

But since I got a lot of hints from Invisible Death. I used the method of coiling magnetic manipulation around the long barrel that I made by telekinesis, imitating Invisible Death. I also succeeded in gaining more acceleration than ever before by doing this. Well, it's a bit more difficult to control, and the wear is doubled.

『Doryaaaa!』

Immediately after the launch, my sword blade pierced deeply into the shell of the Invisible Death, whose scales had been destroyed by Fran. However, I still couldn't penetrate it.

「Bumooohoooh!」

『Fraaan!』

「Nn!」

But I have expected this. Rather, this is the point of the plan.

Fran ran down from the sky at full speed to the Invisible Death, who was concentrating its magic power to release light magic to eliminate us.

Using all the magic she had to use Brilliant Lightning Rush, and taking advantage of her falling speed, she had become so fast that it was as if Fran herself had turned into lightning.

At the end of her trajectory, there's me. To be precise, it's me, whose handle has been transformed into a tray-like shapeshifting.

「HAAAAAAAAA!」

Fran, who was running down from the sky at super high speed, did not kill any of her momentum and slammed a kick into me as if she was going to land on my handle.

「Bumoooooooooh!」

I was already stuck into Invisible Death's body, but Fran's Super Inazu ○ Kick gave me an impact from directly above and pushed me further into its body.

「Bumoooh!」

「Guuh!」

The sound of Fran's leg bones cracking and the sound of the giant beast's shell cracking, also with the sound of my hilt and sword blade shattering combined to create a deafening dissonance.

That powerful kick reduced all of my endurance at once. But I didn't care about it and extended my blade further by transforming it. Then I could clearly feel its magic stone.

「Guh...!」

The impact was so great that Fran's leg was bent in the wrong direction. My endurance is also at a dangerous level.

『But, we did it!』

「Bu...mooh...」

An unprecedented sense of satisfaction. The amount of magic power flowing into me was at another level compared to what I've ever experienced in the past. It even surpassed the demon we had defeated long ago. Even though it was a magic beast with the same threat level of B, this one was probably superior huh.

It seems that Fran and Urushi's levels have also increased. However, there was no time to check it now.

I immediately stowed the corpse of Invisible Death and went straight back to Fran.



『Let's leave this place for now!』

「Nn...」

「Woof!」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-488.html>

# Chapter 489: Even the Sky is Absorbing!

Once we escaped into the sky, we felt the pressure from the Wight King weakened. It seems that it is difficult to attack us when we are flying.

No, Wight King's magic was quite accurate. Moreover, it has a good eyesight. However, the Wight High Wizards under his command did not have that level of ability.

「Keep going up」

『Okay』

「Woof!」

We continued to gain altitude as Fran had instructed. We must have already climbed more than 100 meters.

『Now if we can just shake off the ghost——Oh?』

「It run away?」

「Woof!」

The Greater Venom Ghist that had been following us suddenly stopped moving.

Apparently, it has reached its limit huh?

『We should have went up to the sky from the start huh』

「Nn」

「Ofu」

When I thought "Shall we continue to gain a little more altitude and head to the center"

「Eh?」

『Th-this is...! Dangerous!』

「Wo-woof!」

We suddenly lose our balance and begin to lose altitude rapidly like a paper airplane that has lost its buoyancy, and Fran is wobbling because of it.

Urushi is in even more danger. He moves his feet repeatedly to activate his aerial jumps, but he can't step on the sky and falls all at once.

The way he flapped his legs for a moment and then fell down was like a scene from a gag anime. However, this is not a gag, and it is very dangerous.

Fran tried to chase him with an aerial jump, but it still didn't work.

「Muh」

『Wha, Fran!』

Urushi and Fran fall with such force that I can even hear the whooshing sound.

I panicked and tried to use teleport, but it didn't work either.

I felt as if I were in the forest of exhaustion. No, I think I am actually experiencing the same phenomenon as in the forest of exhaustion right now.

『So it was because of this altitude that caused that ghastr to run away huh!』

Perhaps the higher up we go, the more the magic absorption phenomenon hits us.

As if to confirm this speculation, when we have fell to a certain height, I was able to activate telekinesis and other functions, although they were somewhat required more power.

Fran and Urushi are also using the aerial jump again to regain their balance.

『Fran, are you okay?』

「Nn! But that smoke is coming once again!」

「Garuu!」

『Let's rise our altitude again!』

「Eh? but.....」

『We have to find its edge!』

Escaping into the sky was not a bad idea. The idea was the same as the strategy of using the forest of exhaustion as an escape route. We need to find an altitude at which Ghist could not pursue us, and at which we could still use our magic power.

「Understood」

「Woof!」

We gained more altitude once again. To tell the truth, it was difficult to maintain the same altitude for a long time. Because there are no landmarks around us as a comparison.

Still experiencing a few falls, we had found the last possible altitude. The ghist didn't chase us anymore, but we were pretty exhausted, we also managed to find an altitude where we wouldn't fall.

We didn't gained altitude by teleporting. No, I was going to do it at first, but if it not a short distance teleport, the point of appearance will shift quite a bit. In the beginning, it was difficult to control teleport over medium distances, and due to the phenomenon of magic power absorption, my accuracy was considerably reduced.

I'm sure Fran was very upset when she was upside down with no skills or anything else available for her to do after teleporting. But it might lead to a bigger accident.

Short distance teleport's control wasn't disrupted so much, but its magic consumption is tremendous. It would be safer to proceed with aerial jumps.

At first, the ghastr were relentless in its pursuit. But after five minutes, it gave up the chase. Or maybe it can't follow us because of the area. Anyway, we were thankful that we were able to shake off that troublesome magic beast.

Besides, this near-border altitude strategy was quite easy since we could also avoid the magic beasts on the way. We encountered a few bird-shaped monsters, but they ran away as soon as we threatened them.

As I moved, I checked the skills I had acquired from Invisible Death.

I already had light magic, thunder magic, scale regeneration and rushing, but I was also getting four interesting skills. Well, one of them looked really interesting, but it wasn't going to be useful.

The first one is Magic Disruption. Perhaps this skill is the ability of its crystal scales to disrupt magic power. When I tried to use it, I definitely felt the magic in the vicinity being disturbed.

However, there is a problem. It even interferes with the skills I use, such as magic steal. Also, it might affect me when I try to cast a spell on Fran. I think it's best not to leave it activated all the time.

The second is a skill called shooting correction. This seems to be a skill that simply increases the hit rate of long-range attacks. The power and accuracy

of my telekinetic catapult will no doubt be increased.

It seems to be a passive skill, but when I equipped it, it was definitely different. It's not that my vision has suddenly improved, but my sensitivity to distant targets has clearly increased. When I aim lightly, I feel like I can see the target clearly, and I feel more confident that I can hit it.

『This skill is interesting』

The third skill is the light distraction film. It is used to create a semi-circular field to reflect the light that hits its surface. However, the output is low, and it doesn't seem to be able to reduce the power of light magic. It seems that it is only a skill to distract natural light or weak light.

It seems that optical camouflage was an application of this skill, but it's very difficult for me to imitate. I mean, I have to calculate the amount of light reflected, the angle, and everything in detail. It seems that just randomly reflecting the light has some effect, but I don't think I can imitate the same level of perfect optical camouflage as Invisible Death.

The fact that it is able to supplement this with his wild instincts is probably the reason why it is categorized a high-ranking magic beast. However, it is a skill that can't be easily used.

The last skill was Crystal Transformation. As the name implied, it was a skill that could transform the shape of a crystal into any shape.

It probably used this skill to transform its own scales into bullets, or it may have used it like reactive armor, daring to transform itself into a fragile form in response to our attacks and then releasing its magic power to make it pop. It's an interesting skill, but it's also one that I have no use for.

Now that I think about it, it had huge electromagnetic cannons, laser weapons, reactive armor, detection jammers, and optical camouflage. It was more like a Zo○ds than a magic beast.

I also learned a lot from it. In particular, the increase in the power of my telekinetic catapult was a big gain. Well, I guess it can't be used

everywhere, though.

In other words, the increase in power has made it more difficult to control. Just to stabilize myself from firing it would need tremendous powerful telekinesis. I may need to be a little more selective in the skills I use huh.

If telekinesis is used for trajectory control, the critical injection speed will be reduced. If I try to compensate for this with magic or skills, the power used for control will increase even more, and its magic consumption will also increase. In the worst-case scenario, the power might not even increase by ten percent, even though it consumed many times more than the usual.

While I was thinking about it, I could see where I was going. interrupt my thoughts and scream involuntarily. That's how nostalgic I felt.

『Fran! I can see it!』

「Over there?」

『Yeah. That ruin-like place, that's where I started』

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-489.html>

# Chapter 490: The Identity of the Silver-Haired Man

In the middle of this vast plain, there was a decaying ruin.

A building that has become stained and discolored by years of exposure. Cobblestones covered with moss and grass. From the sky above, we can see a circular plaza is surrounded by buildings at equal intervals, which I am not sure for what purpose they were built.

「Is that the pedestal Master was talking about?」

『No, I mean, yes, but it's not the same.....』

「What do you mean?」

『The pedestal had disappeared』

That's right. When I woke up, the pedestal that had housed me had disappeared.

Fran pointed to the entire ruin and asked if it was a pedestal. But for some reason, the thing I call a pedestal, which should have been in its center, was not there.

The only remnant of this is a square space in the center of the plaza where there is almost no grass. It was obvious that something had been placed there a while ago, and that it had been removed.

A few months had passed since the pedestal had disappeared, and the grass had begun to encroach slightly on the area, but from above, the difference from the rest of the site was obvious.



『L-let's get down there』

「Nn」

「woof!」

I went down to the vacant lot where the pedestal should have been before. Fran tapped on the cobblestones, and Urushi sniffed the ground, but there was nothing unusual.

『It really had disappeared huh.....』

「Are you sure?」

『Of course. I'll never forget this place』

As we were exchanging words, my surroundings turned white in an instant.

But I'm not surprised anymore. It's that space.

『He's here huh』

『Yeah, I'm here』

It's just a voice, but I'm sure of it. It's that guy.

『I can't find the pedestal. What's going on?』

『It's also a sacred object. It did its job, and then it disappeared. Well, now we need it. Tell Fran to back off a bit, and I'll make the pedestal appear』

『U-understood』

A sacred object? As expected, it wasn't just a pedestal huh.

When I returned from the white space, I told Fran and Urushi to back off from the vacant lot.

「Nn」

「woof!」

Immediately after Fran and Urushi took a few steps, a shape of a pedestal appeared on the spot like a hologram. Then, the phantom-like pedestal took on substance and appeared on the spot.

It wasn't a teleport, but rather a mysterious flow of magic that seemed to have sprung from the earth. But the thing that appeared was definitely a familiar pedestal.

『Oooh...There's no mistaking it. It's the pedestal. My pedestal』

It was only a few months ago, but it seemed strangely nostalgic.

「Is this, Master's...Home?」

『Well, no. It doesn't look like a home though.....』

「Then, what should we do?」

「That sword——Stick master on the pedestal. Miss Fran」

「Who?」

Fran turned around and saw a translucent, ghost-like being standing in front of her.

「I'll reveal it soon. But first, stick master on the pedestal」

「.....」

A man with silver hair, all back, and a kimono-like dress. Fran had never seen him before, but he was familiar to me.

Fran looked suspiciously at the mysterious man who had called her name. Well, he really is look suspicious.

「You don't know me miss, but I know you well, okay? After all, I've been watching you from Master」

「Inside master?」

『Yeah, it's true』

I didn't use the principle of falsehood, but I understood that he wasn't lying. Not on the level of trustworthiness or anything like that, but I can see as a matter of course that he is not lying. I didn't feel the need to doubt the authenticity of the man's words, just as I didn't have to worry about whether my words were false or true.

I wonder what it is? I'm aware of a strange connection between me and the man. It's not something vague like a bond or a connection, but a more direct connection. Or should I say, I'm connected?

I don't know if I'd call this a direct magic connection, but it was close enough.

『Fran, it's okay. Put me on the pedestal please』

「Understood」

At my urging, Fran approaches the pedestal.

『A little more higher huh?』

「Okay」

Without any hassle, Fran grabbed me backhanded and thrust me into the pedestal with great force. At that moment, something warm——no, something hot is enveloping my sword blade. But I don't feel anything bad from it.

It was hot, but not an aggressive heat that would melt my blade. It was more like a full body soak in a slightly hot bath.

Somehow, it felt similar to when Alistair was refurbishing me.

「Master, you okay?」

『Yeah, I'm feeling rather good』

「I see」

I guess she can hear my voice and decided that there really wasn't a problem. Fran murmured reassuringly. It's a familiar place for me, but an unknown place for Fran. She was still worried.

「Well then, now we're all set」

The man said so and walked over to the pedestal.

「All set?」

「Yeah, prepare to re-enforce Master's seal」

『Reinforcing my seal?』

「It's okay. I'll explain everything today. Well, as much as I'm allowed to though. Now that he's on this pedestal, Master's condition is stable. His memory will be fine」

「Master's? Memory?」

「Yeah. If I tell you what's going on, it might break the seal on Master's memories」

「Is it bad?」

「That will suck for your Master. Well, I'll explain that too. As long as he's stuck in the pedestal, his memory door should be stable」

「Understood」

『I'm counting on you』

The man snaps his fingers lightly, and the ground rises up to create a chair. I could tell that it wasn't the man's ability, but rather my earth magic activated with my own magic power. Or perhaps I should say, not mine, but ours.

It's both my and the man's power.

「No magic beast is going to approach this place for a while, and it will be somewhat longer. Why don't you take a seat?」

「Nn」

「Urushi, go sit beside her」

「Woof」

Urushi is as quiet as a borrowed cat. Apparently, he understands that the men in front of him are superior to him. Either that, or Urushi considers him as his master too because of his connection to me.

「Well, let me start by introducing myself」

「Nn」

At last huh.

「My name is Fenrir. I'm a former divine beast who went mad after eating an evil god. And I'm an interloper whose soul is sealed inside master's body」

Read more at: <https://todstl.blogspot.com/2021/02/tenken-490.html>

# Chapter 491: Fenrir and The Evil God

Fran's eyes widened as she heard the man introduce himself. Well, even I feel the same way you know?

Even though I thought it might be possible, I was still surprised to hear it from him. I was so surprised that I didn't raise my voice.

「Fenrir? the magic beast with a threat level of S?」

「That's right. I'm that Fenrir」

『As what I've guessed huh...!』

「It seems that master already knows about me huh. I was going to reveal it a little earlier, but I got a little behind」

「Why?」

「I'll tell you about that too. But first, let's talk a little about me」

His name was Fenrir. It seems that his human form was a temporary form he created to communicate with us and that he was actually a giant wolf over 100 meters long.

I don't know exactly how big he was, I just guessed that he was big enough to kill an Invisible Death with one bite.

「A long time ago, I used to be called a Divine Beast 」

『Does the fact that you're a Divine Beast mean that you have some kind of connection to God? Or did you just call yourself that?』

「Describing oneself as a Divine Beast would hurt, right?」

Fenrir chuckles at my words.

『Then』

「Aah, yes. My Lord is one of the Ten Great Gods, the Goddess of the Silver Moon」

I see. In the mysterious image that Forrund saw, there was an emblem of the Goddess of the Silver Moon. So, he's connected to that huh.

「The mission I was given by the Gods was to eat the pieces of the Evil Gods and purify its power. To do so, I was given the ability to take in the power of the person I ate and make it my own, thus I was born」

That's probably the source of my ability to absorb magic stones and gain power from them. And from what I've just heard, it sounds like a God created him right? So, he's a God's direct subordinate huh.

「I came down to earth, and in my first day, I succeeded in defeating and devoured pieces of the Evil God」

『Is it possible to meet the pieces of the Evil Gods that quickly?』

Or were the pieces of the Evil Gods roaming around all over the place since a long time ago? However, it seems that is not the case.

「A fool who sought power broke the seal. Originally, I was created to defeat that Evil God」

After that, Fenrir found the seal of a relatively weak Evil God piece, defeated it, and ate it. Including the first pieces he defeated, he had devoured four of them.

He was truly worthy of his name, the Divine Beast that eats Evil Gods. People revered Fenrir as a spokesperson of the Gods, a Divine Beast, and a Divine Messenger. It is said that Fenrir was even treated as an entity on the same level as a God.

However, humanity's faith did not last long. After all, Fenrir himself went on a rampage and began to attack the humans.

「The delusion of the Evil Gods must have been beyond the imagination of the Gods. I couldn't fully purify the evil I took in, and it eroded me into the opposite direction」

When he had taken in the first piece of the Evil God, it had seemed to not affect him at all.

「But now that I think about it, I suppose it affected me from the start. Without even realizing it, my appetite and desire for destruction had increased. And driven by this desire, I hunted down the pieces of the Evil Gods at a pace faster than my purification speed」

In the end, Fenrir was unable to resist the temptation to “destroy everything” brought about by the soul of the Evil God he had absorbed, and he then began to run wild.

He caused more damage than the unsealed pieces of the Evil God, and the continent of Zilberd was in danger of being destroyed. Several countries were destroyed, affecting the lives of tens of millions of people.

No, if Fenrir had really gone out of control, there would have been much more damage. However, Fenrir hadn't completely lost his reason.

「I was like a runaway and struggled all over again. Oh right... Do you remember the Lich from the floating island we fought before? I might be similar to him」

The main personality and the Lich's personality are fighting for control of the body, and while one of them is awake, the other is asleep huh? I see, so



Fenrir's original personality and the runaway personality that was corrupted by the Evil Gods were both taking turns to show up.

「As my body was gradually deprived of control, I came to this plain with the last of my strength. Well, there was no forest of exhaustion back then though」

「Is that so?」

「Yes, it was created later by the Gods. The pieces of the Evil Gods were separated and sealed here with me, so it wouldn't get out of the plans」

『Eh? In other words, this plain is.....』

「The pieces of the Evil God are sealed in here. It's a fusion of four pieces of the particularly strong pieces of the Evil God.....」

Not only me but also Fran and Urushi stared at the ground unintentionally. It was such a shock. But the man did not laugh at us.

「I know how you feel, but it's okay. So far, we haven't had any problems with the seal coming loose.」

『Really?』

「Yeah.」

Thank God. Something is going on with the seal inside me, and I was worried that this one will be okay too. But the situation is not like “The Evil God's seal is about to be broken!” “Please do something!”

『But still, you said you have separated and sealed the Evil God pieces, right? How did you do that?』

「That's a good question. Only the Gods would be able to seal the pieces of an Evil God」

「Eh? Then, what did the Gods do?」

「You know...」

When Fenrir arrived at this place, he didn't have a specific purpose for coming here. He was simply looking for a place where there were few people and animals, and then he found this place.

「A Divine Beasts cannot commit suicide on its own. Because they're a part of the Divine part of the system that runs the world」

That's probably why he was looking for a place where he could at least not bother the world.

「But, I heard that even for the Gods, it was difficult to tear the piece of the Evil God out of me and seal it. But then a person appeared.」

『A person?』

「Yeah. Elmera, the Divine level blacksmith. She was the one who made the Cherubim, she was looking for a place to dispose of it」

The creator of Cherubim. In other words, the person who made up the sword part of me. I perceived myself as a sword. Strangely enough, I felt more like a sword than a person.

When I first came into this world, I think I was very conscious of being a human once upon a time. Maybe I got used to being a sword while I was living here as one.

So that's why I had a strong image of Elmera as my creator. It's not like she is my parent, but I feel she is somehow close to that.

「Elmera」

「That's right」

However, Fenrir once again uttered a surprise.

「Well, at first we're trying to kill each other though!」

『Huh? You were trying to kill each other?』

「You fought her?」

「That's right. Elmera heard a rumor that I was here, and then she came here to the plains.」

So, she's been coming here for Fenrir from the beginning huh.

「She thought that if she was going to dispose of the Cherubim anyway, she would unleash all the power of the Divine Sword and defeat the Divine Beast, Fenrir」

『How did that get you to cooperate?』

「I was ready to be defeated by Elmera, trying to somehow hold back my body that was trying to take action on its own... and the Moon Goddess also asked the other Gods to try and save me」

It seems that the Gods, especially the Goddess of the Silver Moon, called out to Elmera and asked her to help Fenrir. So Elmera accepted the request.

「It was probably partly because the Gods had asked her to, but Elmera was also happy that there was still a use for Cherubim」

That's a Divine level blacksmith there, just like Alistair. She doesn't want to destroy the Divine Sword as much as possible.

In order to save Fenrir, it was necessary to separate Fenrir's soul from the Evil God's soul. So, the Gods decided to separate only Fenrir's normal soul, leaving the Evil God's soul in Fenrir's body, which had already been fused with the Evil God's pieces.

「The problem was where to store my soul. Because when you cut off a part of a soul, it will drain its power tremendously」

If Fenrir's soul was left without any vessel, it would disappear in a flash. Then the vessel that was chosen was the Divine Sword Cherubim.

「My body was sealed deep within this plain along with the Evil Gods, and I fell asleep within the discarded Divine Sword」

As a result, the evil beast Fenrir disappeared, and the continent of Zilberd was saved.

『But that didn't make it a happy ending, right?』

「What do you mean?」

『Well. After all, you're not in the story now. There has to be a continuation』

「Well, you're probably right. But my original body is happy you know? Being sealed by the Gods. They even created a barrier for me」

「A Barrier?」

『Could it be the Forest of Exhaustion?』

「The sky too. They are also a barrier against the Evil Gods in case they would resurface. They also absorb the magic power of the surrounding area and gradually weaken the Evil Gods that lie beneath these ruins by continuing to perform purification techniques on it」

The uneven distribution of magical beasts in the Plains of the Demon Wolf was actually due to that barrier. Due to the forest of exhaustion, the Plains of the Demon Wolf is a land where magic power easily accumulates and magic beasts are easily born. Therefore, the Gods also suck up the power from the magic stones of the magic beasts and use them in their purification techniques.

Magic beasts increase in number through breeding, but other than that, they are born from the accumulation of magical power. When a magic beast is born from a pool of magical power, a magic stone is first created, which then becomes a magical beast when it is covered with magical power.

Therefore, the magic beasts themselves are weakened by the Divine Barrier that sucks up the magical power even from the magic stones that have just

been created from the pool of magical power. In addition, the closer we get to the ruins, the stronger the barrier power becomes, and the closer we get to the center, the weaker the magical beast becomes.

The magic beast that is born is also unwilling to go near the center because they hate the ruins that suck up their power. It is said that only small magic beasts such as goblins, which are almost immune to the effects of the barrier would come close to the center.

「Will Urushi be okay here?」

「He'll be fine here. The Forest of Exhaustion sucks up magic indiscriminately, but the barrier of the Plains chooses its target」

He said that since my magic is registered and Urushi is my followers, he will not be affected by the barrier. That's convenient huh.

「The magic power gathered by the God's barrier is purifying the pieces of the Evil Gods that parasitized my body every day, but that is not the problem. It's my soul that's the problem」

「What's wrong?」

「Well, to put it simply, I haven't been able to completely rip the Evil God out of my soul.」

# Chapter 492: The Reason It Was Me

『Oioi, Isn't that bad?』

「Yeah. In fact, I was in danger」

It seems that the Gods had sealed Fenrir inside Cherubim, and intended to gradually tear away at the Evil God's power and purify it over thousands or tens of thousands of years.

However, the Evil God's corrosiveness was unexpectedly deep, and instead of being cleansed, it invaded even deeper into Fenrir's soul as time went by.

「The Divine Sword is an entity that is designed to counter the pieces of the Evil God. Therefore, I was supposed to be protected as long as I was sealed within it... However, the power of the Evil God was stronger than expected. Well, it was a combined existence of four pieces after all」

The Gods had taken notice. The Gods paid attention to Fenrir's ability to take in the power of the beings he ate. However, there was no way that Fenrir, in his soul state, could take in his prey on his own.

So, the plan was to fuse the sword with Fenrir's soul. The purpose was to absorb the power of the killed opponent and restore Fenrir's soul.

『If I may say so, couldn't they have just used the Gods powers to heal Fenrir normally?』

「Even though I am a member of the Divine family, I don't understand everything about the Gods.....I've heard that Gods have rules too and that they don't allow any kind of interference on Earth」

So, the Gods wield their power within the rules that they have set.  
Otherwise, the world could be messed up by the whims of the Gods huh.

「And with the help of several Gods, the foundation of the current Master was created. It's a sword with a built-in system that absorbs the magic stones it cuts and heals me」

「How about the wielder?」

「Well, what do you think? I'm not sure even the Gods had any guesses...  
But first, there was a problem that needed to be solved」

「A problem?」

「It's the Evil God. Even if I were to perfect the system that heals me, that wouldn't suddenly weaken the Evil God's power」

「Certainly」

『So how did you solve that problem?』

「Fufu」

Hearing my words, Fenrir laughed. It wasn't a laugh that made fun of me, but a mischievous laugh.

「The solution to that problem was you, Master.」

『Huh? Me?』

「What do you mean?」

「What do you think is the most troublesome power of the Evil Gods?」

「Ummm?」

『Troublesome power huh...?』

「Is it its fighting prowess? Its stubbornness? The evil beings they spawn? No. The most terrifying thing about the Evil Gods is their ability to control others」

A God has more or less control over his or her kin. If she is the Goddess of Chaos, she has control over her kin in the dungeon. If she is the Goddess of Beasts and Insects, she has the power over Beastmen, beasts, and insects. It is said that it is difficult for the kin to disobey their God's orders. Of course, they are not absolute, but their powers are quite strong.

『I'm rather surprised that it's not absolute. Can it be resisted?』

「In the case of the Beastmen, the average person would be unable to resist. If the Beastmen's God commands them to do something, they would have no choice but to obey. However, if you are strong enough to be at the level of the Beast King and his entourage, I believe you can defy her control. Well, I don't know if there is anyone who would defy a direct order from a God though」

『Ordinary humans would rather be willing to obey, huh?』

「Probably」

We know about the relationship between men and Gods. So, what about the Evil God's kin members? Are they only evil beings?

「No, it's not. An Evil God can rule over all who are born in this world」

A Kin member is an existence that was created by their God. Beastmen, the descendants of the Divine Beasts created by the God of the Beastmen, are under the control of the God of Beastmen.

「And before the fall, the Evil Gods were assisting the Gods when there was war between Gods」

In creating this world, the God of War assisted all the Gods. In other words, she is slightly involved in the entire creation of this world. Therefore, the control of the Evil Gods will also extend to everything in this world.



The War God helped in only a small part, though apparently, her control was not as great as that of the other Gods.

It is also said that the reason why kin members can resist the rule of the Chief God was that the Evil God has taken part in their dominant territory of control.

「And it seems that when he fell to the Evil Gods, his power was altered to specialize his control」

『What's that? There's no way you can win against that right』

「It would be difficult for an ordinary being to defeat the Evil God's pieces. Only those who possess the Divine Sword or have the strength to overcome the Evil God's control can fight against it」

『...Then, why am I involved in this? I was just a common Japanese man on Earth you know?』

Now I've become the Discarded Divine Sword, but when I was on Earth, I was just a regular guy. I'm an otaku whose hobbies were playing games, watching anime, and reading manga.

「That part about you being born on Earth is important」

『Being born on earth...? I see! So that's why huh!』

「Do you understand?」

『Those who are born in this world are treated as kin members of the Evil Gods and are ruled by them. But I was not born in this world. So, I won't be controlled by it huh!』

「That's right」

It seems that they planned to connect Fenrir and the magic stone absorption system to the people from Earth and make use of their souls as the main personality, thereby nullifying the Evil God's control.

It's like a filter or a barricade, but anyway, Fenrir is protected by my presence now.

『It's finally starting to make sense』

I didn't know why I had been summoned when I was a normal human being, but it was important to me that I was born on Earth.

『Well, I don't know the reason why I was the one chosen all among the candidates』

「You may think you were chosen at random, Master, but it seems you were screened accordingly」

『Is that so?』

「First, the form of the soul. I don't know about you, but I've heard that the shape of the soul is very important to fit in as the main personality of the sword. I've heard that from the Gods. In particular, the core system of the sword was created by the Goddess of Chaos by applying the dungeon system. I've heard that compatibility with this is important」

『Eh? Dungeon?』

「That's what I've heard, and I don't know what part of the dungeon system they're using either. However, the way you accumulate points to gain new powers may indeed be similar to that of a dungeon master」

That's why I'm treated like the Goddess of Chaos' kin huh. And the Goddess of Chaos said that I was also her kin. So, I guess I'm also the kin of another God. Maybe to the Goddess of the Silver Moon.

「Personality was also important too. You're going to be the independent personality of a powerful sword, so you need to have a decent personality」

『Personality?』

I'm not proud of it, but I'm not a saint, you know? Rather, I'm a greedy snob.

「It seems rather important to be a greedy person. God said this. Good people are quickly ruled by their self-righteousness and start talking about justice, and bad people are out of the question. Moderate people with a certain level of conscience are preferable」

Haha, so you're saying they prefer people who do everything in moderation huh?

「Then there are religious views. Atheists are bad, but fanatics are even worse. It's bad enough when they come to our world and say that their God is the only one. Also, mental flexibility. You need to be able to adapt to this world to some extent」

I have an idea of a race that comprehensively meets the current criteria. It's the Japanese otaku. They look down on those who pretend to be good people, but they don't have the guts to do great evil, and if something happens, they will ask for help from God.

Hmmm, so there's a reason why the main characters of otherworld reincarnation novels are all Japanese otaku huh? Perhaps the authors of the otherworld reincarnation stories that have been flooding the earth are actually returnees. I wonder?

「In addition, when they look on Earth from this world, it has to be a person who is just dying or has died. I guess that means it's easier to summon their souls. When it comes down to it, there are very few people who can be summoned」

It would indeed be very hard to find a person with the right personality, that was dying or has died. It's completely based on luck huh.

「In fact, I think Master was the fifth person I've met since I started looking for a suitable person. It seems that in a world where killing each other is the norm, being reincarnated as a sword is still a high hurdle. The previous four refused, but fortunately, Master agreed to become the main personality of the sword, and so the sword was finally completed」

Ooh, so I wasn't the only one who met the requirements huh. Now I'm grateful to the previous four people who refused to be reincarnated. If I hadn't been reincarnated as a sword, I wouldn't have met Fran either.

「And when Master was summoned to this world by the power of the Goddess of the Underworld, some of your memories were sealed and then you were sealed as the main personality of the sword」

『That's it. I want to hear more about that. Why did they wipe my memory? And what did they wipe from my memory?』

「It's for Master's sake. After all, Master as a former human was going to be reincarnated as a sword. If he retains his human senses, he will surely go mad」

Come to think of it, the Fanatics must have said something like that huh. It said that the spirit of a man cannot withstand being the body of a sword.

「So, it seems that they sealed away the memories that would strongly shake your personality, desires, and emotions as a human being」

『So that's why there's a lot of other memories I'm forgetting besides the ones before and after my reincarnation that I'm just not aware of?』

「That's right. Of course, it was planned that the seal on your memories would be lifted once you were comfortable with the sword and had no problem regaining your memories. Master may not remember this, but it was explained to you before your reincarnation and you understood it」

That's probably true. If I was asked to choose between going crazy or having some of my memories sealed, I would definitely choose the latter. Well, the mystery remains as to why I agreed to be reincarnated... No, if I was dying and someone offered me a reincarnation, I might accept it even if it was as a sword. I'm more surprised that there are people who refused.

『Is it different from what was planned now?』

「That's right. That's why I need you to come to this place. The Gods are not all-powerful, but I didn't expect that their schedule would be so far off... I don't know whether I should praise or lament for the Gods, either」

# Chapter 493: Master's Current Situation

Fenrir began to explain the anomaly that was happening to me.

「Originally, Cherubim was supposed to help Master's mind to adjust to the sword. Over time, Master's mind would adapt to the sword, and at that point, I would reveal myself and release your memories in stages, gradually uniting you with the sword」

『But, Cherubim is...』

「Yeah. Of course, if she hadn't taken a stand at that time, Master and I would have disappeared. I am grateful to her. But now that I no longer have Cherubim's support, my plans are beginning to fall apart」

And that wasn't the only thing that had gone wrong with the plan.

「You grew at a faster rate than expected. In addition with extraordinary series of fierce battles, a large number of skills were acquired as a result. You also burdening the system by the use of potential release, outbursts of mad demonization, and absorption of the Fanatics」

Fenrir counted on his fingers. It's been a pretty intense few months if he tells me that. But does that mean it was bad?

After using potential release, Announcer-san lost his power and also caused a major distortion in the entire system. In the Mad Demonization, the evil part of Fenrir went out of control. And when I ate the Fanatics, the internal system was further overloaded, causing a breakdown not only in my memories but also in the seal of the Evil God.

「It's proof that Master and Fran have been fighting hard. I wouldn't say that's a bad thing. But I'm sure it was more of a rush than the Gods had imagined」

It seems that the Gods, who have a different sense of time than humans, were not very accurate in their estimates. Well, maybe we're living a little too active too.

Even the Gods didn't think that the seal of Evil Gods was perfect no matter what. That was why they had left the residue of Cherubim - in other words, Announcer-san. They said that even if there were some tears in the seal, Announcer-san was supposed to be able to repair it.

However, Announcer-san has lost his power, and so his recovery has been greatly reduced. There's also the series of events that shook the seal in a short period of time followed, causing the seal to become looser.

「But, Alistair had refurbished Master」

「Yeah, I'm sure that had brought it back up quite a bit. However, even a divine class blacksmith won't be able to have a perfect understanding of the system that the Gods built. It was just a first aid」

『So, this time will be different?』

「Even I don't know much about it either」

The pedestal that I'm currently stuck on. This is also a pedestal made by the Gods, and it is said to have various functions that even Fenrir does not know about.

「Anyway, Master has not fully adapted to the sword, but his power is much greater than what was expected. If we leave you like this, the memory seal might break and will affect Master's soul. In fact, it will definitely make Master's mind go crazy. Not only that, Master, you've heard that voice, right?」

『Voices? Ah, you mean that one? The one who says “Devour everything”?』

It was bothering me in my mind during that battle, so I yelled at it and before I knew it, it was gone.

「That’s right. You know what it is now, don’t you?」

『...the Evil Gods huh』

「Exactly. Or, more accurately, a piece of the Evil God’s soul fused with my soul. But still...kukukuh」

『What’s the matter?』

「No, it’s just that I remembered how that piece of the Evil God was yelled at by master, and how it kept quiet after that... kukukuh. It couldn’t believe that there was a being that didn’t accept its control. So it pulled back in surprise」

Oh, I see. It’s not that it was overwhelmed by my soul, it’s just that it was surprised that it couldn’t dominate me.

「Only a small amount of the Evil God’s consciousness is still leaking out, but we can’t leave it like that. We need to reinforce the seal and repair the entire system. That’s why I asked you to come to this place」

「Then, Master can be healed?」

「Of course. I mean, I’ll be in trouble, if we don’t fix him. It’s because I was also a part of him」

『I understand that. So, what am I supposed to do now?』

「You don’t have to do anything」

『Not doing anything.....are you telling me not to move?』



「That's right. I heard that the pedestal will do the rest of the work automatically. I don't know much about it, but Master's job is just to stay still. I'm sure that the formulas built into the pedestal have already started analyzing you now」

『Formulas?』

So, does that mean I'm stuck here for a while? I'm a little scared... It reminds me of the intense, mind-numbing pain I felt when Alistair repaired me. I'm not going to go through that again, right?

『How long do I have to wait?』

「Well, I don't know. Will it be an hour, a day, or a week?」

『Oioi, isn't that really long?』

「Think about how complicated and sophisticated the system inside you is? It could take you a month or more you know?」

『Seriously. So, what about Fran? If I leave her, she'll lose her skill-sharing.....』

Even if Urushi was there with her, it would be too risky to go back to Alessa through the Plains of the Demon Wolf alone.

「I'll wait here」

『Well, it can't be helped huh...Sorry, it's because of me』

「No problem. Besides, it will be a good training period」

『But, I'm not coming with you, right?』

「Gonna train to fight without relying on Master. Urushi is also with me」

「Woof!」

『I see, you're right』

If she can use her skills, Fran's strength won't drop that much. As long as she doesn't go to the outer perimeter, she should be fine.

Based on Fenrir's explanation, it seems that the magic beasts don't like going near the pedestal.

「Then, should I train with Fran and Urushi too?」

「Fenrir will?」

「Yeah. Now, I'm out thanks to the pedestal, but once the restoration is complete, I will sleep inside Master's again. It's the only time I'll be able to train you」

『...Fran, why don't you ask him to?』

I'm also wondering what kind of training Fenrir will give to Fran. Especially to Urushi.

Thanks to Fenrir, now I know why I was able to summon the wolf-shaped magic beast. That's also what Urushi's title, "Kin of the Divine Wolf," means. As a wolf-type magic beast, I think this will be good training for Urushi.

「Understood. I'll be in your care」

「Woof!」

「Yosh Yosh! Well then, let's give you a little lecture」

# Chapter 494: Simple Training

The start of Fenrir's training was a little different from what she had expected.

「Yes just like that, don't move」

「Muh!」

「Woof!」

「Concentrate within your own body, sharpen your senses」

She thought he was going to teach her how to use her skills and how to wield weapons, but he told her to sit in a cross-legged position on the spot.

It was training to control the flow of her magic power. The content of his training was to let magical power flow through her body.

Fran is already capable of using her techniques, but she lacks the fundamentals because she has been fighting on her own. That's why it is not surprising that she has to do this kind of training.

「Once you can do this properly, you'll be able to use your skills better」

Fenrir has been watching over Fran from within me. Thanks to that, I also know Fran's shortcomings now.

「Fran has two problems, the first one is about her skills control」

『Well, it's still far from perfect』

With the maintenance of the Divine blacksmith Alistair, some of my skills have been integrated into one and I gained more powerful superior skills, but she is still having a hard time controlling them.

「And the other one is that her own power is too great, but the backlash on her body is also great too」

『That too. We're trying to do something about it』

The only solution I can think of is to train her body and increase her status. Of course, I know that reducing the number of multiple skill activations and lowering the power output will solve the problem. However, that would put us at a disadvantage in future battles against powerful enemies.

「This training she's doing now will have a positive effect on that weakness」

『Eh? Really?』

「Yeah」

He said that once she had better control over her skills, she would be able to use the magic power she was currently wasting to offset the backlash and strengthen herself.

「It won't be as strong as body strengthening technique, but it's better like that」

『Hoho—, That's good』

「And for Urushi, he's from a species where skill handling is important」

『The wide variety of skills is Urushi's main asset after all』

「Besides, even with later evolution, the Darkness Wolf won't be able to enhance its fighting ability much」

『Eh?』

「W-woof?」

Not only was I surprised by Fenrir's words but Urushi was too. He stood up unconsciously with a shocked look.

「A Darkness Wolf's next evolutionary path is the Gehenna Wolf or Dark Knight Wolf. However, since both of them are lord-level monsters, their abilities as individuals do not increase much, while their dominance skills over other wolf species increase a lot」

『So he's going to make his underlings fight like the Goblin King?』

「Well. Although he'll be able to use more magic, his evolution won't be as explosive as other wolf species in terms of status」

「Woof...」

Hearing those words, Urushi drooped. He wanted to evolve and become stronger after all.

「Urushi, that's why this training will be meaningful. The way for you to become stronger as an individual is to strengthen your skills. Think about how to use your skills even more than you already do」

「Woof」

\*\*\*

Three days passed in the blink of an eye since Fran and Urushi started meditating.

Of course, they take meals and breaks. But they've been in meditation for most of the time. Urushi looks like he's just sitting down though.

『I'm relieved I had prepared some food before we came to the Plains of the Demon Wolf』

「Fran can hunt and cook by herself, right? She also has the skills」

『Well, you're right. But this will allow her to focus on her training, right?』

「Well, that's certainly true」

However, starting today, they will be doing a different kind of training. The training is to stalk the goblins that appear in this area without using any skills.

Instead of relying on stealth skills, they need to be able to eliminate their presence without using skills to manipulate it.

This is something I can't teach them, so I'm very grateful. As an inorganic being, I don't understand what it means to erase my presence. After all, I'm usually able to eliminate my presence without doing anything. I mean, I don't have a heart, so no heartbeat, no breathing, no smell, and no sound because I move by telekinesis.

In general, as a sword, I don't have any presence. As long as I conceal my magic, it would be difficult for those magic beasts to find me.

Well, I still have the senses I had when I was human, but I've never had any training on Earth to erase my presence. I'm an amateur in this field.

Meditation in the morning. Goblin stalking would be their next training in the afternoon.

『Will that make Fran stronger?』

「Of course. Well, it would be even better if she could raise her level at the same time」

『Won't she need me for that?』

「Not in particular. You have a few swords in your storage, right? Well, she'll have to be with Master to hunt magic beast on the outer perimeter, but as long as it's a D level threat or below, Fran will be fine now」

『Well, that's true, but...』

「I know how you feel, but sometimes you just need to keep an eye on things, right?」

『Ugh...』

I also know about that, but... Either way, in my current state, all I can do now is just to watch over her.

『How far are my repairs going?』

「Well. All I can tell you is that you're still being analyzed. It hasn't made any progress in repairing you」

『Even though it's already been three days?』

「Yeah. Moreover, the repairs would take more time than the analysis」

『So even if the analysis is finished today, it'll be at least three more days huh?』

Fenrir told me that my system was so complex that it would take a lot of time to analyze it in detail.

『Do you know how long will it take?』

「I don't know」

『Haah...』

「I'm sorry. It's just that this is necessary for Master's sake. Please bear with it」

『Okay. Hey, if I don't move from this state, can I use my skills or magic?』

「Umm. Aside from telepathy, I think you shouldn't use high-level skills. That could prolong the analysis」

『...I'm not going to use high-level skills』

「That's fine then」

Haah! I can't wait for this to be over!



# Chapter 495: It's Been a Week

A week passed quickly after I was placed on the pedestal.

The analysis isn't finished yet. Seriously, this is going to take at least a month, isn't it?

While Fran was here with me, she went out for goblin stalking now.

Fran and Urushi seem to have taken a great liking to goblin stalking, which was supposed to be their training, and they go out happily every day. They found it as fun as playing detective.

「Today is the day I'm going to get close enough while not being spotted by 『Crooked Nose』」

「Woof!」

「Nn. The 『Crooked Nose』 can't be taken lightly」

「woof?」

「It keeps playing with the 『Spear guy』 and never returns to the nest」

She now can distinguish between the different goblins, and she's having fun by giving them nicknames.

Right now, they seem to be following the goblins around all day long, trying to track down their nest. She'll keep going until she gets tired of it.

Because of this, Fran and Urushi didn't come back even if it gets dark, leaving me with a lot of free time.

Thanks to that, I've completed my original novel-style story that I've been imagining little by little. The title of the story is 『The Former Brave Wise Man as SSSS Ranked Adventurer in His Previous Life, Reincarnated for The Third Time to Become a Demon King as a Holy Sword Used by a Villainess』

It's a super high fantasy with gag, tears, and sex appeal. Of course, it also includes elements of sarcasm and harem.

In the end, when he and his 100 wives are about to take revenge on the hero party that abandoned him, he realizes that it was all a dream. When the protagonist wakes up on his bed on earth, he realizes the pointlessness of fighting and realizes that 「a normal life is the best!」 This is the end of that story.

It's terribly interesting, even for me. I'm sure if I posted it on “Let's Become a Novelist!” (1), which I used to use on Earth, it would be ranked number one in no time. Even I was scared of my writing talent.

「Master, what's wrong?」

『I'm getting bored. I've got enough time on my hands to finish a big, long, super-sh\*tty fantasy in my head that isn't even interesting』

「Uumm, why doesn't Master go train too?」

『I've done that too』

I was still training to control the flow of my magic power, imitating Fran and Urushi. However, I have the Simultaneous Operation skill. That's why I can think about other things while I'm training.

「There's also the blessing of the God of Wisdom, so it can't be helped」

『What do you mean?』

「That blessing assists you with the Simultaneous Activation of magic (2). Or should I say, that makes it easier for you to split your thoughts huh?」

When combined with Simultaneous Operations (3), the effect is doubled. That means I can have twice as much free time.

『But why did I get the blessings of the God of Wisdom?』

「That's because the Divine Sword Cherubim was a kin of the God of Wisdom. In other words, the being that Master calls Announcer-san is the God of Wisdom's kin」

It seems that Alistair's maintenance strengthened my connection with the residue of Cherubim, and I was recognized as a member of the kin too.

『Speaking of which, I've been wondering about the emblem on my guard. Why is it in the shape of a wolf? No, I know it represents Fenrir, but I thought, cherubim were supposed to be designed like angels, right?』

「There are several reasons for this, one is to hide the fact that master is a former cherubim, and even though it was rarely seen by the public, there are still people who know what it looked like because of Oracle skills」

That's for sure. If they find out that I was a former Divine Sword, they're going to come after me in many ways.

「The other, simply because it makes it stronger」

『What? It wasn't just a change in shape huh?』

「No, it's just a change in shape, you know? But the form and existence are closely linked. A cherubim has a form befitting a cherubim, and Master who took in has a form befitting for it」

『Does that change the strength?』

「Just a little bit. Well, that's because it's a Divine Sword, a high-ranking entity. There's no point in messing around with the emblems on a few of those swords」

Because of the tremendous power of the Divine Sword, even a slight increase in strength would be meaningful.

「Oh yeah... For example, it will also affect the acquisition of blessings. A weapon in the shape of fire will not have the blessings of the Water God. The image given by the figure is that much more important」

『But with the wolf design on me, I don't get the blessings of Fenrir or Goddess of the Silver Moon. Instead, I get the blessings of the God of Wisdom』

「This may sound contradictory to what I said earlier, but the form is not everything. It's important, but in the end, it's only one of the factors that make up a big thing」

『I guess it's all about what's inside as well as how it looks huh』

「That's what I mean」

In the first place, the blessings of the God of Wisdom were supposed to be given to me as I grew up, but they had to be put on hold due to Announcer-san's loss of power. Thanks to Alistair, those growths have progressed all at once I guess.

「As for the blessings of the Goddess of Chaos, I don't know much about her.....She's a fickle person. I wouldn't be surprised if she gave you the blessing simply for the fun of it」

『Her blessing huh...? After what I've heard about the Divine kin, I'd even say she's rather troublesome』

「Haah. You came from a different world after all. For people in this world, it's a big deal to have two Divine Blessings, you know? In Master's case, the Gods have no control over you. It's not like they're forcing you to do what they say, so just think of it as a useful skill」

『I've been ordered around by the Goddess of Chaos before though?』

「That wasn't using control over the kin, that was just a normal threat with force, right?」

『Isn't that worse?』

「Well, I wonder? But, you can try to resist it if you're prepared to die, right?」

『What's that? I don't want to die yet!』

After all, I can't go against the Gods, right? No, I have no intention of disobeying any Gods other than the Evil Gods. But what if I have to fight a God? I don't think that would happen. But...

『Aah. I think badly because I have too much free time on my hands. I tend to be negative when I think too much』

「Haah. Then, I think you should do more complicated training」

『Like what?』

「It's a discipline for novice magician, but it involves controlling basic magic to change form」

『Change form? Do you mean like thickening up arrow-type magic?』

「No. What am I talking about is changing its form more finely」

Fenrir said so and created a fire arrow in front of himself. However, the arrow immediately changed its shape and transformed into a wolf. It had the added bonus of making a howling motion.

「Can you get it? I'm not using any magic to transform its shape right now」

『Yeah』

When I strengthen magic or transform it, I put more magic power into it to play with it. However, the transformation Fenrir just performed did not use any extra magic power. In other words, it was the same magic consumption as a normal Fire Arrow.

It seems that if I train my imagery and control of the skill, I can transform the skill without wasting any magic power.

It is said to be a method developed for novice magicians to train without wasting their magic power. By transforming the shape of the magic while maintaining it in the air, they can train their concentration, control, and endurance.

My magic is self-taught, and it's nice to be taught these basic training methods. If I keep doing this, even if my skill level doesn't improve, my magic skills might.

「This doesn't consume much magic power and has little effect on the analysis. And yet, the more you focus all your attention on it, the more interesting transformations you can make. It's a great way to train and pass the time」

『Besides, it looks fun』

I tried to transform the Fire Arrow first as Fenrir had done.

『Suddenly making it transform into a wolf was impossible for me huh?』

「First, you need to imagine the shape of it」

『Sh\*t, just you see, I'm not going to make just a wolf, I'm aiming for Cerberus!』

「I'm looking forward to it」

# Chapter 496: Training as the Time goes by

『I wonder how much time has passed already huh?』

「...」

Of course, no one can answer.

It's been an eternity since I've been plugged into this pedestal.

Clouds drifted, rain fell, many nights have passed, and I was still here.

『How long has it been since... When will I be able to get out of this?』

「...」

『This already like a torture prison on this plains...』

But there was a voice that answered my lament. A man's voice, full of dignity, came out of nowhere.

「Are you done with your “One Hundred Years of Solitude” act?」

It was Fenrir-san who looked at me with a dumbfounded expression as I acted out my monologue.

『I'm bored!』

「I didn't expect it to be this long either. But it's better than when you were stuck in the Forest of Exhaustion, right?」

『Well, that's true, but...』

I know there is an end, and I have Fran, Urushi, and Fenrir with me here now. And I have also grown quite a bit.

『But I'm bored, bored! It's been a month you know?』

Yes, it's been a month since then. Even after all that time, the analysis hasn't been finished yet. How much time will it take huh.....?

A hut made of earth magic now stood next to the pedestal. For the first few days, Fran had laid her bed on the plains and slept there. She doesn't mind sleeping out in the open, or rather, she prefers to sleep on the fresh plains rather than in a confined space.

However, it rains sometimes, so we built a hut just in case. At first, Fenrir tried to build it, but we forgot that this guy was originally a wolf. He dug a huge hole and said 「Isn't this a nice place to sleep!」

In the end, Fran decided to make it properly. But this is Fran we were talking about. Well, it's not as bad as just having a roof over her head though. Sh\*t, if I could have made it, I could have made a better house!

Well, thanks to my analysis not being finished yet, Fenrir was able to stay out longer, and Fran and Urushi made a lot of progress in their training.

『I even can do this with my ice magic now you know!』

I can now control my ice magic better, which I was not very good at before, and transform it from wolf to dragon, dragon to tiger, etc. without difficulty.

With thunder magic and fire magic that I specialize in, I can make ten dragons fly in the air, move them separately, and finally scatter them like fireworks.

I wouldn't do this in front of Fran, but I can even make it look like a beautiful girl and have it pose in many sexy positions.

「I'd just remove the Simultaneous Operations in the first place」



『Then, we won't be able to respond to an emergency like that right?』

「You worry too much huh?」

『It's a good thing because it's been good training for me. And Fran's training has progressed even further』

Fran and Urushi are already in the second stage of their training. This is the training to fight using only sword techniques.

Fran doesn't use sword techniques very often. The reason was that in a high-speed battle, the delay after a move can be fatal. There was also the reason that Fran, who could increase the power of each blow with her skills and magic, did not need it.

But another reason is that Fran is not very good at using her sword techniques.

In the case of a normal swordsman, they would practice sword techniques  
→ learn sword skills → fight mainly with sword skills → encounter  
opponents for whom sword skills alone are not enough → and start to use  
both sword techniques and sword skills in a balanced manner.

However, Fran had mastered sword skills at a high level from the start and was, therefore, able to fight battles on her own. Moreover, because she became strong quickly, she didn't need to use sword techniques in the method mentioned above.

She skipped the process that other swordsmen go through, where they learn sword techniques and use them all the time and get hurt. Normally, that's when the body learns how to use the sword techniques. Because of this, Fran, who had not accumulated much experience, was not very good at utilizing sword techniques in her offense and defense.

This is the reason why we often use sword techniques to pre-empt or end a fight.

Fenrir knew this and told her to use only her sword techniques for a while. Even in the mock battles against Fenrir, she was using only her sword technique to fight.

Fenrir is like an illusion, so it doesn't seem to matter how many attacks he receives. Thanks to this, he was able to take Fran's sword techniques from time to time, while giving her advice.

「I think it's time for her to get some real combat soon」

『Can't she just have a mock battle with Fenrir?』

「I'm an illusion, so she can't touch me. That's not even a mock battle. You won't call a fight with a goblin as a real battle, right? She needs to fight a stronger opponent. Either an actual battle against a magic beast or a mock battle against adventurers」

As expected, she won't get meaningful experiences unless she trains in actual battles.

「It's just, you know, I'm about out of time」

『Eh? What do you mean?』

「I'm almost out of time to talk to Master like this. I've been saving my strength except for when we were training, but I can't stay out here any longer. I'm sorry」

Those words made me understand. It's not just that he won't be able to use his illusions to come out here anymore, but that he really won't be able to talk to us like now.

「I've taught Fran and Urushi almost everything I can teach them, but... It's regrettable that I won't be able to see them in the future. Please take care of the rest, Master」

『Should she hunt some small fry magic beast then?』

「As long as she doesn't have a decent opponent, that's all we can do. We'll start with the small fry and then increase the difficulty. Fortunately, in these plains, we can narrow down the strength of the monsters to some extent」

However, I still feel uneasy about letting them fight a strong magic beast without me... I've been through something like this before in the Royal Capital, but the position was reversed now. This time I'll be the one waiting.

『Hey, can she just have a mock battle with Fenrir and Urushi?』

「The two of them know too much about each other's moves. I'd prefer another adventurer or a formidable magic beast if possible」

We can't call in the adventurers here. We have to hide my identity, and there's no way they'd agree to stay here and keep up with Fran's mock battles in the first place.

「I guess, Master needs to work on that worrying habit of his huh...?」

『I know...』

# Chapter 497: She Came

『Then, we'll use fried fish for today curry's topping』

「Nn! the fish is tasty」

「Woof!」

「What's the worst thing about this body is that I can't eat」

Fenrir lets out a sigh as he stares at Fran and Urushi who are enjoying their curry. Well, I can't say I don't understand the feeling. Fran and Urushi looks really delighted eating their food after all.

Even I, who had lost my ability to eat after becoming a sword, was a little envious. Fenrir must have been stimulated by his appetite as well.

「...Huh?」

「Woof」

After a luxurious meal that could not imagine being in this magical area, Fran and Urushi who were drinking their tea stopped. Then, they stared at the north of the plains.

『Looks like it's getting closer』

「Moreover, it seems to be aiming straight to here」

Something with great magic power is coming towards us.

At first, I thought it was a strong magic beast running rampant, but it ignored the area and headed straight from the south. It seemed to be more

than just a magic beast.

『Fran, be prepared!』

「Nn!」

「Grrrr!」

Fran and Urushi stand ready to respond at any time. I will also have to suspend the analysis at worst. I don't know what that thing would do, but Fran is my first priority.

「Nn?」

「Woof?」

But we were soon relieved of that tension. It wasn't that the other party had disappeared or anything like that. It was simply that we realized that the owner of the presence was someone we knew.

The closer the distance, the more clearly we knew who the owner of this presence was.

「Amanda?」

Yes, it was Amanda, a rank A adventurer, who was coming towards us with tremendous speed. It looks like she's running as fast as she can. At this rate, she should arrive here in a few minutes.

We waited for about five minutes, and sure enough, we saw Amanda running across the plains.

She must have found us at the same time we saw her.

「Fraaan-chan!」

Amanda had spotted Fran and while waving her hands, she accelerated even further.

The goblin that was in Amanda and Fran's straight line was shattered by wind magic. When Fran saw that, for some reason, she let out a sad voice.

「Aaah! Crooked Nose!」

「Woof!」

Oh, so that goblin is Fran and Urushi's eternal rival, the Crooked Nose huh. That goblin has a sense of smell that is unbelievable for a goblin and can spot through all of Fran and Urushi's stalking. I'm sure they were determined to increase the proficiency of their stealth and stalk it from a distance.

「Huhuー, Crooked Nose is...」

「Eh? Eh?」

「Amanda you idiot」

「Eh? Why...?」

Amanda was confused. It had been a long time since they had seen each other, and she was imagining all kinds of emotional things. But then Fran suddenly fell to her feet and started crying. And to top it all off, she got angry.

「U-umm, Sorry?」

Amanda bows her head, not knowing why she's angry.

When Fran saw this, she had no choice but to accept. Well, they're only goblins after all.

「You forgive me?」

「...It's fine now」

「Thank you Fran-chan!」

「Muguh」

Looking thrilled, Amanda jumped on Fran and hugged her. As she was buried in her cleavage, Fran let out a strange voice. It continued with a series of cheek-to-cheek attack.

It's been a long time since they last saw each other. I guess she can't help but be a little passionate about it. But if Amanda were a man, I'd ignore the analysis and hit her with the most powerful attack I could use.

「Fran-chan! Now that your Onee-san is here, you'll be safe now!」

Amanda declared so with a firm face. But Fran has no idea what she's talking about.

「What do you mean?」

「Because Fran-chan said she was heading to the Plains of the Demon Wolf but has not returned ~. Do you have any trouble?」

「No」

Apparently, Fran had been treated as missing.

「But, I've said I'm going to train」

「Don't tell me, you've been training all this time?」

When adventurers train in a magical area near a town, they usually return to the town after a few days. It would be a shame to waste the materials obtained, and they also have problems with their food.

However, it was not a problem for Fran, who has dimensional storage. Well, it would be difficult for a normal adventurer to stay in a dungeon or magical area for a long period of time, but Fran can do it.

「At Alessa's guild, Nell was worried that Fran hadn't come back, so I came to find you」

「Nell knows about my dimensional storage though」

「Fran, you should be a little more aware of how awesome you are」

There is a dimensional storage skill in space-time magic, but it is usually not as useful as ours. In the first place, I can use the storage skills, but I've rarely used it.

Because dimensional storage was the higher version of it. It can be activated instantly, the entrance is large, and the capacity is overwhelmingly large. Moreover, time does not advance inside. Well, it's a special skill that specializes in that after all.

When compared with Storage skills, it can't hold anything as big as us, nor can it hold as much. And unless you're a proficient user of it, time will pass.

「Besides, this is a grade-A magical area you know. No matter how strong Fran is, if she doesn't come back for a month, I'll worry about her. Well, guild master was laughed about this though」

Amanda also thought that something might have happened and came to the Plains of the Demon Wolf in a hurry.

「Besides, Master wasn't with you, so I figured there must have been some unforeseen circumstances. Master, what's wrong with him? I mean, with his magic power is...」

Amanda is pained while looking at me like this. It seems that while I'm plugged into the presence, my presence is almost imperceptible to others. Therefore, to Amanda, I must look like a magic sword that has lost its power.

She asked Fran with a look on her face as if she was asking something that was hard to ask. Well, if she knew the relationship between me and Fran, it would be hard for her to ask after all. It's like asking her why her partner has died.



However, I have already discussed with Fenrir how much I can explain to Amanda.

『Should I say thank you for worrying about me? Or don't make me looks like I'm dead?』

「Eh? Master, are you okay? I thought you were...」

『This pedestal is created by the divine level blacksmith who made me, and it's supposed to keep my power from leaking out while I'm stuck here』

「Hee—. That's great to hear then. But, by a divine level blacksmith? Is Master a divine sword?」

『Hahaha, no, I'm not. I just a sword made by a divine level blacksmith』

I'm not lying. I am not a divine sword now.

「We're here to repair master」

『This pedestal also has a lot of functions』

「Repair? What had happened?」

As expected, I could not talk about Fenrir or the Gods. So, I decided to use Elmera, a divine level blacksmith to explain that I was under maintenance.

# Chapter 498: The Current Situation

After a long conversation, Amanda hugged Fran again and stroked her head.

「You've done your best huh—?!」

Well, the story goes that wherever she went, she got caught up in trouble and almost died over and over again.

With that being said, Amanda didn't stop stroking Fran's head. Fran won't be going bald or have a Fire started on her head if she continues like this right? I didn't stop her because Fran herself doesn't mind it.

「It's great that you had uncovered the conspiracy of that cheapskate Marquis, but don't be reckless, okay?」

「Cheapskate Marquis?」

「It's that Ashtner! I've had a few requests from the Marquis, but he never pays! But I can't refuse because he has an introduction from an acquaintance」

Amanda had taken on a few jobs from him, including gathering materials. She couldn't refuse because she was a person who had some influence on Allesa.

In Amanda's case, she also has thick connections with the country and the nobility.

Amanda seems to know quite a bit about this whole thing. I've heard that a lot of information has been disclosed to deal with the Raidos Kingdom. They've been gathering information through their own networks after all.

Needless to say, she must have also heard about Fran's activities in the Royal Capital.

If anything, Amanda is probably more concerned about the battle in the Beast Country, which is new to her.

When I told her about Kiara's death, she had a pained expression on her face. I guess it was more out of concern for Fran's loss than out of mourning for Kiara.

「...Fran-chan is a hard-working person huh. But don't overwork yourself too hard, okay?」

「Nn?」

「I'll be sad if something happens to Fran without my knowledge. So, don't be too reckless, okay? Is that no good?」

「...Nn. But I have to be reckless to be strong」

「Fuh... Is that so?」

In the next few seconds, she must have realized that nothing she could say would change Fran's decision. Amanda's eyes were sadly downcast.

「Hey?」

「Nn?」

「Right now, Fran-chan is doing her training while waiting for Master to be repaired in this place, right?」

「Nn」

『That's right』

「I see... All right, I'll help you too then!」

Amanda, with a look of determination on her face, clenched her fists and made a declaration. Her face was full of motivation, and she looked like she was about to start a mock battle.

『What do you mean by saying you'll help her?』

Amanda would have to stay in Alessa as a deterrent against Raidos Kingdom. Moreover, she would not be able to do so without permission, as she was currently in the middle of a skirmish.

「Because you want a mock battle partner, right? I'll be your partner then」

「Oohh—」

Fran looks happy, but is it fine for her to do something like this?

『I appreciate your offer, but what about Allesa? And is the war with the Raidos Kingdom going to be okay?』

「Aah. About that matters...」

I asked her, and Amanda explained the current situation to me.

Raidos' troops that crossed the border were scattered and kicked around by Alessa's forces, and eventually, they all retreated. Afterward, Raidos sent a letter saying that they were sorry for the outburst of some hardliners.

They're stating it's not the will of the country, it's just a few idiots messing around. The letter was followed by a messenger and the head of the alleged ringleader.

「Actually, it's just the head of a lower-ranking nobleman who lost a political battle with a Raidos nobleman and had nothing to do with his head」

『So, it's a scapegoat huh』

The leaders of Alessa and the negotiators sent by the Kranzel Kingdom know this. However, even though they know this, they have to accept Raidos' reasoning.

「Why? The other side was the bad guy, right?」

「We know~ But there's no use in continuing the war either」

At a time when the country is in turmoil, it is impossible to continue a war against a major power. If we had the luxury of doing so, it would be better to focus on the reconstruction of the Royal Capital.

There is also an issue with the face value, but that was resolved when Raidos had apologized for the time being. We can also get a good amount of benefits after all.

Raidos Kingdom must have been aware of this from the beginning.

It would be best if they could successfully cut off the border area. Even if it fails, there's no chance for the Kranzel Kingdom to invade. Because we can't afford that. We will have to pay compensation, but we will also gain valuable battle data.

「Jean is currently guarding the border, and is searching for any Raidos agents who may have entered the country with other adventurers」

「And Amanda?」

「I'm filling in for the other adventurers, handling requests for high-ranking adventurers and urgent requests. But I got a little carried away and ran out of requests」

If that was the case, I thought she could help find the agent, but it seems for Amanda, who is famous and stand out like a celebrity, was deemed unsuitable for such a job.

「Aren't they rude? I can be a ninja if I want to be. They make me looks like a brute that can only fight...」

Amanda was muttering complaints about Nell and guild master for a while, but she quickly regained her composure.

「Well, thanks to that. That's what gave me the time to come here, so I should be rather grateful!」

In other words, it seems that Amanda is not going to stay here for long, but will travel back and forth between Alessa and the Plains of the Demon Wolf every few days.

「It would be biased to only have mock battles with me, wouldn't it? Mock battles, magic beast hunts, basic training, and exploring the plains with me. I think it's best to repeat that」

『Well, you're right』

「Nn」

When Fran and I agreed, Amanda hurriedly prepared her whip.

『Eh? Are you going to do it already?』

「Of course!」

「Nn. Naturally!」

Aah. I still hadn't figured the minds of these battle junkies. They never understand the common sense to do things slowly.

# Chapter 499: Farewell

「 Shall we do it now then? 」

「 Nn! 」

Fran and Amanda face each other with a sharp gaze in front of the pedestal. It's been just a few minutes since we met again for a long time, but they're really going to do a mock battle right now huh...

Fran is ready to go and holds up the magic sword made of phantasm pyroxene that she had been using for a while. Amanda's whip was a terrifying whip with the scary name of 『 Demon's Torment 』 . It was not the Divine Dragon's Beard Magic Whip, which was broken in the martial arts tournament. It was her spare whip that was used in the finals.

Name: Demon's Torment

ATK: 721

MP: 616

Durability: 720

Mana Conductivity: B-

Skill: Stretch, Pain-stacking, Paralysis

Name: Divine Dragon's Beard Magic Whip

ATK: 1030

MP: 1800

Durability: 1000

Mana Conductivity: A

Skill: Stretch, Weight Manipulation

It's weaker than the Divine Dragon's Beard Magic Whip, but it's still pretty strong. The pain-stacking skill is also a nasty ability.

「Let me give my newly acquired whip a test, okay?」

「Nn, bring it on!」

「Fufu, then, here I come!」

At that moment, the battle began. It may look so sudden for outsiders, but it's not for the two of them. It's started when they held their weapons.

「Shaa!」

「Muh!」

「Haaa!」

「Nnhh!」

While dodging Amanda's whip, Fran slashed at her. After a few minutes of this kind of repeated attack and defense, Amanda smiled in admiration.

「You've changed your stance, huh?」

「Nn!」

「I see, I see. You're aware of the use of sword techniques now, huh?」

Amanda saw through at her easily. While looking at her, I realized that Amanda's stance was naturally woven into her whip technique.

「Shii! Haa!」



In between the dancing whip attacks. The whip dives into the ground, it strikes Fran like a spear from the ground and turns into a horizontal attack.

She must have made good use of the 『Madness Water Lilies』 whip technique to attack her opponent from below, incorporating vertical attack with its horizontal movements. This not only disrupted Fran's evasive timing but also forced her to constantly pay attention to the ground below her.

Other than that, Amanda's whip technique was also amazing.

The whip, which was once flicked by the sword, attacked Fran again with an impossible movement and blocked her pursuit. The whip moved and took her by surprise even when Amanda didn't move her arm at all, showing once again the usefulness of martial techniques.

『So that's her aim huh...』

In the end, Fran was pushed aside by the storm of whip attack and her sword was flicked away. Amanda was so strong after all.

「Muh...」

「Well, don't lose your spirits yet okay? If we continue to use this approach, you'll be able to become quite strong. And it seems that your martial arts skill itself has already surpassed mine」

「Nn!」

「Besides, it would definitely be in Fran's best interest to fight without Master's support. And I'm not just talking about your attack power and magic control, if you can't consult him in battle, you'll have to think for yourself, right?」

「...Understood」

Fran looks frustrated, but she nods her head in agreement with Amanda's advice. This honesty is what supports Fran's growth potential.

Although she never loses her stubborn side, she was surprisingly straightforward when it came to asking for lessons in combat and the like.

「Then, shall we go on the next one?」

「Nn!」

Well, there's no way she'll be satisfied with just one round huh.

After that, the mock battle between Fran and Amanda continued until the sun began to set.

「Uwaah, that's was one of the best mock battles I've had in a while!」

「Nn...」

Fran didn't even win once in the end. Even though she hadn't changed her stance and was mainly using sword techniques, she looked terribly frustrated. Maybe she thought she could win at least once. But without me, the difference in strength was obvious. No, it wasn't a difference in strength, but a difference in experience and skill handling.

Nevertheless, in the second half of the mock battle, she was able to react to Amanda's whip, and I think she will be able to compete well with her as her training progresses.

「Well, I'm going back to Alessa for now. I'll come back here in four days」

「Understood」

「Fran-chan. Won't you miss me when I'm gone?」

「I'll be fine」

「R-really?」

「Nn」

「Really, really?」

「There wouldn't be a problem at all」

「Really——?」

Amanda, just go back already!

\*\*\*

At dinner time.

Fran and Urushi were biting into a huge piece of meat. Fufu, even Fran won't eat curry every day. Well, she had curry for breakfast and lunch today though.

This meat is from a stray fang boar that had wandered it, and I made a whole roast of it

「Munch munch...This will be delicious like this」

「Grff grff! Woof!」

Fran holds the manga meat in her hands and chewing on it, while Urushi chews the meat off the bone, and he's happy to bite into the thick bones. They seemed to be more pleased with the chewiness than the taste.

「Well then, I'd better go to sleep」

「Nn...」

「Woof...」

I've already explained to Fran and Urushi that Fenrir needs to sleep. But they are sad to be told again by him. Unlike Amanda, she doesn't know if she'll see him again.

「Don't make a face like that. I'll just sleep in Master. Both of you, good luck with your training」

「Thank you very much」

「Nn」

Fran and Urushi straightened their body and bowed their heads. It's a completely different attitude than the one they have towards Amanda, but I guess they feel she's like their good friend or sister, while he's their favorite teacher even if he only taught them for a while.

「What was that, Master and I are the same. As Master's partner, Fran is not a stranger to me either」

「But you've taught me a lot」

「Woof」

「Besides, I need Fran to do her best to help me regain my power」

「Nn! Just leave it to me!」

Fenrir smiled gently at Fran's firm words.

「Yeah, I'll count on you. See ya」

「Nn, see ya」

Then, Fenrir puts his hand on Fran and Urushi's head. As an illusion, he couldn't touch them directly, but they still look happy. After a few moments of watching at Fran and Urushi's expressions, he smiled lightly and disappeared without a trace.

I can feel Fenrir falling asleep inside me.

『He fell asleep, huh? Well, we'll meet him again someday』

「Nn! I'll do my best!」

「Woof!」

# Chapter 500: Urushi's Feeling

It's been a few days since Fenrir came back inside me.

Today, Fran and Urushi are still busy with their training, stalking, and fighting magic beasts. Well, I'm still stuck on this pedestal, so I used my skills to sense their presence.

It seems that the skill-sharing had grown along with my growth, extending its effective range even further than before. Now, she can go as far as the entrance of Area 4 without the sharing being cancelled. Or maybe it's the effect of these plains and the pedestal?

Oh, the areas are the ones that I divided into according to the strength of the magical beasts that appeared when I was alone in this plain.

However, in the current Plains of the Demon Wolf, the previous point seemed to be completely meaningless.

『The strength of the monsters has gone up a lot after all. Area 1 is no exception』

In the past, Area 1 would only have small fry like goblins. Areas 2 and 3 used to have monsters with a threat level of F, and area 4 had monsters with a threat level of E, but now the threat level of the monsters that appear has gone up by one or two ranks.

Rank D magic beast seems to have appeared around the border of areas 3 and 4. In the past, it would not be surprising if one had reigned as an area boss in Area 5, the outer perimeter.

The reason why the magic beasts have become so strong is because of me. No, rather than getting stronger, it seems to be more correct to say that it

has now returned to its original state.

It takes a tremendous amount of magic to summon my soul, seal it in a sword, and fix it. Of course, it is the Gods who took the lead, so they could handle most of the process. However, the pedestal and other facilities required a supply of magic power from the plains.

Well, it seems that the Gods of this world have set many restrictions, which means I can't rely on them for everything, I guess.

To make up for the lack of magic power, they temporarily activated the magic power absorption barrier to its maximum. Because of this, the magic power of the entire Plains of the Demon Wolf had temporarily decreased, and the magic beasts that appeared became weaker.

It helped me a lot, though. It has helped me to survive and become stronger.

If the magic beast had been stronger, I would have been destroyed sooner. Even if it was safe, it would have taken me much longer to escape the Plains of the Demon Wolf. If it had been as strong as it was now, I would have been trapped in this plains for years.

I would never have met Fran in that case.

The Goddess of Chaos once told me that there is no fate in this world. But is it because I'm a former human that I feel something like fate in my encounter with Fran?

『...Looks like they took it down huh?』

Fran and Urushi had been fighting for a long time, and after storing the magic beast materials, they returned to the pedestal. They looked pretty tired.

『Good job, how was it?』

「Nn, it was pretty strong」

『Is that so?』

As usual, I didn't give my help for them to take it down, her weapon was also not as strong as me, and she was fighting in an unfamiliar way, focusing only on martial arts. It must be hard to fight a rank D magic beast like that.

She seemed to have healed herself a little, but there were obvious signs of bleeding marks and tears on her equipment, which showed that she must have taken a lot of damage.

Urushi's condition is also quite serious. No, it may even worse than Fran's. These days, he tends to challenge himself to close combat, which is clearly not suited for him.

In Urushi's case, although his evasion ability is high to begin with, his melee attack power is not so great. As a result, he can't deal much damage to a magic beast that specialized in defense and close combat.

Fenrir's story about his evolution path seems to be influenced by his reckless behavior.

Urushi has two paths for evolution. Being a Gehenna Wolf or a Dark Knight Wolf. He also said that both of them were a very similar evolution, except that the Gehenna Wolf has deadly poison magic, and the Dark Night Wolf has extended dark magic.

It is an evolution in which the individual status does not increase much, but the command skills such as command, leadership, bird's eye view, and eagle's eye view were greatly improved.

Of course, this doesn't mean that his status won't increase at all. He'll become a Lord-class magic beast with a threat level of B after all. However, it's quite weak compared to wolf-type magic beast's evolution into an Inferno Wolf or a Valkyrie Wolf, which both specialize in close combat.

Fran would have to fight much stronger enemies in the future. At that time, it might be difficult to even cover for her from behind if he continued as he was now.

Perhaps, that's what Urushi felt when we were in the Royal Capital.

That's why he wanted to become even stronger.

I guess Fran can understand how Urushi feels. If she had been told, 『You won't get stronger even if you evolve, but you will gain the ability to command other black cats』 she would never consent to it.

That's why she decided to watch over him and not saying anything to Urushi who had become reckless.

『Fran, how was Urushi?』

「Doing his best」

『I know that, but it seems like you had a hard time huh?』

「Nn... The opponent was quite strong」

When Fran told me the details of the battle, it seemed that Urushi had made a few mistakes. Their opponent was a magic beast with hard scales like a lizard and a body like a gorilla.

Fran stalled it with her sword techniques and magic, and Urushi bit it on the neck from behind, but even that blow didn't kill the magic beast. And Urushi was almost caught by it.

It was a typical brutish enemy that specialized in strength and defense. Urushi would have been able to defeat it without taking any damage by wearing it down with magic from a distance, but it would take a lot of time. It was better for him to support Fran and let her give the finishing blow. However, Urushi wanted to put a stop to it by himself.

Maybe, he has hope for his predatory absorption skills. But he has become too reckless this time.

『Urushi...』

「Woof...」



Don't look so dejected. I could see the frustration all over Urushi's face. This is the first time this easygoing wolf has ever been this depressed, isn't it?

「Master, Urushi will become stronger. So please wait a little longer」

「Woof!」

『... Haah, I understand, so don't look at me like that. I also understand Urushi's feelings』

I can only stay on this pedestal and watch over them. Now that I'm in this state, I can understand how Urushi feels. I want to fight alongside Fran too. I'm sure it's the same for me and Urushi.

『... However, don't be too reckless okay?』

「Nn. I understand」

「Woof!」

That's a good answer.

『Ah——』

《Analysis is complete. Proceeding with the repairs. Until the restoration is complete, the main personality will go into a dormant state, and all contact with the outside world will be cut off》

『What?』

Oioi, I haven't heard anything about this! I mean, oh jeez, the pedestal is starting to glow!

〈The repair is expected to be completed in approximately 150 days〉

『F-fran! It looks like I'll be leaving you for a while!』

「Master?」

「Woof?」

『During the repair, I will not be able to speak with you! It's supposed to be done in about 150 days! Sorry! I didn't expect it to be this soon!』

「Master!」

「Woof woof!」

『Good luck with your training! But be careful! Don't be reckless! Get along with Urushi! Also, listen carefully to what Amanda says——』

And that's when I lost consciousness.

# Chapter 501: True Prologue - Top Parts

I wondered how long I had been here.

I moaned at the unbearable pain that assaulted my entire body and looked around with hazy eyes for help. Aah, the tears I've shed, pooling at the corners of my eyes, are so disturbing...

I could see that my hands, which were stretched out to the sky for no reason, were sticky with the bright red blood that had flowed from me.

「Guh... Argh... Help...!」

Why am I in this mess...! Guh, It hurts...! I wish it could be more comfortable...

「Aahh...」

Huh? It's not hurting so much anymore? The pain and burning heat that had been gnawing at me from my bones suddenly eased. It's rather, cold...?

I've heard that it's worse if I can't feel any pain in these situations.

Aah, maybe it's time.

When I thought about it, I felt that my body had relaxed.

My grudge towards the car that hit me, or the safety of the child I saved, or the company that will be gone after I'm gone, and other unnecessary thoughts have completely disappeared from my mind.

What I am feeling right now is only relief.

「...Aah...」

I can't even move my mouth. But that's better if that means I won't be suffering anymore.

Aah, so this is the end of me huh. My field of vision turns completely white, and a sense of being liberated surrounds me as if I'm floating in the air. I didn't feel any pain at all, and it seems I can just get up and start walking normally.

「I'm dead... huh...?」

『That's right, if we don't do something with you, you might die』

「... Umm?」

『But what if I told you there was a way to save you?』

Is this hallucination? I had never heard these voices before, but it sounded so clear. It was as if a woman was whispering in my ear.

And what's with that old-fashioned way of speaking?

『I know how you feel, but this is not a hallucination. I'm here to save you』

A hallucination that says they weren't a hallucination... Haha, maybe it's just me that doesn't want to die so badly.

『I've told you that I'm not a hallucination. Well, it can't be helped then, so how about this?』

Snap

I heard the sound of fingers being snapped, then my field of view changed again.

「Eh?」

「I welcome you to my realm」

I was supposed to be lying on the ground, but before I knew it, I was sitting on the floor. I couldn't help but look around me.

The white space around me remained the same, but before I knew it, a small island had appeared in this endless space.

An island about the size of a schoolyard. In the center of it stands a solemn building made of stone. I don't know how to describe it, but it's... A temple? Yes, it was indeed a temple. I've never seen one in person, but I'm guessing it's something like the Parthenon in Greece.

I was sitting right in front of the temple.

And it wasn't just the ground and the temple that suddenly appeared.

「How is it? Do you still insist on calling me a hallucination?」

A woman stood in front of the entrance to the temple.

There were plenty of things that caught my eyes, such as her strange outfit and hairstyle. But the first thing that struck me was a feeling of amazement,  
「She's so Beautiful」

She had a pure Japanese face, but it was surprisingly well-rounded. Not only that, but I could also sense a kind of inviolable Godliness from her.

It's not just simple beauty, but an inhuman beauty, as if an angel had taken up residence in a statue of a Goddess and started to move.

I gulped and looked at the woman's face for a moment, then finally I looked at her whole body.

Just like her face, her figure was also like a Japanese woman. However, it was not like the old-fashioned ones. Her kimono was not the type of kimono with a long hem like a twelve-layered kimono, but rather the type

of kimono worn by Kunoichi in a manga. To put it simply, she looked like she was cosplaying.

It was thin, form-fitting, and had a long slit. It's a design that could be called cheesy, but it looks mysterious just because this woman is wearing it.

The kimono is jet-black, just like her long hair and eyes, but the edges and the obi are unified with vermillion.

「Come」

「Eh?」

A woman pulls my hand and helps me stand. That soft, warm feeling was definitely not a hallucination.

「You're not... a hallucination?」

「Yes, So you finally understand huh? Well, this isn't my true form. This is a mixture of my Divinity and your image of me」

「I-in other words?」

「This is a temporary form of the Goddess in your head. It is easier to talk to you this way」

So, she's saying that's the image of Goddess I have in my head? A beautiful woman in a thin costume. Hmm, I'd like to say something about my vulgarity.

「So you're a Goddess...?」

「I am the one in charge of the netherworld and reincarnation. In your sense, I am the Goddess of the underworld」

「Goddess of the underworld...? L-like Hades? No, she looks like from Japan, so, Enma-sama? or Izanami?」

「You're right, and also wrong. But let's not talk about my Divinity for now. Your current situation was more important」

Aah, by the way, what's happened to me? No, the Goddess of the Underworld is right in front of me, so I must be dead, right? But I think she said something about there being a way for me to be saved...?

「Well, it's up to you to decide if you want to be saved or not, but I also have a favor to ask of you」

「A favor...? From a Goddess to me?」

「Yes. Will you at least listen to me?」

「Y-yes」

「That's good, then come with me」

「Ah, wait a minute...」

The Goddess of the Underworld turns herself around and walks into the temple. Is that a place that I can enter? Isn't it a sacred place...

「Hey, what are you doing, come」

「Y-yes」

She said I could come in. I hurried after her. And then I was met with more shock.

「Welcome. I am the Goddess of the Silver Moon」

「Fufu, and I am the Goddess of Chaos」

Two beautiful women, no less so than the Goddess of the Underworld, were waiting for me.

# Chapter 502: True Prologue - Bottom Parts

The Goddess of the Underworld invited me to enter the temple, where I found two extremely beautiful women waiting for me.

Their appearances might be described as a western compared to the Goddess of the Underworld.

The woman who called herself the Goddess of the Silver Moon was, as her name implied, a Goddess with beautiful silvery-white hair, pure white skin, and golden eyes. Every time she moved lightly, her silver hair would sway and shimmer. Her expression was full of motherly love and compassion, and she looked exactly as one would expect a Goddess to look.

The Goddess of Chaos on the other hand had a mischievous expression on her face, she had a different kind of beauty than the Goddess of Silver Moon. She had beautiful crimson eyes that seem to see through everything. Her glossy brown skin was clear and beautiful and that made me want to touch it. Her silver hair has a slightly lighter shine than the Goddess of the Silver Moon. Or should I call it an ashen silver? However, her hair color was suitable for her brown skin.

Is the beauty of these Goddesses and their outfits that look like they're just wrapped in thin cloth based on my imagination too? If so, my imagination has done a good job.

「Umm...」

「These two are my colleagues. And they're the ones who were looking for you. Well, I'm just a helper here, and they're the ones in charge」



Then I talked with these three Gods.

To my surprise, they were not the Gods from Earth. So where did they come from? The answer was another world. A world that was different from the Earth. They were the Gods who created and manage that world.

But that was not what surprised me. Of course, I was surprised by the fact that there was another world and that I had met Gods, but what they told me next surprised me even more than anything else.

「With my power, it is possible for your soul alone to cross over to our world」

They were also former Gods of Earth, so they have the power to interfere with Earth slightly. The Goddess of the Underworld in particular can summon those who are on the verge of death.

「Former Gods of Earth? No, rather than that, another world...? I'll be reincarnated into another world...?」

「You might be right, it's close to that」

「Umm...But why?」

「Well well, take your time. We'll explain that matter too」

Well, it was natural for me to wonder, because there was no way I would be reincarnated for free. If I were to be reincarnated into another world, there must be a mission that I have to fulfill.

They showed me an image of the world under their control and about the battles between Gods while explaining what I should do.

I will be reincarnated into a sword and save the Divine Beast called Fenrir who had been infected by the Evil God's pieces within him. I was told that all I had to do was to fight and defeat any magic beast, but it wouldn't be that easy. They also told me that as an Earthling I could repel the Evil God's control...

「I want you to save that child. I beg of you」

「Umm... I'll be reincarnated as a sword huh...? Moreover, my memories will also be erased?」

「We're not going to completely erase your memories, we're just going to seal it temporarily. You'll go insane if you suddenly become a sword after all」

「Mostly, it will be only your memories of the deaths of friends or acquaintances, and the accident that caused your death」

「Also, the memories of emotion and sorrow, which may have a great influence over your personality」

「Other than that, the memories of your first act of sexual intercourse or encounter with the opposite sex will also be sealed」

In other words, the memories that remain strong, and the memories that are deeply connected to the core of my being, will be sealed.

「If you get used to having a body of a sword, and it is judged that you will no longer go crazy when your memories return, it will be returned. Without this, I don't know what will happen to you when you join the circle of reincarnation as a human again after all」

「Umm, what will happen if I die in another world? Will I die if my sword body breaks?」

「You will rejoin the circle of reincarnation of Earth. And not only that, it'll be the same when you have completed the mission」

They told me that I wouldn't be reincarnated in another world, but back on Earth again. But a little bit of preferential treatment will be given to me. Well, I wouldn't have any memories at that time though.

「Umm, what will happen if I refuse to be reincarnated?」

「You don't have to be so scared. We won't punish you. You'll simply go back to the reincarnation cycle, and we'll just look for the next candidate」

Apparently, I'm not the first person whose soul was pulled into this place. However, they refused the idea because they would be reincarnated as a sword.

I'm anxious and scared. But I had already decided on my answer.

「...Okay. I'm willing to be reincarnated」

「Is that fine with you?」

「Are you sure?」

「Yes, I was dead anyway, and I also want to see another world. Besides, as long as I fulfill my mission, I won't be of any use to you, right?」

「Yeah」

「Ah, could I also ask you to erase the data on my computer? But would a God listen to such a silly request of mine...」

「I know, just leave it to us」

The Goddess also provided excellent after-sales service huh. They said that they would also erase the horrible memories of the poor girl I rescued that caused me to be hit by a car and being killed, the data on my home computer, and get rid of my treasured books.

But that wasn't the reason why I decided to do this you know? Although I'll become a sword, being reincarnated with cheat ability was a man's romance right? Also, the reward of being able to be happy in the next life is great. That's how far the Gods are willing to go for me——

「Well then, let me introduce you to these two people as well」

As she was preparing to introduce someone, two new figures appeared in front of me. ??. The reason for the "???" is because I can't recognize one of

the figures very well.

「It is a pleasure to meet you. I am the Goddess of Wisdom」

「Nice to meet you. I am Futsunushi. I am the God of Swords」

「Y-yes, nice to meet you two」

The one who claimed to be the Goddess of Wisdom had a neutral beauty so I couldn't tell if she was male or female. She had long, silky blond hair and slender, and thin-framed round glasses. Her thin figure was wrapped in a kind of hunting robe that made it difficult to tell her shape.

Maybe this God is also based on my image. She wears glasses because she's the Goddess of Wisdom huh? Yeah, just like my image of her.

However, the other God was really bizarre.

「F-futsunushi-sama? You have a name?」

The other Gods don't say their names. Futsunushi was a famous Japanese Deity in his own right after all. He should have been the God of Swords.

「Moreover, your appearance is.....」

Futsunushi figure could only be described as a black shadow. His figure looks mysterious as if darkness had congealed into a human form. What's wrong with my image of him? But it seemed that this God hasn't taken an image from my mind.

「He is the only God among us who has a name. In the battle against the Evil Gods, he summoned some of his Divinity that he had left behind on Earth, and by playing an active role, he was once again bound by the name he had abandoned」

Come to think of it, when I was shown the images of the battle between the Gods and the Evil Gods, there was a God who summoned a giant sword and wielded it.

When Gods came over to a new world, they discarded their old names and were reborn as new Gods. In the first place, they were not a single Deity, but a mixture of Deities from various Gods who were interested in the new world.

However, to defeat the Evil God, the God of Swords had to use his Divinity as Futsunushi, which was only a part of himself, to the fullest. Because of this, the God of Swords was fixed as Futsunushi, instead of being free like many Gods who were not bound by a name.

「Since my existence is fixed, I cannot easily change my form. However, a human soul might not be able to bear the image of my true form. Therefore, pardon me for being in this form」

The other Gods don't have names, so they can easily change their forms, but Futsunushi couldn't do that.

「The Divine Sword in which you are going to be reincarnated is the kin of the God of Swords and the Goddess of Wisdom. Therefore, you will need the cooperation of both of them」

After that, I was shown by the Goddess what kind of memory that I can keep. Ugh, this was so embarrassing.

It was better at first. Memories of pain and negative emotions when I died. Memories of favorite movies and VR games that I was addicted to. Many of them were scenes that moved me.

However, it started to get more and more into my personal side of things...

「Ah, this is a memory of a popular movie that you saw on your first date, it remains strong in you」

Even now, when I watch the reruns, I get sweet and sour feelings and memories of those days come flooding back.

「This is a memory of separation from the dog you loved so much」

It was Fran, a crossbreed dog that my parents had bought. It looked like a white mop. One day, I got a phone call from my mom saying that it had died, and I flew back to my parents' house. The least I can say is that it lived a long life. For a while, I couldn't help but cry when I saw a dog that looked like it.

「This is a memory of the first time you experienced skinship with a woman. You made many mistakes, and it remains as a bitter memory」

Wha! Oh, God! This memory is——!

From there on, it was torture for real. Just kill me already! Well, I was already dead though! I was so tortured that I had to do some flippant commentary by myself.

You still remember the first time you went to a cabaret club huh? No no, that was just my senpai taking me there! Aaaaah! You don't have to show me every single memory of my favorite sexy DVD or anything!

Afterward, when I was mentally too exhausted, they used their power on me, and my soul was transferred into the sword. I was left on my own just like that.

The Goddess of Chaos called out to me as I stand in front of a beautiful sword with an angel-like emblem on its hilt.

「The next time you see us will be when you have completed your mission. Well, if there are no irregularities, that is」

「What do you mean by “irregularities”?」

「Well, I wonder? But you already know by what the words imply right? We're not an all-knowing and all-powerful being you know? There are always some kind of irregularities」

Is that true?

「But if you ever meet us before then, we Gods will pretend that we've never met before」

「Eh? Why?」

「How much do you think your memories about us God will shake your memory? It would be bad if the seal was broken, right?」

「I-I see」

Is it possible that even a seal placed by Gods could be broken? No, the fact that they're not all-knowing and all-powerful beings mean that it is possible.

「Well, I've done the best I could. Especially the system that controls your power, which is my best work yet. You can play with it as much as you want to」

「Eh, play with it?」

「It's important you know? Certainly, the mission is important. But it's also important for you to enjoy the other world, right? Have some fun」

「Y-yes!」

「I'm supposed to seal your memory here so you won't remember this when you wake up. So, good luck」

「Y-yes, thank you very much!」

「Ufufufu. Well then, have a good chaos!」

# Chapter 503: Master, Fran, and Urushi

「Urushi! Now!」

「Grroaa!」

Urushi, who has become much larger than his original body by his body enlargement skill, rushed towards the giant beast wielding a hammer-like tail. The gray-silver fur on his back makes his movement look like a shooting star.

By looking at Urushi made me remember.

『He's so big...』

His size was probably more than twice as big as before. From the tip of his nose to his tail, he was over ten meters long. His body height had also more than doubled, creating a shadow that looked like a large tree.

However, his heavy body did not slow his movement at all. In fact, he was faster due to his increased strength.

Urushi easily closed the distance between them, perfectly avoiding the various attacks that were unleashed. And then there was the giant beast, whose huge limbs were protected by a hard shell—— and he struck the head of the Invisible Death.

It was not enough to kill it, but it seemed to have succeeded in violently hurting its head. The giant beast, who had suffered a mild concussion from Urushi's blow, stopped moving with a stomp on the ground.



This was our chance.

「Let's go!」

『Ou!』

「Haaa!」

Fran jumped out to the sky and swung me from over her head.

「Bughooooh!」

As expected of a magic beast with a threat level of B. It seems that even if it's in a vulnerable state, it won't let us attack it easily.

The crystal-like scales on its entire body stood upside down and shot out in unison toward Fran, who was right above it. In addition to this, it also unleashed a deadly sniper shot.

However, Fran was not panicking and was handling the situation calmly. She didn't even need to use my teleport; she completely dodged its crystals with her defensive movement and sword handling.

In the past, she would not have been able to use the aerial jump continuously with such delicate control. However, it was not difficult for the current Fran.

As for sniping, it was completely offset by the use of her flawless sword techniques. This was also the result of her training. While using her sword skills to intercept the scattered bullets of the scales, she was also able to mix her sword technique into her offense and defense without hesitating.

Fran, who was in midair, was naturally pulled down by gravity and was gradually losing her altitude. The closer she got to the Invisible Death, the more intense the attacks became, but Fran's defense was undisturbed.

「Brilliant Lighting Rush!」

Just like that, Fran went to end this battle at once.

「Yaaa!」

「Bumoooh!」

『That's it!』

The Invisible Death's scales and light magic were blocked by me instead of Fran, who had shifted to focus on attack. It was possible to use dark magic to cancel out the light magic while using telekinesis to prevent the crystal scales from hitting Fran.

Just like that, the full force of Fran's Sword Saint techniques, wrapped in black lightning, cut through the carapace in front of her.

The Invisible Death's tough shell, which was protected by a giant crystal and multiple barriers, was no obstacle for her now.

It's not that the technique was special. It's that Fran, who used the technique, has become stronger.

Fran's black lightning and my multiple deployments of attribute swords shattered the flesh and bone inside its shell, causing it to explode from the inside.

「Shiia!」

「Bumhoooooooooooo.....」

In the end, she thrust me against the exposed magic stone of the Invisible Death and killed it.

It was our complete victory over the Invisible Death, who had given us a lot of trouble in the past. Of course, the experience from that time is still vivid, but more than that, Fran and Urushi's strength has increased.

『Fran, you've become stronger, huh?』

「Master, you're saying it again」

『It can't be helped. I'm happy to see you've grown a lot』

「It's only been a month though」

『But still!』

「I'm not changing like Urushi right?」

『I'm not talking about your appearance! Well, in Urushi's case, he's changed a lot』

「Woof?」

Fran stroked Urushi, who came up to her and his size now was about the size of a cow. I guess the biggest change is his fur.

It had been black with a slight hint of red, but now it had more red with two flowing silver lines on his back. Also, the degree of its fluffiness has increased too.

The frequency in which Fran hugged Urushi had obviously increased.

『But you know, you've definitely grown a lot in such a short amount of time』

「Woof!」

「Nn!」

As we were talking about this, we suddenly heard the inorganic yet somewhat gentle voice of a woman in our head.

〈Obtained multiple skills from the Invisible Death's magic stone. Integration of skills with the same name into higher-level skills have been confirmed〉

「Nn」

It was Announcer-san, who had regained a little of her power. Although she couldn't talk to me like she did when she used her potential release, she seemed to have regained the same level of power as when I first came to this world. The fact that I was able to absorb the power of the Fanatics also seemed to have worked in the right direction.

Announcer-san was also taking over some part of my control, and the load of using magic and telekinesis was considerably reduced.

Another new feature was that Announcer-san's voice can also be heard by Fran now. I've been explaining everything to Fran, but she doesn't seem to fully understand it. She's like a talking spirit inside of me after all.

And yes, I've talked to Fran about the memories I've regained.

It was the memories of the time before I died and became a sword.

Just before the maintenance was finished, I met the Goddess of Chaos again and she explained to me that she returned my memories of the time before and after my reincarnation. She said that if she left the part of my memory that was about to return halfway through, it could have affected the sealing of my other memories.

If all my memories came back at once, I'd go crazy for sure. Well, I guess the worst thing that can happen to me is that I start to remember.

Oh, I'll keep the ecchi (1) part to myself for now. It's too early for Fran. I mean, how should I explain it to her?

My ecchi memories were sealed by the gods because they could have a strong impact on me. I would rather die than have to explain that to Fran myself.

『Anyway, it's been a month since I've been back』

「Nn」

『Your coordination with each other is already perfect huh?』

「Nn. Of course」

「Woof!」

I was quite confused at first. Well, both of us. Fran and Urushi looked so different after all, and my fighting power had also increased with the assistance of Announcer-san.

We had spent the past month perfecting our coordination. The result was this battle.

『Well, it was tough for me right after I woke up though. A lot harder than just practicing our coordination...』

(1) Just in case you're pretending to not know about it, it means sexually explicit lol

# Chapter 504: A Talk with the Goddess of Chaos

Aah—, I wonder what this feeling is...

I felt as if my body was being lifted and liberated from the weight that had been pressing down on me.

Did I slowly ascend from the dark seabed towards the surface? Or from the bottom of a gravity well, towards the weightless space?

Anyway, I felt liberated and exhilarated. It was a strange mixture of the two.

Where am I in the first place?

I couldn't see anything in here. I was in pitch darkness.

What have I been doing all this time?

I feel like I've been asleep for a very long time. However, I didn't feel dull from sleeping for too long. On the contrary, my whole body feels light, although I am aware that I am a bit drowsy.

「Hey, I'd like to have a little talk, have you woke up yet Sleepy-head-san?」

『Eh?』

While I was in a daze, I heard a woman's voice out of nowhere. It was a strangely sexy and naughty voice.

Moreover, it sounds familiar.

『Goddess of Chaos, -sama?』

「I just thought I'd tell you a few things before you fully wake up」

It was the Goddess of Chaos. I couldn't see her, but there was no way I could forget her voice.

「First, I'm going to unseal some of your memories」

『Eh? Really?』

She suddenly said that to me. But wouldn't I go crazy if my memories came back?

「It seems that you were very concerned about your lack of memory, and leaving this sealed would have negative effects on you」

『What kind of negative effects?』

「When you have a memory that you can't seem to remember, you can't help but be curious and try to remember it somehow, right?」

『Yeah, certainly』

That may stimulate the unsealing of some memories in an unexpected part. As a result, there is a possibility that the sealing of other memories will also be affected.

「You don't want to go crazy like the Fanatics, do you?」

The Fanatics said something like that. They say that it is dangerous to have a human soul in the body of a sword. Well, I can kind of understand that, and it also reminds me of the Fanatics' madness. I certainly didn't want to be like that.

「So, I decided to unseal not all of them, but the ones that I think can be returned at this point. So, shall we get started then」

『Eh? Wai—』

Before I could reply to the Goddess, my mind was flooded with various memories.

『Guh...』

It's an indescribable feeling. It doesn't hurt, but it's weird. I wonder what it is. It's like the moment when I cannibalized the fanatics. Well, this is somewhat better though.

What came back to me were the memories of when I was a human and when I was hit by a car. The identity of the three mysterious women who had remained in a corner of my memory. And the memory of the scene where my memory was sealed by the three Goddesses.

It's not like all of my memories had returned, but I remember the main part of what I was most curious about. It was the reason why I can't remember anything.

Well, it also brought back some humiliating memories though. It was about the shaming play by the Goddess...

It was just an embarrassing memory for me, as I don't have any special sexual preferences.

「What's wrong?」

『N-no, it's nothing. Just because I've regained some of my memories, is it okay for me to continue to act as before after I wake up?』

「Yeah, rest assured」

Then, I should collect more magic stones for Fenrir huh

「But still... you were hit by a car while trying to save a stranger's child and agreed to be transferred to help a dying child in this world... You must really like kids huh」

『I don't like the way you say that! It makes me sounds like a lolicon!』



「Ufufu, that was just a joke. Well, I think it's time huh?」

『?』

「It's time for you to wake up」

『So, the repairs are done?』

Come to think of it, it's been a long time since I've been so clearly awake. That is, not since I left Fran in front of the pedestal. And yet, it didn't feel like an instant. I know I've been asleep for a long time. Maybe that's why I think it's been so long.

「Ufufu, say hi to the black cat-chan too. Well then, have a good chaos」

That's the second time I've heard that! Is that the Goddess of Chaos' signature line huh?

〈60 seconds left until the individual named Master is to be fully awakened〉

『Hmm?』

When I thought the presence of the Goddess of Chaos had gone, I heard a strange voice, inorganic but also warm. I think I've heard this voice before...

Uuummm...

『Ah! Announcer-san!』

〈Yes〉

『Eh? You can talk?』

〈Conversation is possible for now only. But it will soon return to normal. Right now, I was borrowing power as an emergency measure when the main personality was dormant〉

『Hmm? Main personality?』

Do you mean me? So, while I'm asleep, the power I normally use is given to Announcer-san allowing her to have a little talk with me for now?

〈By replacing the individual named Master, the provisional named Announcer will be deprived. So, before that... Master, you have my thanks once again〉

『Eh?』

〈Once again, I have the opportunity to wield power for the benefit of my registered wielder〉

『But, you will be deprived right?... That means you're going asleep just like before...』

〈In the future, the probability that the Provisional named Announcer will regain its power with Fenrir is 77%. Also, some of its blocked privileges have been restored〉

『In other words, you have recovered a little huh?』

〈Yes. By assimilating and absorbing the virtual personality of the Discarded Divine Sword, I have regained some of my power, which had been reserved only for necessary calculation before〉

Umm, did my cannibalizing of the Fanatics work out for the better then?

〈It's time〉

『Announcer-san! When I had restored Fenrir's power, I'll bring you back too! I'll do my best!』

〈Thank you——〉

Then a change came to my vision.

A ray of light shone into my blackened vision, and as if it had exploded, it swelled and dispelled the darkness.

I was able to look directly at it because I don't have a retina. Well, if I had been a normal creature, I would surely have damaged my eyes, wouldn't I?

The color returns.

What I saw was the blue of the sky and the green of the plains.

And a girl is standing in the middle of it.

Black hair, healthy skin, a body without unevenness, distinctive black cat ears, a cat tail, and big eyes showing her determined will.

『...Fran』

「Master?」

# Chapter 505: Things that Won't Change

The first thing I saw when I woke up was a girl standing in front of me.

Black hair, healthy skin, a body without unevenness, distinctive black cat ears, a cat tail, and big eyes displaying her determined will.

She was my partner, Fran.

『Fran』

「Master?」

『Yea』

Fran muttered the word as if to confirm, and I replied in a slightly quiet voice.

I wonder, why my heart was so full that I couldn't get the right words out of my mouth. I felt like I just slept and woke up, so I shouldn't have experienced the passage of time so much...

This must be the feeling of nostalgia. If I had tear glands, I would have cried.

「Master...」

『Fran』

「Master!」

Fran rushed over and hugged me while I was still stuck on the pedestal. It was more than a hug, but she's giving it her all.

If the sword being hugged wasn't me, her hug might have destroyed it. And if it were an average person, she might have killed them. That's how powerful her hug was.

However, I was rather happy that this lack of restraint seemed to express Fran's loneliness. And it meant that she missed me so much.

「Master...」

『Fran, I'm back』

「Nn...」

I used my telekinesis to gently wipe the tears from the corners of Fran's eyes. Then Fran rubbed her head against my handle as if she was trying to be sweet.

『Fran, if you rub your head against me that hard, your head will get hurt』

「I'm fine」

『Fran...』

I was in the middle of stroking Fran's head while she was spoiling me.

Growl—...

『Hmm?』

A mysterious sound echoed about.

But it doesn't seem to be a mystery or anything. 'Fran-san, you must be hungry, aren't you?' Even though this is an emotional reunion scene?

Grooowl—!

「...I'm hungry」

Even after five months, Fran was still the same Fran, huh? Should I be happy that she hadn't changed, or lament that she hadn't grown up? Well, there is almost no change in her appearance.

Fran was holding onto me with her right hand and rubbing her stomach with her left. Then she quickly cringed and opened her mouth to me.

「Master」

『Wh-what is it?』

「Give me curry」

『Cu-curry, huh?』

「Nn!」

『Woof!』

「O-okay—... eh?」

『Woof woof!』

Before I knew it, Urushi was here too. He seemed to have come out of Fran's shadow. However, his appearance had changed drastically.

He was basically the same Urushi. A black wolf with lustrous fur. However, his fur color and the presence he emitted have changed greatly.

Originally, the red color was just mixed in with the fur on his neck, but now it was all over his body. Dark red was mixed in at the tips of his neck, knees, and tail. In addition, the fur on his back had silver lines now.

Only by looking at him, I knew that he had evolved. He had become so flashy.

『Urushi, you——』

Grrroowll—

「Master... Curry...」

『Ah yes, sorry! Look, I'll bring it out now! Urushi wanted the spicy one, right?』

「I want a big bowl」

「Woof woof!」

『Then, we'll use ten toppings for the curry. And for Urushi, I'll make the curry ten thousand times spicier』

After receiving the curry I served, Fran and Urushi began to devour it as if it was their first meal in several weeks. The curry, which I was worried might be a bit too much, was quickly filling their stomachs.

When was the last time she had eaten? But I'm sure I had cooked a good amount of food in the Forest of Exhaustion and stored it for Fran in Dimensional Storage...

『Aah! Co-could it be, the skill-sharing didn't work?』

If that were the case, she would have lost my dimensional storage and cooking skills. And it would have been difficult to even survive on this plain.

『F-Fran... You must have experienced a lot of difficulties...』

「Nn? The skill worked」

『Eh? The skill-sharing worked?』

「Nn」

『Then, the reason you wanted to have that much curry is...』

「Fran-chan and Urushi ate up all the curry in the first two months」

『Ooh, so that's why...』

I usually kept her under control. If there was no one to stop her, she would always eat her favorite foods. But I'm rather surprised that her body hadn't changed!

But I'm glad Fran hasn't gotten fat after all this time!

『And then, Amanda, how are you doing?』

She had been there from the beginning, so I called out to Amanda, who was smiling at me behind Fran and Urushi.

「I'm fine. But rather than that, why don't you tell us what had happened?」

『You need to know that there's very little that I can tell you, okay? But I'd rather want to know what had happened while I was gone』

「Are you sure? This is gonna be a long story」

『I'll leave it to you. Fran won't be able to do anything for a while after all』

「Mogu mogu!」

「Wouf wouf!」

「Yeah, I guess so...」



# Chapter 506: Side: Amanda

Fran-chan was depressed for a while when Master was gone. Her face didn't show it, but her voice and eyes were lacking strength.

At night, while being buried in Urushi's fur, she stared up at the stars in a daze, just like a child her age would act.

But even so, after a few days, she was slowly getting back on track.

「Let's do our best okay? You wanted to surprise Master when he comes back, right?」

「Nn!」

「I'll be more strict on you then!」

「Just like I wished」

Fran-chan's determination was genuine. In fact, I even scolded her several times for being a little too enthusiastic.

When I came back to Alessa, my equipment was often badly damaged. Not only that, but the sword I had procured for her had broken, and she was in the process of healing her injuries.

Apparently, they had been challenging high-ranked magic beasts and were being defeated multiple times. They also had recklessly fought a series of unreasonable battles.

She was not a child who will stop, no matter what I say, and I have no right to force her to stop. Fran-chan is already a full-fledged adventurer. She can make her own decisions and take responsibility for everything she has done.

Even if she gets badly injured or even dies from her training. It's hard for me to not be strict with her though because I myself have become stronger through repeated reckless training.

All I can do is to come to these plains more often and train her until she almost dies.

However, a little over a month later, something strange happened to Fran-chan and Urushi. They began to lose their spirits.

There was also a change in their diet. They used to eat curry rice with brown sauce, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. However, this was reduced to one meal a day, then one meal every three days, and finally, there was nothing left to eat.

It was Fran-chan's favorite dish, but it was difficult to make and the ingredients were very hard to find. Fran-chan seems to be a good cook, but she doesn't have the ingredients.

In the end, she managed to cover it up by getting some of the spices for the curry from Alessa and sprinkling them on the meat.

If there had been an infinite supply of curry, Fran-chan and Urushi would have been able to make more progress in their training.

「Well, can you dodge this then?」

「Haa!」

「Good! Yes, just like that! You have to read your enemy's aim, and be careful of their feint」

「Nn!」

Fran-chan's movements were getting better and sharper every day. I may be wielding my whip like it was nothing, but inside, I was covered in a cold sweat.

After training without magic and only using weapons in the mock battles, I decided that it was almost time to let her give it a shot.

The training between Fran and I was not limited to mock battles. Fighting magic beasts was also part of our training.

Her opponent was magic beasts with a threat level of D. Sometimes, she handicaps herself and uses her sword techniques only, and sometimes she would only use her magic. That's how she fights and defeats them. My presence here was just insurance in case of an emergency.

There was something interesting about her fights though. Sometimes I thought she was in a daze, but suddenly she was moving much better than before. I can only assume that someone had given her some advice, but there was no sign that she was talking to anyone.

Fran-chan said it was a sword spirit, but I couldn't feel any signs of a spirit around. It was hard to tell from her straight face, but it seems that Fran-chan was able to make jokes.

Well, maybe she's just adjusting her movements while organizing various things in her head.

「You broke your sword again huh~」

「Nn...」

The problem, for now, was her weapon.

There were a few weapons in Fran-chan's dimensional storage, as well as a magic sword. However, they were unable to withstand Fran-chan's power. Even the strongest magic sword made of phantasm pyroxene stone was easily shattered in just two weeks.

So, I started selling the magic beast materials that Fran-chan defeated at Alessa to buy some swords for her, but there was no way I could get a sword worthy of Fran-chan so quickly.

But it was also good training for her to learn how to hold back when using a weaker sword. The situation just continued like that until Alistair showed up.

Alistair——A Divine level blacksmith suddenly appeared in the Plains of the Demon Wolf in early winter when it began to snow. Because she was using a powerful stealth magic tool, she suddenly appeared near the pedestal without us even noticing. Honestly, I was startled by the mysterious woman wearing high-quality equipment with a surprisingly high-level fighting prowess of her own.

At first, I thought she was a member of the special forces of Raidos Kingdom, so I couldn't help but take a stance. The other side seemed to feel the same way, and if Fran-chan hadn't intervened, we might have ended up killing each other.

Surprisingly, she was a good person to talk to, and we quickly became friends.

Alistair then made a sword for Fran-chan made of heavy magic steel. And as expected of a Divine-ranked blacksmith, she was able to create such a work of art in a week. Unintentionally, I even asked her to make a whip for me.

She then promised to make it for me as long as I gathered the materials by myself, so I'll be working hard to gather them.

Alistair was away from the Plains of the Demon Wolf now at my request. In addition to my whip, there was also something else I wanted her to make. Alistair seemed to have been thinking about the same thing, and she accepted without a second thought.

And then, a few days of training passed. Urushi lost his right leg and his right eye due to his recklessness. It was as if he was in a hurry for something.

And finally, the day had come.

「Shii! Just like that!」

「Haa!」

「Nnha! Tho-!」

She used her sword to flick off my whip technique and then ducked through the gap in the whip to get close to me. I pulled the whip back and threw a kick, but she ducked and thrust perfectly. The last attack she used must have been the dagger technique.

The perfect combination of sword skills and sword techniques, without any delay, and her ability to observe one's surroundings. In addition, she could control her body-enhancing skills with precision. All of this was on full display during her attacks.

「That's the first time you managed to get a perfect thrust in huh~」

「Nn! But it's not over yet」

「Fuh. Then, let's go for the next one!」

「Nn!」

I'm really looking forward to the result of her training.

Another month or so had passed after that. Urushi had never given up and continued to fight with all his might even after losing his legs and eyes, and then he had achieved a surprising evolution.

「Fran-chan, what's wrong? Aren't you going to train?」

Unusually, Fran-chan had been awake since sunrise. And she was sitting in front of the pedestal with her knees in her arms, refusing to move. Beside her, the newly evolved Urushi was sitting in a well-behaved position.

When I asked Fran-chan, who seemed happy for some reason, what she was doing, her answer was a surprise.

「Nn. Master is coming back」

「Eh? Really?」

「Master, 'is said' to be back in about 150 days, and today is exactly 150 days after he left」

「Is said? Are you talking about the sword spirit's voice?」

I can't hear it, but apparently, she really was hearing the voice of the sword spirit. She said that it was not Master, but a woman with a funny name of Announcer-san.

She doesn't respond every time, but it seems that she gives her information about Master's current situation and sometimes helps with her training.

「She says he's almost back, but she doesn't know the exact time. It may be two hours, or maybe two days」

「Eh? two days?」

「Nn」

Fran-chan nodded her head and went back to staring at the pedestal.

「Are you going to wait...?」

「Nn」

She stared back at me with an angry look as if saying 'Naturally'. It seems that she really intends to keep waiting for Master.

「I-I'll wait with you too...」

「Nn」

Master, please get back here quickly!

# Chapter 507: Side: Fenrir

The little wolf of my kin seems to be worrying about something.

Not only did he want to be useful to them, but he also wanted to be able to continue to fight alongside them.

That's why he was worried, he wanted to become stronger, but it was difficult for him.

「Woof Woof——Kyain!」

Today too, he challenged a superior magic beast and suffered a painful attack.

I know what he's trying to do. He's trying to take in the power of a stronger magic beast using his predatory absorption skill to achieve his evolution.

His way of triggering it wasn't entirely wrong.

After all, some individuals could evolve abnormally by taking in the blood and flesh of a stronger opponent. Moreover, Urushi was also a unique individual. So, there was a possibility.

But he couldn't do so in his current state. The blood and flesh of a magic beast with a mere threat level of C was insufficient. Urushi was stronger than them, and it's not because of his level or compatibility, there's not that much difference between the races after all.

If Urushi wanted to trigger a new evolution, he would need to take in a large amount of blood and flesh from magic beasts with a threat level of A or higher, and at least one of each type.

No, I think Urushi himself knows that. He was being reckless in his search for a stronger magic beast, and finally, tragedy struck him.

「Gyauuuf!」

「Urushiii!」

Urushi let out a scream of grief that we had never heard before and was blown to the sky. The opponent that attacked him was a two-legged magic beast that was over 15 meters long. Well, I don't think I would call it two-legged since it was using its tail to support its body though.

It was a variety of the dragon species called an Evil dragon. It's classified as an earth dragon with retracted wings, hard scales, tight muscles, and overwhelming physical attack power. In particular, its arm's attacks were as powerful as an attack from a magic beast with a threat level of B.

Previously, Urushi was having a hard time fighting against a brute lizard, which was a lower species of this magic beast, so there is no way that the current Urushi can defeat this magic beast.

Urushi, who had been blown 50 meters away, was convulsing with his body bleeding profusely. His internal organs were spilling out of his stomach, and both of his right legs were torn off. His spine was probably broken as well. Half of his face was crushed, and this might have affected his brain.

He was probably unconscious. Urushi was unable to escape from the scene.

All I can do now is watch over Urushi, my kin. I'm just a Divine Beast with a soul on the verge of extinction after all.

「Haaa!」

「Bughuuh!」

It was Fran who stepped in to help.

She struck with a series of lightning magic to draw the attention of the Evil Dragon, and then cast a recovery spell on Urushi. However, his wounds



were not even recovering with the amount of recovery magic that Fran had cast.

「Why!? Greater Heal!」

「Wu, wuuf...」

「No good...」

When Urushi regained consciousness, she used regeneration together with her healing magic, but the recovery was still slow.

「Bugwooooh!」

「Kuh... Urushi, sorry!」

「Wo, woof...」

Fran carried Urushi and continued to distance herself from the dragon. And after a few minutes of running, Fran set Urushi down and tried to heal him again.

The potions and other items that Master had given to them were all used up, but Urushi was not completely healed yet. This was not the fault of Fran or the others. The Evil Dragon was a power fighter, but it is also good at handling magic for a dragon. It is particularly good at life magic, which strengthens itself, but its life magic also includes a technique that blocks its opponent's recovery.

It seems that magic was carried from that arm's blow.

As a result, Urushi ended up losing his right hind leg and his right eye.

If Master had been there, the outcome would have been different, but with just Fran and Urushi, it would have been fortuitous that they survived.

「Urushi... Sorry」

「Woof woof!」

「Nn...」

「Woof!」

「I understand, I'm sure you'll evolve someday」

Even in such a state, Urushi did not lose his desire to evolve. Rather, he became even more determined, didn't he?

Urushi wholeheartedly desired to become even stronger for the sake of his Master.

「Kyaiin!」

「Grrrr...!」

「Wo, woof...」

With one eye and one leg missing, the sight of Urushi pushing himself into a fierce battle looked, Divine.

He struggled while looking up to the heavens as he walked forward, he reminded me of myself in the past. I absorbed the pieces of the Evil God, and while being consumed by its power, I continued to fight for my creator, until I finally exceeded my limits and collapsed.

That's why I couldn't stand the sight of Urushi getting hurt and being worn out day by day. It had been about 30 days since Urushi lost his legs and eyes. So, I involuntarily call out to Urushi.

Sorry Master, this may prolong your restoration. But I need to do this.

『Urushi... You may evolve now』

「Grru...!」

Urushi has reached his evolvable level. He probably knows this himself. That his efforts had not been rewarded.

If he continued like this, he could evolve into the Dark Knight Wolf. But Urushi refused to do so, by struggling to block the magic power that had begun to flow within him.

However, he couldn't continue refusing his evolution, he might lose his life due to the outburst of his magic power after all. Seeing his foolishness, I couldn't help but do something for him.

『But you do have one option...』

「Gurru?」

『...I will give some of my power to you. With it, you can choose a new path』

「Woof!」

『However, that path is full of loneliness』

To receive a part of my power, which is a wolf but also not a wolf, means that Urushi will also be transformed into something that is a wolf but not a wolf too.

He will evolve into a new species that wouldn't exist anywhere else in this world. But that also means that he wouldn't be able to find another member from his new species.

This was an unusual evolution that will affect his whole life. Even though his form is that of a wolf, it goes beyond even that category. Urushi, who was not a Divine Beast, would be truly lonely.

『So, the price of this power is loneliness. It's not like you're going to be left behind by Master or Fran. But you'll be left alone, outside the confines of your species』

「Woof!」

『Are you sure? For the sake of your Master, you're willing to be lonely?』

「Woof...!」

『...I've heard your resolve. So be it. I'll give you power!』

I borrowed some power from Master and shared it with Urushi. This must have put a lot of strain on Master.

However, I was sure that Master would forgive me. I was confident of that. In fact, if I did nothing, he would be rather angry with me.

The magic that Urushi had been blocking was mixed with the power I had given to him. It began to circulate, and I could feel it seeping into his body. His body was being remade, and he was beginning to evolve into a different species.

「Gauuf... Grru...」

Was it painful? But this was not even an ordeal when you're going to become a completely different species.

「Urushi! Are you okay?」

Fran shouted when she saw Urushi, who suddenly began to suffer from a huge amount of magic power after the battle. His voice won't be able to reach the little girl. To Fran, it would appear as if Urushi was in a mysterious state of an outburst.

「Urushi!」

「Grruu...」

Urushi did not lose consciousness or cry out, but simply continued to stand on his knees with all the strength in his body. That's right, if you can't handle something like this, you'll never be able to overcome the many trials that will come your way!

「Ghurrruuuuu!」

And then, he had evolved.

「Ghuuwooooooff!」

The roar of a new Demon Wolf echoed across the moonlit plains. It was the voice of birth, the cry of the soul that signified a farewell to the cradle of his species.

A vicious mixture of black and gold magic rose from his body, which had swollen to the size of a small mountain. His missing hind legs and eyes seemed to have been completely regenerated. His thick limbs stomped on the earth, and his sharp face glared at the darkness.

Originally his fur had a slight red tint to it, but it has probably become even red now. In addition, silver hair grew like a mane on his back.

『Urushi. You have become a new magic beast. Your race now is a Ragnarok Wolf. Abhorred by all other wolves, you are alone in this world. This is must be what you've always wanted』

「Woof!」

『That's a good reply』

In exchange for his loneliness, Urushi has gained great power. I'm sure he will be able to continue to fight alongside Fran and Master now.

「Urushi...? Evolved...?」

「Woof」

「So cool」

「Woof!」

Ah yes. Give him more compliments, Miss Fran. Because that was exactly what Urushi was looking for.

Name: Urushi

Race: Ragnarok Wolf; Demon Wolf; Magic Beast

Status: Normal

Status Level: 62/99

HP: 1834

MP: 1910

STR: 1280

PHY: 480

AGI: 1274

INT: 360

DEX: 290

Magic: 1417

[Skill]

Dark Magic: Lv7, Keen Sense: LvMax, War Cry: Lv3, Stealth: Lv8, Superhuman Strength: Lv3, Shadow Transfer: Lv3, Shadow Dive: LvMax, Shadow Transition: LvMax, Fang Skill: Lv9, Fang Technique: Lv9, Aerial Jump: Lv8, Madness: Lv7, Terror: Lv7, Vigilance: Lv8, Presence Blocking: Lv6, High-Speed Regeneration: Lv3, Herculean Strength: LvMax, Regeneration: LvMax, Lethal Poison Magic: Lv4, Evil Detection: Lv6, Evil Resistance: Lv5, Instant Launch: LvMax, Instant Walk: Lv4, Silencing: Lv6, Abnormal Condition Resistance: Lv6, Spirit Magic: Lv6, Life Detection: LvMax, Mental Resistance: LvMax, Claw Technique: Lv6, Claw Skill: Lv5, Poison Magic: LvMax, Haki: Lv5, Echolocation: LvMax, Roar: LvMax, Magic Resistance: Lv6, Magic Absorption: Lv5, Darkness: LvMax, Dark Magic: LvMax, Lightning Resistance: Lv7, Darkness Nullification, Night Vision, Poison Fang, Fur Strengthening, Regeneration Inhibition, Automatic Recovery, Great Physical Change, Poison Nullification, Split Thinking, Rampage, Magic Control.

[Unique Skill]

Dark Absorption, Predation Recovery.

[Extra Skill]

Predatory Assimilation

[Inherent Skill]

Dimension Fangs, Familial Intimidation, Familial Hatred, Seal Nullification.

[Title]

Kin of Swords, Kin of the Wolf God, The Lonely Beast, The Predator of the Evil, The One and Only.

[Equipment]

Divine Steel Magic Claws, Serpent Dragon Collar

# Chapter 508: Fran and Urushi's Growth

『Well, shall we go then?』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

Right after I woke up, we went to look for some magic beasts in the Plains of the Demon Wolf. I wanted to check my condition and Fran and Urushi's growth.

In my case, a malfunction in a part of me that I didn't understand had been repaired, and in addition, Announcer-san has regained some of her strength.

The current Announcer-san couldn't speak freely, but she seems to answer any questions I had about my condition.

She also said that she will assist me in my magic operations from now on. It will be a little easier for me to control the finer details and use great magic in the future.

I also take a look at the sword in Fran's hand. The sword seems to be made sturdy enough to withstand Fran's reckless use.

Alistair said that it was only a makeshift sword, but it was quite strong.

Name: Heavy Magic Steel Sword

ATK: 480



MP: 80

Durability: 1200

Magic Conductivity: D-

It's like a portrait drawn in five seconds by a professional illustrator, or a snack made quickly from leftovers by a genius cook. From my point of view, it's amazing, but from her point of view, it's nothing.

『Hmmm』

「Master? Is something wrong?」

『No, it's nothing...』

The center of gravity and the length of the blade are made to resemble me. But it gives me mixed feelings too.

I'm sure it was useful to Fran. It has protected her while I was away, watched her growth, and endured her rough usage in silence. Yes, that's a great sword.

But I don't like it. No, let me rephrase it, I'm jealous of this sword. I'm jealous of the sword that looks so much like me that Fran used as a replacement while I was gone.

That's exactly how I feel right now.

『Well, now that I'm back, that sword won't be around for a while』

「Nn. I haven't been able to get serious in a while」

『Ou, I'm on it!』

There is no doubt that Fran has grown a lot. She has earned the title of Big Game Hunter and her skills have increased.

Big Game Hunter, as the name suggested, was a title she got when she defeated a huge opponent. Fran didn't seem to know exactly when she earned it, but Announcer-san told us the details in her place. Apparently, she fought against an Earth Slime, which takes in the earth and becomes huge.

It's a title that will increase her status when she's fighting someone bigger than her, so it can be quite useful. Fran is small after all.

I was also surprised at the growth of her skills. Even without skill-sharing, she was even able to handle Sword Saint Skill and Sword Saint Technique by herself now.

Even though the use of skill-sharing and dealing with high-level skills has sped up their growth, their growth rate was still extraordinary.

I guess it was the result of multiple factors.

She had the talent, to begin with. She had the best training partner, Amanda. In addition, she continued to fight against superior opponents in these Plains of the Demon Wolf.

And she had the mental strength to dive into the rigorous training to make the most of it.

The result was her current growth. However, the true value of her training was not in terms of numbers. But the use of her magic power, which was previously left aside, has been sharpened to a far greater degree.

It only took me one look at her magic to know that. When she used the lower level fire magic to light a fire. Her magic flow when she chanted that technique was surprisingly smooth. Moreover, there were no momentary pauses.

No matter how many times you chant, you won't be able to eliminate the process of concentrating and controlling your magic power. Fran would have had to pause for a moment in the past. That was not necessary now though.

『You've grown a lot huh』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

When I praised Fran, Urushi cried as if to tell me not to forget about him too. His voice came down from far above us. Urushi was now over ten meters tall.

『Of course, I haven't forgotten you. I'm sure you have done your best too』

「Woof woof!」

I was also surprised by Urushi's evolution. His growth makes me amazed at him, he grew more than Fran after all.

It wasn't just about his size. The species he had evolved into was neither the Gehenna Wolf nor the Dark Night Wolf species that Fenrir had mentioned before.

Ragnarok Wolf, which was Urushi's race now. Apparently, he has evolved in a special way. The explanation for it was still unclear, just like the Evil People, but Urushi didn't have the blessings of the Evil God.

According to Announcer-san, he has evolved into a completely new and unique species. There's no information about him even in the world's logic after all.

Moreover, his abilities were not hampered. His status was greatly improved, and he has several stats that exceeded 1000. I'm sure his threat level would be at least B.

Moreover, the number of his skills has increased significantly. His skills are mostly the higher-level than the original skills, but there are also new unique skills that have been acquired.

The following are just some of his skills that stand out.

[Skill]

Shadow Transfer: The higher version of Shadow Migration

Regeneration Inhibition: Reduces the healing speed of the enemies he bites.

Great Physical Change: The higher version of Physical Change

Rampage: Pushing oneself on a rampage when cornered

[Unique Skill]

Dark Absorption: Absorb a portion of the magic power contained in dark magic and darkness magic

Predation Recovery: Heal wounds by eating

[Extra Skill]

Predatory Assimilation: The higher version of Predatory Absorption

[Inherent Skill]

Dimensional Fangs: A Fang technique that deals damage while ignoring defense.

Familial Intimidation: Intimidate his kin and relatives.

Familial Hatred: Disliked by his kin and relatives.

Seal Nullification: Nullify sealing techniques.

Familial Intimidation and Familial Hatred was a particularly strange skill. Didn't he evolve into a higher species? But it was clearly a disadvantageous skill. Moreover, his titles were also strange.

I know what Predator of Evil is. As the name implies, it was probably earned by defeating and devouring an evil being. But The Lonely Beast and The One and Only seems to be a title given as a comfort to the lonely being.

Announcer-san also taught me that Fenrir-san had given him some of his power. And as a result, he seems to have evolved into a special race, transcending his wolf kin but becoming a shunned being.

『Urushi...』

「Woof?」

Urushi stared back at me with his pure eyes. Even after he became a 10-meter giant, those eyes had never changed.

I can't feel any loneliness or sadness from him.

Besides, when I thought 'what if someone took pity on me?' or 'Isn't it lonely to be the only sword with a human soul in the world?' What if I was told something like that?

I wouldn't be happy; those were not the words I would want to hear after all.

『Urushi, you've become even stronger huh!? You look so reliable! I'll be counting on you from now on!』

「Woof!」

# Chapter 509: Be Careful to Not Overdo It

「Haaa—?」

『Oops! My timing is off!』

「Woof?」

『Aah, I'm sorry Urushi』

We were out on the Plains of the Demon Wolf, checking our coordination against a herd of Fang Boars we had discovered.

They were small fry magic beasts that were normally easy to handle. The current Fran would be able to defeat them with a single flick with her fingertip.

However, I unexpectedly missed my first and second shots against the Fang Boar leader that I had designated as my first target.

First, Fran tried to draw its attention to us, but it seems neither of us fully understood each other's growth. I had predicted that her magic would be faster, but I hadn't expected that she would be able to control her flame magic Vernier so perfectly.

In the past, it would have been necessary for her to use wind magic or telekinesis to stabilize her posture, but now Fran can go straight ahead without any disturbances while using the Vernier.

Well, if that was all, it would have ended with Fran cutting down the Boar magic beasts, but unexpectedly, I got in her way.

Well, it can't be helped. We're doing this to check our coordination after all, so I can't just watch her do all the work.

I instantly understood that Fran was going to use aerial jump and flame magic to accelerate, so I was going to use wind magic to help her accelerate further while using telekinesis to stop the Fang Boars from moving.

But my control over it was far better than I thought I would be. I'm sure I put too much magic power into it because it has been a while and I was trying to show off a little...

I didn't expect it to be nearly twice as powerful as it was before. The acceleration of my wind magic was so fast that it made Fran jump over the Fang Boar.

Even so, Fran managed to offset it a little and attacked the Fang Boar, which was great. However, her attack had annihilated the Fang Boar herd.

I didn't know that the power of her attribute sword has become that powerful. With a single swing of the wind attribute sword, three Fang Boars were crushed, and the two that were farther away were lifted by the wind and slammed into the ground.

I wonder if the latter was more miserable than the former huh? Anyway, I'll be more careful in the future.

Urushi went at the last remaining one, but they were too different in size. Before we could see how strong he was, Urushi would probably crush it with his huge paws and it would be flattened.

When I thought so, Urushi shrunk in front of me. It was the ability of the Great Physical Change skill. Up until now, the changes were between four meters and one meter. But now it seems that he can change his body size from 10 meters to 50 centimeters.

Urushi, now the size of a small dog, attacked the small Fang Boar, whose movements were blocked by my telekinesis. However, it seems that his attack was repelled by something. He had aimed for the head with moderate

attack power to secure as much meat as possible, but my telekinesis had gotten in the way.

Just like my wind magic, it seemed to have a lot of strength due to the excessive amount of magic power I put into it. However, the telekinetic restraints were burst away with that one blow.

The Fang Boar ran away after being freed from the restraints. However, Urushi caught up with it instantly through Shadow Transfer and chopped off its head with a strike of his paw.

Shadow Transfer was a skill that allowed him to transfer to any place as long as there was a shadow, rather than diving into it. He could even go in and out of a shadow that was smaller than him. And then there was the new equipment for his paws. This was the weapon that Alistair had made for Urushi.

Name: Divine Steel Magic Claws

ATK: 480

MP: 250

Durability: 800

Magic Conductivity: B

Skill: Size Adjustment Enhancement

Name: Serpent Dragon Collar

DEF: 80

Durability: 600/600

Effect: Small Item Bag, Size Adjustment Enhancement

The Magic Claws of Divine Steel was similar to the previously equipped Claw of Capture, but this one was made for Urushi from the start. Although



the paralyzing ability had been lost, the performance was so much different, so it was definitely an upgrade.

The Serpent Dragon collar was made of worm skins and other materials that Amanda had hunted. It seemed to be a substitute for a follower's tag and also a handle for Fran when she rides on him.

Both are very useful because they do not break even when Urushi reaches his maximum size. Apparently, she couldn't attach any other skills to it because she had given them this unusual resizing feature, but she managed to add an item bag feature.

『...I'm so sorry』

「It's fine」

「Woof!」

『It sounds like you're more interested in confirming my power than our coordination』

From that point on, we tested our power separately, but we occasionally combined them over time.

Ooh right, I had also absorbed all the magic stones that Fran had stored while I was gone and I had gained a few skills from it. But it wasn't just skills that I had gained, but my rank had also increased.

Fran had accumulated more than 300 magic stones after all. So, I was able to rank up at once and added more magic stone value for me.

However, the only problem was that the magic stone value I could absorb from the magic stones was strangely low, and I couldn't get any self-evolution points from them. When I was trying to figure out why that was the case, Announcer-san had explained it to me.

〈Fenrir's transfer of power to the individual named Urushi requires compensation〉

『What do you mean?』

〈To prioritize Fenrir's recovery, the power transferred has been greatly reduced〉

I know that the way I get the magic stone value has to go through a first. It starts with me absorbing it → Some goes to Fenrir to aid his recovery → and finally the leftover power comes to me.

It seems that Fenrir had done a lot of work to make Urushi evolve into his unique species. However, because of this, he was worn out and seemed to be using my magic power to recover.

『How long do you think this will last?』

〈It will be until the next time you rank up〉

Well, he did it for Urushi, so I'm not complaining. I'm rather grateful for what he has done.

And because of that, Urushi got the power he wished for. It would have been great if it didn't give him the Familial Hatred Skill.....It was a unique skill, so I don't think even my skill taker could erase it. Well, I'm going to give it a try at least once.

Ah, as for the sudden increase in the number of skills I own, I think I can handle it now. Since Announcer-san is here to help me ease my burden when doing so.

I can't be too reckless with it though.

It seems that this pedestal was not something that can be used that often. It requires a huge amount of magic power to activate in order to repair me. Even though it continued to absorb and store magic power from the Plains of the Demon Wolf, that magic power was not infinite.

『So I'll be able to get points at the next rank up huh?』

〈Yes. However, the probability of obtaining the specified number of self-evolution points is predicted to be only 11%〉

『Isn't that the same as not gaining any points at all?』

〈The possibility of halving the number of points obtained is 89%〉

Well, does that mean I can get half? That's fine. It's a small price to pay for Urushi's evolution.

『We need to strengthen our coordination, master our skills, and obtain more magic stones. We still have a lot to do!』

「Nn! Let's do our best!」

「Woof!」

〈The required magic stone value for the next rank up is 1022 points〉

# Chapter 510: Commemorative Day

About a month has passed since I woke up. Based on the calendar, we've passed the middle of the second month and are approaching its end.

And today was a special day for us too.

『It seems that our coordination is now sufficient and we were able to understand each other's abilities well. We've tested our skills, and we've allocated some self-evolution points we've obtained to gain new skills』

「Nn」

『We'll end our training tomorrow』

I declare that to Fran and Urushi, who are eating around the fire next to the pedestal.

Actually, I wanted to continue our training here in the plains. I'll gain more power by hunting the magic beast around here after all.

But I must not. Fran's wishes would not be fulfilled by staying and training here for too long. In the first place, it would not be good for Fran's education to remain holed up in this magical area. A child needs to be exposed to a variety of people in a human environment to help them grow.

『Amanda too, thank you for staying here with her』

「Thank you」

「Woof!」

「It's fine isn't it, we're friends, aren't we. Besides, it was fun and this could be considered as training for me as well」

In fact, Amanda's level had gone up, and so had several of her skill levels. Even so, the supposedly busy Rank A adventurer had come to this place at least once a week, while adamantly refusing to accept any rewards.

I guess you could say that we owe her a lot. Well, Amanda would probably tell us not to worry about it, so we just keep that thinking to ourselves.

「Alistair too, you've been a great help for us」

「Well, it was an exchange for information about the Fanatics sword. Besides, I can get a lot of experience by examining Master」

『But, are you sure you don't want us to pay you?』

「Don't worry about it, Amanda was the one who gathered the materials after all」

Amanda had asked Alistair to make new claws and a collar for Urushi. She asked her to do it so that not only Fran but also Urushi would become stronger too.

「Urushi too, you've worked so hard」

「Woof!」

Come to think of it, Urushi has been together with us since he was summoned by me.

「If you're interested, I'd like you to take care of that request」

「Nn」

『We'll take care of it』

The request was for us to go to a magic academy in a neighboring country. She said that they were looking for a partner for a mock battle, but we

might be asked to do something else as well.

The High Elf who was the director of the magic academy seems to be a person that even Alistair could not handle, so she has eagerly accepted this request of her.

『...Well then, I wonder when the date would change?』

「Hmm? You're probably right」

Alistair heard me muttering and pulled out a pocket watch from her robe. I'd like to have it too, but I hear it's really expensive.

In particular, a pocket watch made by Alistair would be worth millions.

『Well, Fran. Do you know what day today is?』

「Nn?」

She doesn't seem to know huh. Well, she's been training in this magical area for a long time, so she probably doesn't know what days today is.

『Today marks the day of the first time Fran and I met one year ago』

「Oooh, really?」

『Yeah. It all happened so fast』

I couldn't be with her half the time though, but I was still close to her for almost half a year in total. We had sad, angry, and happy memories together. And it was a terribly intense time for us.

『...And we've got stronger』

「Nn」

Fran was a powerless slave girl when I met her. She had endured fear and intense pain continued to fight without running away even from strong

enemies and continued to walk in a straight line to the new height of her race she was aiming for.

I'm deeply moved when I think about it. Fran is probably the same. She nodded her head with a shy smile.

However, when I appraised Fran, I was surprised by something.

『Eh? Fran's... age is... Come to think of it, you've always been 12 years old huh?』

To my surprise, Fran's age had changed from 12 to 13.

「What's wrong, Master?」

『Hey, Fran. Do you remember your birthday?』

「Nn? Nn...?」

She didn't seem to remember. But what a miracle for today happened to be her birthday too. If that were the case, would the world's logic have recognized the day when she changed her name to Fran as her new birthday? The day she changed her name from nameless to Fran.

『Not only today is the day that Fran and I met, but it's also her birthday! It's a double anniversary then!』

「Nn. I'm happy」

『Fufufu, I've also got something good for you! You know what that is?』

「Something good... Pancakes?」

『That's right!』

「Oooh!」

Fran clapped her hands happily when she heard my words.

She seems to see pancakes as a commemoration treat. Pancakes were Fran's favorite food in a different way than curry was.

『Fufufu, this is the batter for the special pancakes I've been secretly preparing while Fran was sleeping!』

「Special pancakes!」

Fran's eyes lit up at my words. But I will not betray her expectations.

For the past week, Amanda had been buying all the ingredients and preparing them in secret. The cream for the topping was ready, and all I had to do was cook the pancakes right here and it would be ready.

『Let's start with Fran's share! Now I can make 10 at the same time!』

「Master, so amazing!」

『Haha! Of course!』

I poured the batter into ten pans on the fire created with flame magic at the same time. It was all done with my telekinesis. It was like there were dozens of invisible hands. But it was a piece of cake for me now that I had the help of Announcer-san.

〈All telekinetic output is well within the margin of error〉

『Yosh! Here it is!』

「Master, so cool!」

『Hahaha!』

Fran claps her hands even faster than before when she sees my strange move of flipping the pancake by shaking the pan all at once. But aren't you going to wipe away the drool that is flowing down from the edge of your mouth?

『And now it's done!』



「Oooohh!」

『A ten-tier tower of pancakes with 20 toppings of your choice!』

The pancakes were piled up on a large plate in front of Fran with a thud. Currently, there was only butter and maple syrup on them.

On a separate plate, I prepared small bowls of whipped cream, chocolate sauce, nuts, and various kinds of jams. Then she used a spoon to pour them on as she wished.

『How was it!』

「Amazing! Master is super amazing! Can I eat it now?」

『Ou! Enjoy!』

「Nn! Thanks for the meal!」

Fran then cut off the top pancake and first popped it straight into her mouth.

「Mogu mogu」

「How is it?」

「Nn!」

She just nodded, but I could tell the truth from the big smile on her face. A perfect score, I guess. Fran continued to fill her stomach with pancakes at a tremendous pace. Amanda, who was watching her smiling, suddenly raised a question.

「Hey, Fran-chan?」

「Mogu mogu?」

「Between curry and pancakes, which one is more delicious?」

「Nn...?」

Oh? Fran stopped eating and tilted her head.

「Curry is fulfilling!」

「Then, do you like curry the most?」

「Pancakes make me happy! Both are delicious. But a different kind of delicious」

When Fran said so while trying to put more pancakes in her mouth again——.

Growl——.

Her stomach growled, even though she had eaten a lot of pancakes. Well, it was probably because she mentioned curry to her. As evidence, Fran is staring at me right now.

「Master...」

『Yes yes. I'll serve you curry too. But it's only because today is special okay?』

「Nn!」

Fran, who usually doesn't show much emotion, smiled so much when she ate the food I made. I couldn't be happier. I have to limit what she eats so that she doesn't become fat though. It's okay if it only happens once in a while, right?

===== Fran Status =====

Name: Fran

Age: 13 Years old

Race: Beastman, Black Cat Kin, Black Heavenly Tiger Kin

Job: Sword King

Status Level: 61/99

HP: 669

MP: 531

STR: 430

VIT: 295

AGI: 497

INT: 249

DEX: 255

Magic: 310

[Skill]

Sole Sense: Lv3, Intimidation: Lv3, Stealth: Lv7, Evasion: Lv2, Fire Resistance: Lv4, Wind Magic: Lv6, Court Etiquette: Lv4, Vigilance: Lv2, Presence Detection: Lv8, Sword Technique: LvMax, Sword Saint Skill: Lv2, Swordsmanship: LvMax, Sword Saint Technique: Lv2, Evil Resistance: Lv4, Instantaneous: Lv8, Silencing: Lv2, Mental Resistance: Lv3, Survival Technique: Lv2, Attribute Sword: Lv1, Sea Resistance: Lv1, Earth Resistance: Lv2, Provocation: Lv4, Intuition: Lv3, Poison Resistance: Lv4, Fire Magic: Lv8, Physical Barrier: Lv2, Windstorm Resistance: Lv2, Paralysis Resistance: Lv2, Magic Detection: Lv4, Burn Resistance: Lv3, Thunder Magic: lv7, Cooking: lv3, Trap Disarm: lv2, Trap Detection: Lv3

Undead Killer, Evil Killer, Insect Killer, Orc Killer, Energy Manipulation, Sword Technique Enhancement, Sword Skill Enhancement, Goblin Killer, Mental Stability, Demon Killer, Adept Skinning, Determination, Split Thinking, Directional Sense, Magic Manipulation, Night eye.

[Unique Skill]

Blessings of the Sword God

[Inherent Skill]

Awakening, Sword God Transformation, Brilliant Lightning Rush

[Special Skill]

Blessing of the Black Heavenly Tiger

[Title]

Undead Killer, A Match for A Thousand, Evil Killer, Insect Killer, Orc Killer, Big Game Hunter, Dismantling King, Healer, Sword King, Goblin Killer, Slaughterer, Evil Killer, Skill Collector, Skill Mania, Attribute Master, Dungeon Conqueror, Super Big Game Devourer, Demon Killer, Earth Magic-User, Fire Magic-User, Wind Magic-User, Annihilator of Magic Beast, Lightning Magic-User. King of Cooking.

[Equipment]

Heavy Magic Steel Sword

Black Heavenly Tiger Series (Name: Black Heavenly Tiger's Fighting Robe, Black Heavenly Tiger's Gloves, Black Heavenly Tiger's Light Shoes, Black Heavenly Tiger's Ear Ring, Black Heavenly Tiger's Cloak, Black Heavenly Tiger's Leather Belt) Herculean Strength Bracelet, Magician Necklace.

# Chapter 511: Training is Over!

『Shall we go then?』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

『Let's take its magic stones and make it as the culmination of our training!』

「Okay. Brilliant Lightning Rush!」

Fran then jumps off of Urushi's back while holding me. There's a white smoke below us. It was the Greater Venom Ghast, but that's not all.

「Don't let that little girl get away this time!」

「Today is the day for us to kill her」

「This is an impossible fight for you!」

The Wight King was also there. Apparently, Fran had fought with the Wight King many times before. However the Wight King and the Greater Venom Ghast were always close to each other, and because of that, she had become too exhausted to defeat them so she had no choice but to retreat.

『Have you located where that Ghast's magic stone is』

「No」

『Hmm... Let's defeat the Wights first then』

「Understood」

『Urushi, take care of its subordinates!』

「Woof!」

In the past, this would have been a rather reckless instruction. Four Wight High Wizards and two Wight Imperial Guards against Urushi alone was too much for him to take care of. He would have only been able to take care of two of them.

However, it wasn't impossible for the current Urushi.

「Woof!」

「——!」

With the use of his Dimensional Fang after his Shadow Transfer, he had immediately inflicted great damage on the High Wizard. They were capable of detecting space-time magic, but since Shadow Transfer was a skill in the same system as dark magic, they seemed unable to detect the surprise attack from this ability.

After that, he repeatedly used hit-and-run tactics to defeat the wights. Urushi, whose life force, defense, and regeneration had all increased compared to before, did not even budge from a few counter-attacks from them.

From time to time, he changed his body size and used deadly poison magic to create smoke and other substances that fly around among the wights to keep them at his mercy.

Of course, it was not an easy win. He was taking a few hits and occasionally he took some heavy damage from strong counterattacks. But that's all. He never gets into a pinch where we have to intervene, and he never feels uneasy. There was a sense of steadiness and composure in his fight.

「What kind of wolf is that...!?」

「Urushi!」

「I'm not asking about its name! And how did you get here in such a short time...!」

「I've been training after all」

「If only training can make someone become that strong, then anyone would train!」

The Wight King was screaming at her, but Fran didn't respond to his words and rushed forward.

「Th-that little girl too! She's getting even faster!」

「Fuh!」

「Kuh——Short teleport!」

As expected, the Wight King could not be underestimated. Even though he was a magician type, he dodged Fran's Sheaths of Wind skill. In addition, he used a teleport skill to gain some distance, and immediately after, he unleashed a wide range of ice and snow magic attacks.

「Diamond Dust!」

It was a technique used to freeze a large area. However, Fran had rushed into the attack while using flame and wind magic. She cut through the shimmering ice mist and pushed forward toward the closest Wight.

「Kukaka! I had expected that! Nuooooo! Blast Avalanche!」

The Wight King's magic created an avalanche on the plains. It was a tsunami of snow that swept over Fran, engulfing a wide area.

He probably would be able to breach the wall of a medium-sized fort with this technique. That's how destructive his technique was. In addition, the ice created with magic had an unusually cold air around it. So, its danger was much greater than an avalanche of the same scale.

However, Fran only looked at the advancing avalanche and muttered a single word.

「Master」

『Ou! Leave it to me!』

She believed that I could do something——No, she knew that I would do something about it. So, it was my job to answer that trust.

『Haaaa!』

What I released was a huge torrent of light. It wasn't an emission type of magic power, nor was it fire magic. It was light magic that had been raised to a higher level by consuming some points.

It was the Lv6 Light Magic, Solar-Ray.

When you hear the term “light magic” the first thing you might think of is lasers or beams. To put it simply, it's similar to the beam gun from an anime. Since it was magic, it was not a simple ray of light, but it looked like a beam.

A pillar of light as thick as a drum shot out and pierced the white tsunami. The light concentrated on a single point melted the avalanche and created a path for Fran to follow. In addition, I used the Light Distraction Membrane that I obtained from Invisible Death to increase the power of the light by increasing its focus point.

The level of the technique was probably about the same, but this one was stronger because of its single-point focus.

「Ghhaah! Yo-you can even do something like that!?!」

The Wight King was damaged by the light magic that had been released through his skill. It seems that we couldn't defeat an opponent that was resistant to magic so easily. However, because he was on the lookout for the next magic attack, the Wight King's attention was in front of him.



「Black Thunder Roll」

「Nuoh?」

Fran didn't miss the opportunity. She ran through the path I had created and rushed with the Black Thunder Roll.

「Fuuh!」

「Gha——ha...!」

Immediately after the teleport, she swung me down and cut the Wight King's body in two.

「For an elite of the Black Skeleton Army, to be defeated... by such a little girl is...!」

「Haaa!」

「Giiaaahh!」

As expected, the Wight King could not dodge the attack from behind, because his focus was elsewhere. We still didn't know where his magic stone was, but there was no way he could save himself if he was cut in half from the top of his head and then cut into pieces.

「There's no magic stone?」

『Hmm, could it be that he was summoned with necromancy? No, there's should be no magician who can summon such a high-level undead——』

「Master!」

『Oops! I forgot that we're in a fight now!』

The smoke from the Greater Venom Ghast tried to surround us at once.

『The only thing left is this smoke guy huh... But how to find its magic stone?』

「Attack the ground again?」

The Wight King was the same, but I still couldn't find the Gha'st's magic stone. No, I think there's some sort of focus in its magic power, but I couldn't trace it back to its source.

However, if I can feel this particular focus, then I can be sure that there is a magic stone nearby. It's a good idea to use an AOE magic that engulfs the entire area.

As Fran and I were thinking about something, Urushi tried to appeal about something.

「Woof woof!」

『Could it be, that you know where its magic stone is?』

「Woof!」

『Then let's do this!』

「Wooooof!」

With a smug look on his face, Urushi bellowed and ran toward the air. With his momentum, he bit into the space in front of him. And then...

「Uuaaaaaa!」

As an eerie scream rose from the space, the smoke cleared at once. We thought the magic stone was in the ground, but it seems to have been hidden in the smoke. Perhaps it was being hidden with some kind of space-time magic ability. However, Urushi's evolved senses did not miss the magic power of the magic stone. With his Dimensional Fangs, he would be able to attack it no matter what space it was in.

Well, we didn't get its magic stone though, but we did defeat a troublesome opponent. So, I'll give him an honest compliment.

『Good job!』

「Woof!」

「Urushi, good boy」

「Woof woof!」

Urushi, who had changed his size into a medium-sized dog was happy to be petted by Fran.

Even so, we've gotten a lot stronger. We were able to defeat an opponent that we had struggled with before with only a little bit of strain and minor injuries. We took on two magic beasts with a threat level of B and won.

「Fran-chan, Master, and Urushi. Now I've seen it with my own eyes, you guys are really getting stronger!」

「Thank you」

Amanda gave us a thumbs-up as approval when she praised us.

『Yosh, with this, our training is over!』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

---

Author-san note for the previous chapter (Fran's status):

“If you get the Killer title, you will also get a skill with the same name”

# Chapter 512: Temporary Parting

After defeating the Wight King and the Greater Venom Ghast as the culmination of our training, we were discussing our future actions.

「What are you going to do now, Fran-chan?」

「Umm? Master?」

『Now that you've mentioned it』

It's not like we have to do something. But there are so many things I wanted to do though.

『As for me, Alistair has asked us to be a partner for a mock battle. And I'm kind of interested in that』

Rather than the request itself, I'm more interested in the academy. Well, I don't think Fran would want to study there though.

Fran's most important goal was to become stronger and break the Black Cat Kin's curse. For that purpose, going to school would only prolong her mission to achieve her goal.

However, it's also important for her to get in contact with kids of her age, and maybe, Fran will be interested in studying there.

As for me, I agree that Fran should take some time and study there. I'm not going to actively encourage it though, but if Fran wants to go, then I'm not going to oppose her.

Well, with all that said, she has to experience the academy first.

「I'm interested too」

『Ooh? Are you sure?』

By any chance, does she have the desire to go to school? I thought so, but it seems what she was interested in was different than what I was.

「Nn! I'd like to meet the High Elves」

『So that's why huh?』

「I'm interested in the strongest race in the world」

Just as I thought, Fran's interest seemed to be focused solely on the fight. But if Fran also wanted to go there, our next destination has been decided then.

『Well, let's head to the Academy of Magic in the Belios Kingdom then』

「Nn」

「Very well, I will give you my letter of introduction then. Take this with you, and you won't have to wait for days to meet Weena Rhyn」

『So the name of the High Elf is Weena Rhyn huh?』

「That's right」

But still, how long would we have had to wait without this letter of introduction? Such a thing should only happen when someone is requesting to meet someone of high status right?... From her title as the Director of the Academy of Magic, I had assumed that she was somewhat an important person, but she seems to be more important than I had imagined.

「The Academy of Magic is allowed to self-govern itself. So, in a sense, Weena Rhyn is like a feudal lord. Without a letter of introduction, you won't be able to meet with her right away」

「What kind of person is she?」

「Aah, now that you mention it... She is a calm person, but she seems to be rather dull sometimes. Well, she often switches around between her normal and outlandish behavior. But rest assured, she has no ill intentions. It's just that she's a little eccentric」

『That doesn't sound very reassuring at all』

A High Elf with no ill intentions but an eccentric personality that often switches around. Isn't that quite a bad personality?

「I know you're worried. But she really is a good person. In fact, she's been running the Academy of Magic for hundreds of years and is worshipped by many people. Well, I've also heard that there are a few people who had a grudge against her though...」

You don't have to add those last words to increase my worry!

『Somehow, I don't feel like going there now』

「Come on, don't say something like that, and how about you, Fran?」

「Nn. Interested to meet with the High Elves」

「That's what she said」

『Kuh』

If Fran really wanted to meet her, it couldn't be helped then!

「Very well...」

Then we'll need to get ready to cross the border. What's the procedure for that? I asked Amanda, and she said that as long as we have a rank B adventurer's card, we should be fine.

「Well, because it's also bordering with the Raidos Kingdom, the border guards would be quite strict now, so I recommend that you go through the border checkpoint properly」

「Okay」

『Do they have a wall?』

「No, they don't. But be careful, because I'm pretty sure their immigration records are very well kept」

So, we would be in trouble if they check our identity somewhere but there is no record of us entering the country huh.

「Actually, I'd like to go with you too, but...」

『I thought you said you were done investigating the fanatic sword?』

「It's not done yet. And the investigation of the former Marquis Ashtner was still on going」

It seems that she was supposed to inspect the documents left in the Marquis Ashtner's mansion with Gallus and the others.

I wondered if it would be so easy for them to show her the documents of the Divine Sword controlled by the government, but to my surprise, she had already talked to the King.

『Are you okay with divulging your identity to the government that easily?』

The King of the Kranzel Kingdom is not the frank type like the Beast King. In some cases, he might even try to force her to do what he says, right?

I thought so, but it was Amanda who denied it.

「I think she'll be fine. You were introduced to the King by Gallus, weren't you? To be frank, under the current circumstances, they wouldn't want to make enemies with both the head blacksmith and the Divine Level Blacksmith. Besides, no sane countries would mess with a Divine Level Blacksmith」

「Why so?」

「They don't know what kind of magic tools they have, or what kind of connections they have either. They might have some connections to other countries or famous adventurers that aren't known, right?」

If they tried to take in a Divine level blacksmith for themselves, they could make enemies of many places.

「Besides, solving the fanatic sword problem is a top priority for this country. If a copy of that thing comes out, there's a good chance this disaster will happen again after all. Well, at least until the chaos is over, they'll treat me well」

「That's why you don't have to worry. And I'll also hint my connection to Alistair to them」

So, they would also turn Amanda into their enemy if they tried to take in Alistair for themselves huh.

「That's why please rest assured」

「Understood」

Fran nodded at Alistair's words and bowed deeply.

「Amanda, Alistair. Thank you very much」

Amanda and Alistair smiled as they watched her. They were happy, but they somehow felt lonely. It seems they know that this was a farewell gesture.

「I've had a lot of fun」

「Me too」

Fran then raised her head and jumped on Urushi, who had changed his size to as big as a horse.

「Come see me again, okay?」

「Sure」



「Me too, I'll go to the Academy of Magic too after the investigation is over」

「Nn. I'll be waiting」

Normally she holds back more sadness from goodbyes, but this time she was surprisingly quiet. With strong feelings of gratitude, but not so much sadness.

They had been together for a while, and had already been separated and reunited several times, both with Amanda and Alistair. Maybe she's getting used to that relationship.

Besides, she's confident that we will meet these two again. Maybe that's why Fran feels that this was a temporary parting.

「Both of you, bye bye」

# Chapter 513: Shadow of a Guy With a Bounty

The speed of the evolved Urushi was so incredible. The journey which should take us a day to complete was done in about an hour.

He jumped over mountains and rivers, and the magic beasts there were nothing but food to him. He didn't even stop; he just ate them up as he continued to run.

「Momu momu」

「Tasty?」

「Woof!」

I don't mind though, since he had secured their magic stones so we won't need to strip off their materials.

『Ooh, now we can see the next town. That must be Didianne, the last town before we leave the Kranzel Kingdom』

「What's their specialty?」

『I heard they are famous for their cheese from domesticated magic beasts』

「Heee」

「Woof!」

With Urushi's speed, we should have entered the Belios Kingdom long ago, but we're still in the Kranzel Kingdom.

This is because we stopped in all the towns and villages along the way to eat their local specialties. It's been a week since I learned how to cook some of it and even stayed overnight because I liked to cook.

We're not in a hurry, so Fran could do as she pleased. It would be rather boring if we just simply hurried to the destination. It would be a waste to not enjoy the journey as well. I wanted Fran to experience more than just fighting after all.

The first thing we saw when we entered the town through the gate were armed soldiers. They weren't trying to intimidate us, but there seemed to be a lot of them for a town of this size.

Maybe because it's a city near the border huh? But no matter how I look at it, they seem like security soldiers, don't they? Or should I say, police-types? They give a different impression from border patrol soldiers after all.

However, the reason for this somber atmosphere soon became apparent. It was at the first stall we stopped at.

「Hey young miss! This is Didianne's specialty, bread with lots of cheese! Do you want some?」

「Nn. Give me five」

「Ooh, aren't you quite the bold one! Coming! That looks, are you an adventurer?」

「Nn」

「That's amazing, you've must have to do your best even though you're still small huh, is this also your first time in this town?」

「Just arrived」

「I see! So, what do you think of this town?」

「There's a lot of soldiers」

「Aah, about that huh?」

The old man at the stall told us that a few months ago, a famous person with a bounty on his head was spotted in this area. He said that soldiers and even the local army had been sent out to capture him, but they had been one-sidedly beaten.

「About a hundred soldiers were beaten in a blink of an eye, you know? It's been like this for the past few months, with such a dangerous person possibly lurking around」

「I see」

It's quite a violent criminal for being able to defeat a hundred soldiers by himself. Well, I guess the Lord won't just leave him alone after that.

However, I felt a little strange about that.

「...Are the soldier not being serious on their duty?」

Yes, there were a lot of them, but the soldiers didn't seem to be in the mood to capture him. It wasn't that they were not serious, but I felt that they lacked the enthusiasm to capture him.

「Well, no one died, so I'm guessing they're not actually that serious about this」

「Defeated an entire army, but no one died?」

「Woof?」

「Well yeah. Some of them were badly injured, but none of them died. Because of that, the soldiers don't seem to be putting in much effort. I think the Lord just wants to have a record of having a lot of soldiers huh?」

So, he's appealing that he had done his best to protect his people, but he's not willing to capture that guy. And if they put up a serious fight, they'll

probably just get beaten back.

「Well, there was a rumor that he was quite a bad person, so there was some panic in this town at first. There was an increase in the number of adventurers looking for the guy with a bounty on his head, and it became unsafe here. However, I haven't heard of anyone seeing him lately, and security has improved thanks to the increase in soldiers. In fact, I'd rather want him to stay here and not be found」

「Hey, what kind of person is this guy with a bounty?」

「Are you going to catch him? No, please don't」

Did he see the expression on Fran's face and detected that she had a strong interest in the guy with a bounty? For him to be able to read Fran's expressions, that's quite a feat huh. No, it must mean that Fran was so motivated that even someone who never met her before could tell.

「But are you sure? His name is Zelos Reed. He's said to be a skilled mercenary who's killed hundreds of people in his time. He's not a someone a novice adventurer like you can catch」

「Zelos, Reed? Zelos Reed is here?」

「Y-yeah」

No, wait. That's absolutely ridiculous. He had fought a hundred soldiers and not a single one of them had died, right? If he's saying that he had slaughtered hundreds of people back then, how is it possible that he didn't kill a single person now?

It's that Zelos Reed after all.

『Is it the real one?』

He may be a criminal, but he is still famous. It would not be surprising if it was a fake. But the thing is, this guy has a high fighting power.

「What does he looks like?」

「He's a big guy with scars all over his body... Wha, oioi, do you really want to chase after him?」

「Well, I wonder?」

「...T-that's fine then」

When he heard Fran's answer, the old man thought he had been played for a fool.

But the response now was Fran's true intention.

She has a lot of hatred for Zelos Reed. But Kiara has told me not to seek revenge. As for Fran, she probably doesn't want to actively pursue him, unless he's nearby that is.

However, this guy doesn't seem to be the real one and I don't think that he's still around. But we can't ignore this guy.

『Well, why don't we find this guy with Urushi's nose?』

If he was hiding nearby, we should be able to track him down. If he had left the vicinity immediately after the incident a few months ago, there would indeed be no scent left behind. Well, that is, if this Zelos Reed was the real one.

「Nn! Urushi!」

「Woof woof!」

「Young miss and her little doggy, don't be reckless!」

# Chapter 514: Border Checkpoint

「Sniff sniff」

「How is it, Urushi?」

「Woof...」

『No good huh?』

We were walking around while eating our meal in Didianne, looking for Zelos Reed with Urushi's Nose. If he were in town, it would be next to impossible to escape from Urushi's nose.

We had fought him so many times that Urushi remembered his smell after all.

However, we didn't get any results. There was no trace of him, not even a hint of his scent, so it was safe to say that he was no longer hiding in this town.

『It's no use. The information was uncertain after all』

「Nn」

As for Fran, she felt that it couldn't be helped and she wasn't that depressed. It's like saying that she didn't have high expectations to begin with, so she was doing this as a tour.

『So, what should we do now? We've stocked up on a lot of cheese, but should we stay here in town tonight?』

「It's fine, let's go to the next town」

『Are you sure? 』

「Nn. I'm tired of cheese」

Aah, now that she mentioned it, she was thinking earlier that we shouldn't buy food that doesn't have cheese, but it seems, she got tired of eating too much cheese. Well, cheese is not something you would eat in such large quantities after all.

『The next town is already in the Belios Kingdom. But before that, there's the border. We must take the proper route into the country or it'll be troublesome for us later』

「Okay」

In this world, countries' borders were vague things. There are no lines drawn or walls to separate them. It was easy to ignore them if we wanted to.

I also heard that many countries that were on good terms with each other have no particular restrictions on traffic.

However, Belios Kingdom was different. It has one of the strictest immigration controls in this world.

All of the roads in the city are guarded by guards, and there are many security stations. If you are found to have entered the country without passing through the border checkpoint, you will be charged an entry tax. Not only that but if you had committed a crime without having gone through the entry procedures, even minor crimes often came with severe punishment.

This was a measure against spies and such from the neighboring Raidos Kingdom, and they won't let you off with a bribe or something. Well, it's a good thing that the soldiers were serious on their duty.

Besides, if we crossed the border properly, it shouldn't be that bad, and we wouldn't have to worry too much about it.

「Let's go」



『Eh? Right now?』

「Nn」

She seems to be tired of cheese. Come to think of it. I rarely saw her request cheese as a topping for her curry. So, even Fran has something she likes and dislikes huh? But it's not like she doesn't like the cheese, it's just she has her own 'super like, really like, and normal like' list of food.

『Let's head to the border checkpoint then. With Urushi's legs, I'm sure we'll manage to get to the border by the end of the day』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

After we finished our shopping and had reported our departure to the Adventurer's Guild, we then arrived at the first border checkpoint one hour later.

『That seems to be the border checkpoint on Kranzel side』

「A fort?」

「Woof?」

『Well, that fort seems to be double as a border checkpoint』

But rather than functioning as a border checkpoint, that fort seems to be a measure to keep the Belios Kingdom in check.

Most of the borderline between the Kranzel Kingdom and the Belios Kingdom was separated by a river. However, this mountainous area seemed to be defined as its borderline.

In the middle of it, roads were set up to pass between the mountains, and the border checkpoint was located on the way to those roads. The reason why this checkpoint was not built on the borderline was probably that it also doubles as a fort.

Even if they were a friendly country, they wouldn't let only one of them build a fort near their border. If one side builds a fort that doubles as a border checkpoint, the other side will do the same. And they also wanted to build their fort as close to the other country as possible.

However, if both sides think the same thing, it could mean that the two forts were adjacent to each other across the border.

So, in most cases, there was a treaty between the countries not to build any structures within a certain distance from the border. Well, I only heard about this from a guard at Didianne though.

『First, we'll go through the exit procedures on the Kranzel Kingdom's side. And then we'll cross the pass and go through the entry procedures on Belios's side』

「Understood」

『Let's just go on like this for the time being. We'll be misunderstood if we continue to ride on Urushi after all』

They might think that a dangerous magic beast was attacking them and will prolong our exit.

「Woof woof!」

We then headed for the border checkpoint, and the procedure went very smoothly. We were the only ones there, so we didn't have to wait that long, and with her adventurer's card, they didn't take us into more complicated procedures. All she had done was answer with “an adventurer” and we were let out of the country.

They were a little skeptical that Fran was really a B-ranked adventurer, but once they found out that her adventurer's card was real, they didn't ask too many questions. Many adventurers don't like to be questioned about their personal life, and if they were a real B-rank adventurer there was no way for them to afford to offend them.

Rather, it seemed to be more difficult for us to enter the Belios Kingdom.

『Let's walk until we get over the pass. Urushi being here would only cause more confusion after all』

「Woof」

「Nn」

The pass was not that steep and it was said that an average person can get through it in about half a day.

Magic beasts are also said to appear around this area, but since the soldiers were hunting them down, those who might appear would only be a magic beast with a threat level of F at best.

Currently, the strongest magic beast that has been confirmed was said to have a threat level of D, but it is said that they were only witnessed once every few years.

Unless we encountered a magic beast with a threat level of D, it would take Fran and Urushi less than half a day to cross the pass. It was already evening, but even if they camped out, they should be able to reach the border checkpoint by tomorrow morning.

Well, that was what it was supposed to be, but——.

『Don't tell me, did I just raise a flag?』 (1)

「Nn?」

『No, it's nothing. More importantly, let's help them first!』

Near the peak of the mountain, we came across a traveller that was being attacked. Moreover, they were being attacked by a Storm Wyvern, a magic beast with a threat level of D.

「Urushi, let's go!」

「Woof!」

Note:

(1) Raise a flag means “bring something to notice”. The phrase Raise a flag originated from “raise a red flag” which means to alert someone about potential danger or trouble ahead, the origin is that red flags are often literally used to warn people of possible peril.

# Chapter 515: Girls' Party

At the top of the pass, a group of three girls was being attacked by a Storm Wyvern. I thought they were adventurers, but that was not the case.

One of them was wearing full-body armor like a knight, not unlike that of an adventurer, and the equipment of the other two was oddly refined. To put it bluntly, they were overly decorated. They looked like nobles playing adventurer, huh?

「Lady Khanna! I'll draw its attention! Please use that chance to escape!」

「...Kuh! Shella! Let's go!」

「B-but, lady Dianne is...!」

「I'm just going to slow you down!」

A girl who looked to be in her early teens named Khanna seems to be the master. I don't know if she was a noble or the daughter of a rich man, but she was trying to act without losing herself in fear in this scene. It seemed to be quite a spectacle.

A woman of about 20 years old named Shella was her squire, and Dianne, in her full body armor, was probably her guard.

It seems that Dianne was using herself as bait to try to let her master escape.

Dianne was trying to draw that Wyvern's attention to her by making a rattling metallic sound with her armor.

W-well, let's just help them.

『 Its attention is perfectly directed at that female knight. Let's finish it off at once 』

「 Nn! Teleport above it! 」

『 Ou! 』

「 Urushi protects the girls! 」

「 Woof! 」

Nevertheless, the Storm Wyvern was on the weaker side of the threat level D magic beasts. No, if it were only for its combat power and status, it would be in the threat level of E class. However, its flying ability is troublesome, so it was ranked D.

As long as we can get a hit to it, it wasn't that strong of an opponent.

「 Haaa! 」

「 Gyaaoooh—— 」

After the teleport, Fran instantly identified the location of its magic stone by detecting the flow of its magic power and thrust me into that spot. She pierced the magic stone that was located at the base of its neck, and the Storm Wyvern was easily defeated.

I stowed it away as soon as it died so as not to cause any damage to Dianne below, and then silence reigned as if the Wyvern had never been there in the first place.

「 Eh? 」

The girls were looking up at us with a dumb face. They didn't even seem to notice Urushi approaching them.

「 Are you okay? 」

「 Eh, yes. Thank you for your help... 」

The girls were still shocked, but it was the youngest girl of the group that had responded quickly when Fran spoke to the girls while descending from the sky.

She was a beautiful girl with fluffy violet hair and beautiful purple eyes. The dress armor she wore was also of the highest quality. I can't tell if she was a noble by appraising her. The young lady does not have a title, so nothing will be displayed as a title.

「Umm, were you the one who did that?」

「Nn. Defeated and stored it」

「I see, thank you very much」

As the girl lowered her head, the other two finally started to move.

「Y-you has saved us. You got my thanks」

「Thank you very much... Hiii! a w-wolf!」

「Wha, since when!」

They finally noticed Urushi who had approached them. And the female knight pointed her sword at him.

「That is my companion. It's okay」

「I-is that so?」

「Woof!」

When Urushi heard the female knight's murmur, he transformed into the size of a puppy on the spot and got down. They finally understood that he had no hostility towards them and finally the three of them could relax their shoulders.

「Thank you for your help. I'm Khanna」

「B-ranked adventurer, Fran」

「So you are an adventurer huh?」

「Nn」

It was just right after Fran gave her name. Khanna and the other reacted in three different ways. Khanna was really surprised, while Shella had a terrified expression for some reason, and Dianne somehow had a look of disgust on her face.

It seemed that these girls didn't have a good feeling toward adventurers. Fran felt this and turned quickly to leave.

「I'll go then」

『Well, I'm sure these guys will be able to handle the other magic beast on their own』

When I appraised the three of them, I found that their basic abilities were quite high. Not only Dianne but also Khanna and Shella had a status level of 30.

Maybe they have used the power leveling method to raise their levels, but it didn't seem to be just that. Khanna was able to use fire magic and water magic, while Shella was able to use recovery magic.

And then there was Dianne, who had a decent level of skill. As I had expected, she wasn't good enough to fight a flying Storm Wyvern, but she would be ranked D if she became an adventurer.

The three of them wouldn't have any struggle with anything other than wyverns around here. If that was the case, there was no reason for us to stay with them any longer when we had unpleasant feelings for each other.

Shella and Dianne blatantly looked relieved as Fran tried to leave. However, their hopes were dashed by none other than their master, Khanna.

「P-please wait!」



「Nn?」

「If possible, can I hire you to be my escort!」

「Wha! Young lady! But this girl is an adventurer!」

「But you have seen how strong she was just now, didn't you?」

「But adventurer is no different than a barbarian who only has money in their heads!」

What a horrible thing to say. No wonder that Fran's mood dropped. And just like that, the master-servant argument continued in front of Fran.

「But if a magic beast of that level happens to show up again, will we be able to deal with it...?」

「Th-that is... No, I can do it! I will let my lady escape even if it would cost me my life!」

「No, don't do that. I don't want you to die, Dianne」

「Even though I look like this, I'm still a member of the glorious Order of the Red Banner! And I had prepared myself to die to protect you!」

What should we do... They have completely forgotten about Fran, aren't they? She didn't say that she will take the job in the first place.

『Should we leave them alone now?』

(Hmm——)

『Eh? Do you want to help these guys?』

「...Don't want Khanna to die」

Apparently, she had a good feeling about Khanna, who was the same age as her and didn't seem to make fun of adventurers, and was concerned about

the safety of her servants. However, I was sure that she was angry with Dianne.

『What should we do then?』

(...I'd be willing to be hired under certain conditions)

『Is that so?』

Well, we'll just wait for these two girls to stop arguing for the time being.

# Chapter 516: Adventurer's Value

After waiting for a while, their argument seemed to be over. Then Dianne spoke to her with the same haughty look as ever.

「Oi, Adventurer」

「What?」

「I'll allow you to accompany us for now」

Uwaah, who does this guy think she is? I could tell that Fran was getting annoyed with her.

「How much will you pay?」

「Are you trying to extort money from me!」

No, what are you talking about? How could you hire an adventurer as an escort free of charge? However, Dianne cursed Fran even more

「This why adventurers are...」

「Isn't it common sense that we need to pay to hire an adventurer as an escort?」

「Lady Khanna, I'm telling you that I will protect you by myself! It would be an honor for me!」

「Knights really are hungry for honor huh? That's great, but adventurers don't work for free」

「I'm sorry, we're a little lacking in the common sense of adventurers. So how much would you like for us to pay you?」

「Young lady!」

Dianne shouted when she saw Khanna bowing her head. However, Khanna replied with a sharp glare at her knight.

「Silence, Dianne」

「Wha...! Why!」

「Do not impose your value on others. The value of a knight is different from an adventurer after all. Because even among the knights and nobles, their value is different...」

「...That is...」

「Hey. If you're just gonna talk forever, can I go now?」

Aah, Fran was getting bored with them. But before Dianne could say anything to Fran's words, Khanna bowed her head again.

「I'm sorry. So, how much would you like for us to pay you?」

「Hmm...」

「Hmph. I'm sure she's gonna ask for a lot of money from us anyway. But it's fine, here」

Dianne said so and threw a leather bag at Fran's feet. Doesn't this guy have any learning ability? Khanna is staring at her with displeasure, isn't she? When Fran picked up the leather bag and opened it, she found about 2,000 Goldes in it.

「It's just for one night, isn't it quite an exceptional deal?」

What are you saying! The most you can hire with this money is an E-ranked or lower adventurer.

Fran is a B-ranked adventurer you know? There's no way she could be hired for only that much money even if it's only for one night. See! Fran is looking really annoyed now.

It's not so much for her haughty attitude when giving the money, huh? I know that she was making fun of her job as an adventurer, but this must have definitely put Fran in a bad mood.

In other words, she has been told that she's only worth that much.

「Those who exchange the glorious work of protecting the weak and hunting magic beasts for menial and vile money will risk their lives as long as they are paid, won't they?」

Could it be that she is deliberately trying to make Fran angry so that the negotiations will break down? Or does she hate adventurers that much? But there was no way that Fran would consider such a situation and take a wait-and-see approach.

Fran threw the leather bag back at Dianne's feet a little harder and opened her mouth.

「Not enough」

「Nonsense! It's only for one night, you know? How much would you like to extort us for just a one-night job!」

「I'm a B-ranked adventurer. There's no way I can be hired with only this much. The request fee is proof of evaluation to the adventurer. If I'm only worth that much, then the negotiation has failed」

「...Hmph. That's just like what an adventurer who sells themselves for money would say. Then how much do you want me to pay」

「If you want to hire me. Then give me all your money」

「What nonsense! Don't be ridiculous! Then how do you think we'll sustain our journey in the future huh!?!」

「I'm not joking. Either you don't hire me or you'll give me all your money. That's your choice. You like that, don't you?」

「Huh?」

「Money is menial and vile, isn't it? I'll take care of all of it for you then. Or is the money that's so menial and vile really that important to you? Did you tell a lie even though you were a knight? Aah, or were you just a liar?」

Aah, she's angry huh? She has said a lot of words after all.

Maybe she's going to say everything she wants to say and piss them off with it. Now it seems, it was Fran who was planning to break the negotiations.

「Guh... That Incomprehensible reason is...」

「I don't even know you, but don't make fun of adventurers」

「Hiii...」

Dianne, who had been hit by Fran's intimidation, paled and fell on her butt on the spot with tears build up in the corners of her eyes.

No matter how much she despises us, the fact remains that we are overwhelmingly powerful. And right now, they were turning on each other. I guess she has realized that.

Shortly after, Khanna intervened between Fran and her.

「That's enough. Dianne, it's your fault. Even I feel uncomfortable listening to your words. Don't talk anymore」

「Y-yes...」

Ooh. She made it look like she was angry with her escort, but in fact, she has protected her from Fran. Moreover, there was no change in her expression even though she knew that we could strike her with intimidation.

「...Fuh」

「I'm really sorry. I'll give Dianne a scolding later and I won't let her say unpleasant words to you again. So, can you please calm your anger?」

「...」

Fran releases her intimidation and turns to face Khanna. Sure enough, this girl is special, isn't she? While others, such as Shella, who had watched Dianne being put through her paces, looked as if she were about to have a stroke, but there was not even a hint of fear on Khanna's face. There was no lie in her apology either.

「So, what would you do? Do you want to give me all your money? Or not?」

「About that...Can you give me more time to pay for it?」

「Nn?」

「To be honest, we really need to get to the town of Shenarl with the money we have」

(Shenarl?)

〈It's a town located in the western part of Belios Kingdom. It also located near the Academy of Magic we're heading to〉

(Ooh, I see)

「If I give you all the money I currently have. We'll be troubled with our future journey...」

Interesting. Even though she was looking at Fran, who was so intimidating, she was still trying to negotiate with her. Moreover, she was looking up at her with an upturned eye.

I didn't miss the thin smile on Fran's face. Perhaps, seeing Dianne's disgusting behavior had cleared her mind and left her with interest in

Khanna. She seemed to be amused by her fearlessness in negotiating the price.

「I understand that you're strong and I'm sure you'll need a lot of money, but that's all we can afford. Can you accompany us to the next border checkpoint with this?」

The leather bag she held out to her was filled with gold coins over 30,000 Goldes in it. The interesting thing was that it was surprisingly appropriate.

This is about what a B-ranked adventurer would get for a one-night escort on a place where the magic beast's level is low. No, if these girls already have some fighting power and are prepared for the camp, this was rather too much.

I don't think she understands this... However, I was sure that this was the reason why Fran liked her so much.

「Okay. And in return, that guy is...」

「Of course, I won't let her say bad things to you anymore」

「Nn. Then I'll accept the request」

「Thank you very much!」



# Chapter 517: Knights and Adventurers

Fran accepted Khanna's request to escort them, but the sun was soon setting.

We camped on the roadside of the pass and used earth magic to create walls and other stuff around our camp as a defensive measure.

『We won't be in the way of traffic and I think we'll be fine here on the road side』

「Nn」

This pass is not a completely straight road, it is said that dozens of side roads lead to various places. Some of them are said to lead to the Raidos Kingdom, and naturally, that road was monitored by guards, so free passage was not possible.

「Yo-you can use this much magic...!?」

「Yo-you've gotta be kidding me...!」

Dianne and Shella were shocked when they saw the camp that Fran had created.

They may have known that Fran was a powerful warrior, but they didn't expect her to be skilled in magic. It seems Khanna and Dianne were more astonished than when they saw Urushi in his larger form.

The atmosphere on the road was not as bad as I had expected. Dianne, who had completely lost her mind, and Shella, who was still terrified of Fran,

hardly spoke at all. On the other hand, Khanna was very active in talking to Fran.

Dianne and Shella were also trying to hide their presence at a distance from Fran and Urushi while Khanna was sitting next to Fran, enjoying a bowl of curry-flavored soup.

As one would expect of a squire, Shella braved herself to be a tester for poison, but Khanna still ate the seemingly crude dish served by Fran without complaining. Well, it might look crude, but it's still a high-class dish made with a lot of magic beast meat and spices.

She rather enjoyed eating the grilled skewers as they are and her cheerful expression doesn't seem to be an act.

「Fran-san is an adventurer, right?」

「Nn?」

「I think, Fran-san is about the same age as me but isn't it unusual for an adventurer to be that young?」

「Umm... but there are a few」

「Is that so... Umm, hey. Why did Fran-san become an adventurer?」

She doesn't seem to hate adventurers like Dianne and Shella and was interested in adventurers. Is adventurer that rare? But every town should have a few of them though. Or had she never seen the outside world before? But she's quite resilient enough to use magic and not complain about our camp.

「To become stronger」

「Stronger, huh? But can you become a knight or a soldier instead?」

「I'm still a kid so it's impossible」

「I see... Umm, is it hard to be an adventurer?」

「Why?」

When Fran heard Khanna's question, she asked back, sincerely curious.

「To be that strong at the same age as me, it must have been very difficult, wasn't it?」

「...I became an adventurer because I wanted to be strong. That's why I never thought of getting hurt or fighting a strong opponent as a hardship」

「I-I see...」

When Fran's eyes looked straight at her, Khanna looked away as if she was under pressure. Our values are too different from each other. I'm not saying that we can't understand each other, but I don't think it's possible to understand each other all in one night.

What seemed like hellish days for Khanna must have been irreplaceable for Fran.

On the other hand, Fran could not understand Khanna either. I'm sure that this nice young lady has a pain that only she can understand.

That's just what people are like.

「An adventurer's job is to defeat the magic beast and bandits, right? And also, escorting the merchant」

「Nn? No, you're wrong」

「Eh? Really?」

Eh? Really? I was also surprised to hear her reply too.

「An adventurer's job is to go on an adventure」

「Go on an adventure?」

「Yes, by adventuring someone can become an adventurer」

「But what about catching the bandits or hunting the magic beast? Isn't that what adventurers do?」

「Yes, they do. But it's actually the job of the Knights and soldiers. But since they won't do it, so the adventurers are the ones to do it」

Hmm, I don't think many adventurers would agree with Fran. Fran's definition of adventuring is to be going into a magical area or a dungeon and fighting in general.

Maintaining public order by defeating bandits and magic beasts is essentially the work of the Knights. However, the boundaries were pretty fuzzy there. Since adventurers were fighting magic beasts in the dungeon, they could fight outside as well, and fighting bandits and such could be considered an extension of that.

「...B-but those who have power should use their power to protect the people!」

「Is that so?」

「Yes! Great power comes with great responsibility」

「Dianne!」

Khanna tried to stop her, but Dianne's words didn't stop there.

「Y-You has so much power and yet you see the weak and think nothing of them? Don't you want to help them?」

「I always thought of it though, that's why I helped you guys, right?」

「...You don't understand anything, don't you...?」

「Nn? I wanted to help you, so I helped you. That's why, I don't care even if I'm weak, if I want to help, I'll try to help. Do you only help people because you're strong? And you'll just abandon them if you were weak?」

「Th-that is...」

「Dianne, silence!」

「...! I'm sorry...」

Dianne, who had been yelled at by Khanna, fell silent with a pale face.

But it was a difficult problem. The responsibility of power is a convenient story for the weak to take advantage of the strong. Or it is the conceit of the strong who are drunk with power.

In Fran's case, she wouldn't be thinking about such difficult things. In the first place, if there was someone in trouble in front of her, she would help them without even thinking about the reason. As she said, she helps people because she wants to. That's all.

If the other party is annoying, she would usually abandon them, or help them and demand an exorbitant reward.

This may be another difference between adventurers and knights. Knights are people who are fed by taxes, so to speak. They must be taught about their duties and rights from the time they join the knight order.

Aah, as long as it's not a rotten scum knight that is.

However, 「Work for your paycheck!」 was not enough to raise morale or maintain their pride. That's why they use phrases like 「helping the weak」 and 「serving the cause of justice」. If that kind of education goes too far, more knights like Dianne will be born.

Adventurers, on the other hand, are entirely responsible for their actions. In other words, the power they acquire is their own, and it is normal for them to use it for themselves.

「I don't mean to speak for Dianne, but I've also heard that some adventures do things like a bandit」

「It's not the adventurers only, even knights and nobles must have their scum too. Or there are no bad guys in your country?」

「That's... might be true. There are also some bad knights and nobles after all」

Khanna agreed when she heard Fran's words. She seemed to have some idea of what she meant. When I think about it, it's not normal for a young lady to be travelling in such a small group, so she must have her own reason.

「Then, what an adventurer——」

Perhaps because she was so interested in adventurers, Khanna's questions went on and on until she went to bed.

# Chapter 518: Entering the Country

「I can see it, that must be the border checkpoint」

「Really? That was really fast」

「Nn. Urushi is amazing」

On the day after saving Khanna and the others, Fran and Urushi departed with them at sunrise and in less than two hours they were about to reach the border checkpoint on Belios Kingdom's side.

We had run through the pass while carrying them all on Urushi's back.

Khanna and the others were our top priority, so we only killed the closest magic beasts along the way and ignored the others.

No matter what happens, since she had accepted the escort request, we have to do it properly.

「We'll only make a commotion if we continue like this, so let's get down for now」

「I understand」

「...I wonder is it possible for anyone to use a magic beast like him huh?」

「Th-that's impossible, I've never heard of it before」

Dianne and Shella remained pale the entire time on Urushi's back. They must have understood that he was not only big but also capable.

Shella had been by Dianne's side ever since she got to know Fran's abilities. And apparently, Dianne had decided not to offend Fran any further by speaking rudely to her. Thanks to that, it was nice and quiet now.

「Let's go then」

「Nn」

With Fran in the lead, we headed for the border checkpoint. We were told that the screening was quite strict, but would we make it through?

This border checkpoint was just as big as the one on Kranzel Kingdom's side. It was also built as a fort so in case of emergency it can be used to hide from magic beasts and enemy troops.

When we got closer, we were being targeted with a bow from inside the fort. However, this may be just preparation in case ruffians or enemy soldiers disguise themselves as travelers. And since we didn't feel any clear killing intent, Fran and I endeavored to ignore it for now.

「Halt! Only four people?」

「Nn」

「Show me your identification」

「Okay」

「Understood」

She took out her identification card as she was told and handed it to the soldier. Well, as expected, they were a little bit surprised at first, but once they found out that her guild card was real, they allowed us to enter the country without any problems.

It seems by being a high-ranked adventurer plays a part in that. The Belios Kingdom would also benefit from having more strong adventurers in their country after all, so they have no reason to refuse her.



「Are these three people with you too? Or are they from a different group?」

「Fran-san is the escort we hired the other day」

「Hmm. Morley Trading Company? I've never heard of them before...」

「It's because we're still a small trading company」

「So you're a daughter of the trading company owner and these two are your servants huh...?」

Oya? Khanna and the others seemed to be under some suspicion. However, it seems Khanna was the daughter of a trading company owner. I see now, the guts she showed yesterday was very merchant-like. However, I think she still has an elegant side too.

They might know if she is the daughter of a large trading company. But would the daughter of a small trading company that the immigration officer, who should have a lot of information in his head, had never heard of, display that kind of elegance? I know that she had received a strict education too, but...

Dianne's existence with her was a mystery. She called herself a Knight, but her job was a Swordsman. This means that she is not a Knight because of her job, but a knight by status.

But would a guard of a trading company make such a claim? Of course, there's also the possibility that it's just her longing to become a knight. However, she must have clearly said that she was a knight of the Red Banner.

There's also the possibility that she was picked up by the trading company after she was fired, but would that allow her to keep calling herself a knight?

(Master, what should we do about Khanna and the others?)

『Hmmm... Let's watch them for a while』

(Okay)

When push comes to shove, we must insist that we are irrelevant.

「Where is this trading company is located?」

「It's in Dards, a port city in the Kranzel Kingdom」

「What is the name of the owner of that company?」

「Raymond Morley」

「What is your purpose in coming to Belios Kingdom?」

「We're going to the special self-governing region」

「...Hmm」

This immigration officer seemed to have some kind of lie detection skill. Although his level was still low, he should be able to sense at least a hint of discomfort if the other party lied. And it seems she didn't trigger that skill. However, he was still looking at Khanna and the others with an unconvinced look on his face.

Having years of experience as a border immigration officer let him know that they're somewhat suspicious. However, based on his skill there is nothing suspicious about these girls.

I was also using the Principal of Falsehood, but there was no lie in Khanna's words. As expected, she is really a daughter of a trading company owner in the Kranzel Kingdom huh?

The officer who had asked the question before was currently having a sneaky discussion with a man who seemed to be his boss. Well, I can hear it though.

「What should we do?」

「Is that girl is an adventurer from the Kranzel Kingdom?」

「Yes」

「If they hired an escort from the adventurer's guild in the Kranzel Kingdom, we can say that their identity has been proven by the guild. It's fine then since their destination is to the special self-governing region」

「Are you sure about that?」

「It's fine as long as their destination is really to that place. But don't forget to inquire later if they really had entered the special self-governing region okay?」

「Yes!」

Did Khanna use her for this? I see, if they have an adventurer as their escort, anyone would think that they had requested an escort at the Adventurer's Guild. In other words, the Adventurer's Guild has recognized that she is not a suspicious person.

This doesn't mean that she has fooled us, but as expected, Khanna was just like a wily fox.

In the end, the four of us were not detained any further and succeeded in crossing the border. Well, I guess there is nothing more that can be done.

Also, the fact that the destination was a special self-governing region seemed to be another reason why we were overlooked. It seems that the autonomous region is treated as a different country within the Belios Kingdom. So, I guess they just pushed us over to them.

Fran turns to face Khanna when they have walked a short distance past the border checkpoint. While Dianne and Shella are checking maps and at such a distance from her.

「The request ends here」

「Yes. Thank you very much for escorting us. And thanks to Urushi-san too, I was able to enter the Belios Kingdom earlier than I expected」

「Nn. And hey?」

「Is there something?」

「Is Dianne a knight?」

Fran was actually curious about it too. Like me, she probably didn't want to be stopped at the border checkpoint for asking it, so she kept quiet.

「...That's right. But won't you care about my identity?」

「Nn? Not really?」

「Eh?」

「Adventurers don't care about the past」

Many adventurers have left their past behind. And it is forbidden to pry into their past by an unwritten rule. It seemed that she had acquired this mentality while spending some time among them. Well, she was indifferent to her past too after all.

「More than that, I was worried about her」

「Are you worried about her?」

「Nn. Dianne said that she was a knight, and she also had dressed as a knight too」

In the future, there would be other people who would be suspicious of Khanna's identity. Fran was genuinely worried about Khanna. After all, she was interested in this strong-willed girl.

「Aah, do you mean that... She's not really my servant, as I've only borrowed her from my father... At first, I tried to get her to dress up as an adventurer, but she just hated that idea」

She seemed to have a tremendous prejudice against adventurers, and I don't blame her. It's like asking Fran to pretend to be a blue cat. She would refuse

even if it means she would die.

「Although she may be inflexible and narrow-minded, she's quite a skilled one. It's hard to find a girl with that certain level of strength after all」

Even a person with a difficult personality like Dianne can be a valuable female escort huh.

「And thank you for keeping quiet at the border checkpoint」

Khanna then bowed her head deeply once again. It's true that if Fran had interrupted her at that moment, Khanna and the others might have been in a tight spot right now.

Dianne's suspiciousness and the fact that she only hired Fran until they had crossed the border. I don't think she has any bad intentions, but I just didn't want for us to get into any more trouble.

「Don't mind it」

「Fufu. I was really lucky to have met you. Let's meet again next time」

「Nn. likewise」

# Chapter 519: The Reason Why She was Interested in Khanna

After we left Khanna and the others, I asked Fran a question that had been bothering me.

『Hey, Fran』

「Nn?」

『Why did you interested in Khanna so much?』

I wouldn't say she was a bad person, but she was a strong-willed and tricky person. She would use Fran to her advantage to get into the country. Was there any reason for her to favor her that much?

Now that I think about it, I wonder if there was a reason why she didn't strongly restrain Dianne's rude words.

Well, if Khanna and the others had any incidents in the future, there would be little chance that Fran would be bothered. They were just coming along for the ride and being protected from any monsters after all. I didn't dare tell her that, though.

They also didn't use bribes or lie to enter the country. Moreover, they had also presented their identity, and the immigration officer had also officially admitted them into the country. If something goes wrong, the responsibility has already been handed over to the country.

Moreover, in Fran's case, since her immigration records were well documented, they would know that she was alone when she left the Kranzel Kingdom. In other words, it was supported by the fact that they happened to

be together on the pass. It would be unlikely that she would be considered one of Khanna's companions.

But even so, Fran had to bear the burden of being with Khanna.

『You know that she has obviously taken advantage of Fran, right?』

「Nn, I wasn't fooled」

『Well, you're right, but...』

「Khanna, the same age as me」

『Now that you've mentioned it...』

But, is that all?

「And she didn't despise the Black Cat kin」

『Aah, I see』

「Nn. Dianne too, she made a fool of the adventurers but didn't make a fool of the Black Cat kin」

In fact, even the people we had met and befriended in our travels so far had been very surprised to see a girl from the Black Cat kin. There were two patterns of their surprise though.

The most common one was the surprise that a girl from the weakest race, the Black Cat kin, could be an adventurer.

The other one was the surprise at the fact that even though she was a member of the Black Cat kin, she carried the air of a powerful person.

Either way, there was contempt for the Black Cat kin. No, they don't have any contempt or malice towards the Black Cat kin. It was just that they consider it was common knowledge that the Black Cat kin is weak and unfit for battle.

It was frustrating for Fran. It must have been sad too.

But not once did Khanna, Dianne, or Shella say anything about the Black Cats being weak. There were some insults about her being a little girl or an adventurer, but that was it.

Especially Khanna. Come to think of it, she didn't seem to care about race, age, and status at all. Now I also felt respect for her.

「Khanna is interesting. I wish she was an adventurer though」

『Hee?』

In fact, this was quite the compliment in Fran's eyes.

「But Khanna is weak」

『Well, she's not much of a magician, is she?』

「But she's not afraid of me, so I knew that she's not to be underestimated」

Strong adventurers sometimes tested each other's strength during their first encounter. They fought against each other with a light exchange of feints to assess each other's strength.

But it seems the public eye often thought that they're trying to kill each other, but if they were a really strong adventurer, no harm would come to them. And when they recognize each other's strength, they will go out as equals.

Although it was different from that for an adventurer, Fran seemed to recognize Khanna as an equal. I wonder what she had to have that tugged at Fran's heartstrings besides her fighting ability?

She's the same age as her, doesn't look down on her for being an adventurer or a member of the Black Cat kin, and even tried to use her without fearing her overwhelming power. When I think about it, she's quite capable huh?



「Khanna is interesting」

『Well, it's fine then if Fran says so』

「Nn!」

After all, she was kind of interested in her. I guess that's what it's all about.

『They said it normally should take about 5 days to reach the Academy of Magic from here』

「It would be even shorter with Urushi」

「Woof!」

『But since this is the first time we've come to this country, I'd like to see some of the towns too』

「Delicious specialties too!」

「Woof woof!」

『That too, huh?』

I also want to show up at the adventurer's guild to listen to the domestic situation. In particular, I want to know what's currently going on with the Kranzel Kingdom and the Raidos Kingdom. I don't want to get involved in a war after all.

「Is there anything else?」

「Woof?」

『...There might be more to see if you're an adult』

「Ooh-, I see」

It would be best if Urushi didn't make his body size too huge too. We'll never know what kind of rumors might start after all.

In the end, we decided to have Urushi change to the size of a pony and head for the nearest village from here. After that, we would head to a larger town.

However, we were not able to achieve anything special in that village. It was the closest village to the border, so I thought it would be developed like a lodging town, but it was completely rural.

There was only one old man, a former E ranked, in the Adventurer's Guild branch. There was also a lake about an hour further on, and apparently, there was a large town on its shores.

Most travelers usually just pass through the village and go to that town.

『A lakeside town huh?』

「Looking forward to it」

『Come to think of it, have you ever seen a lake that big?』

「Nn」

「Woof」

A lake itself was not new to us, but the place we were going to visit was on a different scale. We can't see the other side of the lake after all. It's probably about the same size as Lake Biwa. But it might even be bigger than that.

(Note: Lake Biwa: 63Km in length, 23Km in width)

「Urushi, hurry!」

「Woof woof!」

『Oioi, the lake won't run away you know?』

「There's fish」

「Woof」

Aah, come to think of it, he said that big freshwater fish was a specialty.  
Was it something like a carp?

「Fish Curry—」

Does freshwater fish go well with curry? Was there such a thing as carp  
curry or eel curry? I guess it was not out of the question as a local souvenir,  
but...

『Fran, let me tell you one thing, some ingredients don't go well with curry  
you know?』

「It will be fine. Curry is the best, no matter what you put in it」

Oh crap, I definitely need to make delicious freshwater fish curry, huh?!

# Chapter 520: The Lakeside Maiden

「I can see it. A big puddle」

『It's a lake』

「Just like the sea」

『No, it's a lake』

Ahead of us was the town of Kiarazen.

It was also known as the Lakeside Maiden. It's because there's a statue of a water spirit in the square where you can get a nice view of the lake that attracts a lot of tourists. But Fran doesn't seem to be interested in it though.

The town was also nicknamed “Lakeside Maiden” because of the beautiful white color of its town's buildings.

It was a beautiful landscape, just as the name “Maiden” implies. The shimmering blue surface of the lake reflecting the sunlight and the white buildings standing on its shore. The contrast of blue and white looks so beautiful.

The sight of the tiny fishing boats coming and going on the large lake reminded me of the preciousness of people's lives.

「...So big」

「Woof...」

Even these duos seemed to be impressed by the view. They stared at the lake in awe. Well, it didn't last for a minute though.

「Fish!」

『Yes yes, let's go to the town then』

「Nn」

Our entry went smoothly. We had to wait in line for a while, but it probably took less than five minutes. I wondered if there were too few people due to the war, but it seems that most travelers use boats to enter the town from the lakeside.

Only a few peddlers or adventurers used the land route.

『Fran』

「...Nn?」

『You shouldn't eat too much, we need to get to the adventurers guild too after this』

「Nnhm」

『It's not polite to answer when eating you know—』

I mean, how can she go to a food stall within 30 seconds of entering a town... Oh crap, buying snacks has definitely been added to the purpose of Fran's trip now.

We have the money, but I wonder was it good for her education to allow her to buy as much food as she wants? I know she won't waste any of it, but...

『Hmm』

「What's wrong, Master?」

『No, it's nothing, but I just think that Fran eat a lot, huh?』

「Fufun」

Why did you make such a smug face? She never reacts at all when people say she's cute. But it seems she thinks that eating a lot was a compliment for her.

『So, what did you buy?』

「This」

『Hohou, deep-fried fish huh?』

It would look more like a carp or a goldfish. Just like a freshwater fish. The cooking method used for it was simple: take out its guts and fry it in oil. They did not even remove the scales.

『How does it taste?』

「Salty?」

『...Anything else?』

「A taste like a mud」

It was a typical under-prepared river fish. However, despite saying that, Fran still managed to eat the fish.

「It's crunchiness is good」

『Oh, you like its texture huh?』

「Nn」

She seemed to like the fried scales. After Fran finished it, she rushed to the food stall and bought more fried fish, and bit into it.

「!!」

『Wh-what's wrong?』

「This is delicious」

『Hou?』

「Woof woof!」

『Urushi too, huh?』

What Fran was staring at with wide eyes was the fried fish that almost every stall on this street offered. The fish they used seemed to be the same and I couldn't tell the difference from other stalls by looking at it.

But if Fran and Urushi say it was delicious, then it must be true.

『It must have been a famous stall. Maybe it was prepped and seasoned well』

「Let's get more!」

「Woof!」

『Ah, wait!』

Fran and Urushi dashed back into one of the stalls. I mean, how could they think of buying something here?

The stall was deserted and looked very rundown. The paint was peeling, and its curtain was dirty and worn.

Was it because of this appearance that no customers came to the stall, or was it because no customers came to the stall that it remains rundown? At least for me, I wouldn't have chosen this stall to get something to eat.

「Huh? You've come again?」

The seller was a beautiful girl with blond hair. Her white skin made me wonder if she had the blood of nobility in her veins. Since she was selling fish that had been fried on the spot, it wouldn't be strange if her skin was rough from the oil splashes, but there was not a single blemish on the girl's skin.

But I don't think customers will be rushing in for this girl. She was wearing a black headband-like eye patch that covered both eyes. It would be fine if she showed one of her eyes. But it covered both her eyes. The strangeness of her eyepatch, which looked like a blindfold, stood out on top of her beauty.

But Fran didn't care about that at all and ordered some fish.

「Nn! It's the most delicious in here, the smell didn't lie」

「Woof!」

「Thank you」

The girl smiled softly and bowed her head lightly.

Apparently, Fran and Urushi chose this stall with their noses. The frying oil used looks different from the others, it may be replaced frequently without being reused. That's why the price was also a little higher than the other stalls.

「Give me all you have」

「Eh?」

「I want them all」

「Umm, you mean all the ones in here?」

「Nn. I'll buy it if you're gonna fry that too」

『Hey hey, you can't buy everything, she won't be able to do business』

It was not enough for a store to have good sales. For the sake of the customers and the regulars, they have to keep a certain amount in stock for their reputation.

However, the girl looked pleased.



「Thank you. I'll fry it right away then」

「Nn」

Come to think of it, her stall was not as popular as the others. Maybe it was already lucky for the girl to be able to sell them.

『But still, she's amazing』

The girl was making the fried fish so fluidly that it made me wonder if she could see. The way she handled the fish and the timing of lifting it out of the oil was perfect.

And that's not all. When Fran handed her the money, the girl could tell by the slightest touch whether it was silver or copper and returned the change to us.

I was curious and couldn't help but appraise her.

Name: Rhyn

Age: 24 Years old

Job: Cook

Status: Missing both eyes

Status Level: 25

HP:54

MP: 101

STR: 30

PHY: 36

AGI: 41

INT: 49

DEX: 47

Magic: 70

[Skill]

Sensitive Hearing: Lv2, Wind Magic: Lv4, Air Flow Vision: Lv2, Presence Detection: Lv2, Wand Technique: Lv2, Echolocation: Lv4, Magic Vision: Lv5, Water Magic: Lv2, Cooking: Lv4, Magic Manipulation.

[Equipment]

Oak Wand, Water Spirit Clothing, Magical Eyepatch, Magical Necklace.

She possessed several skills to supplement her vision. Judging from her skill set, she was probably a magician by nature.

「...」

『!』

Wha? Did Rhyn's eyes look at me for a second there? No, she shouldn't be able to see... But was it her Magic Vision that allowed her to know that I was a magic sword? It felt strange, it was as if she saw through my soul that resided in the sword... But that shouldn't be possible.

However, it seems that the loss of her eyesight made her extremely perceptive in other areas. Let's be careful not to let our guard down in front of her.

「Thank you, I'll come again」

「Likewise. That's the best sale I've had since I started this stall. Come again next time」

Then we left Rhyn's stall, but for some reason, I felt like she was watching me the whole time.

『No no... Was it just my imagination?』

「Master?」

『Hey, do you feel like someone is watching us?』

「Hmm...?」

「Woof...?」

My words made Fran and Urushi brace themselves for a moment. But they quickly tilted their heads in confusion. I guess they don't feel anything. Was it just my imagination after all? When I thought about it, the inexplicable feeling cleared up before I knew it.

『Sorry, maybe it's just my imagination』

「Nn」

# Chapter 521: What a Commercial Fleet Is

After we left Rhyn's stall, we were on our way to the adventurer's guild. But on the way, I was still worried about that girl with the eye patch.

『I wonder if she knew I used appraisal on her?』

「Rhyn?」

『Yeah』

I thought I was mistaken, but something was still bugging me.

「She's amazing then」

In the first place, our training in the plains had strengthened our stealth and concealment abilities considerably. We have also been able to suppress any hint of our use of Appraisal more than before.

I'm so confident that if our opponent didn't have a high-level Appraisal Skill, they wouldn't be able to detect it.

Even Amanda had to concentrate very hard to notice it after all. And even if she did notice, it was only to the extent of giving her an uncomfortable feeling like "Did look at me?".

From what I could tell, Rhyn wasn't very strong. Even though her senses were sharpened, her movements were only amateurish, and her magic power was low. If she was an adventurer, she must have been a ranked F or E

To be frank, I hadn't expected to be noticed. In fact, she didn't have any skills that would allow her to notice appraisals perfectly, and her status would not allow her to somehow notice them through intuition or feeling like a strong person.

That's was supposed to be though, but——

『...This is just making me lose my confidence』

Appraisal was a very useful skill. It was necessary to train daily to use it quietly when the time comes.

I've practiced a lot against the magic beasts on the plains. And I've become proficient to the point that they can hardly detect the presence of my appraisal even against those with high sensing abilities. And I was now in the middle of practicing it on humans.

However, I wouldn't use it on a King or a Guild Master. The only people I will use it to are ordinary people in town or travelers passing by on the road, who are unlikely to notice my appraisal.

No, there is still a small chance that they will notice. There's even a chance that they might have the Appraisal Perception skill by accident. But if I said that, I wouldn't be able to use my Appraisal skill out of fear.

But it would be foolish to seal off this skill because of the fear of being caught using Appraisal and then fail when the time comes. That would be just plain stupid.

There is no such thing as failure when it comes to just activating Appraisal. However, using it in conjunction with the Stealth skill to suppress the presence when the skill was activated requires a certain amount of practice.

This was a world with a game-like system, but it doesn't work the same for everyone, but the more you train, the better you get.

Appraisal too, you have to use it to get better at it.

It's not that I forgot what Diaz said, okay? It's just that he warned me that if I used appraisal on royalty, I might be guilty of disrespect. He didn't tell me not to use appraisal. Rather, he advised me to use it well.

I was going to follow that advice and use the appraisal on the easiest no-risk opponent possible to practice on.

I'm still worried about Rhyn. I think I'll refrain from practicing appraisal on humans for a while.

As I was thinking about this, I quickly saw the sign for the Adventurer's Guild.

「Excuse me—」

「Yes, welcome to the Adventurer's Guild!」

When we entered the guild in Kiarazen, the receptionist greeted us with a smile.

「Are you—...going to take a request?」

「I came to see the requests」

「I see, you're an adventurer huh? Are you alone?」

「Nn」

「Huh? But that's strange」

「About what?」

「You didn't just stick with the commercial fleet, did you?」

「Commercial fleet?」

「You don't know? Maybe, you were born in a foreign country huh?」

「Nn」

「I see. The commercial fleet is——」

The Onee-san then explained it to us. The commercial fleet was a large fleet of ships that traveled around Lake Vivian. Aah, Lake Vivian is that huge lake from before.

There were several large towns and cities on the shores of the lake, which was larger than a small country, and the fleet was said to be making regular trips to these places.

Their work was diverse, ranging from trading to buying and selling local products. They provide transportation for adventurers and travelers. Fishing and purchasing materials in the dangerous central area of the lake. They also provide entertainment such as circuses and minstrels and even regular checkups by doctors.

「I can get that much on ship?」

「It's not on one ship. Otherwise, it wouldn't be called a fleet, would it?」

「Then, there's a lot of ships?」

「Yes, a lot. I don't know the exact number, but there were more than 10 large ships. I think there are also more than 50 small and medium-sized ships」

「Hoo——」

That's great. There are probably more people there than in a small village.

「They've been around this lake for hundreds of years, you know?」

「Hee—. Who started it?」

「Something is interesting about it. I don't know if it's a lie or not, but this Lake Vivian used to be a sea」

「The sea turned into a lake?」

「The story goes that this was originally a small lake and that the lake and the sea combined to form a large lake. Lake Vivian was named after that small lake」

「What do you mean?」

「Hmmm. I don't know the details, but it seems that the lake and the sea were connected by a natural disaster, and then a part of the ground rose and separated this part from the sea, forming the lake as we know it today. The merchant of the fleet said that the commercial fleet began when the trading ships that were left behind on the lakeside gathered together to protect themselves from monsters」

「Are they staying in the lake forever?」

「I mean, they can't just leave a ship like that behind, right? It wouldn't be strange if they just stayed there right?」

A ship was an expensive thing, so it was a valuable asset. If it was a trading ship that could sail the open sea, it was much more expensive than the cargo it carries. I don't know whether the captains of the trading ships were the owners or hired hands, but they probably didn't have the option of leaving the ships behind and returning to their countries.

But to live, they had to work. I don't know if they had enough conscience not to become lake bandits, or if they couldn't make a living as bandits because of the lack of prey, but they considered lake villages as ports and started trading.

Well, they must have thought of various ways to earn money, since they would not be able to earn enough money just by visiting the lakeside villages. They must have thought of: transportation, fishing, escorting, entertainment, and trade. As a result, it would not be surprising if it became what was now called a commercial fleet.

「So, the commercial fleet is full of adventurers who are just starting in this area. They have safe jobs like carrying cargo, and they can watch and learn from the work of the senior adventurers」



It is said that it is common practice for adventurers around this lake to first train in the commercial fleet.

「So there are quite a few adventurers of your age in the commercial fleet, you know?」

「Hee」

It might be unusual to find a place with so many child adventurers. However, if there was little danger to their lives and they could receive guidance from senior adventurers, it might not be a bad place to work.

「The fleet will welcome you with open arms」

「Is that so?」

「If you ingratiate yourself with them at the beginning, you could become a good customer for the commercial fleet when you grow up. If you grow strong enough, you can be hired as an escort. They have a great advantage of having the support of adventurers after all」

It was like a big business moving on the lake. I'd like to see it once, whether we ride it or not, and it seems that Fran felt the same way.

「That commercial fleet. Where can I find them?」

「Oh my, are you interested?」

「Nn」

「Let see... I think the main force is in the east this time of year. I don't know exactly where they are though. But the squadrons, which are small ships that go around the villages, come at least once a week」

「Okay」

This town is located just south of the lake. East of here is also in the direction of the Academy of Magic we're heading to.

The Academy of Magic was still quite far from the lake, but I heard that the self-governing territory around it also borders the lake. This might give us a chance to see a large fleet of ships first.

「Hey, did you come from the Kranzel Kingdom by yourself?」

「Nn. But how did you know I'm from Kranzel?」

「Well, that's because there are no adventurers in Raidos. If that were the case, the only foreign adventurers that would come to this area would be from the Kranzel Kingdom」

「I see」

「It's the first time I've seen a girl your age come alone, but I think it's good to be part of a commercial fleet. After a year you'll be able to become a full-fledged adventurer」

「Nn? I don't really want to stay there though」

「Huh? Didn't you said you're interested before?」

「I just want to see it」

「Aah, I see. But it's not life-threatening, and I'd definitely recommend it. There's also a branch of the guild in the commercial fleet, so you can still rank up in there」

A guild branch in a ship? That was amazing. Not only was it a large moving merchant company, but apparently it seemed to be a moving town.

「Even a kid with G or F-rank can hopefully rank up one rank in a year. We've accumulated the know-how to nurture the adventurers, so they can grow safely」

So, you're saying that they're going to assign us a job to train adventurers? That might indeed be a good system. They might be tied to the commercial fleet, but if they're going to be working in this kind of work, that connection is rather a plus.

「I've also heard that when someone becomes a high-ranked adventurer and has had enough of working in there, they often leave the ship」

「But I'm fine」

「Huh? But why?」

「This」

Fran shows her guild card to the Onee-san, who clearly thought that Fran was just starting.

「...? The usual black card color is...」

G & F-ranked adventurer cards are copper, E & D cards are black, and C & B cards are silver. Apparently, this guild only had adventurers of rank D or lower, and they were not used to seeing Fran's B-ranked adventurer card.

「Eeeeh? I-it's real? It's real, isn't it? Y-yeah, it's the real thing! It's real!」

「So noisy」

As soon as she finally realized that this was the real thing, the Onee-san screamed out. Immediately after, she went upright.

「I-I-I apologize for my attitude from before! I've been talking down of you!」

「Nn?」

「I-I'm so sorry!」

She seemed to be terrified of her. It was the first time that she had been reacted to so intensely before she had even shown her ability.

「A, awawawa...」

She was obviously flustered. And it seems she won't be able to listen to us properly for the time being.

「...?」

# Chapter 522: The Relationship Between the Three Countries

「I'm sorry for that fool from before」

The one bowing his head with a wry smile in front of Fran was the master of the Kiarazen Adventurer's Guild.

He looked like a refreshing uncle, but his speech was coarse and had a gap. However, the presence emanating from his body was definitely that of a high-ranked adventurer.

「High ranked adventurers rarely come here, after all, I think that's why she was so panicked when she met a B-ranker from another country in front of her. It has been a long time and I still can't get rid of this newbie mentality. It's better than last year though」

「Not many high-ranked? What if a strong magic beast appears?」

「They rarely appear, but when that happens, I'll come out or ask the commercial fleet for help」

The fleet itself travels along a fixed route, but it was possible to reach each town in a few days by using small boats.

The adventurers in each town were trying to get by while waiting for help from the commercial fleet. That seems to be their basic strategy when an uncontrollable situation arises.

Therefore, most of the high-ranking adventurers in the area belong to the guilds in the commercial fleet, and they scatter to each town to do their

work. The receptionist doesn't have much contact with the high-ranking adventurers because the masters will be the ones to take care of them.

「And then, what will Fran do after this? You must have heard about the commercial fleet from that fool, but are you interested?」

「Nn... A little, but I can't, there are places I have to go, maybe next time」

「I see, If the Black Lightning Princess is going to be active around here, I'd very welcome it」

「You know about that?」

「There's not a single guild master on this continent who doesn't know your nickname. I'm sure Diaz also has his eyes on you now. There's been a lot of talks about you when she raised you to a B-ranker」

Come to think of it, to become a high-ranking adventurer, you needed a recommendation from a guild master. Because of this, it seemed that Fran's story was spreading to the top brass of the guild.

「You're a hell of a thing to actually face... Are you really from that Black Cat kin? It's been a long time since my strong person detection skills have sounded that much of a warning... Even though I'm a former B-ranker too」

It can't be helped, but it was true that this guild master was also quite strong.

He then observed Fran lightly and smiled bitterly.

「Coming here to get information about this country」

「Yeah, you've just crossed to Belios from Kranzel after all」

「Nn. What's the relationship between this country and the other country?」

「Well, first of all, the current relationship between Belios and Kranzel is probably not so close」

Both countries were bordered by the military power of the Raidos Kingdom and have not had any major conflicts in the past. They both knew that if one of them falls, the other will be the next target of Raidos, so they work together moderately while accommodating each other in various aspects. That kind of relationship has continued for a long time.

「Ideally, we'll reap the profit while the other country and Raidos try to crush each other. But I understand how difficult that would be」

Currently, there was no threatening force other than Raidos, and thanks to the threat of that country, the nobles were not asking them to attack the other country.

As long as there was no war, it was safe to say that the country was stable.

It reminded me a little of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms from my previous life, where the famous military strategist Confucius Kongming (Note: Zhuge Liang alias) proposed to his master Liu Bei a plan to divide the country into three parts. It was a famous plan that three opposing countries should check each other to bring stability. The northern part of the continent of Zilberd seemed to be in such a state by accident.

「Well, it looks like Kranzel is a little shaky for the time being, but that's a big country. It's not like it's going to suddenly collapse. But the Belios Kingdom can't afford to have it fall」

Although they send spies to each other, it seems neither side wants to actively destroy the other.

「I'm sure there will be some kind of support from Belios to Kranzel soon. Well, of course, we'll do it quietly behind the scenes」

「I see, what about Raidos then?」

「We're still talking about them a little now, but it sucks」

They had been at war with each other for hundreds of years, and public sentiment between them was bad. To put it bluntly, many of the people here seemed to consider that country as an enemy.

「However, we believe that the risk of invasion is low now」

「Why?」

「Because we have that special self-governing region」

The special self-governing region. This was where the Academy of Magic was located. In terms of location, it was located on the west side of the Belios Kingdom, and if Raidos invaded, the self-governing region would definitely be in their pathway.

「Even though she was a High Elf, we wouldn't just simply lend her a piece of land that's equivalent to 10% of the country right? So, we used that as a deterrent. In fact, there are already several deals between Weena Rhyn, the head of the self-governing region, and the country」

「Deals?」

「I don't know much about it, but I've heard that there are deals to participate in emergencies and that the technology created at the Academy will be made available to the rest of the country on a priority basis」

And so, the country has also granted various privileges to Weena Rhyn.

「We granted self-government for the special region, but this is probably for the best. They're also exempted from paying taxes to the government, have the right to veto the extradition of criminals, and so on. They also have the power to interfere in the governance of Lake Vivian」

「Does that lake belong to the High Elf too?」

「No, she doesn't have full authority, but she does have the power to interfere in development and other matters. She has also said that there is a spirit living in this lake and that if the spirit is angered, the country might be



destroyed by it. I was told that she's responsible for monitoring the spirits to make sure they don't get angry」

「A spirit that could destroy a country?」

I've heard of that kind of story somewhere. It was Klimut's Great Spirit of Wind. Could it be that the Great Spirit of Water was here? If so, it would be dangerous to anger it.

「But the guys from the commercial fleet were complaining about that too. Because every time they add a ship or decide on a new route, they have to report it to the government or the self-governing region, which is troublesome」

In fact, no one knew whether such spirits lived in this lake or not. It's just that the High Elf, Weena Rhyn, said so, so it must be something like that.

「They can't afford to offend the High Elf though, so they're not going to against it」

# Chapter 523: Collecting in the Lake

「Around here?」

『Maybe. Can you find it, Urushi?』

「Woof?」

『Can't find any signs of herbs either, huh?』

「Woof...」

We had just received a request from the master of Kiarazen to collect medicinal herbs.

The Adventurer's Guilds in this area had a unique and interesting system. This system allows requests made by other guilds to be accepted by guilds in different locations. Conversely, you could report requests to other guilds, but it's limited only to gathering requests such as harvesting.

This was also thanks to the commercial fleet. By using ships to transport items, they could deliver materials to different guilds. It seems that the small fleet called squadrons were mainly responsible for this.

The herbs we were looking for were said to grow at the bottom of the lake, but it was difficult to collect them due to the presence of magic beasts around.

If we collect it and deliver it to the town ahead, it would also be delivered to Kiarazen. That's why this system was so convenient.

『Well, we'll find out when we dive in. I'll set up a wind barrier. Fran and Urushi, get ready for any magic beast』

「Okay」

「Woof!」

『Then, let's go』

We then dove into the lake. There we found an amazingly beautiful sight. First of all, it was so clear that I couldn't believe it was a huge lake. Could it be because it was a lake in another world that hadn't been polluted by civilization?

The bottom of the lake was covered with green water plants, and the slight current of the water made them sway and flutter. Moreover, colorful flowers were blooming there.

I had seen the water-crowfoot before I died. It was a plant that grew small white flowers in the water. But this one was incomparably larger and looked no different from the plants on the land.

We also saw various fish that swam around on the green carpet, and underwater creatures such as shrimps and turtles glanced out from among the flowers. The unfamiliar creatures must be those from this world.

The sunlight coming in was diffused by the surface of the water, wavering more gently and softly than on the ground. The shimmering and changing light added to the fantastic atmosphere of this place.

We almost forgot that we were in a dangerous place inhabited by magic beasts for a moment to look at the scene.

『It's amazing』

(Nn)

(Woof!)

It was so amazing that it even impressed Fran and Urushi.

However, the excitement did not last long.

「Kyaaaa!」

『Tsk, we have a guest, huh?』

High transparency also means that we could be seen clearly by those who were targeting us.

(Huge lizard?)

『That's what we call a crocodile!』

I proudly said so, but it seemed like it wasn't a crocodile.

Its face was similar to that of a crocodile, and it had the same hard scales all over its body. However, the shape of its body would be more like a seal or a sea lion.

It had two pairs of fin-like limbs on each side of its body that was probably used for swimming. In total, it had eight fins. If you were a dinosaur lover, you may also say that it was just like Mosasaurus with eight fins, huh?

It's about three meters long, so it was probably about the same size as a crocodile.

(So that's the Lake Murder?)

『It seems so』

It seems that this magic beast with a scary name would be the powerful enemy that would prevent us from collecting medicinal herbs. Its threat level was E. But underwater monsters tend to be difficult to fight, so the threat level tends to be set higher. I appraised it, and based on its status alone, I'd say it had a threat level of F. Its Swimming skill was outstandingly high, but that was not unusual for an underwater magic beast.

To be honest, even a low-ranked adventurer could fight it if they knew how to handle it.

But only if they were alone. These Lake Murders always act in groups of 10 or more and hunt in coordination. They were also difficult to exterminate because they quickly run away when they feel endangered. In fact, there were probably more than thirty lake murders coming at us right now.

Not only that, but it was also the most hated magic beast in the lake because of its weak but long-range water magic attack. It was also said that it caused the most damage by far.

Just like goblins and orcs, subjugation requests for them were posted permanently.

『Let's take care of that one first』

(Nn. I don't want to hurt the herbs or the other flowers)

『Then, let's go with a less flashy technique, shall we?』

(Let's do that)

(Woof!)

Wh-what a surprise to hear Fran say that she didn't want to hurt the flowers...! I'm so touched! It was worth coming to this place just to hear those words!

(Nn!)

(Woof!)

Fran shot a flash of light magic. It was a technique used to blind people or signal them to go farther, but this time she used it to create a blinding light.

Then, Urushi's dark magic exploded. He used shadow-mediated binding magic. It was a type of magic called shadow stitching or shadow binding.

What Urushi just used was a technique that created darkness from shadows and wrapped it around the opponent to seal their movements.

I was surprised when Fran said that she wanted to raise her light magic, but it worked surprisingly well with Urushi's dark magic. In particular, the ability to create shadows at any location would be a considerable advantage. My Fran must be a genius because she could come up with something like that in her own way.

『Yosh, I'll take care of the rest!』

A group of Lake Murder was struggling to rise to the surface with their limbs restrained by Urushi's magic. Then I split my blade into multiple pieces with Shape Transformation and moved each piece separately to pierce all of their magic stones

Once I stored their corpses, the subjugation was complete. I heard that its flesh was smelly and inedible, but the skin was in demand as armor, and the stuffed heads were popular with enthusiasts. Besides, we could also fulfill the permanent request.

The subjugation was an E-rank request, but it was also an achievement for getting rid of a magic beast that was hated in this area. So, there's no harm in defeating it.

『Let's collect the herbs. It is said to be a red and thorny plant』

(...Is that the one?)

『Ooh, it's definitely red and thorny... I'm that's the one we're looking for. Let's get the whole rood』

(There's more in there)

『All right, let's split and gather them for now. They said that they want as many as we can get』

(Okay)

『Urushi, secure the perimeter』

(Woof!)

# Chapter 524: Scarlet Waterweed Delivery

『Uwaah, we're so lucky!』

「Nn」

『I never thought we'd run into the commercial fleet just after entering Sheftent』

It was the day after we collected the spirit grass from the bottom of the lake.

What we witnessed from the back of Urushi, who was running nimbly along the shore of the lake, was the sight of several very large ships docked at the shore of the lake. Not all the ships could enter the harbor at the same time, so they use the harbor in turn over a period of days.

As Kiarazen's idiot-san (We didn't get her name) said, there must be more than 50 ships in total, big and small. I wonder how they could be so densely packed together and not collide with each other?

「Urushi, let's look from above」

「Woof woof!」

Urushi then used his Aerial Jump skill to run up into the sky at once.

『Ooh, it looks so messy from above』

「Nn」



Before I could say it was spectacular, I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of ships. However, the size of the largest ship could be seen from above. The flagship, which seemed to be the largest of the large ships, was as big as a fort.

It was probably over 150 meters long. It was also probably about thirty meters wide. The strong reaction of magic power made me think that it was carrying a magic propulsion system. No, I could feel the magic power from the hull as well. Maybe it was being strengthened by magic? Or maybe they were using special materials from magic beasts.

It was not as big as a luxury cruise ship, but it was a lot bigger than the ferries I've seen before.

「Let's see it from the town」

「Woof」

『While we're taking care of the deliveries in the Adventurer's Guild in Sheftent, let's ask them more about the commercial fleet』

「Nn」

When we entered the town of Sheftent, we found it was so crowded with people. Although it was a larger town than Kiarazen, though it was not many times larger, there was a difference between the two towns.

It must be because the commercial fleet was here. The crowd was as large as the Royal Capital in the Kranzel Kingdom. It was almost as if they're holding a festival.

「Mogu mogu」

「Momu momu」

『Just straight ahead』

I guided Fran, who couldn't see at all due to the crowd. Fortunately, the Adventurer's Guild was a tall building, so we could follow its roof and not

get lost.

We managed to reach the Adventurer's Guild, despite the crowds of people, the delicious smells of the stalls, and the unusual stalls and their vendors. But its inside was just as crowded as the outside.

「Lots of people」

『I guess there's also the adventurers that were aboard the commercial fleet too』

The adventurers of the commercial fleet would have told adventurers that they would disembark their ships at ports of call to fulfill their requests. The story about a large number of young adventurers was also consistent with what we had heard in Kiarazen.

『That's a long line...』

For this number of people, there were not enough counters at all. But I guess it couldn't be helped. It only gets this crowded a few times a year.

They've added a temporary counter, but it was still not enough.

『We don't have any choice, let's just line up』

「Nn」

I was glad to have Urushi hide in the shadows. He would have been in the way even at any size.

However, as she stood in line, all eyes around her were focused on Fran. If she wasn't careful, they might all be looking at her. She was used to being the center of attention wherever she goes, but to have everyone staring at her from the moment we walked in was rare indeed.

(...Why?)

『Aah, come to think of it, all these guys here must have known each other except us』

It couldn't be helped if Fran, whom they didn't recognize, stood out. But it was not like she was doing anything wrong. She just has to keep her head up.

Besides, it must have been half a year since they came to this guild, and some of the newcomers must have become adventurers in that time. In the end, Fran's turn came without her being approached by anyone.

It seemed that the adventurers in the commercial fleet were better behaved than I thought. Well, they were from a ship with the same group of people working on requests, so the stupid ones would be naturally weeded out or re-educated.

「Umm, Are you new to this guild?」

「Nn. How did you know?」

「If you're an adventurer in a commercial fleet, you'll have an emblem so that we can identify you with」

Now that she mentioned it, I could see that the people around us were wearing matching silver badges. I guess that was their emblem. And the guild's receptionist could tell that Fran was not an adventurer from here.

「Nn. I just came」

「I see. Then what can I do for you?」

「Report on completion of requests. I have fulfilled the subjugation request. This is the delivery」

Fran submits the request form she had received in Kiarazen to the receptionist. Then the onee-san received it with a surprised look on her face.

「Well, is this a request for delivery of Scarlet Waterweed? We've had a shortage recently, so even a small amount would be appreciated. May I ask you to put it out here?」

「All of them?」

「Yes」

『Ah, Fran, wai—』

「Okay」

Baaam!

Aaah, it's been a long time since she has done that. Maybe, she guessed that Fran was a newbie. She probably didn't think she had an item bag and thought that she only brought one or two of them.

I heard in Kiarazen that some low-ranking adventurers were lucky enough to collect Scarlet Waterweed growing in the shallows and bring it with them. She seemed to think that Fran was that kind of person.

「Eh, Eeeeh?」

「This is all of them」

「Ho-how many are this!?!」

「Maybe about 200 of them?」

I've thought—did I pick too much? But there was more than I expected, and they also said that they wanted as much as we could get. So, we picked up all the Scarlet Waterweed that was growing in that area.

But it seemed that since that place was full of Lake Murder and the water was quite deep, it was very difficult to collect them and no one had been able to do anything about it.

「Wa-wait a minute!」

The onee-san at the reception desk was in a panic. Also, the stares of the adventurers around us were amazing. A surprised, jealous and suspicious atmosphere drifted through the guild.

What should we do?

As the Onee-san at the reception desk fumbled around with a troubled look on her face, an older adventurer standing in line behind us approached her.

「Lulu-chan. Why don't you just count them and process them for now? There's no other Scarlet Waterweed that looks the same as it, so it can't be a fake」

「Yo-you're right!」

「Buying these medicinal herbs that are in short supply is top priority right? We'll wait until it's processed, okay?」

This Dandy adventurer seemed to have a lot of say in here, and the other adventurers who had approached nodded in agreement.

「Y-yes, of course!」

「Huft」

I think we're gonna make it. Thank you, Dandy-san!

# Chapter 525: Making the Same Mistake Again

I was so relieved that Dandy-san called out for her. But his face looks very serious.

「You're not one of the adventurers from around here, are you?」

「Nn. Just stopped by during my trip」

「I see... I know it's rude to ask, but where did you get that huge amount of Scarlet Waterweed? I'll pay you for the information if you're willing to tell me」

「Where to find?」

「Yeah, the shortage of Scarlet Waterweed has been a constant problem for the people in this area. If a new harvesting point has been found, that would be a piece of pretty good news 」

I see. He thought she found a less difficult harvesting point where Fran, who looked like she was just starting, could collect a large amount.

「I don't mind」

「Re-really?」

「Nn. I'm not going to stay in here for long after all」

「I'm grateful!」

The man bowed his head and immediately took out a map. It was a reasonably detailed map of the area, with the lake at the center.

But unfortunately, it was already a well-known place.

「Do you know where it is on this map?」

「Nn. In here」

Fran pointed to the slightly west side of the islet, halfway between Kiarazen and Sheftent. From Kiarazen, it was 100 meters west of the star-shaped island.

The Guild Master of Kiarazen knew that Fran would be able to harvest at this location, so he asked us to collect at a more difficult location.

「Eh? But I thought there was a Lake Murder nest in there...?」

「I've beat them」

「Huh? You? Beat them?」

「Nn」

When Fran nodded, the adventurers made a noise once again. This time, the atmosphere was even stronger in denial than before.

「Hey, if you don't want to tell me, just tell me that. I'll know right away if you tell a lie to me, you know?」

「Nn? I'm not lying」

「Th-then, you must have the materials from the Lake Murder, don't you? You've beat them after all, so you must have some, right?」

Dandy-san looks angry. I couldn't blame him though; he must have thought that she was trying to give him false information after all. Even so, he didn't yell at her. That must be the sign of his age, huh? He seems to have a lot of experience as an adventurer.

「Why don't you bring it out for now?」

「In here?」

「Yes」

When Fran looked around, all the adventurers were looking at us with stern faces. Aah, she was totally being recognized as a liar.

I'm so pissed. You could go ahead and do whatever you want. I'm not gonna stop you.

Then there was even more commotion than before. It was because she brought out the Lake Murders, which we had defeated without getting any wounds. I also had removed its flesh and internal organs and processed its skin last night. The head was still attached, and it looked very impressive.

That was thirty of them. The adventurers around us were being pushed and falling by the collapsed pile of leather. And it smells pretty fishy. But it was fine since he was the one who told us to take them out!

「You believe me now?」

「I-it can't be real...」

「I'm not lying」

「Uwaah...」

「You must have bought it from somewhere else right!?」

「What's the point of doing that!?」

I wonder what we should do now. Maybe, I should have stopped her before, huh...? The onee-san at the reception desk didn't seem to know what to do either. It was already out of control.

Then a small, old woman appeared from the back of the guild as if she had heard the commotion.



I could guess who she was by just looking at her. She must be the Guild Master. The lack of stagnation in the magic power flowing through her body told me that she was a first-rate magician.

「What the hell is happening here? Oi, Lulu, what happened?」

「Aah, Master. Uumm, it's because of this girl...」

「Oioi... What is someone with an alias doing in here?」

The old woman looked at her lightly. It seemed that she had figured out Fran's true identity with just one glance.

「In the middle of a trip」

「I appreciate it, but I wish you'd think about it a little more before doing something like this」

I'm sorry. We got a little heated. After hearing from the girl at the reception desk and Dandy-san, she sighed even more.

「Is this guild only full of blockheads and idiots...? What a shame」

「So-sorry...」

「Well, it's fine then. Swift, you're gonna help me take care of it right? It's your fault because you were too stupid to see what she's capable of」

「Y-yes」

「And you, come with me. Black Lightning Princess」

「Nn」

The moment the guild master called Fran the Black Lightning Princess, there was a commotion of a completely different level than before. If I had to sum it up in one word, it would be astonishment. It seemed that Fran's alias was even known in the Belios Kingdom.

The moment Fran and the Guild Master entered the back room, the commotion they had been holding back exploded all at once. Even without listening, I could tell that they were gossiping about Fran.

While many people were saying that a child like that couldn't be strong, the calm adventurers seemed to be saying that there was no way that the Guild Master could be wrong. Still, some of the younger adventurers were laughing at us when she told them that she was stronger than them.

「I'm sorry for those annoying guys」

「It's fine」

「I'm the Guild Master. The adventurers here call me Grandma Jill」

「I'm Fran, B-ranked adventurer」

She showed her guild card to her, but Grandma Jill just lightly glanced at it.

「I know. You're the only Black Cat kin who can do something like that. You look just like the stories I've heard. So, you're in the middle of a trip?」

「I'm going to the Achajhe... Academy of Magic」

Fran biting her tongue at the academy part was cute. It would be even cuter if she was a little embarrassed by it. But it seemed like it was nothing to be embarrassed about and she just rephrased it as normal.

The Guild Master also decided to not mind it.

「Academy of Magic? Are you going to enroll there?」

「No. I have just received a request」

「I see. Well, it's not just a place that teaches combat skills, and I think someone your age should be able to enroll there」

「I can get stronger by being an adventurer too」

「Well, I won't force you. I'll also be sure to send the Scarlet Waterweed you mentioned to Kiarazen. There's a shortage of that stuff around here too. Can I share it with the other guilds? I'll make sure the request is treated as fulfilled in here too」

「Nn. You can split it up where ever you need it」

「Thank you, that helps」

It must have been very scarce. Grandma Jill looked relieved.

「Can I have you sell me some Lake Murder skins too?」

「Okay」

「That's such beautiful skin after all」

「Thank you」

「Now that we've got that out of the way, can we talk about something serious?」

As expected, there was a reason why she was called into the room, huh?

「Since you're a B-ranked adventurer, I have a request to make of you. Will you accept it?」

# Chapter 526: Community-Based

The day after being asked to accept a request from the Guild Master of Sheftent.

Fran was on a small boat. Next to her was the Guild Master, Grandma Jill.

We were aiming for a medium-sized ship called an adventurer's ship that was docked about 100 meters away from the port.

At first, she tried to bring Urushi with us, but Grandma Jill stopped her. She said he would only cause panic in there. As there was no way for everyone in there to know about him, there would certainly be a risk that they would mistake it for an attack by a magic beast.

If a panic broke out in this kind of place where ships were so densely packed, there was a possibility that the damage would be tremendous. Like a ship that would try to escape only to hit another ship and they might sink each other.

「There's an Adventurer's Guild there?」

「Yes, that's right. They didn't use a large ship so that it can turn around in an emergency」

「Is the ship just used as a Guild Branch?」

「Well. There are also the Adventurer's Quarters, training grounds, a dismantling site, and a weapons shop. Just think of it as a ship with everything an adventurer needs」

「So it's also the training grounds where they do the tests?」

「Yes, you're right」

The request from Grandma Jill to Fran was for her to be an examiner for an Adventurer's Promotion test. She wouldn't be the one to determine who passed or failed, but to be a witness.

Normally, they would have called in people from remote towns in the country for the test to measure their combat power. However, due to the war commotion and incidents that have occurred in the country, it has been postponed for half a year.

The reason why they need to go to the trouble of inviting outsiders was to make them feel less naive and to give them a sense of the vastness of the outside world.

Unlike the other regions, many adventurers in this region were born and raised around Lake Vivian and became adventurers as they were.

In a normal region, they would travel to improve their skills or to find a dungeon with a difficulty level that suited them. Even if it wasn't as exaggerated as a trip, if they were interested in a dungeon or magical areas, it was normal for them to move their base when they were young.

However, the number of settled adventurers has surprisingly increased as a result of the community-wide efforts to train adventurers, especially in the commercial fleet. Or should I call it a community-based Adventurer's Guild? Since they were from this area, they were well-behaved and knew the rules around here. All in all, it was a good thing.

At the same time, however, there was a downside in that, it caused people to get used to each other. A particular problem, she said, was the lack of a sense of urgency and competition among lower-ranked adventurers.

Many of the adventurers were familiar with each other, and many of the higher-ranked adventurers were like heroes they had admired when they were young. Because of this, even when they were beaten in the exams, many of them would think "Well, it couldn't be helped if I lost to you" and didn't feel frustrated at all.

「I don't want them to be looked down on by the people from other regions. So that's why we call in strangers as an examiner whenever possible」

「Nn. Understood」

「Oh, you sure?」

「Me too, I hate it when the Black Cat kin gets looked down upon」

「Yeah, it may be a feeling close to that. So, go ahead and beat those brats」

「Okay」

「Hihihi. The guy who wants to pass this is out of luck」

It seems this grandma Jill's personality was quite bad. But I agree. Those adventurers who lose to Fran would be quite shocked. She was a girl, an outsider, a Black Cat, and doesn't look very strong after all.

Mmm, I'd cry if I were them. If they're going to hold a grudge, please hold that grudge against Grandma Jill for knowingly asking Fran to do this. Should I ask Fran to go easy on them? Haha, it was impossible, of course.

「Besides, I want the others to see what you're capable of」

「Why?」

「As a reminder and a goal」

「?」

「Well, just show them what you're capable of」

「Okay」

「Woof!」

「I see, what great magic power. I'm looking forward to this. Urushi too, please take care of them」

As expected, her personality was bad.

Five minutes later.

From a small boat that had come alongside, Fran teleported to the adventurer's ship.

『It looks like a normal ship to me though』

「Nn」

「Woof」

Other than the Adventurer's Guild flag on the mast, it didn't look much different from the mid-sized ships that were docked nearby. But once inside, it looked so different.

The reception lobby of the Adventurer's Guild existed directly inside the ship after all. Many adventurers were hanging out here and the atmosphere was very lively.

A good number of adventurers must have landed at the Sheftent, but there were still so many aboard.

All the adventurers' gazes turned to us as Jill led us in. The adventurers, all of whom were skilled in their own right, were observing Fran as if they were evaluating her.

Many of them have suspicious looks on their faces. They seem to be looking at Jill, and then at Fran.

I guess they already know that Grandma Jill was bringing the examiner. But they didn't know that it was this girl. Since it was Grandma Jill, I'm sure she did it on purpose.

The adventurers who were evaluating Fran were those who sensed that she was not a small fry. The ones who were puzzled were probably the ones who see Fran just like a normal girl.

「You've finally come huh, old hag?」

「Thanks for picking me up, old man」

Just like Grandma Jill, a small, wrinkled old man greeted us in front of the reception desk. This old man must be the Guild Master of this place.

「I am Galfiran. I'm the Guild Master here. You can call me Grandpa Gull」

「Okay」

「Hmm. Then come with me so I can explain things to you, you're welcomed here」

「Thanks」

Grandpa Gull must have understood that she was an examiner because he accepted Fran as normal. The high-ranked adventurers nodded their heads in understanding, while the lower-ranked adventurers shouted in surprise.

Then a young man with an unconvinced face stood in front of Fran and the others.

「Grandpa Gull, is she's today's—」

「You fool!」

「Hiii」

「What kind of attitude is that towards an adventurer who took the trouble to respond to our request! Don't you even know how to be polite!」

His friends then tried to help the young man who was shouted down by Grandpa Gull.



「I'll introduce her later. Shut your mouth if you can't even judge her abilities!」

「B-but...」

「In the first place, don't you understand that the fact that I greeted her politely means that she is an important person? It looks like those dumbasses who can't even realize that need to be retrained...! Be prepared for that later!」

Was this another one of the bad sides of being familiar with each other that Grandma Jill was talking about? He had interrupted the conversation between the Guild Master and a guest and then treated him with a lax attitude. If this had been Eliante, whom we had met in the Royal Capital of Kranzel, He would have been cut down on the spot.

# Chapter 527: Promotion Exam's Content

「So I just have to fight a few times?」

「That's right. First, I want you to take it easy on them and see what they can do. After that, beat them to a pulp with overwhelming power and break their fighting spirit」

「Hihihi, that's gonna be good medicine for the weak hearted」

Grandpa Gull said some pretty extreme things while swinging his arm as an example. And Grandma Jill seems to be liking his idea too.

「Is that really fine?」

Fran tilted her lightly when she heard what these two said. But it seems, this Grandpa Grandma duo was pretty motivated.

「You've just seen those guys from earlier, right? I mean, they've been slacking off a little」

「Isn't it because of you spoiling them too much, right?」

「Well, I won't deny it. After all, we don't get many dangerous requests around here」

「No matter how much you say, words can never fully convey the message, you know」

「Yeah」

He wanted us to beat up the slacking adventurers and get them back into shape. I'm sure there were other ways to do so if he just wanted us to show the difference between our power... But this was the most reliable way to deal with those adventurers.

「However, there are a few things for you to keep in mind. First of all, can you hold back a little」

「As long as I don't kill them, right?」

「No, no, no. It would be a problem if they suffer an injury that has no hope of recovering! You're kidding, right?」

「Nn?」

「Oi, Old hag...」

Sweat was trickling down from Grandpa Gull's temples. He finally understood that Fran was more dangerous than she looked.

「I've already asked her to do this though」

「Yo-you're right. But please, those adventurers still have a future. I'd like you to refrain from giving them any injuries that might affect their life as much as possible」

「Okay, I'll be as careful as I can」

「You promise!? Please be as careful as you can!」

「Nn. Please leave it to me」

「...Seriously, can I really leave it to you!?」

You don't have to worry. I'll stop Fran if she makes a mistake. Well, as much as I can though.

「And also, please refrain from using any flashy magic」

「Why? Isn't the place was protected by a barrier?」

「Well, it's simply because we're onboard a ship. If you use Fire or Thunder magic in here, the damage to the ship will be tremendous」

「I see」

It was a simple reason. This was probably because he knew the meaning of Fran's alias, so he advised her to hold back.

「I've covered the place with barriers and stuff, but it might not be able to hold up if you unleash your magic with all your might」

「We'll get you to pay for the repairs if you overdo it, so be careful」

『Fran, you shouldn't do any damage to this ship!』

(Okay)

This ship was a magic ship no matter how I thought about it. I wonder how great the bill would be if she caused any damage to the engine section... It seems I'll have to make sure she doesn't overdo it!

「And also, you have a follower, right? Can you call him now?」

「Urushi」

「Woof!」

「Ooh, I didn't see that coming! A Dark magic user huh!? And look at that...」

「A Darkness Wolf? No, he looks different, huh? But I can tell that he's strong」

If their opponent was a humanoid, they would be able to sense a certain level of strength based on their years of experience. The lack of stagnation in magic power flowing through his body, his behavior, and his gaze were all factors that could be used to judge him. This was why some people

could tell that Fran was strong even when she was suppressing her magic power. Well, to put it simply, it was an adventurer's intuition.

However, I guess these two don't know much about any wolf-shaped magic beasts. They're not sure how to measure Urushi's power, who had evolved and became better at concealing his magic power.

「Urushi is very strong」

「Hou? Is he strong enough for Fran to say so? That's good then, why don't we get Urushi to fight too?」

「Woof woof!」

「Urushi said he'll do it」

「Thanks a lot. After all, there aren't many strong beast-shaped magic beasts around here. So, I'd like to show them how scary a magic beast can be. The lack of adventurer's awareness can be fatal in times of crisis after all」

「Awareness?」

「Yeah, The adventurers around here are only good at dealing with problems around Lake Vivian. To make matters worse, they're too familiar with this place」

It seems that they only hone the necessary skills to do jobs in this area, so they couldn't do much when they go to dungeons in other areas. I've heard that a man who was a C ranker in the guild here once died easily in an E-ranked dungeon.

That was also why the adventurers around here don't want to go out. This was not a bad thing for the region, so it had not been seen as a problem.

However, if such a thing continues for a long time, adventurers who work around Lake Vivian in the Kingdom of Belios would be looked down upon. They're useful on the lake, but elsewhere they're considered a rank below. That was what the rumors say about them.

「It's so frustrating... I've tried to do something about it, but things are not going well」

「That's why we would be grateful if Urushi is willing to help」

Grandma Jill was stroking Urushi while saying so.

「Isn't he a beautiful beast... His rank must be pretty impressive, right?」

「I wonder?」

「...Well, it'll be fine as long as you don't destroy the ship」

「Woof!」

「No problem」

「Well then, you'd better get to the exam site」

The promotion exam site was reasonably large. It was about the size of a gymnasium. The ceiling was low though, but it was enough for us to move around.

「Ah right, more guys met the rank-up requirements last night. Is that a problem for you?」

「No problem」

「All right. Well then, let me introduce you guys to your examiner today. She's Fran, an adventurer」

「Nn. Nice to meet you」

「You guys! No matter how high up in the ranks your opponent is, don't show a pathetic appearance against a kid!」

Grandma Jill's personality, as always, was quite bad. She didn't explain Fran's identity in detail. And Grandpa Gull seems to be in on her plan too. In fact, he was fueling the adventurers.

「Yes!」

「You can count on us! We'll definitely rank up!」

「It's going to be easy this time, isn't it?」

「Hehehe, they're so adorable」

Well, I'm sorry guys.

# Chapter 528: Adventurers of the Lake

「Hey, who are those guys?」

「That must be the onlookers. The old man must have called them here」

「They've been slacking lately too. I thought I'd give them a shot to wake up. Let's show them how strong you are」

「Or do you not want to show your skills publicly? If that's the case, I'll kick them out immediately」

「No need, it's fine」

Well, it was not going to be a fight where we have to show up the cards in our hands after all. Fran was rather pleased with this. It was because this was a nice chance to improve the status of the Black Cat kin.

I was worried that she might get a little too motivated though.

「Ooh, that's good then. I'm sorry for not telling you before」

「Good grief, this old man is so brazen」

「I don't want to be told that by this brazen old hag!」

As they were talking about this and she was doing some light stretching, a man approached her from among the onlookers.

He was clearly an adventurer with power a level higher than the rest of them. At the very least, he was a C-ranker. Depending on his skills and



abilities handling, he could have been a B-ranker.

『He's quite strong』

(Nn. Appraisal)

『Aah, what are you doing?』

(It's natural to appraise stranger who approaches us)

『Is that so?』

(Nn. If he found out, then we can either defeat him or run away, that's all)

She was so simple! Apparently, I was an idiot for worrying about it.

When I used the appraisal skill a sense of weight lifted off my shoulders, I found that he was still quite strong. His status was at the top of rank C, wasn't it? He was much weaker than Colbert, but he had a good balance of water magic, underwater action skills, and trap detection. He was an all-rounder with a high rating in areas other than his combat prowess.

「Hey, sorry to barge in on you. I'm a B ranked adventurer and my name is Lovren」

「Nn. And I'm a——」

「You just need to give your name」

「?? Okay, I'm Fran」

「Yeah, I'm sure I'll learn a lot today. Nice to meet you」

「Nn」

Fran shook the hand that was offered to her. He was a fresh, handsome guy with dark hair, but he doesn't seem like a bad guy. And he was a B-ranker, huh?

「Anyway, Guild master, what's the point in hiding her true identity? After all, I'm not the only one who's noticed it」

「Well, those who don't realize it are negligent. And it means they have bad ears for information and poor eyes for judging others!」

「Haha, so strict...」

「Why are you laughing!? Well, enough about the low rankers. But the problem is that there are a lot of C's and D's who underestimate Fran! They've been in lukewarm water for too long, and their senses have been dulled」

「Well, we haven't had any major incidents in the last 20 years after all~」

「Don't be so cocky! It was because you're such an ace, that's why the adventurers of Lake Vivian look like fools! The people of the Royal Capital haven even called us water striders!」

「What a strange thing to say」

「Guh...」

「Well well, it's no use worrying about it. You're just segregating yourself」

Lovren doesn't seem to care. Apparently, he was a pretty easy-going guy. Grandpa Gull, on the other hand, was the impatient type. So, I don't think they'll get along.

Well, it seems like Grandpa Gull was a little hot-blooded huh?

Well, that was fine. I'm more concerned about something else.

『Fran, you recognize that kid?』

(No)

『Of course, huh』

There was a boy who kept staring at Fran and Urushi since we showed up. Although the other group's members were also looking at us with suspicion and contempt, this boy was the only one who was letting out his killing intent at us.

I wondered if we had beaten him up somewhere, but Fran didn't seem to remember him either.

『He's looking at us as if he was looking at his parent's killers』

(... I don't know)

『Well, it's no use thinking about him, we'll just need to be a little more cautious』

(Nn)

I wonder if it was because his relatives were killed by the Black Cat kin or something like that? Or maybe he was the child of an enemy that Fran had defeated?

「Two people from the E-rank, come!」

「Ou!」

「Understood!」

A man in his early thirties and a woman in her mid-twenties stepped forward at Grandpa Gull's words.

Both were warriors that used the spear. Apparently, there were a lot of spear users in this guild. Of the nine people here, seven were spearmen, and the other two were a mage and an archer, so all the warriors were equipped with spears.

「Let me show you these spear handling skills that I got from Daghour-senpai!」

The tip of the spear that the man held up looked like a harpoon. No, it was not that it looked like a harpoon, but wasn't it a real harpoon?

I wondered about it, only to realize that using a spear on a lake would be easier. Furthermore, if the junior adventurers were taught by their seniors, it would lead to an increase in the number of spear users.

Upon appraisal, I found that he possessed skills such as harpoon skills and spear throwing, in addition to spear skills. In addition to swimming, diving, and other underwater skills, he also had water walking skills.

Certainly, it was true that the adventurers in this area were specialized to work around Lake Vivian. I also took a look at the other examinees, but they all had similar skill sets. I can see why the Guild Masters would feel frustrated by this.

「I can't believe they brought a kid this time. I guess they were more concerned with the fact that the examiner must be an outsider than their ability... Don't resent me if you get hurt, okay?」

「...」

「Hey, why don't you say something? Or are you just too scared to——」

「No need to talk, come」

Fran interrupted the man's words and provoked him with a gesture of her finger to call him over. I guess the man's story was boring for her.

The reason why she didn't go first was that she'd been told to let them strike first and show what they were capable of. Yeah, yeah, it was great that she remembered what she was asked to do!

「This brat... Don't underestimate me!」

This guy seems to have zero tolerance for agitation.

# Chapter 529: The Examiner is Tough

「Haa!」

「Hmmh」

「Kuh! Sh\*t! Zeeii!」

The man, provoked by Fran, thrusts his spear out in rapid succession. However, Fran could dodge all of his attacks by a hair's breadth.

After about a minute, Fran started to put a light counterattack. She controls her attack where her opponent could still dodge it.

He could react to the attacks that came above and below, but he was not that good at responding to the strikes from the left and right. When the attack was about to hit, Fran pulled back and stopped.

The man was pissed off and kept attacking, even though it was obvious that she was holding back. This was not good. He needs to learn how to suppress his emotions. After all, it seems that he hadn't realized how many times he had died if this was a real battle. But when Fran pointed this out to him, he became even more pissed off.

In the end, she fought him for about five minutes, until Fran landed a flying kick on the exhausted man's head, and the match was over. It was okay, I immediately cast heal to the man who was blown away. He was unconscious, but he was unharmed.

「All right, next!」

「Y-yes!」

The girl started cautiously, probably because she had seen the man get beaten up so badly. With her spear poised at her hip, she moved in a circular motion around Fran, stepping like an out-boxer.

(Note: One of the primary boxing styles, check on Wikipedia for details)

She seemed to be looking for an opening. Immediately after that, the woman thrusts her spear into the air without missing the opening that Fran showed. It was a good thrust, intended to inflict a fatal wound from the start.

However, Fran easily dodged the thrust that should've hit her from behind. Well, it was an opening that Fran made on purpose after all.

After that, the woman continued to attack. And as if she was being led by Fran, all of her attacks were dodged. Gradually, she seemed to realize that she was being led by her, and she stopped taking the lure.

A look of impatience clung to her face. It seems she didn't have any more ideas to attack.

「If that's the case, then——」

Oh, water magic, huh? If she couldn't use her spear, using magic was not a bad idea. However, her skill level was still too low. The bullet that was released was easily shattered by Fran's back fist.

「The magic power was half-heartedly formulated. This will be useless in a real battle」

「Wha...」

「Well then, it's my turn now. Here I come」

「Kuh!」

She changed to offense now. Just like against the man before, she launched a few attacks to see how she would react to defend against them.

Five minutes later. Just like the man from earlier, her consciousness was reaped when exhaustion slowed her movements.

There was no voice from the surrounding adventurers. They probably didn't expect Fran to be that strong and the fight to be so one-sided. The F-ranked adventurers, who would have had to fight Fran next were in tears.

However, Grandpa Gull and Grandma Jill were laughing with a look of heartfelt joy on their faces.

「Uwaah! Fran, that was amazing! You've exceeded my expectation!」

「You're right. This will be easy for us to evaluate. Keep it up like this for the next one too!」

「Nn. Understood」

After that, Fran took less than three minutes to beat the fledglings.

「Ghaa!」

「Arrgh!」

「But she's cute!」

Well, they don't have as much strength as the two from before, and they also had fewer tricks to watch, so it couldn't be helped.

——At the end of the first round.

「What kind of move is that...!?」

「This... This is not fair...」

「Haah, haah, more...!」

The adventurers who had regained consciousness were looking at Fran with a desperate look. Losing doesn't mean they've been disqualified, but they've been beaten without being able to put up much of a fight at all. So, they must be quite shocked.

Some of the F-ranked adventurers began to cry for real. Aah, there was also a guy who received a kick from a bad angle and broke his neck, so I instantly cast Greater Heal on him. He had a serious life-threatening experience and it seems that his heart was broken.

The rest of the participants seemed to be in a similar state. Well, there was one guy who seems to have woken up...

This one person among them was the only one who never lost his fighting spirit. It was that boy, who had been sending killing intent to Fran from the beginning.

I think he lasted the longest out of all the F-rankers. It was still only for about five minutes though. I couldn't believe he just barely met the rank-up requirements yesterday.

He wasn't bad from a technical standpoint. In terms of ability, there was even a possibility of him reaching D-rank. At his young age, that was quite a talent.

Well, he didn't say a word to her, so I still don't know why he was staring like that at Fran.

「All right, next, everybody, step forward」

「Eh? There's still more?」

「Of course! It's not over yet! If you're done with only that battle, you'll fail the exam! Show some spirit! And stop talking or we'll start it all over again!」

Maybe Grandpa Gull's threats managed to make them regain their motivation, or maybe they realized that there was no escaping this. The



adventurers then lined up in front of Fran.

「The next one is all of you vs Fran. We've got the old hag and potions with us. You should go all out to the extent that you do not destroy the ship」

Those words were probably meant for the adventurers. Those who were relieved to have the numbers and those who were worried that Fran would not be able to get away with anything if these many people were to come at her started to get serious.

However, it was Fran who reacted to that first.

「Are you sure you want to do this?」

「...As long as you don't hurt them too badly」

「Nn」

The second battle between Fran and the blue-faced adventurers who heard the conversation between Fran and Grandpa Gull began. And then it was over.

Yes, in about 10 seconds.

The two E-ranked adventurers, who were the leaders, were blown up and out by Fran's first blow when she rushed at them with super high speed. After that, the adventurers fell out at the rate of one hit and two faints per second, and the match was easily settled. That was what will happen when you're stuck without a plan.

The adventurers whose consciousnesses had been reaped were lying around Fran, who stood leisurely.

「It's over」

「Aah—... You're right. You're amazing」

「Fufun」

「However...」

「Nn?」

「Maybe, these guys don't even know what you have done to them」

Of course, huh? They had already fallen before they had realized it after all.

「I don't think you understand your differences in power with them」

「Yeah, I've beaten them into pulp」

「Aah, It's a metaphor, you know? What I meant by beating them into pulp was to break their pride! It's not like you have to break their bones or anything, you know!?!」

Grandpa Gull was telling Fran with a worried look on his face, while Grandma Jill was kicking the adventurers in the head to wake them up.

「Come on, get up! There's still the next one!」

It looks like their suffering will continue for a little while longer.

That was too quick for them to realize what had happened, so this time they were a little more cautious and able to fight for a longer time.

The adventurers now spread out from the beginning while preparing their weapons.

They probably thought that if they froze for a moment, they would be killed instantly. But, do they think that was enough?

「Well then. Begin!」

Immediately after Grandpa Gull shouted so, Fran was already moved in front of the man on the far right.

「...I'll be going for your torso, okay?」

「Ugh... Ghaah!」

While holding me that was still in my scabbard, she sent the guy flying to the wall. The rest was a repeat. Fran approaches any lone adventurer, calls out to them, and then strikes a blow.

It took her longer than before. But it still took about five minutes though.

「Good grief, what a bunch of idiots... It's because they're so afraid of being taken down altogether that they spread out randomly!」

That was right. If they were just scattered randomly, it would only have the effect of slightly extending the time it took for each of them to be defeated. They were too far apart to attack Fran from behind while their friends were attacked. So, it was no wonder Grandpa Gull was so angry.

「Get ready for the next one! Get up, quickly!」

# Chapter 530: A Puppy?

And soon, the third group battle began.

『Fran, let's go a little easier on them this time. It's not good for the exam if we keep defeating them instantly』

(Okay)

And she then began to circle the adventurers who were trying to intercept her in a formation with a speed that even created an afterimage.

She sometimes kicks the low ceiling to jump over their heads, while tapping the shoulders of the adventurers to provoke them.

「Sh\*t!」

「That was just an afterimage」

Wha? Fran wasn't that the line from Flying Shadow-san...! Well, that was a good one to hear. I need to thank these adventurers for that. As thanks, I'll wish them a gentle defeat.

(Note: Yuyu Hakusho references)

「There she is!」

「So naive」

「Wha!? She stopped my spear with her finger...」

「Don't break our formation!」

As the adventurers began to attack recklessly, Fran gradually increased her pressure on them. She increased her speed, even more, fooling them with a speed that doesn't even leave an afterimage, and occasionally stepping into their formation and tapping them on their backs.

They were suddenly struck on the back by her who could take them down with a single blow. In addition, she also whispered 「Yes, you're dead now」 or 「Your back is full of openings」 into their ears but they found no one there when they turned around with a pale face. It must be quite a horrible experience for these adventurers.

(It's about time to end this)

『What would you do?』

(I'd like to see their reaction to magic. I'm an examiner after all)

Fran muttered that with a smug look on her face. Well, at least she hasn't forgotten that she was the examiner.

「I'll end this now. Haaa!」

「Sh-she's using magic now!」

「A-aren't you a sword—」

The shivering adventurers were attacked by multiple activations of stun bolts. The adventurers, who had been frozen in place, were struck by the pale blue electric shocks and collapsed.

「Th-that was amazing. That was an example of how even lower-level magic can be differ based on the user」

「You're right. That was how a first-rate magician uses their magic」

Both of the Guild masters were praising her, but I was worried about something else.

『The floor got a little burnt... I wonder if that's okay...』

Seeing the adventurers crying made me feel sorry for them, but Grandma Jill and Grandpa Gull were merciless. They woke up the adventurers and started the mock battle again.

However, the adventurers that have lined up looked confused.

「Umm, are we going to fight this puppy now?」

「Oh my~, he's so cute~」

「You fools! No matter how he looks, he's the kid's follower, you know!?!」

「Y-you're right...」

「Woof!」

「B-but he's so small...」

「However...」

They seemed to be completely confused between the relief of not having to fight Fran anymore and the fact that their next opponent would be a pup-sized Urushi.

At first, I thought about making him look a little bigger, but when Grandma Jill saw Urushi come out of the shadows in puppy size, she insisted we keep it that way.

「If he can manipulate his body size... He must be a high-rank magic beast. It would be more shocking for us to lose against the small one than to the big one, isn't it?」

「That's right. This time, our goal is to let you witness how strong a beast-type magic beast is. I'd be grateful if you could have a decent fight with him」

「Is he the type that changes his fighting power based on his size?」

「He'll be fine」

「I'll leave this to him then」

「Okay」

「Woof!」

The adventurers then formed a formation while looking puzzled.

「Don't underestimate him just because he's a puppy!」

「Y-yes!」

「Let's make a preemptive strike with magic!」

With the E-ranker as their leader, the F-ranked adventurers obediently followed. Their teamwork was the only thing that looked good though.

Water magic was released sporadically by several adventurers, and that was the signal for Urushi to start moving.

「Woof!」

「Wha?! So fas—Ghaah!」

「Ghaaah!」

Two people were immediately blown away by Urushi, who had evaded their water magic and approached them. Urushi didn't do anything special. He just lunged in a straight line and lightly patted them with his paw.

The adventurers, who had fallen on their asses, looked at Urushi in astonishment as he dared to attack them from the front.

「Wh-what the hell was that...!?」

「Short distance teleportation, huh?」

While they were puzzled by what had happened, he really used his teleportation this time. The adventurers were pushed away by Urushi, who instantly moved behind them.

Urushi's attack continued for a while. But no adventurer had retired yet. It was because they were asked to show off their strength, so they don't want to let this fight end so quickly.

But I think their adventurers' pride has been torn to shreds already. Because they're being beaten one-sidedly by something that looks like a puppy.

Urushi too seemed to be starting to think that it was about time to end this. After all, they looked at him with a very frightened look, so it must have hurt him a little.

「...Woof!」

「He can even use magic!? What the hell is this!」

「Th-the shadows are entwining us!」

「Sh\*t, it won't come off!」

Although it was not that strong, it seems that most of the adventurers are unable to shake off Urushi's magic. In the end, only two E-ranked adventurers managed to escape the restraints.

「L-like hell I'll let this puppy defeat me like this!」

「Ah, wait!」

A male adventurer ran to Urushi out of desperation. It seems he couldn't stand the fear of losing. I guess this was what Grandpa Gull meant by calling them "Naive".

「Uwooh!」

「Woof」



The two-stage thrust that he must have put all of his power into was not even able to graze Urushi as he was able to easily slip into his bosom. And then, with a headbutt from below, he was blown up and hit his back against the ceiling. He then fell to the floor unconscious, but he'll be fine because an E-ranked adventurer would not die easily.

After that, the female adventurer who remained until the end was hit by water magic and a slap with his paw. She even has a paw-shaped bruise on her cheek.

「Wh-what the hell was that puppy is...」

「Of course, a magic beast, right?」

「I know that, but... he's scary!」

「Surely. If I encounter that thing in the woods, I won't even imagine being able to defeat it」

As requested, he was able to show them how scary a beast-type magic beast could be. Urushi was freaked though, and he was depressed. Basically, he's a friendly guy.

「Urushi, good job!」

「Woof!」

Nevertheless, when Fran held him in her arms and stroked him, he was in a good mood in no time. I wouldn't call it too easy to comfort him. But that's just how much he likes Fran.

# Chapter 531: Daghour

They decided to let them take a break as it would take some time for the adventurers to recover their bodies and minds after being beaten by Urushi.

After this, a mock battle between Urushi and those who wished to participate would be held. The goal was to show Urushi's power not only to the lower-level adventurers but also to the higher-level adventurers.

It was a little off from the request of being an examiner, but it was fine since they're also offered an extra reward and Urushi was looking motivated too. Well, it seems, it was also because Fran praised him earlier for doing a good job.

However, Fran was not tired at all and seemed to be bored. Perhaps realizing this, one of the adventurers approached Fran.

「I'm a C-ranked adventurer named Daghour. Fran-dono, would you be so kind as to let me have a match with you?」

Fran then glanced at both of the Guild Masters, and they nodded rather happily.

「It's fine. In fact, I'd like you to blow all the onlookers away too」

「Understood, I'll do it then」

「Ooh! I'm grateful! I know I'm not going to be able to do much, but I'll do my best to not let you down!」

It seems he was a warrior type. And that name too, this guy must be the one that had taught spear techniques to the adventurers from before. In fact, he looked quite skilled in using a spear. He possessed the Spear Saint Skill and

Spear Saint Technique and his level of harpooning and throwing skills was also high. In addition, he had a strange skill called 『Water Draining』. It seems to be a skill that weakened the opponent's water resistance when an attack was launched into the water. Well, he was a lake specialist after all.

「Well then, please take care of me!」

「Nn!」

「Shiyaa!」

He unleashed a deadly attack right from the start. But Fran smiled as if she were enjoying it. Daghour too, he laughed excitedly.

「Hahaha! Amazing!」

「Good shot!」

Then the fierce battle began. Although there was a difference between Daghour's seriousness and Fran's wait-and-see approach, both seem to be having fun.

There was also a scene that made me feel a chill at times. It was the shape of the spear that Daghour used. It had a large harpoon-like curve at the tip, so it could be used as a small sickle when pulled back after a thrust.

We had never seen this unique weapon movement style before, as he had tried to snatch Fran with it a few times already.

「Interesting」

「Ooh! It's an honor to hear the Black Lightning Princess say so!」

Then Daghour starts chanting while fighting. To be able to use magic while moving, this guy must be quite skilled! Although he hadn't reached B-rank yet due to his level, it seems he had been training his skills every day. His level of mastery was quite impressive.

「Haaa! Aqua Create!」

It was the simplest water magic that he used, but it was not foolproof in a high-speed battle. If it hits her in the face, her movements would be impeded, and she might even lose her footing.

Fran ducked this time, but I'm sure it wasn't my imagination that she looked happier. Because it was a mock battle with a strong opponent.

(Master, put up a flame barrier)

『Oioi, are you going to use flames to end this?』

(Nn. He won't expect it to be used here. This is my payback)

『Very well... Haaa!』

「Uwooh!」

「Kyaa!」

「Gyaaa!」

「Fi-fire magic, in this kind of place... Eh, it's not hot?」

The surrounding adventurers screamed and looked terrified as they were swallowed up by the veil of flames that spread quickly around Fran. Soon, however, they begin to be confused by the fact that it wasn't hot.

What I used was the Flame Barrier, a Fire Magic skill. This skill itself had no offensive power and was not hot to the touch.

Originally, it was a spell that enveloped the user to nullify flame attacks. However, with my current control power, I could transform this magic to cover this site completely.

『Looking good. The Superiorized Magic Control skill is showing a good result!』

「Nn!」

This was the result of Skill Superiorization, which had been a dead ability for a while. This skill transformed my magic control skill into a Special skill. This was also thanks to Announcer-san's advice.

When I was asleep, Fran had talked to Announcer-san about how to use the points and taught her how to enhance this skill.

Not only did it have the benefit of increasing my magic control more, but it also had the benefit of making it easier to reacquire my magic control if I trained my magic manipulation. Of course, I've already reacquired the magic control as a shared skill in the Plains of the Demon Wolf. Well, I used my self-evolution points to raise the magic control level though, so I've spent a lot of points.

「I-impossible... To be able to use such a skill...! You're also a first-rate magician, huh!? Ha, haha, I guess I had a problem with my eyes」

It seems that the only person who understood this greatness was Grandma Jill, who was a genuine magician. It was no wonder she was so sober and her face was pale.

「I'll end this now! Haaa!」

「No chanting huh!? Damn, this is...!」

Flare Impulse. Well, it was the skill that spread an explosive flame over a wide area. It was the higher-level magic of Burst Flame. It had less killing power, but with the addition of explosions and flashes of light, it had high crowd control power.

After the flames had cleared, there was no one standing on the site except Fran.

Even the Guild Masters were moaning while covered with soot.

『...It's overkill』

「But they also asked me to blow away the onlookers too」

『What they meant by that was for you to show them how strong you are though. Now then, I wonder if this all right』

It would be enough to just show off her strength after all.

After that, we just went with the flow and took a break. The damage shouldn't have been too bad, but I guess, we overdid it.

It was also going to take a while for the participants to recover from the shock of fighting Urushi as he broke their hearts again.

「Uwaah, that was great magic」

「Yeah, I am impressed」

Lovren, who was an onlooker, and Daghour, who was a participant, seem perfectly fine. Along with a few other adventurers who are still fine, Fran was making small talk with them.

By showing her strength, she seemed to have been accepted at once.

But in the midst of it, an adventurer that seemed to be in a great hurry came running into the exam site.

「This is a disaster! Anyone...! Eh? What a mess!」

# Chapter 532: Modoki

「A-Anyone... Eh? What a mess!」

Apparently, he didn't know about the promotion exam and was surprised to see a large number of adventurers.

「What happened?」

「Ah, Guild Master! This is a disaster, we've got another Modoki attack!」

「Another one, huh!? How many of them?」

「Four of them! They're coming here right now!」

「Tsk! Oi, the exam is suspended! This is an urgent request! Get rid of those bastards before they reach the fleet!」

「Ou!」

Modoki? Was that a monster?

「Hey, what's a Modoki?」

「Oh right, Fran doesn't know about them, huh? It's a troublesome magic beast that's been on the rise in this lake lately!」

While heading to the deck, we heard from Grandpa Gull and the others.

「Originally, there was an endemic monster in this lake called the Vivian Guardian, do you know it?」

「Never heard of it. It's endemic?」

「Yeah. It's a rare monster that can only be found in this lake」

However, the monster had rarely been hunted. First of all, it was very mild-mannered. They don't leave their territory and won't come into contact with humans unless they cross its territory.

「And even if you go into their territory, the first thing they do is to show up in groups and block your path. And you'll be attacked if you ignore them...」

Still, they would not be killed. They said that they would just render them powerless and throw them out onto the nearby land.

However, that doesn't mean that it could be hunted one-sidedly. When they were pressured with a certain amount of attacks, their stance would transform into an attack with hundreds of Guardians in the vicinity.

「Once it's in its attack form it won't stop until the humans are eliminated from its area. In addition to the idiots who provoked them, unrelated fishing boats and adventurers may also get caught up and die」

「Are they strong?」

「Their threat level was E and will be treated as lower than that if they're not in their attack form. We also didn't have many battle records with them, so I don't know exactly how strong they are. But from what I've seen of its attack from when I was younger, I'd say that they would become a threat level of B in a flock」

Isn't that quite a powerful monster then? But I wonder why they never talked about them in the guild?

When we asked them about it, they told me that their habitat was off-limits and that it was not a place to be entered. So, if someone approached those places, the guards would turn them away. In fact, the guild doesn't actively promote this rare magic beast, because if they spread the information about them, poachers might appear to hunt for them.



「So, what is a Modoki?」

「Aah, They think Modoki was an aberration of the Vivian Guardian, in other words, a new kind of monster」

「Aberrations? Will it be fine if we take them down?」

That urgent request he made earlier was supposed to be about taking them down, right? But, wouldn't it be bad if we attack it?

「But, you see, even if we attack these monsters, the other Vivian Guardians will not attack us」

「Why?」

「Don't know. I'd love to know about it too」

It seems that their research had not progressed that far yet.

「It's so different from the usual Vivian Guardian, and there's so much that we don't understand yet. Why are they coming out of their territory and why are they relentlessly targeting the commercial fleet?」

「They're targeting the commercial fleet?」

「Apparently, yeah. Every time they've been sighted, it's been near the commercial fleet, and I can't help but think that they're heading towards us. Of course, the commercial fleet has a lot of guards and surveillance magicians, so it's easy to spot them, still... the spotting ratio is high, that's for sure」

That would be a very bad situation, wouldn't it? It would not be an exaggeration to say that this fleet supports the life of the area around this lake, and if the fleet was destroyed, the surrounding towns and villages would be seriously affected.

「Guild Master! Over there!」

「There were four of them, right?」

「Yes, the rookie on watch was the one who found them!」

As soon as we stepped out onto the deck, we were able to spot the Modoki.

It swam towards the fleet while sticking its body halfway out of the surface of the lake.

Does their figure look like a 5-meter-long shelled squid or an octopus? It looked like a pointed turban shell with about ten octopus-like tentacles sticking out of it. It seemed to be swimming with its tentacles while pointing the tip of its shell at us.

Its overall color was black and red stripes with reddish-purple in some places that look very poisonous.

「So that's a Modoki?」

「Yeah」

Race: Vivian Guardian: Evil Spirit: Magic Beast Lv30

Condition: Abnormal

HP: 561

MP: 301

STR: 301

VIT: 441

AGI: 210

INT: 298

DEX: 121

Magic: 459

[Skill]

Presence Detection: Lv4, High-Speed Regeneration: Lv3, Regeneration: LvMax, Abnormal Condition Resistance: Lv5, Tentacle: Lv7, Flexible Tentacle: Lv5, Water Bullet: Lv6, Underwater Movement: Lv8, Life Detection: Lv4, Water Flow Control: Lv5, Magic Perception: Lv4, Water Magic: Lv5, Swimming Lv4, Coordination: Lv8, Sharp Smelling, Sharp Hearing, Shell Strengthening, Rampage, Magic Control.

「Well, it should be called the Abnormal Vivian Guardian, but since it was too long, so they called it with Modoki」

「Besides, it has changed a lot from its original form」

Grandma Jill, who was catching up with us, also blurted out at the sight. The original Vivian Guardian was said to be pure white. In addition, its tentacles should've been translucent, as if they were made of water, giving them a mysterious appearance.

「Hey, is it really fine to take them down?」

「Yeah, no problem」

「Okay」

「We can't get any materials from them! So, don't be too reckless!」

「Can't get its material?」

「Yeah. When the Vivian Guardians are defeated, it would melt like water and disappear! You won't even get its magic stone! It's the same for Modoki too」

I see, I certainly had sensed its magical power, but I couldn't find its magic stones anywhere. What a strange magic beast...

I have an idea of what this type of magic beast this thing was. But they seemed to be the same as the undead that we defeated on the Island in the

Sky. After all, the improvised undead that Jean created with his magic doesn't have magic stones.

But these guys weren't undead, were they? Was there a technique to create such magic beasts out of nothing?

(Master, how is it?)

『It really doesn't look like there are any magic stones. So, we can kill it without worrying about its materials. But since we're near the fleet, don't do anything too fancy』

「Nn! Urushi!」

「Woof!」

Suddenly, as the adventurers were surprised to see Urushi grow to the size of a large dog, Fran took off on his back.

「Let's go」

「Woof!」

# Chapter 533: VS Modoki

『I don't know if it'll work, but let's try the method we used against the Lake Murders!』

「Woof!」

It was a combination of Shadow Binding and the flash of light. But it didn't do much to stop it. Their eyes didn't seem to react to the light, and the fact that one or two of their tentacles were bound didn't do much to stop them.

『It's no good, huh...?』

「Woof...」

So, was a direct attack the only way to fight it? Magic would inevitably cause a lot of damage to the surrounding area after all. If we use Fire Magic or Light Magic, I don't know what kind of effect it will have, like a steam explosion or a huge wave.

「Master, I'll attack it first」

『Are you sure?』

「Nn! Awakening!」

Fran nodded and used awakening. She seems to be in her serious mode. Fran then kicked Urushi in the back and jumped up. She also leaped high in the air and set me up above her head as she fell.

「Bujuuh!」

「Bujuuh!」

The tentacles extended from the Modoki attacked Fran. They must have used their Flexible Tentacle skills. The tentacles that looked like they were about five meters long have grown to nearly twenty meters long.

But Fran continued to dodge their tentacles by kicking lightly in the air and twisting her body as if she was dancing. Since she didn't use me, she continued to fall with only the bare minimum of evasion.

「——Heaven Judgement」

「Bushuu——」

「Bubu——」

With just one swing, she cut two Modoki in half, their hard shells then melted into mush. She could now release the Heaven Judgement with her strength alone.

「Master, I'll leave it to you. Let's go!」

『Ou!』

「Haaa!」

My telekinetic catapult, boosted by Fran's throw, shattered one of them into pieces. I guess when push comes to shove, physical attacks was the way to go.

「Urushi, take care of it. You can use your bigger form」

「Woof!」

「Bushyu—!」

At Fran's instruction, Urushi killed the last one. He returned to his original size and used his large mouth to bite its entire shell to death.

『The promotion exam would have been canceled under these circumstances, so it's probably a good thing that we were able to show

Urushi's strength here』

「Nn」

Fran must have remembered the request from Grandpa Gull. So, she thought of a way to show the adventurers how strong Urushi was, even if it wasn't a mock battle.

「Bweh bweh! Woof...」

『What's wrong? Does it taste bad?』

「Woof...」

Apparently, the Modoki was not to his taste. He spat out the remains of the mush and desperately washed his mouth out with the lake water.

「You better not bite them next time」

「Woof」

『Let's go back for now』

「Nn」

「Woof」

『Oh hey, Urushi needs to be smaller first』

Just like that, we returned to the Adventurers ship and were greeted with cheers from the adventurers. The low rankers that scare me still haven't woken up, so the only people there were people of some ability. They must have acknowledged Fran, who had shown them overwhelming power.

「That was as expected from you! No, it was even more than what I expected!」

「Yes. That was amazing! I feel embarrassed to call myself as the same B rankers now」

「Gahahaha! I'm so glad you're here, Fran!」

Fran was being squeezed by her. But Fran looked happy. I guess this kind of communication was new to her. Besides, it looks just like what any adventurer would do.

The adventurers then huddled together and started singing merrily.

They said it was a song about the spirits in this lake and was called the Song of the Lakeside Maiden.

To sum it up, a spirit in the form of a blonde, white-skinned, innocent-looking girl with a mysterious amethyst right eye and an emerald left eye was guarding this lake. And it seems the lyrics were mostly about their gratitude to her.

Grandpa Gull also shouted as he got even more excited as he sang.

「All right! Let's hold a party——」

「Don't be ridiculous, old man! And these bunch of idiots too, stop making a fuss about it!」

The adventurers who were about to get even more heated stopped when Grandma Jill shouted at them.

「Alert the guards at the perimeter to search for any others! We also need to confirm how much damage was done! We still have so much work to do!」

She instantly took over the atmosphere of the place with her shouting and intimidation, which I couldn't believe came from a petite old woman. The adventurers who had been glared at by the old woman then dispersed at once.

「Fran, you come with me」

「Nn」



「Fran! Thank you for your help this time. If you have any problems, just let me know. I'll help you next time!」

「Thanks」

Fran, who was a little disappointed about missing the chance to have a party was led by Grandma Jill to what looked like a conference room.

「What's the matter with you? Did you want to have more fun with those idiots?」

「Nn...」

「Haah. At a glance, you don't look like you would fit being with those idiots... You're a high-ranked adventurer after all」

Grandma Jill shook her head in disbelief. She was smiling bitterly, but her eyes were kind. After all, I guess she doesn't hate those idiots either.

「Well, thank you for your help in accepting the request for being an examiner. I'm satisfied with it」

「Nn」

It seems the exams were judged to be over. And the ones who will pass or fail will be judged from their first battle and then the group battle.

After that, we talked about the reward and got the approval of the completion of the request. All that was left was to receive the reward.

『Well, there was also one thing I wanted to ask the old woman』

We asked Grandma Jill about the boy who had been staring at Fran before.

「That boy, huh? It's said that he's the youngest genius ever to take the rank E exam in this guild. And I think he will be 13 this year」

It was true that he was very young, compared to the other adventurers who were over sixteen, which was concerning. But I don't understand why that

would make him glared at Fran like that.

I can understand if he hated someone who has a higher reputation than him. But I don't know if it was hatred or just simple anger...

「I could felt his killing intent」

「Hmm... I don't know what we should do. This is your first-time meeting, right?」

「Nn」

「You should ask him directly then. I'll be sleeping in the next room」

We then headed to the infirmary, but the boy was nowhere to be found. The only people there were the young adventurers who were scared of Fran. When we asked about the boy's whereabouts, the answer was that they didn't know.

He must have gotten up on his own and left.

『It's no use, we'll ask him directly the next time we met him』

「Nn」

Now that the request was over, our next destination would be the self-governing region.

# Chapter 534: Famous Place

The day after we defeated the Modoki.

After leaving the commercial fleet, we were heading northeast. It was a straight route to the Academy of Magic.

『I never thought we'd be involved with the commercial fleet by chance』

「Nn. It was amazing」

「Woof!」

『Me too, I've never seen that many ships in one place before』

I looked at Lake Vivian again as we were leaving, and it was still looking big from this distance. Maybe it really was much bigger than Lake Biwa.

Well, I've never seen the real Lake Biwa before, so I don't know what it was really like.

After that, we traveled by flying in the sky while riding on Urushi's back. Since the Kingdom of Belios was a mountainous country, there were a lot of differences in elevation, and it was fun to see a complete change in the scenery just by going a little further.

「...?」

Fran was staring at the clouds far above.

『What's wrong?』

「What is that?」

『Huh? Aah, it finally reached here huh!? It's the floating island』

「Looks strange」

What Fran has discovered was a huge mass of clouds, standing even higher than normal clouds. No, she was probably looking at the shadow of an island floating in the middle of it.

「Floating Island」

It was the same kind of floating island that we had explored with Jean the necromancer.

However, this one was not a dungeon. I've done some research at the adventurer's guild in Alessa after all.

「So, there is no strong magic beast?」

『No, that's not true. It's a Grade S magical area, the bed of the Heavenly Dragon. It's one of the most dangerous places in the world where the strongest class of magic beasts in the world, the A-rank magic beasts, live』

Yes, that place was more of a dangerous place than a dungeon.

I don't know how it works, but there was always a lot of water flowing down from that floating island.

According to those who have reached the island, rivers as wide as 100 meters fall straight down from the edge of the island to the ground. However, these waters never reach the earth.

The water seems to turn into vapor and dissipate before reaching the ground. The same principle applies to Angel Falls, a famous waterfall on Earth that has no basin.

The clouds surrounding that floating island were created by the waterfall that turned into clouds.

「Heavenly Dragons? It exists?」

『Yeah. I heard some are living on that island』

However, these Heavenly Dragons have rarely caused any damage to this country. In the first place, they seem to be unable to live on the ground and never descend below the clouds.

It was said that during a battle with adventurers who broke into the Heavenly Dragon's sleeping quarters, the breath that a Heavenly Dragon released rained down on the earth, destroying the highway to some extent.

『I've heard that there are few records of them being defeated in the past, so we don't know how strong they actually are』

The reason it was called an A level threat was that other Dragon species were ranked as threat level of A. Since they were dragons too they were ranked A for the time being.

Only A-ranked adventurers or higher were allowed to enter the sleeping quarters of the Heavenly Dragons Well, it seems that more than half of them were knocked down by the magic beasts that inhabit the sea of clouds before landing on the island though.

And even if they managed to land, most adventurers won't challenge the Heavenly Dragons right away. Their main goal was the several dens that exist on the floating island.

In their dens, they collect the scales and the beards that have fallen off and then run back. That was the main goal of those adventurers.

There was the possibility of being attacked by multiple Heavenly Dragons, but there was no place to run to in case of emergency. When that happened, the adventurers would be at an overwhelming disadvantage, it was because fighting the Heavenly Dragons in there would be suicidal.

『They say if we're lucky, we'll see a Heavenly Dragon flying between the clouds!』

「Really?」

『Yeah』

「What is it like?」

『They say it looks like a long snake with a body length of about 200 meters』

Yes. That dragon figure looks like an Eastern-style Dragon, unlike a Western dragon. It has a magic power that far surpasses that of a Western dragon, and if a Western dragon was a warrior type, this dragon was more of a magic and skill type.

Eastern-type Dragon and Western-type Dragon. Their ecology seems to be very different.

『They have golden scales that looks blinding on a sunny day』

「Nn... I can't see any」

「Woof...」

『Well, they say it's really rare. But since we can see the island from anywhere in the eastern part of this country, so if we're lucky, we'll get to see it』

「Nn」

We proceeded to look up at Heavenly Dragon's island to see if we could see any dragons. Urushi too was slowing down while looking up, but he sometimes failed to maintain our altitude and Fran almost fell. In the end, we couldn't see any Heavenly Dragon.

『Ooh, I saw the town』

「So that was the Academy of Magic? It's so big」

『No, you're wrong. The Academy of Magic is in the back where the tower is. It's still big though. What's in its front is just a town』

It seems that a town has developed around the Academy of Magic. It was also called the Academy Town.

『That's Lady Blue, the town where the Academy of Magic was built 』

「Blue? It's not blue though?」

『Lady in Blue. It's a name that honors the world's most powerful ocean magic user, the High Elf, Weena Rhyn』

「I see」

# Chapter 535: Great Ancient Tree Pavilion

Lady Blue was a much more chaotic town than I had imagined. Aside from the main streets, once we entered the back streets, we found ourselves in a maze of narrow streets.

It was also quite easy to get lost in the Royal Capital of the Kingdom of Kranzel, but this one was really just like a maze. However, the image of the town was much different due to the different nuances of the buildings.

Compared to the Mediterranean style of the Kingdom of Kranzel, this one was more like the good old British style, huh? Well, I've never been to England, so it was completely subjective.

I feel like this was the kind of atmosphere that was introduced in the Beatles special on TV, such as the downtown area of Liverpool or the country towns in the suburbs.

『Hey, don't you think we made the same mistake as before?』

「Nn?」

『We got lost off the main street in the Royal Capital of Kranzel back then, right?』

「I smelled something delicious」

「Woof!」

In response to my words, Fran held a waffle-like baked confectionery in her hand. Urushi was chewing on three of them in one gulp.



At first, we were going along the main road as usual. However, Fran smelled something delicious and suddenly veered off the road. It was fine until we found the source of it, a baked pastry store.

『We're completely lost』

「Nn」

『You asked the old lady at the baked pastry store for directions, right?』

「Yup」

『Then why are we still lost?』

「This way looks more interesting」

『Aaah, is that so?』

「Nn!」

There were paths that she had to lie down to get through, stairs that were so steep and narrow that an old man would get tired on the way, tunnels of greenery made out of plants, and many other places that would tickle the fancy of children.

Fran and Urushi explored the town with great joy. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they had gone to get lost themselves.

『Well, we're not in a hurry, so that's fine. I'd like to go to the adventurer's guild for now, but even that was not urgent』

Besides, I'm starting to enjoy exploring a bit more. This area has fewer apartment buildings and more single-family houses, but the gardens of each house were very elaborate and fun to look at.

Then Fran stopped abruptly and pointed ahead.

「Master, that...」

『What's wrong, Fran?』

「That building is amazing」

Fran pointed to a building with a distinctive appearance a little further down the road. I see, that was certainly amazing.

It was a three-story house, and trees were growing out of its roof. It was not like they were greening the rooftop, huh? No matter how I looked at it, there was a hole in the roof and the top of a huge tree sticking out of it.

When we look closely, I can see branches that seem to belong to the tree sticking out of some of the third-floor and second-floor windows.

But that wasn't the only thing that surprised us. There was laundry drying in the yard. Apparently, people were living there.

We walked up to the house. Then we made another surprising discovery. A sign saying "Green Ancient Tree Pavilion" was hanging at the entrance of the house.

Apparently, it was an inn.

「Urushi, let's go!」

「Woof!」

『Ah, wait!』

Fran and Urushi stormed into the inn with bright eyes. Even though they didn't even know what kind of place this building was!

「Oooh—」

「Woof—」

Fran and the medium-sized Urushi stood side by side in the middle of the garden, looking up at the huge tree. The tree resembled a camphor tree, but

its branches and leaves were already wider than the roof of the inn. It was as if the inn had another roof.

After a few moments of looking around, Fran was satisfied and decided to get into the inn. Its door was well-kept but it was a very old wooden door.

「Oooh—」

And then, for I don't know how many times already, she expressed her admiration.

「There are trees inside too」

『Of course, but well, I can understand your surprise』

The tree trunk was much thicker than I had imagined. The inn was supposed to be quite spacious, but half of it was occupied by the tree trunk. A huge tree sat in the center of the room, and the floor was stretched around its roots like a wooden deck.

The uneven shape of the floorboards around the tree was probably because they were cut into that shape as the roots had continued to grow.

「Oho, a customer?」

「Who?」

「What do you mean by who? You too, who are you?」

「Fran. Adventurer」

「Haha—. I see—」

It was an old, petite female Elf, who spoke to Fran who had stopped at the entrance of the inn.

「I'm the owner of this inn. Are you going to stay?」

「Nn! One night!」

『Oi oi, do you want to stay here?』

(Nn!)

We haven't found the guild yet though... But she seems to like it a lot already.

Still, this may be the first time I've ever seen an old Elf. It was said that elves spend most of their long lives looking youthful, and in the last hundred years or so, they age just like humans do. When that happens, most elves were said to shut themselves away and go into long periods of sleep.

It must be quite rare for an old Elf to still work in a town of people, right?

「That will be 500G with dinner and breakfast」

「Okay」

「Also, I have to warn you about this. I'll kick you out if you hurt this Daiki-sama. Do you understand?」

(Note: Daiki -> big tree)

Daiki-sama, huh? Was it some kind of special tree? Fran asked and was told that it was inhabited by a spirit. The old woman said that she had made a contract with the spirit.

「She's a nice person, as long as we don't do anything wrong to her」

「Spirit, can I see her too?」

「I don't know. Maybe you'll see him, or maybe you won't. Well, if you're a good kid, maybe you will meet her」

「Okay, I'll be a good kid」

「Houhou, that's good then」

The room she was then shown to was more ordinary than I had expected. A clean bed with a simple interior design. Also, there were no tree branches that stretched all over the room as I had worried before.

She said that the tree itself was not inhabited by a spirit, but she can adjust the direction of its growth according to the inn. Because of this, the branches of the tree have not entered the guest rooms.

The roots and other parts of the plant seem to get thicker though.

「Nice room」

「Woof」

『You seem to like it a lot, huh?』

「Nn! It smells like being in the forest」

This inn which was in the middle of the town, remind her of the forest. So, Fran must have thought this was a nice place where she could feel at ease. She then sat down on the bed and took a deep breath.

# Chapter 536: The Walls of the Academy of Magic

『So this is the Academy of Magic, huh...? It's so big, or rather, it's so tall』

「Looks pointy」

「Woof」

After getting a room at the Green Ancient Tree Pavilion, we once again head to the Academy of Magic.

At first, I planned to go to the Adventurer's Guild, but I realized that the Academy was closer than I thought.

After we left the inn, we decided to take a look at the town from a hill. We climbed up a narrow staircase with more than 500 steps and looked around Lady Blue from the square at the top of it. There we saw the Academy of Magic was surprisingly close to us.

We got lost again on the way to the Academy, so it took us quite a while to get there.

It would have taken us less than five minutes if we went from the top... But well, we made progress in our exploration instead, and Fran and Urushi were both happy with it.

It seemed that waffles were a specialty of this town as we discovered many stores that were selling them. I didn't expect to find not only sweet flavors but also non-sweet dough with ham and cheese in between.

It was interesting to discover different stores while we were in Lady Blue. Maybe I'll try to make some too. But well, if I ask Fran what kind of waffle she wants, she'll probably just say curry-flavored waffle anyway.

By the way, Fran wanted to try the freshwater fish curry. So, I came up with a slightly unusual one and the straightforward one.

The first was one curry with eel. I added a bit more sansho (Japanese pepper) and a bit less sweet unagi kabayaki (broiled eel). So, this would be a Hitsu-mabushi-style curry, huh? I thought it was a bit too much, but Fran seemed to enjoy it.

The other one was carp curry, well, it was normal, but it was fish curry you know? It was nothing new, and I made it a little too spicy to take away the muddy smell, and Urushi seemed to like this one a lot.

『Let's find its entrance for the time being』

「Nn」

We're standing in front of the outer wall that surrounds the Academy of Magic. From there, we could clearly see the tall towers that line inside of the Academy. There were probably more than ten tall and thin towers. There may be more when we go further in.

It would be rare to see such a tall building outside of a military facility such as a castle or fort. At first, I thought it was to make effective use of the small site, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

After all, we couldn't find the gate no matter how far we walked. In retrospect, when I look at this town from the outside, about a quarter of it must have been occupied by the Academy of Magic. It was a quarter of the Lady Blue, which boasted a scale that this Academy alone could be called a town already.

I also thought that the grounds of the Academy of Magic must be larger than those of Kiarazen, where we stopped along the way.

「...Should we climb it? But that way, the people will come at us」

「Woof」

『N-no, don't』

After all, we'll be staying in this town for a while, so we couldn't cause any problems here. Besides, this wall was not just a simple wall. There was a hint of magic coming from it.

At first glance, it seemed to be alarm-type magic. Fran guessed so too, then she came up with the overly reckless idea of sounding the alarm and calling the people here.

But now that I had the Magic Control SP, I could sense other magic coming from it. The alarm spell was a distraction, and it seemed that something else was being hidden behind the spell.

As I expected, I couldn't sense what kind of magic it was, but it was certainly a troublesome one. At least we don't feel like trying it ourselves.

It was better to keep walking steadily outside of it.

『That's why Fran-kun』

「...Nn. I understand」

After wandering along the wall just like that, we finally see something other than a wall. But it doesn't seem to be the main gate.

「Master, what's that?」

『It looks like an entrance, but... Why is it so small?』

We finally arrived at the entrance of the Academy of Magic, which was surprisingly small compared to the immensity of the walls. It looked like a kitchen door. No, in fact, it was probably something close to that.

『Looks like we're at the back entrance, huh?』



It seemed to be a back door used by servants and staff when they went out.

「What should we do?」

『Well, we can go to the main entrance, but in the meantime, let's ask if we can enter it from there. Oh, and make sure you show the letter of introduction from Alistair, okay?』

「Okay」

『And Urushi... Well, just stay like that』

It was better for him to be visible from the beginning than to be hiding in the shadows. It would also save the trouble of introducing him later.

「Excuse me」

Even though it was a back entrance, there was a guard. So, we decided to talk to them for the time being.

「Hmm? Do you need anything?」

He seemed like a kind uncle. I wondered if it was okay for the guards to be so soft-hearted, but I guess that's just how well they teach their staff.

「I came here for a request」

「Huh? You're an adventurer, aren't you? It's unusual for us to outsource our work though...」

「Nn?」

「Oh, I'm sorry. So, what's the request?」

Apparently, we could get through from here. Fran then handed Alistair's letter of introduction to the uncle of the guard.

「A request for a mock battle. Various things are written on this」

「Let me see it. Wha-what... Eh?」

The uncle was surprised to read the letter of introduction. Well, it couldn't be helped. It says "To the director of the Academy of Magic, I have found the person you were looking for to be a mock battle instructor, so I'm sending her to you with a letter of introduction"

Alistair's name was written at the end of it. It seems that Alistair had a title as a faculty member of this Academy of Magic. In addition to the envelope and the letter made by the Academy of Magic, her signature would be enough to make sure that they would take care of us.

「Umm, Did you bring your adventurer's card?」

「Of course, here」

「I'll take a look at it」

After checking the card carefully, the guard opened a small window next to the back door and started talking to someone on the other side.

「May I take this letter of introduction for a moment?」

「Okay」

The uncle then handed the letter of introduction to someone through the small window and asked her to wait here for a moment while he returned the card to Fran.

「Umm, I can't make the final decision myself, so someone a little more important will be coming here. So please wait a moment」

His attitude had changed a lot. He was treating her like a child before, but now it seems that he was treating us like a guest now. They were not assuming that it was a forgery and were treating us well.

Well then, I wonder what kind of person would come here.

# Chapter 537: The Other Side of the Back Entrance

Five minutes later.

「Hello, sorry to keep you waiting. So, you're the adventurer who brought Alistair's letter of introduction?」

「Nn」

「Can I see it?」

「Okay」

「Hohou—...」

The man who showed up was a cheerful-looking young man. He was a half-elf, so he's probably older than he looks, but no matter how I look at him, he looks like a teenage character. He then read Alistair's letter of introduction, but because of his frivolous look, it looked like he was just skimming through it.

「Hmm... Well, whatever. Please come this way for the time being」

The man led us through the back entrance. On the other side was a passage with a low ceiling. The outer wall itself seemed to be quite thick, and the passage through it was like a little tunnel.

「My name is Coltandhyre. Feel free to call me Colt, okay?」

「Fran, an Adventurer, and this is Urushi」

「Woof!」

「I like the wolf-type beasts. They're obedient, good for fighting, good for spotting, and good as a blanket at night too」

「Urushi is the best」

「Woof woof!」

「Hahaha, you seem to be getting along, huh?」

I observe Colt from behind as he guides Fran. He has high magic power, but his footwork was completely amateur. I guess he was a typical researcher type.

Colt laughed as he led us through the passage. The tunnel was getting much wider than we had imagined, and we were greeted by an interesting sight.

There were not only lawns, but also forests, ponds, and rocky mounds on the site. It seems they were used for training and experiments. Looking further in, we saw a snow mound about 10 meters high.

I could feel its magic power trace, so it must have been created by magic or maintained by magic... Just as expected of the Academy of Magic.

Furthermore, a huge structure sits in the middle of these unnatural natural objects.

The many towers that we saw from the outside were all connected by passageways and buildings and were actually just a part of one super huge building.

「Whoa—」

「It's pretty amazing, isn't it? They're still renovating it, so the buildings are expanding every year, you know? It all started with that little short tower over there」

Colt pointed to a very old and shabby tower in the middle of the many towers. It was the only tower that was not connected to the huge facility and stood quietly and independently. So, he's saying that the Academy of Magic was so small at first? It's hard to believe.

「Heee, when was it built?」

「I've heard that it's over 2000 years old and it was originally the Director's laboratory」

A High Elf laboratory, huh? If that's the case, we couldn't judge it by its humble appearance. I wonder what kind of tremendous research was going on inside.

「Well, that place is basically off-limits. Only the Director or authorized personnel can enter. More importantly, we're over here」

「Nn」

Colt then led us to a small building right next to the exit of the tunnel. No, it looked small after seeing the academy, but it was actually a rather large building with three floors.

「It's the guard's office though, but it has some magic tools to check things out. In the meantime, I'll check to see if your adventurer's card is real, okay?」

「Nn, I don't mind」

「I'm sorry. I'm not much of a fighter, but I'm good at sensing magic. So, I can tell that you're not just an ordinary person, but on the other hand, I can't just let someone like that walk by without inspection」

I see. If you're a small fry, it would be easy for them to handle you, but if you're a powerful person, you need to go through an inspection.

He held up Fran's adventurer's card to a crystal that Colt had been seeing several times before. And that seemed to be all the confirmation he needed.

「Yes, thank you. Now we have confirmed your identity?」

「Nn? It's over」

「Yup, that's right」

「You won't check if the letter is real?」

Yeah. I was wondering about that, too. I mean, if the letter was a forgery, it doesn't matter if Fran was an adventurer or not, right? There were a lot of things he could do to find out, like handwriting analysis and whether or not the sign on the letter was genuine.

But Colt laughed cheerfully as he handed the letter of introduction to Fran.

「Ahaha, I'm sorry. I've already confirmed it. It's a special paper after all. If we drop a little chemical on it, we can easily determine its authenticity」

It seems they have already confirmed that the letter used for that letter introduction was a special one made for Alistair at this institute.

「Since your letter of introduction is genuine and your adventurer rank was high too, so no problem, right? All I need to do now is to interview you...」

Th-there's such a thing too, huh? Well, she's hired as an instructor after all, albeit a temporary one, at one of the most prestigious schools in the world, so it's rather natural.

But I wonder if she would be fine...? Fran seems to be bad at an interview after all. No, I'm sure she could handle this if she uses her court etiquette skill to the fullest and just follows my instructions, right?

Well, it was so long ago that I've forgotten more than half of what I learned about an interview back then. But I'm sure it's better than just letting Fran do it by herself. Come, bring it on!

I was all fired up like that, but they said that the interview would not take place today.

「I'm sorry~. The interview must be done by the director of the academy, but she's out of the academy for some business. But I'm sure she'll be back by tomorrow or the day after」

Well. That's because we didn't tell them about our arrival in advance after all.

「Okay, then what should I do next?」

「Where do you stay? If you don't have a place to stay, we can get one for you」

「I already have a place to stay」

「Heee, where is it?」

「The Green Ancient Tree Pavilion」

When Fran said that, Colt looked a little surprised.

「What's wrong?」

「No, well. The landlady there is famous for being difficult and not letting people stay if she doesn't like them. How did you manage to get a room?」

「She was just an ordinary old woman though」

「Woof」

She was kind to Fran and Urushi. She was an old elf, wasn't she? Did he mistake her for someone else?

「I-is that so...? Well, that's okay. I'll send a messenger for you when the Director returns」

「Okay」

Now, all we had to do was pass the interview and she'll be an instructor at the academy. It's not that she really wants to be an instructor, but I feel like

we're being tested, so Fran and I were both starting to get a little worked up.



# Chapter 538: A Normal Adventurer's Guild

After we completed the procedures at the Academy of Magic, we were now at the Adventurer's Guild.

「It looks, normal?」

「Woof」

Fran and Urushi tilted their heads when they saw the Adventurer's Guild building. They had seen a lot of special buildings in this city, and they were expecting too much from the Adventurer's Guild.

However, the guild's building used brick as the exterior, which was quite common in this town. It was almost twice the size of the nearby building, but it was not too huge.

『Let's just go inside for the time being』

「Nn」

「Woof!」

When we passed through the guild's door, we found that the interior was normal too. The floor, the ceiling, the walls, and the reception counter were just as plain as the others.

It was just like any other Adventurer's Guild, where adventurers were struggling to decide which requests to accept, or negotiating in vain with the receptionist to raise the purchase price of materials.

However, there was one group of people that caught Fran's attention.

「A lot of kids?」

『They're probably older than Fran... I guess, they are students at the Academy of Magic』

The boys and girls wore leather cloaks of reasonable quality. On the shoulders of their cloak was an emblem of an upside-down wave. The emblem looked familiar to me. I'm sure it was on the flag of the magic academy that we had seen on the back entrance.

Some of them were standing in line at the counter, others were looking at the request forms. If they hadn't been wearing the cloaks of the Academy of Magic, I would have thought they were just ordinary fledgling adventurers.

I was wondering if students of the Academy of Magic were allowed to become an adventurer. But I guess, they were allowed to do so since they're wearing their cloaks so proudly like this.

『I wonder why these students would be adventurers』

Well, we'll probably find out about it when she becomes an instructor.

『Let's say hello to the guild for now』

We were going to stay in this town for a while after all. Well, that was, if she doesn't fail the interview though. In that case, as a high-ranked adventurer, Fran needed to report to the local guild to stay. It was not mandatory, but it was recommended for us to do so.

After all, it was important to know the whereabouts of high-ranked adventurers in case of emergency.

「Hey」

「Yes. Welcome to the Adventurer's Guild, how may I help you?」

「Nn. I came to say hello because I might be staying in this town for a while. Here's my card」

「Aah, I see. I'll take a look at your card then」

The lady at the reception desk then took the card from Fran. She then looked surprised for a moment. However, she soon regained her business smile.

「P-please wait for a moment while someone from the higher-ups comes」

「Okay」

She definitely thinks that she was a fledgling adventurer imitating a high-ranked adventurer, huh? Even so, it was amazing that she continued to respond to us with hardly a smile on her face.

Lately, I've been able to tell if the receptionist was a veteran by this kind of first interaction with them.

As we waited in front of the reception desk, I felt a presence approaching us from behind. I thought she was going to the reception desk, but she just stopped behind Fran.

「Hey, you?」

「Nn?」

The one who spoke to her was a beautiful blonde girl. She was probably a little older than Fran. She was wearing the cloak of the Academy of Magic and had a sword on her waist that emitted strong magic power. However, all I could see was one thing.

『Uwooooh! Blonde Drill! It's a Blonde Drill-san! Moreover, it is decorated! I-Is this for real! I wonder will she laugh at us with an “Oh-ho-ho”』

The girl had what was called blonde hair in a vertical roll. It was the first time I had ever seen anything like this up close. She also had the air of a high-class young lady.

I couldn't help but shout out at the sheer perfection of it.

(Master? What's wrong?)

『Ah, no. It's just her hairstyle is a bit...』

(Hair? It's blonde?)

『No, it's nothing. But I'm just surprised that she has such an unusual hair style』

(Hmmm)

Fran doesn't seem to be interested in this at all. Well, that was obvious. But it was one of the most exciting things I've seen since I've come to this world after a butler and a maid.

Based on the appraisal, it shows that she was 16 years old. Her name was Charon Lyfaal, so she must be a young lady of nobility. If she was a commoner with this hairstyle, I would have punished her.

In terms of ability, she was probably ranked E as an adventurer. She could handle fire magic and water magic, but both of them were only on level 3, and her melee combat ability was quite low.

Still, she possessed the minimum skills to work outside, such as life magic, presence detection, and survival. It was the same with the other academy students, all of whom had learned skills useful for survival. I wonder if they taught them this at the Academy of Magic.

「What is it?」

Fran looked at the Blond Drill-san cautiously. She could tell that there was no hostility on our part, but her voice contained slight annoyance, or perhaps a subtle hint of disgust.

「'What is it?' you said」

The Blonde Drill-san sighed at Fran's words.

「Students are required to wear their cloaks when accepting requests from the Adventurer's Guild. It's a violation of academy rules to not doing so」

Apparently, she misunderstood that Fran was a student of the Academy of Magic. And she called out to Fran to warn her that she seemed to be violating the academy rules.

「You, where's your cloak?」

「I don't have it with me」

Well, that was because she was not a student at the academy, so she doesn't have one, but there was a better way to say it, right? She makes it sound as if she didn't bring it with her now.

「Then I can't just let you go. You must return to the academy first」

She has still misunderstood her, huh? The Blonde Drill-san then grabbed Fran's arm. It was as if she wanted to remove her from the guild. It was not like her intentions were bad, so Fran was wondering if she should shake her off.

She struggled on the spot to resist her, but the Blonde Drill-san thought of her like she was a child who didn't want to listen. She may be a surprisingly gentle person, as she didn't yell at her in here.

While Fran and Drill-san continued their struggle, a man then appeared from the back of the guild. He looked to be a handsome man in his late twenties. Well, he was an Elf, so it was hard to tell his age from his appearance, but he definitely seemed to have a good amount of experience.

He was a skilled warrior, and his magic power was much higher than that of most magicians. In addition, he was very good at eliminating his presence and seems to have a quite high all-around ability.

The man approached the reception desk rather quickly and whispered to the receptionist. Well, I could hear him though.

「The emergency beacon went off. What's going on?」

Apparently, there was a mechanism where if we do something at the reception desk, something would make a sound in the Guild Master's room. This could come in handy in case of robbery. But I don't think any robbers would be dumb enough to break into the Adventurer's Guild though.

「As a matter of fact, a high-ranked adventurer came to report on her stay」

「Oh? What's her rank?」

「It's B」

「And where she is now?」

「That kid over there」

Drill-san, who took her hand away once to admonish Fran, and the lady at the reception desk who pointed at Fran who was asked by her with 「Go home then!」 but Fran replied with

「I'm not going home」. And the guild master seemed to understand what was going on in an instant.

「Hey, can I have a word?」

「Eh? Umm, who are you? We still have a business here」

「Well, I have some business with her too」

「...What kind of business do you have with her? I'm her guardian」

Drill-san stepped forward to protect Fran. As an upperclassman, I guess she was trying to protect her underclassmen.

The guild master looked like a young man on the outside, so he looked like a suspicious man. But it was no surprise that a low-level adventurer had never met the Guild master.

「Guardians? Is that so?」

「...No」

「Eh?」

Fran was troubled for a moment, probably because she felt sorry for Drill-san. She was not very good at talking, so she kind of got her involved with the guild master in a weird way.

「Well, I'm Khinabar, and I'm the Master of this guild」

「Eeh?」

「Nn. Adventurer, Fran」

「Eeh?」

「I never thought I'd see someone with an alias. You're welcome here」

「Eeeh?」

Fran then bowed her head to the Blonde Drill-san, who was too surprised and stunned to know about her.

「I'm sorry」

I'm sorry too, Blonde Drill-san.

# Chapter 539: How Hard The Interview Would Be?

Prompted by the guild master, Fran then came to his office.

「Well, please have a seat」

「...Nn」

「Aah, you don't have to worry about the young lady who seemed to be taking good care of you」

Even though it was their first meeting, he could read Fran's dejected expression. As expected of a Guild Master. He's very observant. On the other hand, there was a good chance that I'll be found out too.

「You're not angry?」

「Hahaha, I rather like that little lady, don't you think? It must have been hard for her to stand in front of a suspicious person for the sake of her junior. Well, it was a misunderstanding in the end. Anyway...」

The Guild Master then observed Fran sullenly.

「To someone who can't tell the difference, you might look like a weak beast girl. And it's hard to tell the performance of your equipment from its appearance」

Sure, if they didn't know anything, it might just look like a flimsy piece of cloth equipment.



「Your magic sword certainly stands out, but... Many newcomers are tricked by how a piece of equipment looks, so they often equip themselves with fancy looking good for nothing equipment」

In other words, the Blonde Drill-san——or Charon looked at Fran and thought that a junior student of the Academy of Magic who yearned to be an adventurer was trying to become an adventurer fully equipped with good for nothing equipment.

「So, what's the Black Lightning Princess, Fran doing in this town? Are you planning to stay here for a long time?」

This guy... His tone of voice was quite rude, but it's strange to hear a beautiful Elf talk like this because it makes him look more handsome. He looked like a slightly evil and handsome Elf. The Elves were really unfair, weren't they?

「I'll be an instructor at the Academy of Magic」

「Hou?」

「Maybe?」

「Huh? What do you mean by “Maybe?” It hasn't been decided yet?」

「Nn」

「What do you mean?」

Fran then gave a brief story to him. An acquaintance of hers was related to the Academy of Magic. The acquaintance was looking for someone to be a mock battle instructor at the academy. Then, Fran was invited and came to Lady Blue with a letter of introduction.

「I see, so that was the case, huh?」

「Went to the academy today, but the director wasn't there and they said that the interview would be held another time」

The Guild Master snorted when he heard Fran's words.

「The interview process at the academy is pretty tough, you know?」

「Really?」

「Yup. Even among the adventurers in this town, there are only about 30 adventurers designated by the academy this far」

「Designated by the academy?」

「Yeah. They will be adventurers who are allowed to accompany the students of the Academy of Magic after all」

Some of the students of the Academy of Magic are allowed to work as adventurers. It seems that only those students whose skills and grades are up to a certain standard are allowed to register with the Adventurers' Guild.

Moreover, there were even stricter rules for accepting requests. First of all, requests of E rank or higher could not be accepted by the students alone. It was an absolute requirement that they need to be accompanied by an adventurer designated by the Academy of Magic.

I guess it was a measure to prevent students from dying in vain. The adventurers who are qualified to accompany the students of the Academy of Magic are called the Academy's Designated Adventurers.

With this designation, they were obliged to accompany the students and were paid a certain amount of money every year by the academy.

It seems that they received a good amount of money for this job and it seemed to be a popular job among Lady Blue's adventurers.

「The students who are allowed to register as adventurers are strictly screened by the academy, and those who pass are the ones who are allowed. So those who will cause problems are quite rare」

So, even though they were accompanying them, they were not there to babysit those sh\*tty brats, but rather giving instructions to the new

adventurers. After all, they would become an excellent new adventurer who could use magic and be willing to learn. And if they were paid a large sum of money in addition to the request, it would not be surprising if they became popular.

However, not just anyone could be designated by the academy. Because the academy entrusts its most important students to them, they are very strict in their screening process. They look at the character, ability, family structure, past work history, and so on. Finally, only adventurers who pass the interview with the Director of the academy are allowed to become academy-designated adventurers.

And in particular, the interview with the director of the academy was famous for how strict it was.

「Regardless of whether you have a letter of introduction or not, if they deem you useless, they'll simply kick you out. There was once a problem when a nobleman who came for an interview with a letter of introduction from the government was kicked out. And for some reason, their house disappeared... I wonder how scared that person is...」

「Do you know the Director?」

「Of course I do. I'm the Master of the Adventurer's Guild, and I'm an Elf too, right?」

It was natural when I thought about it. Fran then inquired about the personality of the director. But the Guild master then crossed his arms lightly and frowned.

「She's usually a calm and gentle person, but when she gets angry, she's terrifying. So never make her angry, okay?」

「Okay」

It seems that even the guild master was afraid of the Director of the academy—the High Elf Weena Rhyn. He reminded Fran about it with a pitiful face.

「Is she strong?」

「It's obvious, right? She's a High Elf after all」

「I heard she was a great Ocean Magic user」

「Yeah. She's the greatest Ocean Magic user in this world. She once single-handedly crushed a mid-level dungeon that had a stampede by herself」

What was more is, Weena Rhyn was said to not even moved from the entrance at that time, as she used her excess magic power to create endless amounts of water, submerging everything in the dungeon and suffocating the magic beasts to death.

The sight of her using magic constantly for three days straight was said to be breathtaking.

「What else can she do? Since she's an Elf, maybe, Spirit Magic?」

「Well, I wonder?」

「Nn? You don't know?」

「If you're someone at her level, you'll probably just use your Ocean Magic for everything. But I've never seen her in close combat or using Spirit Magic. And Appraisals don't work on her either」

「She has an Appraisal Jammer?」

「No, it's simply because the rank is so overwhelmingly high that Appraisal doesn't work on her」

It would be like me not being able to appraise a Divine Sword huh? She's lived for thousands of years and said to be more powerful than any S-ranked adventurer. She may indeed be difficult to Appraise.

「Well, not only is she famous for being the Director of the academy, but she's also famous for her love of children too. So, I'm sure Fran will have no problem with her」

After that, we had a light chat about the local specialties in the area, and then we left the Guild Masters' office. It seemed that the Guild Master wanted to find out what kind of personality Fran had. I wonder what kind of rumors were going around about her?

# Chapter 540: Charon

「Hey…」

「Nn?」

Someone called out to Fran when she came back to the lobby. It was Charon, the blonde drill girl from earlier. Her face seemed to be somewhat tense.

「I apologize for what I did earlier. I didn't know you were a high-ranked adventurer, and I was very rude to you」

It seems that the lady at the reception desk had told her that Fran was actually a high-ranking adventurer, and so she seemed to be afraid of her now. Even though she looked like the daughter of a nobleman who seemed to have a lot of pride, she bowed deeply on the spot without hesitation.

「I'm not angry」

「Re-really?」

「Nn」

When Fran told her so, she then looked relieved.

A high-ranking adventurer was probably just like a monster for a low-level adventurer. Even if she looked young—the fact that she'd managed to become a high-ranking adventurer at such a young age made Fran a veritable monster to her.

「Guild Master praised you」

「Eh? He praised, me?」

「Nn. He said you've bravely stood in front of a suspicious person just to protect your junior」

「About that, Umm...」

Charon looked down with a troubled look on her face.

It seemed as if she was being ridiculed for mistakenly treating Fran as a junior student and for how she treated a suspicious person without knowing the Guild Master's face, but she was also happy to be praised.

Either way, she was troubled on how to reply now.

『Fran, let's change the topic for now』

「?? Did I look like a student of the academy?」

「I'm sorry. I thought you were a student of the Elementary Department who didn't know the Academy's rules」

「Elementary Department's student?」

「Ye, yeah. There are many different departments at the Academy of Magic, but all students must start in the Elementary Department to learn the Magic Skills」

As expected of what was called the Academy of Magic, it seemed the students were required to learn Magic first. They would then be allowed to choose a new Department during the promotion period once every six months.

It didn't matter what attribute they could use, if they didn't graduate from the Elementary Course within three years, they would be expelled. Well, it was an Academy of Magic after all, so I guess it couldn't be helped.

「You are also not allowed to register with the Adventurer's Guild while you are enrolled in the Elementary Department」

Well, it was natural, since the children were probably all amateurs who couldn't even use magic after all.

However, it seemed that every year there were students from the Elementary Department who heard rumors that students from the Academy of Magic were going in and out of the Adventurer's Guild, and without even listening to the explanations of it, they immediately charged into the Adventurer's Guild.

「Some students are selfish and even cause trouble for the guild sometimes」

If a student of the academy were to cause trouble for the Adventurer's Guild, it could bring down the reputation of the entire academy. She was proud to be a student of the Academy of Magic, and so, that was not something she could tolerate.

I thought she was a member of the morals committee or the student council, but it seems she was just being concerned. After that, she told many stories about the failures of students who don't follow the school rules. It was quite rare that Fran listened to someone so quietly, wasn't it?

「Oi, It's time for us to go」

「Yes, I'm coming. Well, I'm really sorry about today. I'll take my leave now」

「Nn」

「I don't know if there is anything I can do for you, but if you have any problems, please just ask for help. I will show up at the Adventurer's Guild at least once a week」

「Okay, thanks」

「Very well then」

She was called by one of her companions, Drill-san then bowed one last time before leaving the guild.



As I saw her leaving, Fran suddenly talked to me.

(Master)

『What's wrong?』

(Now I know what Master meant when he said it was an interesting hairstyle)

『Hmm?』

(Every time she moved; her hair would bounce)

『I thought you were listening to her quietly, but you were actually thinking about her hair, huh!?!』

(Her hair was interesting)

After leaving the Adventurer's Guild, we decided to enjoy sightseeing in Lady Blue based on the information we had gathered.

The lady at the reception desk seemed to be a local of this town and knew all the best places to go and places to visit.

We enjoyed the scenic hills and unusual buildings while visiting a few food stalls and restaurants.

As we toured the town in this way, I noticed a few things that made it different from other towns.

「It's beautiful here too」

「Woof」

『I don't see anyone that looks like a guard anywhere too』

No matter how narrow the backstreets or how far out of town we went, I couldn't find the so-called slums anywhere. There may be a gap between

the rich and the poor due to income and other factors, but the atmosphere here seemed to never drop below a certain level.

Of course, we didn't run into any members of Thieves guilds or underworld organizations who wore an underworld atmosphere. We also didn't encounter any thugs who would try to take advantage of us. Well, it also meant that we couldn't get extra pocket money from those thugs either though.

That was unusual for a town of this size, right?

Furthermore, perhaps due to the lack of such criminal organizations, I have only seen a few guards in the town. It was not that there weren't any, but they were probably less than half that of other towns.

『Does it mean this town was so safe?』

「Nn. There's a lot of kids too」

『Come to think of it, maybe that was the case』

It was rare to see kids in an unsafe town. This was because parents think of the worst and don't let their kids play outside. But in this town, there are kids everywhere we go.

I could see the kids running around and playing in the back streets by themselves. I guess it meant that they were sure that they'll be safe.

On our way back to the inn, we went to the Adventurer's Guild to give them some baked sweets as a thank you for introducing us to a good restaurant. They also told us why the security here was so good.

It was simply that Weena Rhyn was crushing criminal organizations and criminals from the inside out. And they were sure that someday, no organization would be able to freely lay their hands on this town.

Weena Rhyn's methods are said to be quite extreme. For example, if there was a drug dealer, she would crush not only the dealer, but also the

organization behind the dealer, the organization involved in the distribution, the organization involved in the production, and everything else.

It didn't matter if it was a nobleman or another country behind them.

The Kingdom of Belios, which had been repeatedly troubled by diplomatic problems due to her extreme measures, decided to defend the self-governing region.

I guess they would rather spend their budget to protect the self-governing region than let Weena Rhyn run wild as she pleased. No, maybe Weena Rhyn was actually the one who arranged for that to happen, huh?

Anyway, Lady Blue was safer than any other town we've been to.

『She loves kids, a radical one, and an Elf...』

(Just like Amanda)

『They're sure similar, huh?』

By the way, when Alistair mentioned the Academy of Magic, Amanda, who was standing next to her, was quiet and didn't say anything. I don't think it was surprising that Amanda and Weena Rhyn would be acquainted with each other... Well. If they really knew each other, she would have said something at that time.

『I wonder what kind of person she is...』

# Chapter 541: One's Gaze

「Mogu! Mogu!」

「Gafu! Gafu!」 (\*munching sfx)

『Does it taste good?』

「Nn!」

After we returned from our adventure in Lady Blue, Fran and Urushi were now in the middle of dinner at the inn.

They even served a normal meal for Urushi too without needing us to pay any extra fee.

The meal's contents were not an animals' food or anything like that, it was just the normal, salty food, from the same menu as Fran's.

It was hard to say if she was just like the old Japanese moms who didn't care about the health of their animals, or if she just dared to serve the same food to Urushi because she saw him as a powerful magic beast.

The menu consisted of gnocchi-like pasta made from wheat and potatoes with cheese, and tomato soup with ground meat. The rest of the meal consisted of bread, scotch eggs, and salad.

Urushi's portion was put together in a large deep dish, making it look like a left-over food for cats. No, it was not even a left-over food for cats anymore when it was mixed with so many other things.

It looked very unappetizing, but Urushi was eating it like it tasted good. It seemed that it consisted of a combination of ingredients that went

surprisingly well together.

「...Hmmm」

Aah, Fran, don't mix it up! It's not polite! Don't look at Urushi with such envious eyes. It may look delicious, but it's not!

「How do you like my cooking?」

「It tastes good!」

「Woof」

「That's good to hear then. Just say so if you want more. I've got plenty of it」

After that, she refilled Fran's bowl three times without any hesitation, and the old lady didn't even look uncomfortable, and even happily gave us a special serving.

But still, was it okay for us to eat this much? Should we pay extra for it? Fran and Urushi were probably already eating ten people's servings after all...

However, the old lady didn't seem to mind Fran and Urushi's binge eating. The way she smiled while looking at Fran and Urushi, was just as if she were grandmother taking care of her grandchildren.

「Uwaah, you sure eat a lot aren't you?」

「It was delicious」

「Is that so? How about some herbal tea after dinner then?」

「Okay」

It was a dark green tea that looked quite bitter, but Fran seemed to enjoy drinking it. She seemed to rather like it.

As Fran sipped her tea, she looked up at the huge old tree. Well, her gaze was blocked by the ceiling though.

Fran, who had been quietly staring at the tree for a while, unexpectedly opened her mouth.

「Hey, is there really a spirit in this tree?」

「Yeah, the Spirit of the Green Trees was in it」

「Why did you build an inn around such a tree?」

「It's a bit of a long story, but—」

The old lady gave us a very long explanation, just like what she said. Fran almost got bored halfway through, but I managed to tie her to a chair with my telekinesis and secretly gave her some sweet snacks out of my storage.

To summarize briefly, there was originally a tree here where spirits dwell. It was said that the tree was now over 3,000 years old. However, about 1,500 years ago, it was not considered to be a tree where spirits dwelled anymore, but just a mysterious magical tree. Its sap, branches, leaves, and bark of the tree had been forcibly extracted by the alchemists and pharmacists who lived in this area at that time, and the tree had weakened.

The tree was then saved by the Elves who founded the inn, and Weena Rhyn, who was consulted by the Elves.

The method was simple: they bought the place and surrounded it so that no one could mess with the spirit tree. The reason why they turned it into an inn was because the spirits that lived in the tree liked to observe people.

As a result, it became an unusual inn that only allowed people approved by the spirits to stay inside. Fifteen hundred years have passed since then, and now the old lady, the granddaughter of the founder, was running the place. It has been 1500 years, and she was still the third generation... As expected of the long-lived Elf.

「Then, was I also approved by the spirits?」

「Yeah. In the first place, you wouldn't have been able to enter the inn without the spirit's approval」

I didn't know that. We couldn't sense spirits, so we had no idea. Spirits were mysterious existences after all.

I also understood the horror of it. After all, since we couldn't detect it, we wouldn't know if a spirit were aiming to attack us.

We would know if it launched an attack on us, but if the spirits were to lie low and stay put, it would be nearly impossible to detect them.

Afterwards, Fran and Urushi thanked her for the meal and went back to our room. Even as she walked, she kept looking at our surroundings.

Well, I know what she was looking for.

『Are you looking for the spirit?』

「Nn! I want to see it!」

「Woof!」

Even when we got back to our room on the third floor, she peeked between the branches of the spirit tree and into a small cave. But she never touched them. I guess it was because she was told not to hurt them.

However, there was no way she could find the spirit by doing so, and she ended up giving up.

Both Fran and Urushi went to bed looking disappointed. Lately, Fran and Urushi have been sleeping in the same bed together. Now that Urushi could become smaller, it was no longer a problem.

Urushi was held tightly by Fran's hands and feet in a hug. I wonder if it hurt. No, Urushi's sleeping face looks happy. Fran was also breathing comfortably, and both of them seemed to be enjoying their sleep.

As I was observing their sleeping faces, Fran suddenly opened her eyes.  
Did my presence disturb her?

But when Fran jumped out of bed, her gaze was not on me, but on the entrance to the room for some reason.

『Wh-what's wrong, Fran?』

「Woof?」

Even Urushi, who had fallen off the bed when Fran suddenly raised herself, tilted his head, unable to understand what was happening.

「...I felt a gaze on me」

『A gaze? Did you feel it too, Urushi?』

「Woof...」

「I felt it」

Fran too, was still unclear about it.

Did she have a strange dream? Neither Urushi nor I could sense it after all... We used our skills to the best of our ability to search for a presence and magic, but we couldn't sense any presence of anyone other than us and the old lady inside the inn.

Of course, there was the presence of small insects, but it was hard to imagine that Fran would be awakened by such a presence. For example, if she had magic or skills that allowed her to see into the distance through the eyes of insects, she would definitely be able to sense the presence's origin. However, there was not even that in the inn.

『Maybe it was the spirit? It was said to like to observe people after all』

「I see」



After that, neither Fran nor the two of us could feel any presences. Well, we were dealing with a spirit after all. It would be quite difficult to sense them.

Eventually, Fran lay down on the bed again.

「...Good night」

『Ou, good night』

「Spirit...」

It seemed that it would be a while before Fran could sleep soundly.

# Chapter 542: Unexpected Reunion

The day after Fran felt the presence of what seemed to be a spirit.

『Fran. You don't seem to be sleeping well last night. Are you okay?』

「I'm okay」

It seems that she was always searching for the spirit's presence. In the end, though, she didn't feel anything after that.

She rubbed her eyes, but that didn't stop her from eating her breakfast. She just looked like a real cat, didn't she?

Breakfast was freshly baked bread and vegetable soup with meat. Also, with assorted fruit and a large meatball-like ground meat dish, Fran and Urushi were happy to eat it.

「You're still sleepy, huh?」

「Nn...」

「What's wrong? If there's something wrong with the bed, I'll fix it right away」

「I felt a gaze on me」

「Hou?」

When Fran told her about the gaze she felt last night, the old lady smiled happily.

「The spirit must have liked you」

「Is that so?」

「Yeah. Otherwise, it wouldn't be peeking on you」

To stay at this inn, you have to be accepted by the spirits, but that doesn't mean they like you. It was said that only a handful of people who were allowed to stay at the inn were liked by the spirits.

It seemed that some of the guests had seen them.

「How do I get the spirits to like me?」

「Well, I wonder about that...? Just be a good girl...」

Hmm, I don't understand what she meant by being a good girl... Do we just have to be nice to the old lady and not mess with the spirit tree?

Just like that, as she was eating her breakfast, the entrance to the inn opened. The person who came in was an Elven man. Ooh, even though he was an Elf, wasn't he a handsome one?!

When I looked closely, he was certainly a handsome person. But after seeing the Guild Master, he looked a bit plain. He reminded me of Phreon, the plain Elf we had explored the spider's nest with before.

Even the Elves had someone like this, huh?

「Umm, I believe there's an adventurer named Fran staying here...」

「Nn?」

I wondered if he was a new customer, but he seemed to have some business with Fran. When the man spotted Fran, he approached her with a smile.

「That appearance, are you Fran-san?」

「Who are you?」

「Aah, I'm sorry. I'm an employee of the Academy of Magic」

So, why was he here?

「The Director of the academy had returned earlier today. So, I am here to ask Fran-san about the date for your interview」

「You're asking me for the date?」

「Yes. The Director says it can be done today or tomorrow, but what do you think?」

It seems that Weena Rhyn was back after all. I was expecting him to tell us when to come, but he seemed to be giving priority to our convenience. I wonder, if we left it for a few days would she be disqualified?

(Master, can we do it today?)

Well, we must go there sometime soon, so...

『Yeah, we can do it today』

Even if we stayed here till tomorrow, there would be nothing to do but explore the town anyway. So, the sooner the better.

「Today then」

「Very well then. So, do you have a specific time in mind?」

「I should decide now?」

「Yes」

「I'll go after I finish my breakfast then」

「Very well. I will tell that to the Director then」

So, after finishing breakfast, Fran went to the Academy of Magic. We were coming through the back entrance today too. I thought about going to the main gate, but I thought it would be faster to talk with the guard who already knew Fran's face.

If they told us to go to the main entrance, we would have obeyed them, but they easily called Colt for us. In the first place, it seemed that outsiders don't often come to the back entrance, so they had already called Colt when they saw us.

「Hey, It's been yesterday」

「Nn」

「I'll show you to the Director's office. Follow me」

As we walked through the tunnel as we did yesterday, Colt gave us a few notes of warning.

「The Director is a gentle person, but she has no mercy for those who are hostile to the academy. So be careful not to offend her」

「Okay」

I wonder if she was a person who tends to easily get angry.

『Fran, don't be careless here』

「Nn」

She was a High Elf, and I don't want to antagonize her from the start. I'd never know what might happen after all.

We passed through the same tunnel we had passed through yesterday, but this time we did not head for the guard's office. Colt's eyes were on a tower at the far end. That was where he was headed, I guess. It seemed that today we would be taken to the school building of the academy.

We could see a sparse number of students around the building. They weren't there the other day, but maybe it was because they're on a break or something like that, huh?

Many of the students wore the same cloak as Charon and the others we met at the Adventurer's Guild, and others wore robes like magicians.

As I observed these students from a distance, I could see that they were looking at us from the other side as well.

「Is that a freshman?」

「But, what's about that equipment?」

「Well, there are some people who go from being adventurers to being students at this academy after all」

「Well, that's true...」

Under the gaze of many students, Fran abruptly stopped in her tracks.

「Huh? What's wrong?」

「...」

Colt, our guide, turned around in surprise. But I don't think Fran heard him. At the moment, Fran's attention was only on the person who came out of the building at the back.

「...Why, are you here...?」

I was surprised, too. How could he be in this place? And I panicked and tried to stop Fran.

「Awakening... Black Lightning Rush!」

『Wait! Fran!』

It was too late. Fran had already rushed out for battle.

Fran muttered the name of the man she hated, gritting her teeth so hard that they even made a sound.

「Zelos... Reed!」

# Chapter 543: Someone that Get in The Way

「Zelos... Reed!」

Fran, who was running while being clad in black lightning, muttered a word filled with killing intent. However, she didn't leak any killing intent at all.

As a result of the use of Awakening and Brilliant Lightning Rush, a large amount of magic power has leaked out. However, whether or not there was killing intent attached to it, it could buy her a fraction of a second before the target she was aiming for—Zelos Reed—noticed her.

Fran was calm even though she was dominated by fury. Calmly, she acted to kill Zelos Reed.

「Sword God Transformation!」

『Ugh...!』

This was bad. Fran was even more pissed than I had thought. She didn't even check to see if it was okay for me to use the Sword God Transformation! The usual Fran would never do something like this!

I couldn't stop her anymore at this point. Her eyes were simply focused on the large, scarred man directly in front of her.

For some reason, his evil spirit seemed to have faded, as I could finally sense it at this distance, but I could certainly feel the evil spirit from inside the man. That figure and that evil spirit. He was definitely Zelos Reed.

Zelos Reed's face finally turned to look at her, as if he had noticed Fran's gaze, which was filled with crazy killing intent.

Our surroundings looked slower as we had entered the realm of super speed with our Sword God Transformation, and it had probably only been a few blinks since Fran had awakened. However, the distance between us was already less than half.

More magic power then gushed out of Fran, and the black lightning in her body increased in density. Then, Fran, who was running at full speed, turned into black lightning.

「Black Thunder Rolls!」

The place where Fran reappears after moving at super high speed with the Black Thunder Rolls was behind Zelos Reed. She had pulled me out of my scabbard and positioned me at her hips.

「Haaa!」

Fran's suppressed energy overflowed. It was the first time that even I had seen Fran unleash such killing intent.

As if seeking an outlet for her killing power, I was swung at him. Despite her current wild emotions, the attack was calm and beautifully executed.

The sword flash, which had been optimized by Sword God Transformation, was sure to reach Zelos Reed in the neck.

He shouldn't be able to duck at this point. Fran, who was in a state of Sword God Transformation, was convinced of this, and I could see it in her eyes.

Zelos Reed sensed Fran's killing intent and tried to react to it. I could see his head moving slightly as he tried to turn around to face us. But the fact that he was making such a movement now meant that he was completely unable to react in time to Fran's surprise attack.



No matter what he did now, there was no chance that Zelos Reed would be able to prevent this attack. It was already too late for him to try to activate any skills.

My blade then slipped into Zelos Reed's neck and sliced through his flesh. However, it was just right after that feeling came over me.

Booom!

「Ghaah!」

『Ghuhh!』

Fran and I were blown away by an impact that came from the side.

It wasn't that powerful. However, because she was targeted at the moment she launched her attack, she completely lost her balance.

If he had aimed for this timing, his discernment was perfect.

Fran twisted in mid-air as she was blown sideways and landed on the ground without any injuries. I wonder who this mysterious attacker was?

The crazy thing was that we didn't know the source of the attack until we were attacked. Now we knew they were a little behind Zelos Reed. There was someone there.

I couldn't figure who it was. But I could tell from the bias of the magic and the presence that there was someone there...

But Fran seemed to understand. Her eyes were clearly on the one behind Zelos Reed. Could it be that she could see them?

However, Fran's eyes quickly returned to Zelos Reed.

『Fran?』

「Let's go」

『Eh?』

Without the slightest hesitation, Fran's next move was to attack again. She seemed to be planning to defeat Zelos Reed here, even if it meant ignoring the mysterious person who had attacked us earlier.

No, it seemed that she would try to block their attack by putting up a barrier. Did she find out the identity of the other party?

「Tsk! This brat!」

「Haaah!」

In the meantime, Fran, who was in a state of Sword God Transformation, slashed at Zelos Reed without hiding the vicious killing intent coming out from her.

With the first blow, she sliced off his left arm, but the feeling was strange. It was clearly not flesh, but a hard substance.

Then I remembered. Come to think of it, Kiara's last attack had severed Zelos Reed's left arm, and apparently, it wouldn't regenerate.

For the evil people, the divine attribute was not only a weakness for them, but it could inflict fatal damage. And now she was clad in that divine attribute due to the effects of Sword God Transformation.

This was not a relief or anything, but a chance. If we hit Zelos Reed now, we might be able to inflict a fatal wound on him.

But this time's attack did not go well either.

It wasn't the invisible shock I had felt earlier, but this time I could see it. Suddenly, a layer of water the size of two tatami mats (Note: 2-3 meter) was stretched between Fran and Zelos Reed.

It was so dense with magic that I'd think it was made up purely of magic power.

However, Fran didn't care and slashed at it. And at that moment, the water layer then created a huge explosion.

「Ghaa...!」

『Fran!』

It seemed the layer of water was created by compressing a tremendous amount of water. When the compressed water was released all at once, an overwhelming amount of water overflowed instantaneously, making it look as if a huge explosion had occurred.

While in the air, she was attacked by the violence of the water so I rescued Fran from drowning by teleporting. But I could see that even though she was drowning, Fran's face was still looking in Zelos Reed's direction.

She hadn't given up yet. But honestly, she was already at my limit. Any more fights would be bad for us.

『Fran, sorry. I'm already...』

「Ugh!」

Hearing my words, she must have finally remembered that she was using the Sword God Transformation. She then hurriedly deactivated the skill.

「I'm sorry... Master...」

『I'm fine now!』

A tremendous amount of pressure then surrounded us. It was not Zelos Reed. For some reason, the pressure that Zelos Reed was giving off was not as significant anymore. It was as if he had no intention to fight us.

The source of the pressure was the person who had come out of the building after Zelos Reed. It was a blonde Elf.

「I wonder who is this bad girl who behaves badly in my beloved academy?」

# Chapter 544: The Unmotivated Strong Person

「I wonder who is this bad girl who behaves badly in my beloved academy?」

While saying so, the beautiful blonde Elven woman gave off a pressure that even made Fran's whole-body shudder.

But now, her willow eyebrows were upturned showing her clear anger. When I looked at her face, she was just like an Elven woman frowning, but she gave off intimidation as if we were facing a Dragon.

「...Ugh」

She also showed us a glimpse of her ability. Just by slashing at the water, my durability value, which was buffed by the Sword God Transformation, was greatly reduced.

What was more, the annoying thing about that water defense layer was that it countered by instantaneously releasing a large amount of water. At the moment of attack, we'd be defenseless, and we'll be countered by a torrent of water at that moment, our attack could most likely be canceled halfway through. It was also quite difficult to spot it at first sight.

Even without appraising her, I could guess who this Elf was. She had tremendous magic power, the overly powerful Ocean Magic, and she also said the line 「My beloved academy」. Fran couldn't help but mutter her name.

「Weena Rhyn...?」

「That's right, I'm Weena Rhyn. Hmm... You're quite a lovely young lady, aren't you? Maybe you're Fran?」

「Nn」

「I wish we could have met differently... I also have a lot of questions I need to ask you——But first, I need to punish you」

The moment Weena Rhyn said that and looked at Fran, a violent sense of intimidation enveloped her. What she had been radiating was only a small residue that leaked out from earlier. Maybe she didn't even realize she was intimidating her.

「I'm sorry, but I won't let anyone who was messing in this academy go unpunished. But don't worry, I won't kill you」

Weena Rhyn was giving off a sense of pressure that was even accompanied by physical pressure as if the surrounding gravity had increased many times.

「I, Weena Rhyn, as the guardian, will——No, that's not good enough. That will be too much. To you, who will become a special instructor——That's still not good enough, huh? Then, to you, who have been offered a position as a special instructor and a short-term transfer plan, I shall begin with your punishment for your hostile acts towards our temporary instructor and our protected students. It will be a little harsher than a normal punishment. Well, you've almost killed him after all」

Immediately after Weena Rhyn said so, the air around us changed. I could see that the magic power that had enveloped this area was also flowing into Weena Rhyn. Some kind of reinforcement must have been applied to our surroundings.

However, Weena Rhyn seemed to be really unmotivated. Despite the intimidation and the words she said, there was not much motivation on her face. In fact, she looked like she didn't even want to fight.

「I'm going to have to restrain you for now. You can resist as much as you want, your opponent will be me alone. It's for your own good too. But I'm the strongest in this academy, you know? Divine Water Creation——Aquarius」

With Weena Rhyn's words, a sphere of water filled with strong magical power was created. Moreover, this sphere of water was slightly imbued with Divine Attributes. As the name suggested, Divine Water Creation must be a skill to create water with the Divine Attribute. She was manipulating it with the Ocean Magic, Aquarius.

Aquarius was an Ocean Magic that simply manipulated the surrounding water, but I've once read in the Adventurer's Guild documents that it could be changed into a thousand different forms when used by an expert user. In other words, if Weena Rhyn used it, it would become something terrifying.

The effect was immediately apparent. To my surprise, I could no longer sense the Divine Attributes and magic power from the water sphere. However, my danger detection was ringing loudly.

It's not that it has lost its attributes, but the effect of the Aquarius must have masked its presence. At first glance, it was just water magic. However, it was actually superb magic that contained powerful magic power and Divine Attributes.

Now I know why my endurance was cut down so quickly. That layer of water was also Divine water.

「Okay, let's start」

The next moment, a sphere of water shot out like a bullet. Fran jumped back to avoid it, but a new sphere of water was already created ahead of her.

「Tsk!」

Fran was trying to cut off the water sphere——.

「!!」

『How troublesome!』

We were being toyed with. Although it was a spur-of-the-moment attack, it was a blow that could even take down a mid-level magic beast... Fran managed to dodge the water sphere by twisting her body using an aerial jump. The water sphere approached her again, but Fran was also in a position to intercept it. She was in a Sheaths of Wind stance.

「Haaa!」

「Ara?」

Now it was Weena Rhyn's turn to be surprised. Her eyes widened when she saw the water sphere that had been cut in half by the Sheaths of Wind technique.

「No way, I didn't expect you to be able to do this much... You're an amazing child, aren't you? That was wonderful. But I wonder, why do we have to fight...?」

As I expected, Weena Rhyn does not seem to want to fight. However, some kind of compelling force seemed to be at work, forcing her to continue the fight.

『Fran. All I see with my appraisal is her name only! I don't know what she's going to do next!』

「Then, we'll take her down as fast as we can. Now it's our turn!」

「And now you're using light magic? You're so versatile, aren't you?」

Fran shot her light magic, the Solar Ray. Just as it looked like the violent torrent of light was going to swallow Weena Rhyn, it was the same layer of water that had interfered.

The rays of light were blocked by a layer of water and dissipated. But this was expected. Rather, the purpose was to blind her with the flash of light and make her focus on defense.

「...Black Thunder Rolls——Heaven Judgement!」

With Fran still maintaining her light magic, she went right behind her with the Black Thunder Rolls.

She then unleashed her all-out attack. Fran's aim from the start was to get in close and use the Heaven Judgement.

The speed was so godlike that an ordinary opponent would not even be able to react and would only realize after being slashed by it. However, Weena Rhyn was able to respond to it.

「You're so fast, aren't you!?!」

Just like when she attacked Zeros Reed in her Sword God Transformation state, a layer of water then stood in front of Fran. She was blown away by its massive flow of water before, and unable to finish her slash.

But she had seen that technique once. So, Fran had naturally thought of a way to deal with it.

(Master!)

『Yeah』

To be honest, I don't know if resisting Weena Rhyn was the right thing to do here. Unlike Zeros Reed, we don't have a grudge against her, nor do we want to kill her. In fact, looking at it objectively, it would be worse for us to suddenly draw our swords and start fighting in a place where there were many non-combatants.

I couldn't sense any killing intent from Weena Rhyn, and I felt that it would be better for us to be caught obediently.

However, Fran was motivated, and she had received word from Weena Rhyn that it was okay to resist. Even if she was caught without resistance in this state, Fran would not be satisfied. If that was the case, it's better to go all out and feel satisfied later.



And it was not that I don't have my own thoughts after being so one-sidedly beaten before.

I activated my Dimension Shift in time with Fran's call. I guess that the counter of the water current was set to automatically activate upon impact.

We then easily slipped through the layer of water with the dimension shift. And the moment we hit Weena Rhyn, we canceled the skills.

As she regained her physical form, she was touched by the layer of water and the counter was triggered. Fran laughed ferociously while being blown away by the tremendous stream of water that was created to explode.

This time, there was a definite response.

「Kuh...! You can even use the space-time magic...!」

A red liquid was flowing out of Weena Rhyn's right side. It was where Fran's Heaven Judgement technique sliced through Weena Rhyn's side.

「You're stronger than I had imagined, aren't you...? It's been hundreds of years since I've had a hard-fought battle like this」

Weena Rhyn was grimacing. However, she immediately looked apologetic and said she was sorry.

「I'm sorry. I did say that you could resist as you can... But it seems that I've underestimated you. When this happens, I need to get a little serious... This is going to hurt a little bit, okay?」

「!」

Immediately after we heard Weena Rhyn's words, her figure was already in front of us. Instead of distancing herself to heal her wounds, she just stepped right in!

She must have been using a physical strengthening skill. Because even her blood flow has been strengthened, a large amount of blood was gushing out from her side. No, even that was actually Weena Rhyn's aim! A large

amount of blood that overflowed became countless ivy and attacked Fran all at once.

Is it because it was a liquid, or because it was her blood that she could control it? Anyway, it seems that Weena Rhyn could manipulate her blood. Moreover, Weena Rhyn's blood, which was imbued with strong magical power, was actually much stronger than ordinary water.

The blood ivy, wriggling as if it was alive, wrapped around Fran's right arm in two or three layers. It must have focused on the right side of her sword grip. And her barrier could not pull it off.

Fran tried to use her magic release to blow the blood away, but it was a moment too late. Before she could do so, Weena Rhyn released a water sphere at close range that struck Fran's solar plexus.

「Ghaah!」

Because her arms were held by the blood ivy, she wasn't blown away and lost her power. Fran's body lifted and I saw that her right shoulder was badly injured.

Well, Fran wasn't the only one who was getting hit. Even as she was being attacked, she swung her left leg up and slammed a kick into the right side of Weena Rhyn.

「Guh!」

The water armor covering Weena Rhyn's skin caught the kick, but the impact seemed to have penetrated and reached Weena Rhyn, and she was frowning as she spat blood out of her mouth. Moreover, this was not the only attack that Fran had made.

「Eat, this!」

The black lightning that Fran wore was flowing into Weena Rhyn through her kick. It was the black lightning that even Goddarfa was taking damage from.

However, even though her entire body was enveloped in black lightning, Weena Rhyn's expression did not change. When I looked closely, I could see that she seemed to have controlled it with the water armor she wore and was guiding it to the ground.

It was a perfect response as if she had seen the black lightning before. Could it be that she had prepared the armor not to prevent the attack, but to nullify the black lightning?

「I think we're done here」

「？」

For some reason, Weena Rhyn let go of Fran's arm while saying those words. Fran hurriedly tried to keep her distance, but her legs never moved.

「Water...?」

Before she knew it, a large amount of water had covered Fran's body, blocking her movements. The water sphere that had just been released was not just to attack. The water quickly covered Fran's legs and torso. Moreover, this water was not just for catching Fran too.

「Argh? Gughaah...!」

Fran's body suddenly glowed and began to spark, accompanied by a buzzing sound like electricity popping. It was as if she was leaking electricity.

No, it seems that a similar phenomenon was really occurring. The black lightning on Fran's body lost its density all at once, and her life force began to drop rapidly.

「My... Power is...」

「It's been a long time since I've seen Black Tiger Kin, but I've got all the countermeasures I need, you know?」

This phenomenon, Weena Rhyn was doing this on purpose! It seemed that Weena Rhyn, who had lived for a long time, had fought the Black Heavenly Tiger in the past. So, this wasn't her first time seeing the black lightning either.

I tried to use teleport to somehow escape, but for some reason, it didn't activate.

『This feeling... It feels like something was interfering with its activation?』

「Did you try to use teleport? Currently, teleport was not allowed to be used in this whole area. Even I won't be able to use it」

『Fran! Unleash your Brilliant Lightning Rush right now! We're in trouble if you don't!』

「...Okay!」

As soon as Fran released the skill, she used all her magic power release while putting up a barrier, and flicked away the water that clung to her body.

「That was a quick decision, wasn't it? I can't believe you were able to do something about it... It's been hundreds of years since I had someone run away from me after I thought I've caught them perfectly, you know? I would have preferred to have a normal encounter with you if I could...」

Weena Rhyn sighed again as she healed her wounds. Her face showed signs of fatigue, but she was still able to fight.

On the other hand, Fran was fully wounded. If it was a game of simple battle, we'd have won by hitting her with the Heaven Judgement. But if you look at the degree of exhaustion, we were overwhelmingly defeated.

「You have very little energy left, but what will you do now? More than this, and I'll be more serious, you know? Or do you still want to go?」

# Chapter 545: Surrender

「Or do you still want to go?」

「...I do!」

Immediately after shouting so, Fran created a ball of light behind her. However, this was not an attack skill, but merely simple light magic.

The place where it was created was where the light ball, Fran, and Weena Lane line up. Fran's long shadow then swallowed Weena Rhyn.

And then, the mouth of a huge beast suddenly appeared from her shadow and swallowed Weena Rhyn's leg.

It was Urushi, who had changed to his largest size, who ambushed her from the shadows.

「Grrrr!」

「...It's still hiding all this time even though you've been pushed this far, huh!？」

Weena Rhyn had jumped up as quickly as she could, and all Urushi could bite was below the knee. In addition, the Aquarius counter immediately pried open Urushi's closed mouth. Apparently, the large amount of water produced in his mouth made it impossible for him to keep it closed.

「Gaoof!」

Spitting out a large amount of water from his mouth, Urushi fled into the shadows again. But he had done his job well enough.

Although he hadn't been able to bite through, both of Weena Rhyn's legs had been severely injured. Blood was pouring out of the holes drilled by his fangs, and both legs would have been broken.

It was the effect of the dimensional fangs that he had acquired through his evolution. The attack, which ignored defense, penetrated the defensive layer created by Aquarius and inflicted damage to her.

If he had been able to close his mouth completely without the water getting in the way, he would have been able to bite her legs off... But this was enough to make a chance for us.

Fran and I decided to make our final attack here.

「Kanna Kamui!」

「Let's overlap it!」

To be honest, my durability value was already on the edge. That was due to the combination of the damage received from the Sword God Transformation and the damage from striking the Divine Water.

Knowing this, Fran chose magic. It was a field that she was not very good at, but her training had improved this as well.

It wasn't enough to unleash Kanna Kamui easily, but it didn't take her tens of seconds to concentrate like before. That was enough time for me to complete my preparations in the time that Urushi had given us.

The strongest attack we could unleash at the moment rained down on Weena Rhyn, who was healing her legs while floating in the air using water to support her body.

「Divine Water Creation! Yamata-no-Orochi!」

(Note: Eight-headed serpent)

However, our opponent was a master of magic. She must have sensed the signs. So, she immediately activated her magic against the extreme

lightning that was pouring down.

Eight dragons formed out of water ascended toward the sky. The water dragons, each with their own tremendous power, then collided with Kanna Kamui in the sky, causing a tremendous discharge.

Rizzt zzt zzzt!

Then the lightning rapidly became thinner and thinner and disappeared before it even reached the ground.

It wasn't an explosion, nor was it being one-sidedly pushed back. The water dragon had weakened, dispersed, and dissipated the power of extreme lightning.

It seems that Weena Rhyn was doing it on purpose. She had adjusted its power to cause as little damage to the surrounding area as possible while being able to cancel out our Kanna Kamui.

We were able to have a good match in close combat, but I guess she has the upper hand in the battle of magic.

「That hurts... My combat instincts must have been completely dulled, huh? But even so, you are still able to use Kanna Kamui after using the Heaven Judgement, huh...? Aren't you a little too strong for someone of your age? Well, I'll ask you once again, will you surrender now?」

Perhaps, Fran's voluntary surrender was the key. Weena Right seemed to be forced to fight by some kind of compelling force after all. It seemed that in order to stop it, the other side would have to surrender or be neutralized.

「The damage would be too great if we were to have a serious fight here with someone of your level. I'll detain you, but I'll let you go soon. I promise」

(Master?)

『I think we should listen to what she has to say here. She wasn't lying』

The Principle of Falsehood was able to discern a lie and the truth. However, I didn't know if the Principle of Falsehood was working properly against someone who was so superior that even my appraisal could only reveal her name.

Still, Fran seemed to have decided to believe her words. Well, it could also be said that her anger was somewhat dissipated after the fierce fight.

「Or do you still want to beat me and kill him?」

「...」

Weena Rhyn and Fran's gazes turned to Zeros Reed, who was standing some distance away. He was covered in blood, with blood pouring out of his neck, which had been cut open by us. But he didn't make any noise and stood there quietly.

「I understand that you have a history with him, but I can't let you kill him just yet. Besides, if you kill him here, I won't be holding back anymore. So please, surrender!」

Weena Rhyn said so and bowed her head in place. It felt like the positions were reversed, but I could tell that Weena Rhyn really wanted to avoid further fighting. Fran must have understood that too.

「...Okay, I'll surrender」

「Thank you」

Weena Rhyn exhaled in relief at Fran's words.

「Hmm... Berthoudi is still making noise...」

But her brow furrowed again.

「Eh? Do you mean that wolf? I don't have a choice then」

Does she have a conversation with someone? Weena Rhyn, who was nodding towards nothing, produced a sphere of water again.



「Aside from Fran, I don't think I've punished the wolf enough. I'm sorry if I'm being a little rough with him」

The sphere that Weena Rhyn created was sent flying and landed at Fran's feet. I wondered if she was trying to restrain Fran, but it didn't seem that was the case.

The sphere of water began to spread thinly as if it were licking the ground. At first glance, it would appear that Fran was standing in the center of the puddle. I wonder what she was doing.

As Fran and I watched in amazement, the water immediately began to bubble up. Soon after, something jumped out of the water.

「Ofu offu!」

「Urushi?」

It was Urushi, spitting water out of his mouth and scratching the air with its paws as if he were drowning. Or rather, he was actually drowning. It seems that the water was somehow poured into the shadow where Urushi was hiding.

As long as Urushi was blocked from using his teleport, he would not be able to escape the water torture. As soon as Urushi jumped out of the water, the sphere of water that was placed above his head attacked him again, as if it had been aiming for it.

「Offu...!」

When the water sphere expanded at once, Urushi was trapped inside it. After having escaped from being suffocated, he was immediately thrown back into the water and moaned pitifully.

He seemed to be on the verge of panic, but still, Urushi did not give up. He then tried to make his body huge at once. He thought he could use the size of his body to blow away the water.

However, Weena Rhyn was one step ahead of him.

「It's useless」

To my surprise, the water sphere expanded to adjust with the giant Urushi. In the end, Urushi was still trapped in it. Then Urushi's face was distorted in agony. It seemed that water was being forcefully pushed into his mouth.

「Offufu...」

This was bad, Urushi's going to drown! But just as Urushi's face twisted in agony, Weena Rhyn snapped her fingers. Then the sphere of water changed its shape, with only Urushi's face allowed to come out.

「That should take care of the wolf. You're next. Stay put」

「Nn」

Weena Rhyn then waved her finger lightly, and water rose from under Fran's feet at once, covering her as if to envelop her. From the outsider's perspective, it would appear as if she were being attacked by blue slime.

Just like that, the water went from Fran's neck down. It wrapped around her torso and legs, similar to Urushi. Apparently, the water pressure was exquisitely regulated, as there was no damage to Fran's vitality. However, she seemed to be unable to move.

Fran and Urushi, who were stupidly restrained with only their faces sticking out of the water sphere, were drooping in frustration.

But Weena Rhyn's face still frowned.

「She doesn't seem to want to resist, and I've restrained their movements, but why is Berthoudi still so noisy...? Eh? Her sword? What you mean is that hostile thing is... her sword?」

She was talking to someone else again. And did she just say sword? Then Weena Rhyn's gaze turned completely to me.

The water holding Fran then wriggled, and I am separated from her in such a way that only I am separated from her.

「Umm? Sword-san? How should I say this...? Are you going to resist?」

I was sure that she knew. So, there was no point in hiding it now.

「Well, just because it has consciousness doesn't mean that it can answer my question huh...?」

『...No, I'm not going to resist』

「Eh? What was that?」

『I'm the sword. Please talk using telepathy for now』

(A-a talking sword...? Even though each one of them was legendary enough, there are only three of them after all... Well, I'll have to hear more about that later, okay?)

『Yeah』

「Hostile response complete. This concludes the defensive action」

When Weena Rhyn said that, the magic that had covered our surroundings dissipated. At the same time, the aggressive magic emanating from Weena Rhyn eased.

# Chapter 546: Zelos Reed's Change

「Let's see... Fran, you are somehow related to him, am I right?」

Weena Rhyn asked Fran, who only had her head out of the water sphere a question.

「Nn...」

「Haah... If I'd known about it beforehand, I might have been able to prevent this, but I've been so busy dealing with something that I haven't had a chance to look through your files」

「My files?」

「Yes. When interviewing a staff member, the research office is supposed to provide a briefing on the person in advance. Well, in your case, since you're quite famous, they've been gathering rumors about you from the beginning」

She said they would gather information before the interview. So, they have a special department for that, huh? And then they would pass on the information they had gathered to Weena Rhyn.

「I've been looking for him since yesterday. We've been trying to seal him up ever since, and we finally caught him this morning. It was finally going to be over and I was just about to take him to the isolation room...」

Then Fran came across him at the worst possible time.

「When I interrogated him, he told me that he came from the Beastman Nation to the continent of Zilbert, but did you have a grudge with him?」

「Nn」

Fran nodded and turned her eyes, filled with dark emotions, to Zelos Reed.

Kiara had told us not to seek revenge, but as expected, she couldn't just ignore it when Zelos Reed appeared in front of us.

Zelos Reed, who had been hit with killing intent, was standing behind Weena Rhyn, instead of running away. Weena Rhyn had said that she had caught him, but what about his current treatment?

「As I said before, I still can't let you kill him. Besides, he is being treated as one of our temporary employees right now. So, we need to protect him, that's how it works. Well, I understand that it may not sit well with you, so I'm not asking you to accept it right now」

「...」

「However, I'd like you to choose the place to get your revenge on him next time」

「？」

「Just take a look around you」

Around us? Fran and I then looked around us as we were told.

Then we saw a group of students who had been watching us from afar fall on their knees.

「I've made a barrier beforehand, so the damage is minimal... But before that... When you attacked him, the students got the full brunt of your power and intimidation」

The barrier must have been the magic that surrounded the area after Weena Rhyn mumbled something back then. Apparently, it had the effect of blocking damage from the inside to the outside.

So, it was definitely our fault that the students were scared.

When Weena Rhyn appeared, I thought she looked like a dragon in front of us, but to the students, Fran was exactly like that.

I guess they were too frightened to even run away in the face of the mysterious being that had suddenly appeared, clad in super magic and spreading vicious killing intent. They were looking at Fran with a mixture of fear and terror.

「Aah...」

「This time, there were only a few students around, so we only suffered this much, but if it was in the town, the whole town would have panicked」

「...I'm sorry」

She finally realized how little she had been aware of her surroundings. Fran then bowed her head with a heavy feeling.

「Ara? You're apologizing?」

「?? Because I did something bad...」

「You're quite an honest girl, aren't you...? Well, let's take care of him for the time being」

Weena Rhyn then looked away from Fran, who was bowing her head and approached Zelos Reed, who was standing behind her.

Even though it had been prevented, my blade had slightly cut Zelos Reed's neck.

And at that time, she was clothed in Divine Attributes due to her Sword God Transformation. So Zelos Reed was unable to recover from the wound on his neck, and could only hold back the unstoppable flow of blood with his hands.

「Just sit tight for a bit... Divine Water Creation, Aqua Heal」

Weena Rhyn waved her hand lightly as she created a new sphere of water. The water then clung to the wound on Zelos Reed's neck and began to glow dimly.

After a few seconds, a section of the slashed flesh rose and began to regenerate itself at high speed.

Shouldn't the Divine Attribute be quite effective against the evil gods...? Or was it because she used a recovery based on the divine water?

In no time, Zelos Reed's wounds were healed. Then Weena Rhyn gave him an order.

「Stand up」

「Yes」

Although she had healed him, Weena Rhyn's gaze on Zelos Reed was very cold. Without complaining about such treatment, Zelos Reed nodded quietly. His gaze turned to Fran for just a moment. He was neither frightened nor angry, just quietly staring at Fran. But that was impossible, to begin with.

Is this really Zelos Reed? His atmosphere has changed to such an extent that I doubted him.

When their eyes met, Fran began to glare at Zelos Reed again. This was not good. If this continued, Fran's anger would flare up again.

When Weena Rhyn saw this, she raised her voice.

「We can't even talk properly with him around, huh...? Colt, take him to the Third Tower, I've already spoken to the other side before」

Oh, we forgot about Colt. We forgot he was here ever since Weena Rhyn showed up.

「Are you sure you'll leave him to me?」

「I've put a seal on him, and Berthoudi and the others will keep an eye on him. Besides, he won't do anything stupid while he was still healing, right?」

「Yes」

「I'm going to have a talk with Fran then」

「Understood」

I don't know the details, but it seemed that something magical was binding Zelos Reed.

「Also, call the other staff members to come and administer first aid to the students. None of the students is in any serious condition, but they can take a break from their classes for today」

Fran's head drooped as she listened to the exchange between Weena Rhyn and Colt. She was probably regretting now that she had caused damage to unrelated students because of her hatred of Zelos Reed.

「You should go now」

「Yes. Come with me」

「Okay」

Zelos Reed then quietly obeyed Colt's words and started walking slowly. So, he had really changed, huh? I guess I could call it a transformation. Was it because of Weena Rhyn's magic? Or...

「Fran, why don't you just talk to me for now?」

Weena Rhyn's body then blocked Fran's gaze, which was staring at Zelos Reed's back with a complicated expression.

「I'm going to release you now. I hope you won't run away. Besides, you must want to know about a lot of things, right?」



「No problem, I won't run away」

「Thank you. Then, I'll release you now」

Weena Rhyn then snapped her fingers, and the water sphere that had been holding us disappeared.

「Come with me」

Weena Rhyn turned and walked away as the two of them landed. Fran then picked me up from where I was stuck in the ground and followed her with a short run.

# Chapter 547.1: Guardian Spirits of the Academy

Weena Rhyn led us to what appeared to be her office. Fran then sat on a sofa in one corner of the room and faced Weena Rhyn.

「I'd like to introduce myself again. I'm Weena Rhyn. I'm the Director of the Academy of Magic」

「B-ranked adventurer, Fran. And this is Urushi」

『My name is Master, and I'm an intelligence weapon』

「Master? Is that your name?」

『Yeah』

「I've been called President, Headmaster, or Director too. So, I know how you feel」

Just as I expected, Weena Rhyn's reaction towards me was a little weak. Well, it's not like I don't like it when people aren't surprised when they find out about me, but she's much calmer than the people who have seen or know who I am.

But I soon found out why.

「This is the first time in a thousand years since I've seen an intelligence weapon capable of having a proper conversation」

『You know any other intelligence weapons besides me?』

「Well, I've lived a long life after all. I know more than what I can hold in one hand. You're the second sword that I've seen that is capable of having a proper conversation. Most intelligence weapons have gone mad after all...」

What a surprise, it seemed that she had met an Intelligence Weapon many times before. I guess that was why she wasn't terribly surprised to know about me.

But still, the mad intelligence weapon, Fanatics, also said that when a person's consciousness was in the body of a sword, there's a good chance they'll go mad. I feel like I want to meet the other intelligence weapons, but I also feel scared at the same time...

However, I could tell that the Intelligence Weapons were not new to her. Rather, it seemed that Weena Rhyn's interest was in Urushi.

Urushi, who was sitting next to Fran in his small form, was stared at by Weena Rhyn. Well, Urushi felt nervous when he was being looked at.

「What's wrong with Urushi?」

「Eh? Well, this is the first time I've seen this species. It's been a long time since I've seen a magic beast that was completely new to me, you know? Well, forget about that, there's something you want to know more than that, right?」

「Are you sure it's fine to leave Zelos Reed to Colt?」

「It's fine. I've used my skill to seal off the evil spirits within him and bind his actions, and the spirit here is watching over him too」

Just as I thought, it seems that the reason why Zelos Reed's evil spirit was suppressed was as a result of something Weena Rhyn had done. On top of that, he seemed to be bound by a kind of slave contract. Moreover, she had a spirit watching over him.

「I didn't limit his ability to talk properly, but his strange quietness has shown that he's obeying me. Well, when you attacked him, he didn't fight back, right? That's because fighting is not allowed in the academy」

Indeed, Zelos Reed did nothing more than put out his hand to block our attack. After our first attack failed, there must have been plenty of opportunities for him to counterattack.

『In the first place, why is Zelos Reed here?』

「It all started the day before yesterday」

Weena Rhyn has received word that a dangerous criminal was hiding in the Self-governing region. He was not well known in this country, but there was a bounty on his head in other countries.

It was said that adventurers had already set out to capture him, but had been repelled many times. Even if there were no deaths, his power was considered to be overwhelming.

So, this time, Weena Rhyn herself went out to catch him. Because of her flashiness and numerous heroic stories, people tend to think that Weena Rhyn was always ready to respond to any situation, but she said that if there was an incident outside of the Academy that could be handled by someone other than her, then she would leave it to them.

「Otherwise, the younger generation will not grow up. And I don't have time to deal with every little incident, you know?」

Conversely, Weena Rhyn would only respond if it was a much more serious incident.

Weena Rhyn then used her magic and other means to find Zelos Reed and captured him after a battle. But she also learned that Zelos Reed had a companion.

「A kid named Romio?」

「Yes, Romio Magnolia, I've decided to take him under my protection」

So, he was still bringing him around after all this time, huh?

I've heard that Weena Rhyn likes children, and I could understand her decision to protect Romio. If it were Amanda, who likes children too, she would have also done the same.

However, Fran was still confused.

「Is there a reason why I shouldn't kill Zelos Reed yet?」

「That's the problem... There's a connection between Romio and him that's close to a master-slave contract. And a nasty one at that, where if one of them gets hurt, the other one will get hurt too」

「Zelos Reed did that?」

「I think it's the opposite. Romio might be the one who unconsciously made a deal, I guess it's kind of a curse possessed by Magnolia's bloodline...」

『How is that possible? He's just a little kid, right? And what this all about Magnolia's bloodline?』

I know he's from a noble bloodline, but what's so special about his family?

「A long time ago, there was a special family on the continent of Gordisia that guarded the seal of the pieces of the Evil God. Magnolia, Wisteria, and Camellia. The people of those three families had a special bloodline that could communicate with the Evil Gods and control their power. They have taken advantage of that characteristic to perform a ritual to appease the Evil Gods... However, the Dragonmen destroyed and stole the pieces from them」

The pieces of the Evil God that Trismegistus used to create the giant magic beasts must have been the pieces that those three houses were guarding.

「And this child, Romio, was a descendant of that Magnolia Family. Moreover, his blood was pretty strong that I even thought he was a reincarnation of his ancestor」

Could it be that it was because of that blood that Murellia and Zelos Reed were strangely obsessed with Romio? No, I'm sure it was.

「Anyway, as long as that contract was still in place, killing him will only get Romio killed too」

And apparently, that was not all.

It seems that Romio's young body had been contaminated with evil from spending so much time with Zelos Reed. After all, there's a phenomenon of intoxication by being exposed to strong evil, and it seems that Romio's condition was even worse than that.

It was life-threatening if it was not cured, but because of the contract, it was dangerous to keep them apart for a long period of time.

So, in the end, to protect and treat Romio at the academy, it was necessary to have Zelos Reed close to him.

「So I decided to use my power to significantly suppress Zelos Reed's power and keep them in the academy until Romio is healed... I'm going to treat him as a temporary employee. I'll also explain to you why I'm doing something like this」

「Nn」

「First of all, this Academy of Magic is protected by a powerful guardian spirit and its dependent spirits. So, there must be hundreds of spirits guarding and watching over the academy」

『Could it be, the mysterious attack that first blocked Fran's attack was...』

「The High Ranking one was in charge of watching over Zelos Reed. And in your case, it was just trying to stop an outsider from committing violence in the academy rather than protecting Zelos Reed」

So that's why I couldn't see it! Moreover, if it was a High-Ranking spirit, it must be quite strong. And wasn't it quite dangerous if it could attack

stealthy from anywhere?

But it seems, Fran managed to look at it faintly. No, maybe it was just a faint feeling, huh? Perhaps because of our stay in that inn, Fran got the ability to sense spirits.

『Fran, did you see the spirit?』

「...I only felt something strange」

「Ara? Maybe Fran has a talent as a spirit user」

「Really?」

「I'm just saying it's possible. For example, how about this?」

Weena Rhyn then pointed her fingertips lightly at the ceiling. All I could see was a slight movement of magic, but I don't know what's happening.

However, Fran could definitely see something.

「It looks hazy」

「Hmm, you can only roughly see it, huh? But it seems you can feel it」

Maybe Fran really has a talent as a spirit user, huh? I'd really like to see her use it.

「How to be able to see them?」

「Hmm... Let's see... All I can say is that you need to be in contact with spirits and be aware of them at all times. Some people say that you need to have a pure heart, but to be more precise, some spirits like people who have a pure heart. In the first place, many spirits don't care whether we are good or bad」

「Is that so?」

「Yes. Think about it. Do you think that spirits would care about the values, crimes, and laws that the peoples have set for themselves? The same goes for the guardian spirits of this academy. Their defense ethics have nothing to do with right or wrong. First and foremost is the safety of those involved in the academy as specified in the contract. Next is the people's safety, which is its high priority. No matter what the reason, the guardian spirits will not tolerate any hostile acts」

Moreover, the defense system was not limited to the spirit's surveillance network.

「And I, myself, am part of that defense system」

「？」

Weena Rhyn then explained further to Fran and Urushi who looked confused.

「To put it simply, the guardian spirits will determine if someone is an enemy, and I will be the one to impose sanctions. That's how it works. That's also the reason why I attacked Fran earlier」



# Chapter 547.2: Guardian Spirits of the Academy

It seems that if an outsider attacked the academy, Weena Rhyn had to deal with them. To fulfil the contract with the spirits, she couldn't stop attacking until the spirit decided that the sanction was sufficient.

「The spirit's eyes can't be deceived, so in some cases, I have to kill them against my will」

In addition, the spirits could read the emotions of the enemy and even determine if they were feeling remorse or if they were lying.

In other words, the degree of sanction would be rather severe against those who had surrendered but thought that they could get revenge later.

The degree of the sanction also varied considerably depending on the position of the other party and the degree of hostility.

If a hostile organization hurts a student in the academy, they were doomed, no questions asked. However, if it was someone friendly to the school... For example, if a graduate raised their hand because a student mocked them, a simple apology was all that was needed.

In some cases, the academy may be at fault, but that doesn't seem to matter to the spirits who judge the degree of sanction. Even if the other party was a Saint, a felon, or even the King, the sanction would still be enforced.

「It was impossible to keep him, an evil person, in the academy without a title. Just being Romio's guardian was not enough to convince the spirits, so he needed the title of a temporary staff member」

「Even Zelos Reed, can be a staff member?」

「Aah, you mean, is it fine for us to accept a sinner?」

「Nn」

「You see, as I said before, laws made by humans are meaningless to the spirits that judge them. In addition, if you are talking about him who has taken the lives of many people, the number of people that I have directly taken is hundreds of times greater than the number of people that he has killed」

Weena Rhyn then shrugged her shoulders after saying so.

「I've traveled around the world for a long time, fought on countless battlefields, and fought against countries. Even now, some countries still have me listed as a terrible criminal」

Come to think of it, she had also killed a nobleman who messed with the academy, right? Well, no wonder she would be considered as their enemy.

「And such a person is acting as the Director of the academy, right? Well, it just goes to show that spirits don't care what kind of sins you've committed」

As a result, Fran, an outsider who had attacked Zelos Reed, who was now an academy employee, had triggered the sanctions.

「But there is one thing I owe you an apology for」

「What is it?」

「To lessen the sanctions against you, I misled the guardian spirit, Berthoudi, by pretending that you were related to the Academy. Specifically, it's when I said, "To you, who have been offered a position as a special instructor and a short-term transfer plan". Instead of treating you like someone from outside the academy who almost killed someone from the academy, I decided to treat you like someone from the academy that got into a fight with someone from here」

(TLN: Reference ch544)

I see. So, there was a loophole like that, huh? She had a letter of introduction from Alistair, and since Weena Rhyn actually recognized her as a related individual, she was then treated as a related on the spot by the spirits.

And it seems Alistair's letter of introduction was particularly influential. It was said that just having this letter of introduction was enough for a minor assault case to be judged as no problem. That's why even Fran, who was involved in an attempted murder case, was only detained.

For a moment, I wondered why she hadn't told Alistair that information, but then I thought, why would she need to?

It was obvious that one shouldn't be messing on the academy or being hostile to Weena Rhyn. It was also common sense that someone should not be rude to someone who was about to hire them.

It's the same as someone warning an acquaintance who was going to a job interview at a big company with 「Don't be rude at the office」 or 「Don't insult the Chairman of the company and make him angry」.

I heard that if we pass the interview, they usually tell us about it, but I guess they didn't think it was necessary to tell us. As we had a letter of introduction, some mischief was allowed. It was just that this time, that wasn't enough.

Oh, that was right. There's another mystery.

『We had attacked Weena Rhyn, right...? So, we actually did some damage, didn't we?』

She had slashed her with Heaven Judgement, and Urushi too has hurt her a little, right? Wouldn't our sanction be increased by the spirits?

「Yeah, I've told you in the beginning that you could resist, didn't I? That's why I permitted you to do that」

So, by Weena Rhyn's permission, it was treated as a mock battle, huh? In other words, she had said a precautionary line first so that Fran could resist.

「But Fran was much stronger than I expected. Well, it was also because I hadn't calculated you had the support of Master. I should have told her that she could hurt me, not that she could resist as much as she wanted. The spirit then judged that you were resisting more than you were allowed to. I'm sorry」

Weena Rhyn bowed her head as she said so.

The surprise attack she had done to Zelos Reed was offset by receiving some damage and being restrained. Her attack on Weena Rhyn too was offset by receiving some damage from Weena Rhyn. And the fear she had caused to the students was forgiven by the apology she made afterward. That seemed to be the case.

However, the problem remained.

『You said that she has been offered a position as a special instructor and a short-term transfer plan, right? Does that mean it's already decided?』

「That's the problem, isn't it? In the first place, if you think about what Fran has been doing since she came to this academy, there's no factor to increase her likability. I'm not going to say, "I'm going to make you a member of our prestigious academy, shiver and be grateful!" I'm not even going to say that. But for now, that title is the only reason Fran is allowed to be here by Berthoudi」

『What if she refuses?』

「...If you refuse, I think you'll have to deal not only with me but with the spirits as well」

Doesn't that mean we don't have the right to refuse at all!?

「Don't worry. You can't quit immediately, but if you work for a couple of weeks, the spirits will be satisfied. That's how long it will take to work for a

short period of time to be completed」

Well, by listening to her explanation, I could tell that it was a necessary procedure... It was probably because she had made a decision for Fran on her own.

But even so... Not only an instructor but a transfer student too? Doesn't that mean she's going to be a student here? I wonder if she will be fine...

However, Fran nodded easily at her words.

「Understood, I'll be that special...?」

「Special instructor and short-term transfer student」

「That's fine then」

『Fran, are you sure?』

「Nn? In the first place, that was my intention; it's the same as passing the interview after all」

Apparently, she didn't have any particular thoughts about Weena Rhyn. So, she casually accepted Weena Rhyn's words.

「If we stay here, we can keep an eye on Zelos Reed」

『Well, you're right』

Whether or not the opportunity for revenge came around, she was not going to give up and let it pass her by here.

「Are there a lot of spirits in this academy?」

「Yeah, There aren't many places as crowded with spirits as here, you know?」

「If so, I can practice using spirit magic by staying here. So, it's a good thing」

「Haah... That's good for you then. Thank you very much for accepting it. Now I don't have to be angry with A-chan anymore... Aah, as an apology for the trouble, I'll at least offer you a raise in your salary. But do you have anything else you want?」

「...I want to have a mock battle with Weena Rhyn」

「Huh? With me? I don't mind though, but...」

Rather, the major reason we came to this academy was because of her interest in Weena Rhyn. She wanted to see the strength of the strongest High Elf in the world. And although she had experienced that strength once, I guess she wanted to fight some more.

Weena Rhyn, who was obviously not a battle junkie, chuckled at her.

「Your face is cute, but you're quite greedy, aren't you?」

「?」

「Well, just wait for it. In the meantime, I look forward to working with you for a short time」

「Nn. I'll be in your care」

# **Chapter 548: Shitty Brat**

## Chapter 548: Sh\*tty Brat

「This way」

「Nn」

We were now being taken by Weena Rhyn to the staff room. Most of the staff was given private rooms or laboratories, but apparently, there was also a large room for everyone to gather.

She said that it was more convenient for them to prepare before class or for simple meetings. It really felt like a Japanese staff room.

「But still, you're the first one to cause such commotion in such a state since the establishment of this academy, you know?」

「What do you mean?」

「Usually, people who come to the academy for an interview are nervous because they know about me. So, who would cause a commotion in such a state, right?」

Well, she was right. If they offended Weena Rhyn, they would be doomed. In that sense, Fran was in a lot of trouble.

「And I'm not going to let you do anything crazy in my presence」

「I see」

「I usually make people wait an hour for an interview, but some of them get angry and leave」

「You make them wait? Why?」

「We don't need people who didn't have the patience and enthusiasm and leave with just being neglected for that long」



I think they were just like normal people in interviews on Earth, weren't they? I mean, I used to get that kind of treatment a lot when I was looking for a job. In large-scale interviews, they even made me wait for a long time. It was a combo strategy of making you wait for a long time and then pressuring you into an interview.

Well, there were also times when the interview process was prolonged and the company unintentionally made you wait. Anyone who had experienced those eras when companies were super dominant would understand it.

「Some aristocrats who brag about their great titles have no patience. In the first place, being an instructor or teacher is hard work, right? Not all kids are good and honest, and there are a lot of sh\*tty brats out there. You have to have enthusiasm and patience to deal with them. Or maybe you just need the heart to go through it」

「Nn?」

Fran tilted her head a little when she heard Weena Rhyn's words. I was also feeling a little uncomfortable too.

「What's wrong?」

「Do you like kids?」

That was right. I felt uncomfortable with Weena Rhyn's tone when she said "Sh\*tty brat". Amanda, who also loved children, would not have said it, and even if she had, there would have been a hint of affection in it. But I couldn't feel it in Weena Rhyn's words.

She seemed to really think of them as sh\*tty brats. However, she then laughed slightly with a bitter smile.

「I don't know why people seem to think of that of me as the Director of the academy... Well, it was also because I've made a contract with the spirits so that I was bound to the academy, but I wonder if that's another point that they've misunderstood. Well, but I love honest, cute, and talented kids, okay? Like you for an example」

Weena Rhyn said so and winked at her. But the chuckle remained on her face.

「I can't love every kid unconditionally just because they are a kid, right?」

『So, why did you become the Director of the academy?』

「There's a lot of things an adult should do. Aah, by the way, you know Amanda, don't you?」

「Nn」

I saw that she was looking through Fran's files before she said so. So, I guess it must be from what was written in it.

「You shouldn't compare with to that girl」

「You know her?」

「You haven't heard about it?」

「Nn」

「Fufufu, she never changes, doesn't she...? Well, her ancestors are my children. I guess that makes her my descendant, right?」

What? She was related to her by blood? But Amanda never said anything about that, right?

「Well, it's because she hates me」

「Why?」

「Well, it's because of a lot of things. But one reason is that she probably doesn't like me being called as a kid loving person, as she was a real kid loving person」

Is that all? Well, I'm not going to pursue it too deeply if she doesn't want to tell more.

As we walked along talking like that, I noticed that the students we passed were staring at Fran.

「Who is she? I can't believe that the Director is personally showing her around」

「Maybe she's some kind of noble?」

「I don't think the Director would care about something like that. She's the type who would even beat up the royalty after all」

「Umm, is that the director of the academy? This is the first time I've seen her」

「Oi oi, we were greeted by her at the entrance ceremony, you know?」

「Well, I was late getting in because of my family matter...」

I wondered if the incident from earlier had already spread, but they seemed to be simply surprised that Weena Rhyn was guiding us.

The students thought they were whispering, but we and Weena Rhyn could clearly hear them. It seemed that Weena Rhyn's face wasn't well known even to them.

「It can't be helped, you know? Most of the work is done by my subordinates after all. So, the only time I appear in front of the students is for the upperclassmen's mock battles or greetings at the ceremony」

It was a school with a long history after all, so I'm sure they already have a complete system of education as well as defense.

Besides, as the Director of the Academy, she wouldn't be in charge of classes often.

Even for me, it was hard to remember what my principal looked like when I was in school. But I do remember that the principal in my high school had a little less hair though.

「Besides, I usually walk around in a plain outfit, so I don't think the students would recognize me, right?」

Well, if they couldn't sense her strength, she might just look like a normal Elf.

She was an Elf, and she was beautiful, but not the best in the world or anything. Even if she evolved into a High Elf, her appearance would probably remain the same.

She wore a plain robe that certainly doesn't look like much of those in power. However, it was actually a luxury item made of good material, but they wouldn't know about that by just simply seeing it.

Furthermore, she seemed to be suppressing her aura. I guess it was because she doesn't want to cause a commotion here.

Seeing Weena Rhyn dressed like that, Fran nodded approvingly.

「Nn. Weena Rhyn looks so plain」

「Wait doesn't that sound like it means something different」

# Chapter 549: Staff Room

We followed Weena Rhyn to the room that was much larger than I had expected. It was probably five times larger than what I imagined when she said it was the staff room.

Wooden desks were neatly arranged facing each other like an office or a staff room, and nearly a hundred people were working here right now.

Even so, only about half of the desks were occupied, so there were probably 200 to 250 people actually using this room.

It was even hard for us to see to the back of the room unless we got on a table as Weena Rhyn had climbed right now.

「Ha~i, everyone, attention please~!」

As soon as Weena Rhyn called out and clapped her hands, all eyes in the room then immediately focused on us.

「She's Fran, an adventurer. She'll be a special staff member and a transfer student for a while in this academy. And next to her is her follower, Urushi. He can change his size a little, and he's a smart boy. So please take care of them」

「I'll be in your care」

「Woof!」

After Weena Rhyn told them so, the teachers' reactions were split.

They were split into those who were bewildered and those who accepted her. And it seemed that there were even more people who were bewildered.

Many of the people here were just normal teachers, after all, so they might not understand what Fran was capable of.

On the contrary, the teachers who seemed to have accepted her were former adventurers and those dressed like magicians.

Well, they won't need fighting prowess to be a classroom teacher, so I won't blame them.

However, the man closest to us, who was dressed in a suit, spoke up on behalf of the group. He looked like a chubby uncle in his fifties, who didn't get enough exercise.

「I understand that she'll be a short-term transfer student. And there will be no problem with her age. However, she'll become a special staff member too? Where will she be placed?」

It seemed that becoming a student and an instructor at the same time was indeed a rare thing in this academy.

「First of all, Fran will be placed as the Advanced and Special Combat Class Instructor」

「Eh? So, you mean, she's going to enroll in the Special Combat classes」

「She'll become the Mock Battle Instructor」

Her words then caused a slight commotion.

「Mock Battle Instructor...?」

「Isn't it that only a D or higher ranked adventurer is allowed to be an instructor...?」

「Moreover, I've heard that Advanced and Special Mock Battle Instructor is at least a C-ranker, right?」

Apparently, the class Fran was in charge of was a merit-based class for both students and teachers. So, it was unthinkable for an ordinary teacher to be

allowed to fill that role.

「She'll be fine. Even though she looks like this, Fran is a B-ranked adventurer with an alias. In terms of fighting prowess alone, she's definitely at an A-ranked level」

「Eh? But if the Director says so, then it must be true」

「Fufu, It's been hundreds of years since someone has made me shed my blood in the academy after all」

The commotion then became even louder than before. They must have been shocked to hear that she managed to hurt Weena Rhyn.

「Th-the Director has made a contract with a guardian spirit to protect this academy, right?」

「Yeah. And she will be even strengthened when fighting in the academy...」

「S-so, you're telling me that she managed to hurt that strengthened Director? No way...」

To them, she must be like an invincible legendary figure, and they have never even heard of her struggling in a fight.

Some of them seemed to think that it was a joke, but most of them seemed to believe it. However, some of them were staring at us because of it. Well, it couldn't be helped.

Weena Rhyn was the world's most powerful magician and a High Elf who has lived for a long time. She was also the founder of the Academy of Magic and a world-famous hero. So, she must have many admirers.

For such admirers, hearing a story of someone who managed to hurt Weena Rhyn must be very unpleasant.

The uncle, who didn't know what was going on, was also confused.

「Umm, what do you mean...?」

「A lot of things had happened. Well, I can at least assure you that Fran's ability is outstanding」

「U-understood」

The way the uncle looked at Fran has changed. Before, it was as if he was surveying a mysterious beautiful girl, but awe had definitely been added now. The reason it was not fear was probably that she was someone that Weena Rhyn approved of.

「What will be her class then?」

「Let's put her in the Special Battle Class」

「Are you sure?」

「It will be more convenient for her as an instructor. Besides, Fran is a first-rate magician, so it won't be a problem」

It seemed that in order to qualify to get in the Special Battle Class, someone needed to have not only decent fighting prowess but also decent magic abilities.

「Is it okay to transfer her to the Special Battle Class?」

「Rather, I think Fran has nothing to lose from doing this, right? It's a shame, though. After all, Fran's magic skills are at a level where she can be trusted to be the head of a department at our academy」

「Huh? Sh-she is... Quite amazing then」

It was not a commotion anymore. Everyone was talking to each other so loudly that it almost looked like they're shouting.

Probably, it was because that was a position that required considerable ability.



(Master)

『What's wrong? You don't like being the center of attention?』

(Nn? I don't care about that. Rather than that, I'm more interested in learning Spirit Magic)

She was not concerned about the teachers' reactions. Rather, she had been thinking about where she was going to be transferred.

『Are you sure? Well, ask her if they have any classes that teach that kind of stuff then』

「Nn. Hey, I want to take a class where I can learn Spirit Magic」

「Oh, so you're interested to learn that. You should choose Spirit Magic class as your elective class then」

Apart from the curriculum of the Special Battle Class, there was an elective class where students could choose any class they wanted. Among them, there were also classes on Spirit Magic to choose from.

「The Special Battle Class doesn't have lessons on Spirit Magic?」

「The basic knowledge will be taught during the basic studies. As long as you're in this academy, that knowledge is absolutely necessary. But if you want to learn to use Spirit Magic, you'll have to learn it in an elective class

「Hmm」

「But I don't know if you'll be able to master Spirit Magic, you know? It was one thing that Fran had the talent to see spirits, but it's a completely different thing if you'll be able to get along with them」

「Is that so?」

「Yeah」

It seemed that there was no uniform way to use a spirit or make a contract with a spirit because each spirit has a different personality and preferred a different partner for them. Therefore, it was quite difficult to teach.

In addition, there were very few people other than Elves who have the talent for Spirit Magic, and even fewer people who have the talent and could improve. And even if they do, it was not sure if they could master it because it was very difficult.

Because of this, it was quite difficult to incorporate it into the regular classes. But she said it was fine for people who could sense spirits like Fran to choose an elective class.

As for Elves, they don't need to learn Spirit Magic as they had been trained by their village or parents. However, many Elves were individualists, so they did more training on their own. That was why most of the Elves attending this academy did not take the class on Spirit Magic.

「That's why I think you should be in the Special Battle Class. After all, the teacher in charge of that class was a Spirit Magic-user. You should ask her about it」

「Nn. It's good then」

「Yup. So, let's get started with the procedure then」

I wonder what kind of class that was.

# Chapter 550: Going Around to Greet Everyone

「W-well then, please come right here!」

「Nn」

「Woof」

After separating from Weena Rhyn in the staff room, we were heading to a place with a female teacher who had been assigned to guide us.

「Th-that is the eighth tower. The advanced classrooms are on the first floor」

The Special Battle Class was outside of the Academy for practical training, so she had to go around to some of the classes she was in charge of as an instructor first.

Inez, the girl and instructor in charge of mock battles like Fran, was our guide. In terms of ability, she was at least a D-ranked adventurer. However, she had a good intuition to sense Fran's strength. That was why she was so strangely nervous and timid right now.

So, I thought it would be better for someone without any fighting prowess to be our guide. But well, we didn't have any choice.

We then left the teacher's tower where we had just been and were now heading to one of the department's towers a short distance away.

As we walked, Inez briefly explained to her that each tower had a specific role. There were research towers for teachers, storage towers for magic

tools, and quite a few other places that students were not allowed to enter.

This place was just like a huge university, wasn't it? It seemed to be more than just a big academy.

She said that the tower we were going to visit was used especially for combat training and practice.

「F-Fran-dono, the waiting room for the Special Battle Class that you will be transferring into was here, so you'll have many opportunities to use it later」

「Okay」

「For the beginning, Let's introduce you to the advanced class」

After we walked together, Inez seemed to have lost some of her nervousness, and she explained a lot of things to her.

The advanced class, as the name implies, was a class of advanced students. This academy has several departments, including many specialized departments. However, there was also a general department that does not have any specialization, where students could uniformly learn everything. The advanced class was the class to which the advanced students of the general department belong.

In the case of the Academy of Magic, they do not divide the students into different grades because the ages of the students were quite different.

They first need to learn magic in the elementary department. Those who were able to master the magic there will be able to move on to the next class.

But if they couldn't learn magic after years of training in the Elementary Department, they'll be expelled. Well, this was an Academy of Magic, so they need to be able to at least use magic.

Next to that was the Basic Department. However, it was often referred to as the Junior Class in the academy. In this department, students took classes

that had little to do with magic, such as classroom lectures, and were taught the basics of using magic for about two years.

If they don't have any problems here, they will be admitted to the practical department. In other words, they will be an advanced students. There were many advanced classes of the General departments to choose from such as the Adventurers Department, Magicians Department, and Special Combatants department, as well as quite detailed specialties such as Fire Magic, Water Magic, and blacksmithing.

Students could choose the class they wanted to belong to and study what they wanted in the form of seminars or club activities.

About 70% of the classes were decided by the department, and the remaining 30% could be chosen by themselves.

Besides, after graduating from the Practical Department, students were allowed to re-enter other departments, so as long as they were motivated, they could learn whatever they wanted.

I was even surprised to learn that some of the students have been students for more than ten years by repeatedly changing their departments after graduation. On average, it takes about five years for a student to graduate.

「The previous Special Mock Battle Instructor had retired, and we General Instructors were somehow filling in the gaps, so you was a great help this time」

「Is there a difference between a Special Mock Battle Instructor and a General Instructor?」

「There is, of course. The most important job of a Special Instructor is to demonstrate overwhelming ability. Since that is impossible for us」

In this world, some overwhelmingly strong people couldn't be easily reached. So, they wanted students to learn of that firsthand and also to develop the courage to immediately flee or negotiate with a strong person

without becoming stiff when confronted. That was the role of the Special Mock Battle Instructor.

In short, it was their job to beat them with overwhelming force in a mock battle. To do that, they needed to have tremendous ability.

「I see. But, did Weena Rhyn was not good enough?」

Fran asked so. Well, she was right. I think Weena Rhyn would be a perfect fit for this role.

「The Director is not very good at holding back. No, that's not it. She's just simply too powerful, and there's a limit to how much she can go easy on them. Just as a dragon cannot lift a pup with its claws, no matter how hard it tries」

She had never accidentally hurt a student, but she had overdone it many times against bandits. Because of this, the teachers have asked Weena Rhyn to avoid doing a mock battle with the students as much as possible.

However, they hadn't found suitable personnel for the past few months, so they had been conducting special mock battles with multiple instructors and continuous attacks on the defending Weena Rhyn.

「However, the effect was still too subtle. So, I am very grateful to have such a strong person like Fran here even for a short time」

As she talked about this, we were led to a room at the back of the first floor of the tower. It seemed to be a room where classroom lectures were held, and about twenty students were taking the lectures there.

「Redua, can I have a moment?」

「Y-yes. Umm, Inez-sensei, who is this girl here? 」

「I came here to introduce her. Fran-dono, this girl is the one in charge of the teacher of History, Redua. And these people here are the students of the Advanced Class」

「Nn. Understood」

The students were looking at us with astonishment. However, the surprise seemed to be directed not at Fran but Inez.

「Th-that Devil Instructor, Inez, bringing a child here...?」

「Wh-who is she? Is that really Instructor Inez?」

「For someone like her to do something like that... It's just like the Devil getting sunstroke!」

It seemed that the normal Inez and the current Inez were more than a little different. It seemed that the students were astonished to see her changes.

「Devil? You're a human though?」

「N-no, you don't have to worry about it! Hey! Those who said that before! I'll remember you!」

「Hiii!」

I see why they call her the Devil Instructor Inez.

「Haah, she's Fran-dono, the one who has been assigned to take care of you guys as the Special Mock Battle Instructor!」

「I'll be in your care」

「 「 「Eeeh!」 」 」

There was a different kind of shriek, but Inez shouted again to shut them up. So, this was her true nature, I guess.

「Silence!」

「 「 「...」 」 」

The students then immediately fell silent. She was amazing, wasn't she?

「You may not be able to understand it, but Fran's ability is real, you know? It will be tomorrow before she can start, so look forward to it」

「Nn」

「Woof!」

「And this is Fran-dono's follower, Urushi」

「We'll be in your care」

「Woof woof!」

「 「 「Please treat us well!」 」 」

Immediately after Fran's greeting, the students bowed their heads in unison. They may still be skeptical, but if they behaved badly here, Inez's thunder would surely strike them.

Well, I guess she could read the air. However, Inez seemed to be unhappy at the fact that her students did not believe her words.

「Fran-dono, can you scare them a little?」

「...Okay」

Perhaps she meant to threaten them with her intimidation skills. But Fran had chosen a different approach. She was probably worried about the fact that she might threaten the students with killing intent instead.

「Nn」

What Fran activated without chanting was a technique to create a light ball. The students' eyes then focused on the ball of light she created near the ceiling. However, when the students noticed, Fran's figure had disappeared from their sight.

Fran's disappearance then made a commotion among the students.



Knock knock.

A sound then rang out in the back of the classroom, causing all the students to turn around in panic. What they witnessed was Fran standing quietly at the very back of the classroom, completely unnoticed. She just stayed there without being noticed until she hit the wall.

What Fran did was simple. All she did was draw their eyes to the ball of light, make it disappear, and move fast. But the students must not have known what was going on.

However, the fact that she was able to deceive everyone's eyes and move in an instant was enough to show her ability. After all, if this had been a battlefield, there was no doubt that they would have been cut down without being able to do anything.

Furthermore, the students in the Advanced Class are capable enough to notice the difficulty of no chanting and blocking presence. There was not a single student who looked like they would be underestimating her anymore.

「Even you guys must have witnessed a glimpse of Fran's abilities. So, look forward to it tomorrow. Shall we go then?」

「Nn」

「Well then, I'm sorry for disrupting the class」

After that, we repeated almost the same exchange about five more times, and the greeting tour then ended.

But what did her reaction mean in the teacher's room where we were led to at the end? Inez seemed to be the leader among the instructors, and it seemed strange that she was using honorifics with Fran.

Aside from the instructors in charge of mock battles, the teachers in charge of fundamentals and tactical theory are not that strong, so they couldn't seem to detect Fran's abilities.

And since the Special Battle Class will be coming back tomorrow, she should also greet them as a transfer student too.

# Chapter 551: Inn and Dormitory

After the tour by Inez, our next stop was a series of three towers near the center of the academy.

The other towers were built apart from each other, but these towers were built so that their foundations were attached, and the upper floors were connected by a walkway.

It seems to be a place used as a dormitory.

「It will be tomorrow afternoon when you'll meet the Special Battle Class. So, I'd like you to come to the Instructor's office at that time, is that okay?」

「Nn. Okay」

「Oh, right. I've also been asked to take you to your dormitory and another facility, so I'll just show you around」

Did they prepare a dormitory for her? However—.

「Dormitory? But I'm currently staying at an inn」

It was as she said. Moreover, Fran liked the Green Ancient Tree Pavilion where she was staying now.

「It's cheaper if you stay in the dorm... And Fran-dono doesn't have any problems with it, right?」

But, what Fran was interested in was the matter of the spirit. The gaze that Fran felt last night seemed to be the gaze of a spirit. So that inn was suitable for her to train spirit magic.

However, there were even more spirits in the Academy of Magic. So, would it be even better for her to stay here then?

「Inez, are there a lot of spirits in there?」

「Eh? The spirits, huh...? Hmm...? I know there's some in there, but I've never seen one」

「Not even once?」

「Unless a spirit magic user is willing to visualize them, the figures of lower or middle-ranked spirits are invisible. However, if it's a powerful being like the Great Spirit, even someone like me can see them」

「Is that so?」

「Well, I've heard it once from someone before」

Surely, the Great Spirit, that Klimut was said to have calmed down, was said to have had its appearance witnessed by many people back then.

「Well, I think the spirits in this academy are quite hidden, so it's harder for people who can't use spirit magic to see them, right?」

If that was the case, it wouldn't be that good of a training method for spirit users, wouldn't it? No, was it the better training instead? I'm sure they were there, and if she try to sense them. It might be good training for her.

「Hmmm」

「Staying at the dorm is also convenient because it is only a short walk from our workplace. They also serve meals to us too」

「They serve meals?」

「Woof?」

That was what interested you, huh? Well, that kind of thing has always made Fran and Urushi interested.

「Eh? Yes, you'll also get a different meal every day」

Inez was puzzled by her unexpected reaction. Up to now, she'd been indifferent to anything she said, but her eyes suddenly lit up and she quickly started questioning her back. Just like that, with Fran and Urushi staring at her she told us about the menu for the past few days.

「They usually serve the same breakfast, but lunch and dinner are different every day. And the amount is quite large too」

「Is it tasty?」

「Woof?」

「Its taste? I-I'm sorry but I haven't paid attention to that matter... But at least, it doesn't taste bad, I guess?」

So at least it wasn't something super tasty, huh? However, Fran and Urushi were curious about the food they served in the dining hall.

「I want to try it. I'll decide after I eat there」

「You'll decide based on the food?」

「Of course」

「Woof」

「Th-that's fine then... I think we can still have lunch now, so let's go to the cafeteria」

「Nn」

She told us that the dining hall for the students was so large that it could accommodate up to a thousand people, but the dining hall for the teachers was more comfortable. It seemed that they also served the same meals for the students and the teachers.

「This room is quite small though?」

「Well, the one for the students is ten times larger than this」

The teachers' cafeteria was large enough to accommodate a hundred people. It was reasonably clean and the atmosphere was not bad.

「Please wait a moment」

「Nn」

Inez then rushed to the counter. There she talked to an aunt in her apron.

She then somehow pointed at us, so I guess she was talking about Fran and Urushi.

「Today's menu is bean and ground meat soup, salad, potatoes with cheese, fish pie, and fruits. Is there anything you don't like?」

「No」

「Very well then, please wait」

「Want a large portion」

「Understood. They also said that they'll serve a meal for Urushi too. Do they need to serve it on a wide plate?」

「Nn」

「Woof」

Then Inez brought us our meal. The menu was just as we had been told. The soup and potatoes were almost twice as much as Inez's could eat, probably because she asked for a large serving.

「Just ask for a refill if you want more」

It doesn't look bad. However, when Fran and Urushi smelled the meal, their expressions were subtle.

The meal was not well-prepared, and they probably did not use that many seasonings. The portions were large, and the vegetables were plentiful and nutritious, but the taste may be mediocre.

「Thanks for the meal」

「Woof」

「Mogu mogu...」

「Momu momu...」

『How is it?』

I could imagine what it would taste like by the looks on their faces, but I asked them about it.

(It tastes normal...)

(Woof...)

It was not bad, but it was not really tasty either. The serving was large, but they didn't seem to want to eat a lot of it. That was how it seemed to be.

After all, the most important thing for an Academy meal was to be nutritious and fulfilling. They were serving meals for thousands of people after all, so I couldn't blame them.

「How is it?」

「Nn. I'm not going to stay in the dorm」

「Woof!」

「So you choose to commute from the inn?」

Inez was puzzled by Fran and Urushi's decision to choose the inn.

In her mind, she was probably thinking “Just because of the meal?”. But for Fran, that was the most important thing.

「I-I understand. I'll ask them to give you an entry pass then」

「Please do」

「Woof」



# Chapter 552: Troublesome Contract

「What are you going to do after this?」

After picking up the student and faculty handbooks at some sort of general affairs office and getting everything she needed for her classes, Inez asked her where she wanted to go next.

She told us that we already had visited all the places we needed to go to today, and if there was anywhere we wanted to go, she would take us there.

So, we decided to take a look around with Inez's guidance at the places we were interested in.

Our first destination was a snowy hill, which was unique among the various facilities in the academy.

「Whoaah」

「Woof woof!」

There was white snow all over the place, and it got steeper and steeper as it went straight to the center. It looked like a snowy mountain or a ski slope, wasn't it?

「This place is used to train hikers on a snowy mountain and basic combat training in snow」

「Can I go up?」

「I think it's okay for now」

「Urushi, let's go」

「Woof!」

Immediately after Inez gave her permission, Fran and Urushi ran into the snowfield. It wasn't the first time that Fran and Urushi had experienced snow. It had even fallen in the Plains of the Demon Wolf after all.

I guess she was just excited by the strange sight of the snowy area while everything around it was normal.

The snow was as soft as if it had just fallen because it even got Fran's legs buried up to her knees.

I thought they were collecting the snow that had fallen during the winter and cooling it down to prevent it from melting, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

If I'm not mistaken, the snow in this area should be harder than that. Especially in the hill part, it should've been compressed like a block of ice. Just like the snow that had been collected in one place during snow removal and would then stay there for a long time, it should've been hardened.

Fran and Urushi then returned to Inez, probably satisfied after running around until they were covered in snow. Then Fran asked her somewhat excitedly.

「How do you make this?」

「They used ice and snow magic and other techniques to maintain it」

「I see」

It seems that every day, they created new snow with magic. So, when the snow hardens, they'll melt it back into water, which was then turned into snow again.

「But it's only possible during this time of the year」

As expected, it would be difficult to maintain it in the summer. So, it was possible to make it only in this season when the outside temperature was not so high.

In the summer, they use it as a small mountain with deep bushes to train hikers.

After that, we looked around at the rocky hill, lakes, marshes, and other training grounds that were mainly used for practice. Many of the places were apparently maintained by magicians and spirits.

「I've shown you most of the training grounds we have in this academy. But do you have any place you still want to go to? The sun is about to set after all」

「Nn... Where's Zelos Reed?」

「I'm sorry, I've been told to not guide you to his place today. However, once things have settled down, you can meet him with the condition that he's with the Director」

「...Okay」

Well, of course, there's no way they would let her see him the day after she almost killed him. Fran seemed to understand that she had asked the impossible, so she didn't seem to be so depressed.

「Then, how about Romio?」

「It would be quite difficult to let you go there too. As he was asleep right now」

With that said, I thought he was getting sick because of the evil spirit. But that doesn't seem to be the only reason why Romio was asleep

「I can't meet him?」

「Yeah...」

Huh? Why did Inez sound strangely lackluster?

「I'm sorry. It's a lie that the boy named Romio is asleep. He was already awake by the time Fran came to the staff room」

「?? Why would you lie about that?」

「I've been told to not let Fran-dono meet the boy named Romio」

「What do you mean?」

「The truth is, he's scared of you, Fran-dono...」

The incident where Fran attacked Zelos Reed was still fresh. It was not only Zelos Reed who had his head almost cut open and the unlucky students who were hit by Fran's killing intent that was affected.

There was one more person who had been severely injured. That was Romio, who was connected to Zelos Reed by a special ability.

Weena Rhyn had also told us before that Zelos Reed and Romio were in a quite troublesome situation where if one of them gets hurt, the other would too.

And if Fran hurt Zelos Reed then...

Fran looked a little shocked and opened her mouth.

「Did Romio get hurt too?」

「Yes... However, he didn't suffer the same injury as Zelos Reed, but only a tenth of it. However, he is just a three-year-old child」

Even a slight scratch would be a serious injury for a child that young.

「Is Romio okay?」

「His injury was treated immediately. However, he seemed to understand who had caused the injuries」

So that was why he was so scared of Fran. Apparently, she thought that Fran would be upset if she found out that she had indirectly almost killed Romio as well, so she was trying to hide that fact.

However, since she had said that she wanted to see Romio, she must have told the truth. If she misrepresented it properly, she would have said, “You’ll be allowed to see him at a later date”.

「...I’m leaving for today」

「Understood」

When Fran muttered this with her shoulders slumped, Inez walked her to the main gate with a worried look on her face. With a face like this, she must look like her appropriate age.

「I’ve heard about your situation. But I don’t know what will happen to Romio, so it is best for you to not worry too much about it」

「Thank you」

Even as she replied, Fran’s face did not clear up. The fact that she had almost killed a three-year-old was making her feel depressed.

『Well, it’s a good thing that we didn’t kill him. So, let’s be happy with that for now』

「Nn...」

「Woof」

「Thank you, Urushi」

Fran’s face regained its light slightly as Urushi licked her hand flippantly. However, this made her revenge against Zelos Reed more distant, or rather, more difficult.

She couldn’t even hurt him anymore unless Weena Rhyn dispelled the contract between him and Romio. All it would take was for Fran to become

enraged again and hurt him, and Romio could be killed.

It's just like what Weena Rhyn had told us before that it was quite a troublesome situation.

# **Chapter 553: Spirit-sama's Interest**

## Chapter 553: Spirit-sama's Interest

「Mogu mogu...」

「Momu... Momu momu」

(\*munching SFX)

Fran still looked in low spirits when we returned to the inn at night.

She wasn't visibly depressed, but she didn't look like her usual self. Her smile was somewhat weak, even though she was eating.

The menu consisted of stew with lots of meat and potatoes with red bean paste. With the addition of three kinds of bread which were, black bread, rye bread, and butter rolls. A salad with fish in oil, homemade pickled vegetables, and cheese pasta. Considering what they had the other day, the meal tasted perfect.

However, Fran's eating speed did not increase much. It was about the same speed as when she was at the cafeteria of the academy. This was quite unusual for her to be like this. If it were the usual Fran, she would forget most of her worries if she ate a good meal.

Urushi, who was eating next to her, was not as energetic as usual because he was worried about Fran. He was eating his meal while glancing sideways at Fran from time to time.

『Fran, are you still worried about Romio?』

「Nn...」

Yikes. As soon as she heard Romio's name, Fran's expression became visibly clouded over. It seemed that she was still worried about hurting Romio. I think that no matter how much I said that it was unavoidable, she didn't seem to be able to get over it.



Her spoon had stopped, but then an old lady, the innkeeper spoke out to Fran.

「Did something happen today, young miss?」

「Nn...」

「Don't worry, I won't ask for the details, but... Is that something you need to worry about this late?」

「That is...」

「There is this Elven saying... “New shoots come from the ashes of the deep forest”」

「??」

An Elven saying?

「Even if the forest you live in burns down, one day the trees will grow back and a new forest will be born. In other words, anything can happen as long as you're alive, but it's what happens after that that counts. Some things are irreversible. You may not be able to get back what you have lost. But we have to live with them as our strength」

Maybe it was an Elf-like outlook considering their long lifespan. They lived much longer than humans, and I'm sure their lives would be filled with many incidents and events. If they were to worry about all of them and regret them, their heart would probably be overwhelmed.

「...Hmm?」

Fran seemed to be trying to understand the words. However, she immediately crossed her arms and tilted her head. I can grasp the meaning of the words, but to be honest, I'm not sure if I understand them.

So that might be a little difficult for Fran, who has only lived for thirteen years, to understand.

「Hmm... You don't get it, do you, young miss? Well, it's a phrase that has finally sunk in for us old Elves at this age」

「...I'm sorry」

「I'm sorry too. I didn't mean to pester you. But can I tell you something?」

「Nn」

「A good meal tastes even better when you put your mind to it, right?」

「!! Certainly!」

The old lady had said many words to try to comfort her, but in the end, the last one seemed to impress her the most.

And it seemed that the two of them were on the same page. They then stared at each other for a moment and then nodded at each other.

「Eating while thinking about other things is disrespectful to the meal」

「Yup, you're right」

「Nn」

Then Fran began to shovel in her meal steadily.

She was not fully cheered up, but she was getting back in shape. And I could see a slight smile on her face. I hope this can help her regain her usual self...

However, when I thought so, Fran's hand stopped again.

Did she just pretend that she was fine? I thought so, but the old lady had stopped moving too. And both of their eyes were locked in the same place.

「Hohou? Why have you shown up?」

「...A spirit?」

Apparently, the spirit of the ancient tree had come out near the entrance of the dining room, and both of them were looking in its direction.

When the old lady noticed that Fran was looking at the same place as her, she asked Fran in surprise.

「Can you perhaps can see it?」

「Is there, something?」

She couldn't see it, but when Fran replied so, the old lady's eyes widened for a moment, and then she immediately started laughing.

「Hohoho. You must have been very well-liked by Spirit-sama then」

「What do you mean?」

「Even if you have the talent, you won't be able to feel it if the spirits don't like you. Hmm, spirit-sama is watching you and it seems to be worried about you」

「!」

「If it doesn't like you, it'll just kick you out... It's been decades since Spirit-sama has been so attentive to someone other than an Elf」

「Spirit-sama allowed me to be here?」

The old lady's words made Fran's eyes widened this time. But I wonder why the spirit cared for Fran so much.

It had only been one night, right? Or maybe, the spirit was attracted by Fran's cuteness. So, even a spirit was charmed by Fran, huh? Yeah, that must be the case.

「But, I didn't do anything special」

「Spirit-sama likes a pure and gentle person after all」

Well, it wasn't her cuteness but Fran's pureness that the spirit was attracted to. Well, she can't see it though.

Fran also tried to activate her detection skills to detect the spirit even more. However, her face soon looked pensive.

『What's wrong?』

(Even after I used the skill, I still can't detect it)

Apparently, she still couldn't detect it. The old lady who saw this then gave her some advice.

「You won't be able to detect it with the usual way」

「Is that so?」

「In order to see spirits that are not visible, you need to have Spirit Magic skills or spirit eyes. It is said that those who have either of these qualities can sense them slightly」

What was next was to get some kind of trigger and let her skills blossom. The fact that she could feel it was a sign that she was on the verge of sensing it. However, the old lady couldn't give her more advice as Elves could see spirits before they could even remember.

「...Spirit-sama?」

「...」

Fran called out to the place where the spirit was supposed to be. But as expected, she got no response. Fran didn't know what was going on, but the old lady was smiling while narrowing her eyes.

「Hmm, Spirit-sama was glad」

「What did Spirit-sama do?」

「It looks so happy. It has gone back to the tree though. It's a whimsical fellow after all」

「I see」

「Well, if it looks like that, I'm sure it'll come out again」

「I'm looking forward to it」

But at this rate, she might actually learn Spirit Magic while we stay at this inn.

# Chapter 554: Uniform

It was the day after she had decided to transfer to the school as a student while working as an instructor at the Academy of Magic.

Fran and Urushi were walking towards the Academy of Magic.

『You didn't feel any sign of the spirit after that, huh?』

「Nn」

Perhaps the contact in the dining room had satisfied the spirits. And Fran was able to sleep soundly last night without waking up at all.

『Is it easy for you to move around with that uniform?』

「No problem」

『But even so, its impact was so dangerously destructive... Fran, do you like the uniform?』

「Nn? Its defense power is low, but it's quite easy to move in. But I don't think its destructive power is better」

『Aah—, I didn't mean it like that. What I mean is about its cuteness or something like that』

「?」

It was no good trying to explain it to her, huh? Well, I can't imagine Fran wearing girly clothes and being happy that she was called cute though.

Right now, Fran was wearing the uniform of the Academy of Magic. Aside from combat training, she was required to wear the uniform during classroom lessons.

This was to show the student's classes and grades clearly. In such a large academy, with a huge number of students, it would be more convenient to be able to tell by sight.

As a mammoth academy (Note: giant academy), the academy store had uniforms of all sizes available for purchase on the spot. Oh, and in Fran's case, she got it for free.

The uniform of the Special Battle Class was a navy-blue blazer with the emblem of the Academy of Magic sewn on the shoulders and chest, a tie with white lines on a red background and a navy blue and white checked skirt.

She chose a white shirt, a gray vest sweater, navy blue socks, and black loafers because she was allowed to choose whatever she wanted for the rest of the outfit.

Eh? What do you mean? It's to my liking too though. Some cloaks and robes could be worn over the head to make her look more fantasy-like... But I purposely asked her to wear a school-like uniform, because, with that, Fran's prettiness would stand out even more!

『Now all you need is a high twin tail and you'll be perfect...』

But there was a big problem with that.

Her cat ears would get in the way if she tried to make twin tails. I just realized that the supreme cat ears would clash with the supreme hairstyle!

So, she had no choice but to tie her hair into a low knot twin tail. Well, it looks great too.

「Master」

『Hmm? What's wrong, Fran?』

「Why has Master become small?」

『Well, it would be weird if you were carrying me on your back in this outfit, wouldn't it?』

「??」

She was wearing a blazer, but it would be ruined if she was carrying a large sword so I transformed into the size of a dagger and hid on the inside of her blazer.

For now, I could maintain this state for a long time if it was just a resize. At the very least, I could maintain it on our time when we're at the academy

It would be perfect if we had a school bag, but I guess it can't be helped. As long as we have the Dimensional Storage, that would only be a hindrance. However, her looks would be complete with that! Should I have Fran bring it with her? No, however—

「Master... You've become strange again」

She gave me the same deadpan look she had given me yesterday when I was picking her uniform at the store. Were my thoughts leaking out?

『A-ahaha. It isn't weird, is it? What was the weird part about it?』

「I knew it, it was weird after all」

『Ugh... W-well. More importantly, the main entrance is already in sight』

「...Nn」

Phew, did I manage to cover it up? No, let's just say that I managed to cover it up.

『You must show them your ID card, okay?』

「Okay」



We were supposed to be able to get in by showing the guard her teacher's ID card, but...

「Hold on a second, young miss!」

「Nn?」

「Woof?」

A guard uncle stopped Fran when she tried to go straight through the main gate after presenting her teacher's ID card.

He looked like a former adventurer with a stern appearance not like the calm and collected uncle at the back entrance. And there was a hint of confusion on his face.

「Aah, young miss, you're a student, right?」

「Nn」

「But what you presented to us was a teacher's ID card, you know?」

「Nn」

「Eeh?」

「Nn?」

They were wondering why Fran, who was dressed as a student, had presented them with a teacher's ID card.

「However, the spirit is not responding to her... Aah, could it be! The one with cat ears and brought a wolf with her is... Umm, can you tell me your name?」

「Fran」

「I see. I'm sorry for stopping you. I've heard the story about you, but I just wanted to confirm it myself」

「Nn」

「Woof」

We were told that we could get in as long as she presented her teacher's or student's ID card. But as expected, she should have shown her ID card a little more clearly for the first time. Or rather, she should have used the student's ID card instead.

「I know you just got hired yesterday, but do you know the academy's layout?」

「No problem」

She had already confirmed the location of the classroom she was going to today.

Fran then said goodbye to the guard and continued to walk again.

However, she immediately tilted her head in confusion.

「??」

『Fran, what's wrong?』

「I felt like I was being watched」

As Fran muttered so, the eyes of the surrounding students were focused on her. I wondered if perhaps they were the victim of yesterday's incident, but there was no fear or fright in their gazes.

They looked at her not without ill-feeling, but also jealousy and irritation which seemed to be the main ones.

「Who is that pretty girl?」

「Sh-she's cute...!」

「Hey wait, where do you think you're lookin' at!」

It seems that she had attracted attention as a mysterious pretty girl. Well, it couldn't be helped that our cute little Fran had acquired a different kind of cuteness with her uniform.

She was probably going to have to become accustomed to the hostility and contempt from the adventurers by now, but this kind of attention was rare, so it has even bothered her.

『Let's ignore it for now. It might stay like this for as long as we're in this academy, and once you get used to it, it won't bother you anymore』

「Understood」

You guys with a delirious face just now, I've memorized your faces, so be prepared!

# **Chapter 555: Seeing EaChapter Other Again in the Special Battle Class**

## Chapter 555: Seeing Each Other Again in the Special Battle Class

「Good morning」

「Good morning, Fran-dono. Ooh, so you're here in your uniform today?」

「Nn」

When Fran arrived at the academy, she visited the preparation room for the mock battle instructors that she had been shown yesterday.

In a room much smaller than the staff room, there were about ten adults here. All of them were mock battle instructors, just like adventurers, they were dressed in leather armor. It could also be said that their current appearance, which was ready for battle, was their formal attire.

The scene of muscular former adventurers crowding this small room made the room look hot and humid. I didn't have a nose, but I wonder why I think I could smell the sweat. Well, think of this as a gym, and you'll get the idea.

Inez greeted her while standing upright. The other instructors had already been introduced to us yesterday, so they too were standing upright with serious faces. It made me feel nervous though.

「Let me show you to the Special Battle Class」

「Okay」

「Then, please follow me」

She was then led to one of the classrooms on the second floor of the tower.

The room looked just like any other ordinary classroom.

The presence that could be felt from inside was no different from any other classroom. There was a somewhat tense presence of about twenty people in there.

I guess they were nervous because they knew that Fran was coming. If there was someone who had a quick ear, they must have heard that a pretty girl who was both an instructor and a student would join them.

When we reached the class, nothing had changed except the tension.

There was no tremendous sense of intimidation emanating from the front of the classroom, nor was there any magic spreading around that would startle us. It was just the presence of ordinary boys and girls.

Since they were from the Special Battle Class, I was wondering how amazing they were, but...

Well, when I thought about it, it was not that surprising. They were still students after all, and that meant that Fran was by far the stronger of the two.

In addition, the fact that Inez was able to take on multiple students was a good indication of their ability. They probably just had high fighting prowess among the students. It seems that I was expecting a little too much.

「This afternoon's class is scheduled to be a mock battle, but before that, I've set aside some time to introduce Fran-dono. They may have some questions, but if you can't answer them, please just ignore them」

「Okay」

「Let's get in then」

「Nn」

They must have seen our figure through the blurry glass of the door and knew that Inez had arrived. The voices of the students then quickly quieted down at once.

Inez then slowly opened the door to the classroom of the Special Battle Class. All eyes turned first to Inez, and then to Fran, who followed her into the classroom.

There was no contempt on the faces of the students. There was just a great sense of confusion.

「She really was a kid...」

「Sh-she's so pretty!」

「So, what Charon said was true!」

I wondered if she had told them that she had met with Fran before, but it seems that was not all.

「I-it's really you!」

Amid the noisy classroom, a student suddenly stood up with a surprised look on her face. But we were just as surprised as she was. After all, we had met her before.

「Charon?」

「Y-yes! I'm glad that you remembered my name」

「Nn」

Yes, it was Charon, the blonde drill girl. So, she was a member of the Special Battle Class, huh?

Apparently, Charon had already told her classmates about Fran beforehand.

Maybe she heard about the story about an instructor that was also a student from another class, then Charon who heard that information, tells her classmates about Fran. I guess that's how the flow went. However, her classmates were also skeptical.

After all, for a girl from the Black Cat kin, who was actually a super talented adventurer and was talking to the Guildmaster so casually. That was too wild to be true, so I don't blame her.

But unless the other classes, Charon and Inez, were in cahoots to fool them, they were certain that the girl in front of them was the new Special Mock Battle Instructor. Knowing that they finally believed that Fran was a strong girl.

「Fran-dono, do you know her?」

「Nn. We talked a little in the Adventurer's Guild」

「So that's why. Oi! Stay quiet!」

「 「 「...」 」 」

As usual, they were under her control. The students immediately closed their mouths in unison.

「Let me introduce her. This person is Fran-dono. She has just been appointed as the Special Mock Battle Instructor! Fran-dono's adventurer rank is B, but her combat prowess is on par with an A ranker! She also has the Director's approval. Besides, she also has an alias. I'm sure you've heard the name of Black Lightning Princess, right?」

Most of the students in the class were shaking their heads. But it seems that they know about Fran's alias.

「It looks like you've been collecting information very well. If there was anyone who said they didn't know, I would have had to give them an hour-long lecture on the importance of gathering information」

It seemed to be a part of their education but seeing as how Charon didn't notice Fran at first, I'm not sure if she was being kept active or not.

She seems to know her name, race, and alias. However, she lacked the ability or insight to see through the identity of the other party.



Even Inez must have that ability. She felt the need to teach her the importance of such information from now on.

「The next lesson will be a mock battle, but before that, does anyone have any questions for Fran-dono?」

If this were a school on Earth, I'm sure there would be all sorts of questions being asked to the mysterious and pretty transfer student. Whether or not she had a boyfriend, where she was from, what type of boy she liked, there would be no end to the questions that would be asked.

However, the students then become quiet. After all, she was an instructor and a high-ranking adventurer. They must be afraid of upsetting her by asking inappropriate questions, so they don't know what to ask. However, they also knew that it would be rude for no one to ask any questions.

The students looked at each other and a strange sense of tension enveloped the classroom. It was the blonde drill-san who then broke the atmosphere.

「...Me!」

「Charon, huh? Go ahead」

「You mentioned that she will be both an instructor and a student, what kind of responsibilities will she have?」

「I'll answer that. Basically, she'll be a student in the Special Battle Class. However, since she'll also act as an instructor for the Special Battle Class, the Advanced Class, and several other classes, she will be excused during that time」

「I understand, thank you very much」

That was also explained to us beforehand. Except for her work as a Special Mock Battle Instructor, she was a student of the Special Battle Class.

Well, Fran doesn't have to earn credits, so it didn't matter if she missed some classes.

They also explained the content of the classes beforehand, but she didn't need to take half of them. Apparently, there were many classes to learn skills for working as an adventurer, such as trap disarming and goblin dissection classes.

After that, most of the questions were about the weapons she used and the magic she was good at. It seems that they wanted to gather information about her before the mock battle.

Well, I don't know if any of that is of any use though.

「Well then, it's about time. Move to the 5th mock battle site! Make sure everything is ready by the time Fran-dono and I arrive!」

「 「 「Yes!」 」 」

「Fran-dono, please come with me. For now, please use the instructor's changing room. But from tomorrow onwards, you can use whichever you like, whether it's the one for students or instructors」

「Okay」

# Chapter 556: The First Impression was Important

She changed into her usual gear in the instructor's changing room and headed for the mock battle site. Unfortunately, her hair was the same as usual. After all, she felt uncomfortable because she wasn't used to tying it up. So, she decided to make it in short twin-tails.

We then went to a large field, a little far from the triple towers.

It was a huge, empty field of dirt. It's probably the size of the Tokyo Dome.

On that mock battle site, the members of the special battle class were waiting after they changed their clothes. It was similar to what Charon wore the other day at the Adventurer's Guild. On top of her leather and metal armor, she wore a cloak and robe with the emblem of the academy on it.

The students had also formed a neat formation, which showed the high level of their training. Inez nodded in satisfaction at the sight of the students standing upright and waiting without being told to do so.

「Well then, Fran-dono will now show you some of her power!」

Apparently, it was customary for those who were assigned as instructors to first perform a kind of demonstration to show their abilities.

She was told that she could choose one of the instructors to fight with, or she could unleash her magic on this large field. But most of the new instructors choose to use martial arts and magic against the target doll.

We were told that Inez could use Earth Magic and could create dolls, but we decided to go a little flashier.

The first time is the most important, so we can't afford to be underestimated here.

「Fran-dono, please go ahead」

「 「 「We're looking forward to it! 」 」 」

「Okay」

With the eyes of the students on her, Fran strode out onto the field. We were going to give them a good scare.

『First, let's start with that one』

「Nn!」

The first thing we did was to make a target. Fran put her hands on the ground and activated her magic.

Immediately after she had done so there were shrieks from the students.

It couldn't be helped though, as the ground in front of us suddenly rose, creating a 15-meter-high spire.

「Th-that's. No matter how you look at it, that was High-level Earth Magic, right?」

「I-isn't the Black Lightning Princess a Thunder Magic-user?」

「Or maybe, she's a magician? Not a swordsman?」

They probably thought that Fran was a swordsman who could also use Thunder Magic. But after they saw her using Earth Magic, they realized that she was also a very skilled magician.

But this was just the beginning.

「Awakening! Brilliant Lightning Rush!」

「Th-this is the first time I've seen a bolt of black lightning!」

「Hiii!」

「Fo-for such a kid... To use this much magic is...!」

Many of the students paled as they felt the magic power that Fran, who was clad in black lightning, was giving off. The reason they become talkative is probably to calm themselves down.

I felt like It was already enough to show her abilities, but the real thing was just about to start.

(Master, together!)

『Ou!』

「Haaa!」

『We're going to be as flashy as hell!』

The first shot was a Thunderbolt of Lightning Magic. Fran fired two, I fired four. And a total of six Thunderbolts struck the earth spire, creating a huge hole with a thunderous roar.

However, that was not powerful enough to collapse the spire. Since it was just for the opening I focused on the impact of sound and appearance.

「Next!」

『Ou!』

Now for the real deal... Both Fran and I used Thor's Hammer at the same time. My two shots overlapped with Fran's, creating a spectacular flash of light.

The extremely thick thunderbolts that rained down from the magic circle drawn in the sky above then swallowed the earth spire as a whole.

The students now couldn't even keep their eyes open anymore. They were screaming, struggling to stay on their feet as the blast, roar, and the flashing lights made them wince.

A few seconds later what the students saw when they opened their eyes was a ruined spire.

「...Ah-ahaha」

「I-in one-shot...?」

「B-but that wasn't Extreme Magic, right?」

The spire, which was now less than half its original length, was smoking as its surface melted into lava. The upper half part of it must have been vaporized.

It must have been an incredible level of magic to the students. They must have felt as if their blood had gone out of their veins so they could only laugh.

But Fran hadn't stopped yet.

The students, who had noticed that Fran was nowhere to be seen, looked around to find her.

Immediately after, a tremendous amount of magic emitted from the sky, and at the same time, it seemed that they had finally found Fran. All at once, their faces turned up to the sky.

「Let's finish up with this」

『Ou. Let's show it to them』

「Nn!」

The first thing that Fran did was to perform the Sheaths of Wind with all her might. Magic and swordplay. That was what was important to show off about Fran's abilities.

In front of the students' eyes, the lower half of the remaining spire was slashed diagonally. A moment later, the students watched in dismay as the spire slid away from the cut at its center.

The fact that they didn't even understand what had happened showed how awesome it was. That must have been what it felt like.

「Fuh」

『Good job』

「Nn」

That was it. That was what we had planned, but someone then complained.

「Woof woof!」

「Nn? You want to go too, Urushi?」

「Woof!」

It was the first time in a long time that Urushi wanted to relieve himself. When he saw the destruction that Fran had left behind, Urushi's tail was hanging.

「Let's do that one then?」

「Woof!」

In response to Urushi's begging, Fran jumped up into the air again. Once she gained some height in her aerial jump, she activated two magic spells.

She used earth magic to create a plate about five meters in diameter and activated light magic to create a light source on top of it. As a result, a dark shadow was created on the ground.

「Wooo~f!」

In response to Urushi's roar, a jet-black circle about ten meters in diameter was drawn inside the shadow that was created by Fran.

What Urushi invoked was the Dark Magic, Bottomless Shadow. It was vicious magic that created a field of shadow that swallowed everything on its surface.

Well, it has many shortcomings though. First of all, it couldn't be activated without a shadow. Furthermore, the speed at which it swallowed was slow, so it was surprisingly easy to get out of. And it seemed to be quite difficult to control, as Urushi couldn't even move while using it.

Also, while its name was Bottomless, there was a limit to the amount of mass it could swallow at one time. What was more was that it was impossible to retrieve materials and magic stones because it was impossible to release what it has completely swallowed. It also consumed a large amount of magic power.

It was a technique that looked flashy but was not very useful. At least, it could never be used during high-speed combat. Well, it might be useful to momentarily hinder our opponent's movement though.

It may be of use against sluggish opponents or if he made a surprise attack in the middle of the night. It was also suitable for cleaning up messes like this.

The remains of the spire on the ground slowly sank into the shadows, as if swallowed by a bottomless swamp. And then, a minute later, it was all gone, clean and clear. The field was back to its original empty state.

The students stared at the ground with their mouths wide open as they realized that not only Fran but also Urushi, was out of the norm.



# **Chapter 557: Mock Battle's Preparation**

## Chapter 557: Mock Battle's Preparation

「F-Fran-dono! What stunning magic and swordplay! Thank you very much! I never thought I'd see something like that!」

Inez became restless and praised Fran. She was quite excited to be able to directly witness Fran's abilities.

Even for Inez, who should have understood Fran's ability to some extent beforehand, was like this. But the students were still in a daze.

However, this wasn't the end of today's class.

Inez had told Fran in advance to demonstrate her abilities to make an impact on them, and then she would have a mock battle with the students. If possible, she'd like for her to give them a bit of a beating as well. That was what she was asked to do.

The spirits surveillance network wouldn't be a problem for the current Fran, as she was officially recognized as a Special Mock Battle Instructor. They told her that fighting in class wouldn't be a problem. As long as she didn't kill a student with malicious intent, she wouldn't be blamed for it.

Of course, this didn't apply outside of class or when she was being treated as a student.

Will the students be able to continue the mock battles like this? Wouldn't it better to let them rest for a while? After all, they were surprised and exhausted and seemed to be running out of energy.

However, as expected of the one being called a Devil Instructor, Inez.

「I'd like to conduct the mock battle as planned, are you okay with that?」

She said they should continue just like this. However, she asked Fran with a somewhat worried expression.

「How long do you need a break?」

「A break?」

「Yes. Will you take about 30 minutes to rest? We also have stamina potions and mana potions with us if you need some」

She seemed to think that Fran needed to take a break for a while after unleashing such a huge spell. Well, I couldn't blame her for thinking that, since she had unleashed such a large amount of Advanced Magic. After all, she had used the same amount of magic power as several ordinary magicians.

But Fran shook her head with a calm face.

「I'm perfectly fine」

「Yo-you're perfectly fine...? Certainly, you've already stopped sweating now. I'm impressed」

Inez was sincerely surprised to be told that she didn't need a break.

「Th-then. Let's proceed to the mock battle as it is」

「Okay」

Inez then turned to her students, who still looked dazed, and gave them a stern command.

「You will now engage in a mock battle with Fran-dono!」

Immediately, there was a shriek. There was a strong look of fear on the faces of the students. Well, it seemed that we had gone a little overboard earlier.

But overcoming the fright was the main purpose of the battle with the Special Mock Battle Instructor. Inez then stared at the students with cold eyes and shouted at them.

「All of you, prepare for battle!」

「A-All of us?」

「That's what I said, right? Or did you not hear me?」

「No! I could clearly hear you! I'm sorry for asking something like that!」

A male student who had asked back was smacked down by Inez. Seeing this, the students ran out to the central part of the ground without wasting any more time after that and formed a formation on the spot.

It seemed that their fear of Fran was weakened by their fear of Inez. They still looked pale though, but they managed to start moving.

Apparently, they were planning to form parties of five or six people and then coordinate with each other. During this time, the students were discussing something with each other, so they must be confirming their strategy.

「Alright. Fran-dono, please take care of them. As for the recovery, I've called the school nurse, Deaden, so you don't have to worry about it」

「Thank you for the introduction! I'm Deaden! I've mastered Recovery Magic, so if you lose two or three arms, just leave it to me and I'll regenerate it in no time!」

Three arms...? No, does he mean if it was more than one person? However, the students scrunched up their faces when they heard that.

Perhaps they just imagined the future of their arms being cut off.

「Very well. Then, Let the mock battle begin!」

At Inez's shout, the mock battle began quietly.

The students in the vanguard held their weapons and shields and refused to move from their positions. I wondered if they were planning to intercept us, but it seemed they were waiting for the Support Magic from the rear guard.

They were using a spell to raise their magic resistance and a spell to raise their defense.

It seemed that they were planning to counter Fran's magic.

Was the reason why they raised their defense was to prevent themselves from being defeated with a single blow? But if they're all stuck together like that at the start of the battle, wouldn't a wide AOE spell wipe them out? Besides, even with their defense up, were they going to be able to react to Fran's movements?

Well, it was not a bad idea to increase your defenses when you're fighting an opponent who was far faster than you. But that would be of use only if you could barely see your opponent's movement.

After all, there was no point in raising their defense if they were unable to sense or even see their opponent's movement.

If they were like Goddarfa, they would be able to counter-attack. However, with their level of magic, it seemed to be of little use.

No, not if we assume that this was a mock battle, right?

The powerful magic and sword techniques that we just showed to them could not be used this time. After all, they would just simply kill them instantly if they were to hit them. That was why she could be as serious as she wanted about evasion but she had to adjust her attack considerably.

I guess the students have already figured that out. So, it was not surprising that they thought they could get away by fortifying their defenses.

But was that all right? Wasn't a mock battle supposed to be a real battle? Did they plan a strategy based on the assumption that their opponent would go easy on them in a mock battle?

Well, at least they managed to gather and analyze the information to form a plan, but...

「...」

Inez looked angry.

「Fran-dono... Give them a taste of despair. You can also break their hearts if you want to」

「Understood」

I was thinking of holding back a little but Inez requested the opposite.

Fran then pulled me out, I was back to my normal size, and we stepped onto the ground.

However, the students still did not move. They seemed to be planning to ignore the wide AOE magic and deal with it together.

Well, it was predictable though. Their plan would be for the vanguard to stop her movements while the rearguard attacks.

They observed Fran who started to walk slowly. Their magic chanting had already been completed and their arrows were ready. So whatever Fran does, they should be able to handle her.

『Well, let's give them a little lesson, shall we?』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 558: Never Ending Mock Battle

『Well, let's give them a little lesson, shall we?』

「Nn!」

The students were frozen in place, unable to make a move to respond to Fran. There was a strong sense of fear and just a tiny bit of motivation left on their faces.

We were told that the purpose of this class was to get the students used to facing an overwhelmingly powerful opponent so that they could know how to deal with them.

I felt a little sorry for them because they were being forced to fight an opponent that they had no hope of winning against. However, this kind of training might save their lives one day if they can experience despair in this class and not stop thinking during their adventures. So, I guess it was in their best interest for us to beat the crap out of them right here and now.

It seemed that the students could also understand it too. They knew that they had no chance of winning after being shown Fran's power in the beginning. And what was worse is that there was no victory condition set for their mock battle.

There was no condition such as if they can get a hit on Fran, if they managed to hold on for 10 minutes, or if they could escape to a specific location. In other words, all they had left was a future in which Fran would beat them to a pulp.

Even so, I was impressed that they were determined to at least get a hit on Fran before they were defeated. Well, we were not going to make any mistakes though.

『What do you wanna do now? Do you want to scatter stun bolts over a wide area? Burst Flame will do too』

I suggested that we should use magic to wipe them out, but Fran seemed to have a different plan.

While keeping me down, she slowly approached the students.

(I'll only use Master for defense)

『What are you trying to do?』

(Nn? Breakthrough the front)

And the moment we were about 30 meters away from each other, the students started to move.

From the other side of the wall created by their vanguard, countless arrows and various attributes of magic were released all at once.

The reason for the variation in attributes was probably because it was the techniques they were best at.

Even though we were already so close, their aim was still poor. After all, only about half of them were on the trajectory to hit Fran.

Or maybe it was their purpose. They scattered them far and wide so that Fran could not escape with only a little evasion. That was quite a nice plan.

Normally, she would have jumped away from the spot or used a barrier to block it. However, Fran took neither of those actions.

Without stopping her slow steps, she stared at the barrage of bullets raining down on her.



The students must have thought that she would get hit if she didn't do something. But instead of being happy, I could see that they were rather worried.

For them, this kind of attack was probably just to probe the other party. But it would be great if they could stall high-ranking adventurers with this. That must be the extent of their thinking.

They looked surprised because it looked as if it would be unexpectedly effective.

Well, they were wrong though.

「Fuuh!」

Fran swung me so casually. But she managed to knock the arrows away. After that, she continued to slash and play at their magic, and walked leisurely through the barrage.

「Did she just cut the arrow!?!」

「You fool! Even Instructor Inez could do that! But what's more important is...!」

「She even slashed the magic!」

「Is that the ability of her magic sword!?!」

「That was just her ability! You'll just blow yourself up if you don't have the skill to accurately break the magic!」

The students were making a lot of noise when they realized that Fran was still approaching. They then started to chant a spell again, and the students with the bows began shooting more arrows.

When the distance between Fran and the students had been reduced to about 15 meters, the second volley of magic was fired. This time there was a lot of Wind Magic and Water Magic. They must have chosen this technique as they were hard to see.

Moreover, the vanguard started moving in time with simultaneous shots.

They tried to get close and attack her while she was blocking the long-range attacks.

The long-range attacks that were more accurate than before were fired one after another with slightly delayed timing. Were they planning to keep Fran on the defense, so that Fran wouldn't have a chance to counterattack the vanguard?

Immediately after slashing away the magic, the students in the vanguard attacked Fran at once.

Four swordsmen slashed at her from all sides, and spearmen thrust their spearheads into the gaps. At the rear of the encirclement, the second group was looking for an opening to attack.

They were able to attack at the same time, and their aim was accurate. I guess this was the result of their training in a party to fight a single magic beast.

However, the opponent now was not a magic beast, but a very skilled swordsman.

「Wha! How!」

「Impossible!」

「Re-reflection!?!」

Fran didn't stop walking. And yet, all their attacks were being repelled at the same time. Well, while it looked that way to the students, Fran just had swung me at super high speed and repelled their attacks.

It seemed that there were even students who misunderstood that their attacks had been blocked by Reflection Magic.

The same went for the spear thrusts. The tip of the spears was being flicked upward. Because their attacks were repelled upwards, the hand of the

swordsman and the spearman were all pointed up to the sky, leaving a huge gap in front of Fran.

「Nn. I'll start from the four of you」

「Ghaa!」

「Ghuh!」

I wonder if the two guys in front of her who took a punch to the stomach and collapsed on the spot were still okay. But the two in the back were hit with a kick to the back on their head and were blown several meters away.

Moreover, her attack was just enough to keep him from losing consciousness, so he didn't pass out and was writhing around, spitting out stomach juices.

The reason she didn't let him faint was to make the other students wonder whether they could recover or not and delaying their decision even for a moment. The other purpose was to instill fear into them by showing them the sight of their fellow students writhing in agony. Well, there were other purposes too, but they didn't matter right now.

As I had expected, the students who had been waiting behind as the second group slowed down. In that time, Fran had finished taking care of the spearmen.

What Fran used was her magic release skill. The current Fran could attack multiple enemies at the same time by sending her magic power flying like a bullet.

For the students, in a matter of seconds, more than half of the vanguard had been defeated. The astonishment stopped the students from thinking, exposing more gaps.

Fran then continued to attack the rest of the vanguard with her magic release skill and rendered them powerless. In the end, they didn't even last ten seconds after they launched their attacks.

「S-shoot, shoot!」

「I-If we keep up the attacks...」

「That's all we can do right now!」

「Wait! Don't shoot so recklessly!」

The students in the rearguard were also very confused. Some were even casting magic recklessly. Some were wondering if they should run away. Some were trying to rethink their strategy.

In the end, the scattered attacks did not stop Fran, and when the distance between us was less than ten meters, about half of them started to retreat to get some distance.

But she wouldn't let them escape so easily.

Fran suddenly stepped up a gear and closed the distance between her and the students at once.

The rest was a one-sided beating. Even though they were the rearguard, they also had some experience in close combat, but they were still inferior to the students in the vanguard. In the end, they were unable to do anything and all of them fell after being punched in the stomach.

However, none of the students in the vanguard and the rearguard were unconscious. However, that was what she was aiming for.

「...Hey, if you're gonna sleep here, I'm gonna one-sidedly attack you, you know?」

「??」

「Eh?」

A puzzled look appeared on the faces of the students when they heard Fran's words. With anguished expressions on their faces, they were probably thinking hard about the meaning of those words.

But they immediately understood.

「G-get up! Everybody, get up! The mock battle isn't over yet!」

「I'll start attacking again in ten seconds」

「Get up! Get up!」

「Shiit!」

Fran only hit them all once each. Their life force hadn't diminished much as they hadn't lost consciousness.

In other words, the mock battle was not yet over.

Yeah. I felt a little sorry for them, but I think she managed to give them despair, just like what Inez had asked her.

Later, when the students managed to get up and readied their weapons, Fran completely destroyed them again. The relieved expressions on the faces of the unconscious students spoke volumes about their feelings.

But I now understand why Inez was called the demon instructor.

「Thanks to you guys for finishing the mock battle so quickly, we still have a lot of time left! Rejoice! We're now ready for the second round!」

She said so to the students who had just regained their consciousness after being taken care of by Deaden.

Well, neither I nor Fran would go easy on them though.

# Chapter 559: The Secret Garden

The first mock battle class had ended.

The tattered students then lined up with dejected looks on their faces. There also seemed to be a hint of regret on their faces.

I wonder how they could still make such faces after being beaten so badly... It seemed they had more guts than I had imagined.

「Good job, today's mock battle class is over! Make sure to properly take care of your equipment!」

「 「 「Yes!」 」 」

「And you, Charon」

「Yes, do you need something from me?」

「Guide Fran-dono to the student changing room」

「Understood」

I'm glad that Charon was in this class. If it were any other student, they would have been scared of her for sure.

But it seemed, even Charon was a little scared of her. After all, she had punched her in the stomach just like the other students and had beaten her up with sword techniques.

However, it was probably because she had had some conversations with her before and knew that she was someone she could talk to if she was not in battle.

「Well then, let me be your guide」

「Nn. Thanks」

Fran then began to walk with Charon as her guide.

But there was no conversation between them, just silence. Well, Fran was just like her usual self, but Charon seemed to be a little nervous.

But, it was Charon who broke the silence between them.

「Umm...」

「Nn? What is it?」

「Well, what did you think about us today?」

What a vague question to ask. Perhaps she had asked that as she couldn't bear the silence and said that without thinking. Fran looked confused in response to her question.

「What do I think?」

「I know that we are not as good as Fran-sama, but—」

「Hey」

「Y-yes?」

「Doesn't need the honorific」

「Eh?」

「Just Fran is fine」

Charon looked worried when Fran interrupted her, but she soon felt relieved. But she was a little confused.

「B-but, Fran-sama is—」

「We're in the same class, so we're equals. That's what Weena Rhyn said. Nobles and exiles, strong and weak, it doesn't matter if they're in the same class」

That was what Weena Rhyn said to her when she briefly explained the academy to us.

This academy was a very special place. Regardless of their status or honor on the outside, the students were equal under the spirits here. There was no room for nobles to act arrogantly with their power, or for the strong to threaten others with violence.

On the other hand though, the weak wouldn't be tolerated to slack off because of their positions or weakness, or for commoners to vent their daily frustrations on the nobility.

This also meant that Fran and Charon were now equals regardless of each other's strength or positions.

For Fran, it was fine for her to call her that while she was being an instructor. But when she was just a student, they were in the same position as students. I guess that was how she saw it.

「O-okay then, Fran?」

「Nn」

「Do you think we're weak?」

That was quite a difficult question. From Fran's point of view, they were quite weak. But in the eyes of the world, I'd say that they were reasonably strong. Each of them was as good as an E-ranked adventurer, and they were able to work together as a party quite well.

If their opponent had been an ogre, they would have won without any problem. But their opponent this time was too tough for them.

However, Charon didn't seem to think so. It was just as if the confidence she had in herself had been shattered into pieces.



「I aspire to become an adventurer, so we applied for the Special Battle class with the goal of making a living by fighting as an adventurer」

「Nn」

「But we were completely outmatched in this mock battle. I didn't expect us to win, but still, we couldn't even return a single blow in the end... Can we really become an adventurer like this...?」

It seemed that she was no longer confident with her abilities. When Charon was looking down anxiously, Fran then spoke to her.

「Nn. You guys are weak」

「I-is that so...? Of course, that's true...」

「You guys took too long to activate your magic and were quite slow to make decisions. Your level was still low too」

「Yes...」

「Even though Charon was a magician, you went too far forward」

「Yes...」

「You may be confident in your martial arts, but you can only kill a goblin with that much strength. You need to train harder」

「I see...」

Oioi, you're making Charon cry, you know? But it was the truth. However, Fran hadn't finished speaking yet.

「You won't even be able to escape from a strong magic beast with only that much strength」

「...Ugh. You're right. We are... weak, aren't we?」

「Nn」

「Just like what I thought, we are—」

「But everyone is weak at first. So, Charon and the others can get stronger from now on」

Charon then stopped in her tracks and stared at Fran's face.

「Nn?」

「...Even we, can be strong too?」

「Of course, you'll get stronger if you train. It's the same for everyone」

「You think so...?」

「Nn」

She must have understood that Fran's words were not meant to comfort her, as I could see a strong determined light in Charon's eyes.

「I-I'll do my best! I'll train harder and harder from now on!」

「Nn. Do your best」

「Yes!」

Fran also smiled at Charon, who finally smiled, albeit a bit awkwardly.

After that, the conversation had surprisingly become livelier. I guess it meant that they had grown closer. All they talked about was how delicate the food in the school cafeteria was, and which cafeteria was the best though.

They were chatting happily and in no time, they arrived at the changing rooms. There was a sign saying "Girl's changing room".

Yes, it must be the Girls' changing room.

『F-Fran! Th-this is bad! You can leave me here!』

(What's wrong)

『Aa-aah you see~...』

We-we've entered it! An old man has gone into the Secret Garden!

I-I'm not looking though! I don't have eyes after all, but I'll meditate! I'm a harmless, gentlemanly Gentle Weapon after all!

「Oh yikes, I have a bruise on my butt」

「Hey, aren't your breasts getting bigger again?」

「H-hey, don't touch it~」

I-I see nothing! I swear! But, you see, I can't do anything about the sound! I can't block my hearing after all!

There was a way to use magic to block it, but if I did that here, it might make me look suspicious. So, I had no choice! Yes, I have no choice but to listen to the voices.

「I didn't know you had a mole in such a place. It somehow looks so naughty, doesn't it~」

「Iyaahn! Don't look at it!」

『...』

(Master? Why are you shaking so much?)

『Do-don't mind me, just get dressed quickly and get out of here, okay!』

(??)

To all the boys in the country, I am so sorry.

# **Chapter 560: Elsa's Brand Beauty Serum**

## Chapter 560: Elsa's Brand Beauty Serum

Together with Charon, she went into the changing rooms.

It was quite spacious, just like a changing room in a large facility like a fitness club or a swimming pool. The students from the other classes seemed to be here as well, and over a hundred girls were changing here.

I-I'm looking at the floor, okay! And I could only feel their presence! But I couldn't help but notice the clothes that were scattered on the floor!

In the midst of all this, Charon made a small sound.

「Aah!」

「What's wrong?」

「Umm, I've taken you to the changing room, but did you bring a change of clothes?」

Aah, Fran had changed her clothes before class in the instructor's changing room. So normally, she would have left a change of clothes in there as well.

「It's fine. I bring it with me」

「You can even use Space-Time Magic too? Amazing」

In her case, she had stored it in the dimensional storage. She rolled her eyes at Fran as she pulled her uniform out of the thin air.

She had shown a considerable amount of magic before in front of Charon. She had already witnessed she used Fire, Wind, Earth, Thunder, Light, and Space-Time Magic. She seemed to be surprised at her versatility. But perhaps, she's already used to being surprised by her, so her reaction was rather weak this time.

「Charon?」

「Ah, I'm sorry. Umm, Fran, do you know how to use the locker?」

「Nn. Heard of it from Inez」

「Well, since Fran can use the Space-Time Magic, it might not be of much use for you though」

It seemed that their next subject was the magical beast's anatomy, a subject on the dismantling of magic beasts. And Fran's job as an instructor would be to deal with the Advanced Classes after this class.

「I'll guide you to the classroom, so let's change our clothes first」

「Okay」

Fran and Charon then begin to change their clothes. Hmmm, the sound of the clothes rustling was strangely pleasing to my ears. It's like I'm listening to a sound that I shouldn't hear.

Charon suddenly spoke up again while I was waiting nervously for them to finish changing.

「Hmm」

「Nn?」

「Ah, it's nothing. It's just that you're a high-ranked adventurer but you have very smooth skin」

Aah, did she expect her to have old scars or something? Well, the more experienced an adventurer was, the more likely they would have some scars on their body. However, in Fran's case, I've healed her with my Recovery Magic, so old wounds were unlikely to remain.

Well, it's not that she doesn't have any, but she doesn't have any noticeable scars.

「Do you take care of it in any way?」

「Taking care of it?」

「Yes. Your skin is so smooth that it's hard to believe that it's just because of your age」

「Nn?」

「Are you using any beauty serums or other products?」

Taking care of it, huh? That's not the case though.

I let her use the special beauty serum given to her by Elsa (real name Bardiche), the man-like-woman adventurer from Ulmut, on her skin as she told her to. She pays particular care when applying it to her face and exposed limbs.

Fran was a little annoyed at first, but by making it a routine, she no longer hated it. Well, it seemed that she skipped using it during her training in the Plains of the Demon Wolf though, but now she won't miss her nightly skincare.

We'll need to go back for more when the serum we got runs out.

「I use this on my skin」

「Wow! Isn't this...!?!」

When Fran handed her the serum she had taken from the dimensional storage, Charon raised her voice and widened her eyes. She was probably a few degrees more surprised than when she saw the dimensional storage.

「What's wrong?」

「I-isn't this Elsa's brand Beauty Serum! It is said to be a miracle product because of its limited distribution!」

Elsa's brand was probably referring to the picture of an axe and a woman on the bottle.

Charon was getting very excited. Moreover, the color of the surrounding female students' eyes changed when they heard Charon's voice.

All of the students from the other classes, even the students from the Special Battle Class who were too scared to get involved with Fran before were all looking at the bottle Fran was holding.

However, the owner, Fran herself, was not interested in the serum. She just replied absent-mindedly.

「Hmm?」

「Wh-where do you get that...? After all, it's not something that even nobles can easily get in their hands, you know? The few that do appear on the market are bought up by the wives of high-ranking nobles... I also heard a rumor that even the Queen uses it as well」

But Fran only thought of it as a tedious work routine, so she wasn't particularly impressed with it.

「This was given to me by an acquaintance in Ulmut」

「Aah, I see. I've heard that Ulmut is the place where this serum is produced, and it's also the town where Fran made a great achievement. So maybe there's a connection between it」

She didn't mention that she wanted it. It's not that it was so expensive, but she just couldn't ask Fran for it. Especially after Fran had displayed her ability to her.

The girls around us didn't seem to be calling out to her as well. It seemed that they were uncomfortable with Charon. Was it because she was a noblewoman? No, maybe it's because she was in the Special Battle Class. Anyway, it was fine as long as they didn't cause us any trouble.

That was what I thought, but it was Fran herself who caused all the trouble.

「You can use it too if you want」



「Eeh?」

「Here」

To my surprise, she handed the bottle of serum to Charon.

「A-are you sure??」

「Nn. Anyone can use it too if they want」

「 「 「—!」 」 」

At that moment, the changing room was in shock. Not only the students around Fran and Charon, but even the students far away who had heard the story, dashed to gather around them. Even the students who were scared of her had gathered around Fran in an instant.

「E-even a single bottle of this thing usually costs tens of thousands of gold, you know?」

「It's a gift though」

「Aah! Come to think of it, Fran is someone with an alias...! Unlike my poor Baronial family, that much money doesn't seem to mean much for you, huh!」

It seemed that Charon, who was hesitant at first, couldn't resist the temptation of the high-quality serum and those who stared around her were like “Just use it quickly and pass it to us”. She then took out a handful of the serum and began to apply it to her skin.

After that, the surrounding girls started passing around the bottle of serum, and in no time, the bottle was empty.

Even so, it was not enough for everyone. A covetous gaze then fell on Fran. Then Fran took out a new bottle and handed it to the girls.

「You can use it」

「Kyaa! Thank you!」

At this rate, she'll have to bring out more bottles for them...

『Oi, Fran, you have to save some for yourself, okay?』

(...)

『Fran?』

(Everyone is happy to use it)

『Aah! You, did you just give it away because you're too lazy to use it at night!?!』

(...)

I didn't know that it was that annoying for her...

Well, they'll resent her if she takes away what she had given to them, so it couldn't be helped. However, I won't let her give them any more than this!

『Wha, Fran! Why are you taking out another bottle!?!』

「You can use this too」

「Yeay! Thank you very much!」

「I feel amazingly moist!」

「Ahaha! Thank you!」

「Nn」

Everyone smiled and thanked Fran. Her classmates who were also excited began to even shake Fran's hand. It was just like there were no more reservations or walls between them.

Haa~h. Let's just say that it was an upfront investment by her to be accepted by the female students...

# Chapter 561: Rebellious Period?

『Haah... She ended up emptying three bottles of it... We'll have to get more from Elsa again next time』

It was actually a luxury item, so we'd have to pay for it next time.

(Muh...)

Fran didn't look pleased with my idea at all.

『Fran?』

(...)

She turned her face away at my call! I-is this her rebellious period? What do you think, Announcer-san?

《Carnivorous Beastmen do not have a rebellious period》

『Eh? Really?』

But it seems, the Beastmen's rebellious period was actually quite interesting.

《Rebellious Period. It is a state of excitement characteristic of growing up, in which stress is expressed in the form of aggression and antisocial behavior toward others. The imbalance between physical and mental growth is considered to be the primary cause》

『Well, I guess so』

She was at the age when they began to ignore their family members, stop listening to their parents, and even steal someone's bike to play with it.

《Beastmen are said to grow faster than humans and are also considered to be a race that can get excited more easily than Humans and Elves. So, if we apply the definition of rebellious period of the human race to the Beastmen race, especially one that inherited the carnivore factor, then more than half of their life would be considered a rebellious period》

『In other words?』

《Since that state is normal for the Beastmen, they don't have a rebellious period》

Doesn't that mean they were in a 24/7 rebellious period!? Well, the Beast King was just like that though.

「Hmm?」

Fran, who had been calmly changing in the changing room after the excitement of the serum did not cool down yet, moaned something.

「D-do you need something?」

「This, how do you use it」

Then she held up a long piece of cloth.

Oh! Come to think of it, Fran couldn't tie a tie by herself! I was the one who tied it for her this morning. And that was quite a tedious task.

I used to tie it for myself, but it was quite hard to tie it for someone else.

I've seen a few sweet scenes where a young wife ties a tie for her husband, but it must take a lot of practice to do that.

This morning, I managed to tie it for her by getting to Fran's back to make me feel like I was tying it for myself, but...

This time she should have just loosened the tie lightly and pulled it off her neck instead of untying it completely.

「Can you give it to me for a moment?」

「Nn」

「Fufu, I remembered that I learned to do it by doing it for the other kids when I first entered the academy」

Charon then stood on her knees in front of Fran, and she then tied her tie skillfully. As she did so, she also fixed the collar and hem for her. Charon seemed to be a capable girl, doesn't she?

「And, it's done」

「Thanks」

Immediately after Charon tied her tie, someone came stumbling up to us and approached Fran and Charon.

「Hey you! I heard you're an adventurer, aren't you!?!」

「Nn?」

「That beauty serum, give it to me! It's useless for a commoner like you to use!」

Uwaah, this was the first time I've seen this type of noble since we came to the Academy of Magic.

「You want to use it too?」

「That's not what I meant! Give all of it to me! I don't want to be rough with you, so just give it to me and leave!」

I thought she was just a bit of a tsundere and couldn't bring herself to say that she wanted to use it too, so she acted haughtily, but it seemed that she was just a regular sh\*tty nobleman.

As I was wondering how to handle the situation, Charon stepped forward with a stern look on her face.

「Hey you, Your arrogance will not be tolerated in this academy, you know?」

「Hah!? What do you think you're doing?」

The female student replied with a mocking attitude. Charon then looked at her with pity in her eyes and further warned her.

「Weren't you warned about it when you entered the academy? That no matter who you are, your status is meaningless while at the Academy」

「Hmph! It's indeed that this is a large academy, but how can the prestige of my Marquis family be affected by a mere rule of the academy!? Rather, they should be grateful that someone of such high rank as me choose to enroll here!」

So, she was a daughter of a Marquis? She must never think that there were places where her family's title was meaningless. But that kind of thing was really meaningless to the spirits that protected this academy.

「That speaking manner... You're not from this country, are you?」

「I'm a member of the Marquis Renge's houses, the leading vassal of the glorious Kingdom of Vassar—」

Just as she was getting to blurt it out, a female student then came at her in a fierce dash and jumped at the daughter of Marquis Renge. She then tried to cover up her mouth with her hand.

「Wh-what do you think you are doing!?!」

「That should be my line! What do you think you're doing here, Miss Kurda」

「Get off of me! You're so rude! Sarltha!」

「Didn't your father also tell you to stay quiet and obey the rules here at the academy! Or did you forget about it!?!」

「I know! That's why I'm obeying the staff and the nobles of this country in this academy!」

「Are you sure that's what he asked you to do? What your father meant was that for you not to break any of the rules of this academy and obey them all though!」

「But as the eldest daughter of a marquis family, do you expect me to care for a mere commoner!? That's nonsense!」

This female student, Sarltha, must be her attendant. They couldn't bring a maid with them, but they could enroll with them and share their room with them.

「Jeez! Anyway, this is really bad! It will even be a matter of the family's future! Let's go!」

「Wha, let me go!」

Sarltha seems to be a quite skilled person. She was at least as strong as the students in the Special Battle Class. It seemed that she also doubled as her personal attendant and escort.

Sarltha who looked deeply troubled bowed to Fran and Charon. She seemed to understand how bad it was to cause a scene in this academy.

「Umm, I'm really sorry. I won't let her approach you again, so can you please just forget what had happened?」

「Sarltha! What are yo—Ugh!」

「Just keep silent! Jeez!」

「Haah. What should we do now, Fran?」

「Nn?」



「Should we just overlook these girls?」

Fran was the first one to get tangled up, so Charon asked for Fran's opinion. But Fran was not interested in these girls at all.

「Just let them do as they want?」

「Thank you very much」

「Anyway, can I wear my skirt now?」

Huh, Fran? You're not wearing your skirt yet!? But if it had been the Fran before, she would have completely ignored them, finished changing, and tried to walk away. But just the fact that she stopped changing and tried to listen to them properly was a sign of a big leap in her growth.

「Eh? Yes, go ahead. You girls can go now. Well, I don't think that we'll meet again, right?」

「I see... I think you might be right...」

Does that mean that they'll be expelled? Well, it only ended as an attempt though, so I don't know how much punishment they'll get.

Charon shrugged her shoulders as she watched them leave.

「You'll get great credibility if you're a graduate of this academy even among the foreign nobles, so there are people like that once in a while」

「I see」

「Well, if we wait a little while, the teacher who was called by the spirit will soon arrive here. So, we should be a little patient in such situations」

Charon advised her that she didn't have to submit to the arrogance of the nobility, but...

「Okay, I'll hold back not to blow them away next time」

Charon then chuckled when she heard Fran's words. She must have remembered that the girl in front of her was a strong person with an alias and even the country should be concerned about her.

「...It seems that I have more things to worry about Fran now」

# Chapter 562: Dissection Class

When we returned to the classroom from the changing room, the other students had already arrived in the classroom.

The boys froze when they saw Fran in her school uniform. But it seemed it was not because of Fran's cuteness, but because of the trauma from the mock battle.

The female students were not as distant as they had been in the changing room earlier. Some of them were even waving at her.

However, the classroom, which had an enormous male-to-female ratio, quickly became quiet.

「...」

「...」

「Nn?」

「Fran, come here」

Charon ushered her to a seat among the boys who were holding their breath and staring at Fran.

Although I called it a classroom, it was shaped like a bowl, like a university lecture hall. Apparently, there were no seating arrangements, so each person could sit wherever they wanted.

The reason why Charon purposely sat in the last row was to alleviate everyone's attention on Fran.

「...」

「...」

When Fran and Charon were seated, silence still dominated the classroom. All the boys were still holding their breath and concentrating on Fran's presence as if they were facing a fierce beast.

Seeing that, the female students were laughing at them.

「Oya? You guys are quite quiet today, what's wrong?」

The silence was broken by an old man who walked into the classroom. He must be the teacher for this subject.

「N-no, it's nothing...」

「Really? Well, okay then, let's start the class. Oh, right, that reminds me, we've got a transfers student, right?」

「It's me」

「So you're the instructor and transfer student that I've heard so much about, huh? And a Beastman too, quite rare in our academy」

The old teacher looked at Fran with interest as she raised her hand. He wasn't in the staff room when she was introduced this morning.

「They also said that you're an adventurer, but have you done a lot of dismantling?」

「Nn」

「So what about this, would you be willing to change things up a bit today and tell us about your experience? It would be a rare opportunity to be able to hear an actual story from an active adventurer after all」

「I don't mind」

「Ooh! That's good!」

The old teacher was more excited than the students. He must be a teacher that liked to do research.

「It's not every day I'd get to hear about a high-ranking adventurer's dismantling experience!」

With eyes filled with curiosity, he shouted in joy.

「Where should we start then? Oh, that's it... For example, what is the biggest magic beast you've ever dismantled?」

「The biggest?」

「Yes!」

「Hmm...?」

「What's wrong? Or did you haven't had much experience in dismantling a large magic beast?」

「I don't know which one to choose because there are too many」

「O-oooh! So that's why! Well, how about the biggest one in recent days?」

「‘That’ will do then, the one I defeated in the Plains of the Demon Wolf」

「Hohou? Rumor has it that there are all kinds of magic beasts in there. So, what did you slay there?」

The old teacher showed a big smile on his face. He was probably the most serious person in this classroom right now.

「An Invisible Death」

「Wh-what did you say!? I-I-Invisible Death!? It's a magic beast with a threat level of B! And you managed to defeat it!?」

The students were completely left behind, weren't they? Contrary to the excitement of the old teacher, the students looked puzzled.

「Uhum. Aah, that's right. Let me explain about the magic beast called the Invisible Death first」

There was no textbook, so he began to explain about Invisible Death while writing on the board. As he was a specialist in magic beasts, the old man's explanation was very detailed.

However, some things could only be understood through first-hand experience, and Fran would supplement this information accordingly.

For example, its optical camouflage. He knew that it refracted light to camouflage, but he didn't have any concrete information about how stealthy it and how much of a threat it was.

And so, the class went on with the conversation between Fran and the old teacher. The students were trying their best to understand, but it seemed to be quite difficult for them.

It was too powerful to be real, and its abilities were too diverse to be imagined. He tried to explain them with diagrams on the blackboard, but they couldn't seem to get the hang of it.

「Umm, Morley-sensei」

「Charon-kun, do you need something?」

「I'm having a hard time imagining what the magic beast you're talking about looks like, so why don't we use a magic beast book now? I'll be back in 15 minutes to fetch it」

「Hmm, you're right」

Normally, he would bring a magic beast book from the library and show the pages to the class.

Then, Fran pulled out something from the dimensional storage.

「This」

「C-could it be! An Invisible Death's Scale!?!」

「Nn」

「D-do you have anything else?」

「I kept all of it with me」

「A-all of it? Could it be, you have a whole Invisible Death with you!?!」

「Nn? I also got two of them」

The moment Fran nodded; the old teacher let out a crazy scream.

「Uhiihoo! C-can you show that to us? Wha? No, for the sake of the young students' studies, by all means, please let us see it!」

It was definitely for his interests, wasn't it?

「This class is too narrow」

「Let's move! Let's go right away! Come on! Everybody gets ready to move! Let's get to the dissection room!」

They all moved to the dissection room after that. On the way, she was also bombarded with questions from the old teacher.

The dissection room we arrived at was much larger than I had imagined, and the ceiling was also quite high. It was made large enough to dissect even a large magic beast.

Moreover, there were several support magic circles painted on the floor. These magic circles help to preserve the blood of the magic beast during dissection.

In the middle of it, Fran pulled out the corpse of an Invisible Death. This one was still untouched, the one that she had killed before her training.

The corpse of the giant beast, over 10 meters in length, clad all over with crystal as thick as a pillar, attracted everyone's eyes with its overwhelming presence. Both teacher and students were speechless in front of the huge beast with the scars of the fierce battle still fresh on it.

Even if they already knew it with knowledge, the impression of it was different when they actually saw it in front of them.

The corpse of the Invisible Death had a foul odor as some of its bodily fluids and internal organs flowed out. It had been stored in the dimensional storage, so it wouldn't rot. So, this might be the original smell of its internal organs.

I was impressed that none of the students felt sick or frowned at the smell. It seems that this was the result of their regular dissection and dismantling activities.

「I've brought it out」

「O-oooh... It's wonderful... Everyone! Make sure you observe it carefully! You may never have the chance to see a magic beast with a threat level of B up close like this again!」

The old teacher shouted, and took the initiative to start observing the carcasses of the magic beasts. Seeing this, the students scattered around it and started sketching.

「Fran, can you tell me more about this magic beast?」

「C-can we join too?」

It was a group of female students, led by Charon, who approached us.

「Nn. Okay」

「Thank you very much」

「Then, let's start with the most annoying part. The tail. There's a hole here, from here—」



「I see—」

「And then, there's this—」

「What about its ability—」

While listening to Fran's simple explanations, Charon and the others responded with exaggerated reactions. Fran seemed to be getting into the mood with their reactions. She then continued her explanation with great eloquence that was quite unimaginable for someone like Fran.

The boys, watching them, gradually came closer and closer to Fran and the others. Some of them even started to ask questions. I guess they realized that they didn't need to be afraid of Fran any more than they needed to be after actually interacting with her.

They all listened to Fran's story of her fierce battle with the Invisible Death, and the difficulties she faced in finishing it off.

The class was a little sidetracked, but I hope this has brought her even closer to her classmates.

# Chapter 563: Beastmen and Magic

『Well, today we'll also have a mock battle in the afternoon, but we'll have normal classes in the morning』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

『Oh? Feeling enthusiastic, aren't you? Could it be, that you're looking forward to the class?』

But aside from Fran, why does Urushi look so enthusiastic too?

「Cooking Class today!」

Aah, now that she mentioned it...

『Hey, Fran』

「Nn?」

『Do you remember what other classes you'd need to go for today?』

「Nn...?」

At my question, Fran tilted her head with a puzzled look on her face. She looked as if asking 「What other classes?」 She didn't seem to be bothered by it—Or rather, she didn't seem to feel the need to remember them.

『You remember that you have a Cooking Class today, so you must have looked over the timetable you were given, right? But are you sure you don't remember anything else?』

「Nn」

Well, it was Fran we were talking about...

But Cooking Class was a class where they'd cook their food, right? How could she be satisfied with students' cooking? Moreover, in the case of the special battle class, they were supposed to learn how to cook quick and easy meals on the battlefield or outdoors. So, I don't think they'll be able to come up with a dish that suits Fran's palate.

『Fran, do you know what kind of class Cooking Class is?』

「I'm sure I can eat there」

As Fran's flat chest heaved with anticipation, I told her the truth about the Cooking Class.

Then Fran's expression quickly became sad. After all, it wasn't what she had imagined.

Urushi's tail too hung and stopped moving. I guess he was hoping to get some leftovers from a delicious meal. However, it was doubtful whether he would eat the leftovers from an amateur's cooking. He seemed to have finally understood that.

She passed the main entrance while feeling down.

「Good morning!」

「...Good morning」

We didn't get stopped by the guard today. He greeted her with a nice smile.

She still doesn't know many people in the academy yet, so she could hardly talk to any of them. However, some students seemed to remember Fran's face from yesterday's changing room incident, but she just nodded at their call.

「Fran, good morning」

「Good morning」

As soon as she entered the classroom, Charon immediately called out to her. Fran then casually sat down next to her.

We had Urushi in his small dog size today. He was sitting next to the chair where Fran sat.

Even though he was known to be a powerful magic beast, his cute appearance made the female students' gazes mellow.

「...Urushi is cute, isn't he?」

「You think so?」

「Yes. No one will be afraid of him when he looks like that」

Well, Urushi still had a sliver of hope for the Cooking Class and he thought that if he was the size of a small dog then he could be easily fed.

The first class of the morning was not a Cooking Class. It was a class to learn more about the various species that exist in this world.

「Well, well. It's an honor to meet the Black Lightning Princess here. So, you've really evolved, haven't you?」

The teacher for this class was a Beastman. His name was Horial, and he was a Deer Beastman. Horial bowed his head respectfully in front of Fran and shook her hand in a somewhat familiar manner.

However, his eyes were filled with genuine emotion, and I could tell that he was thrilled to be able to see the evolved Black Cat Kin firsthand.

「Since Fran-dono is here, let's talk about evolution today. Until last year, I've taught you that the only Beastmen that could not evolve were the Black Cats, but that theory turned out to be wrong. And the person who made that fact known to the world was this Fran-dono here!」

Some of the teachings have been changed this year and they were now teaching that the Black Cat Kin was one of the Ten Primordial Races that could evolve when they met the requirements.

Fran smiled happily when she heard that. She was happy that the Black Cat Kin were being reevaluated.

「I'd even say that she has made history! You guys must be really lucky to be in the presence of such a person! Besides, there aren't many Beastmen in this academy, and none of them has evolved yet. Have you guys witnessed her evolved forms?」

Charon and the other students then let out a chuckle. Fran was a scary instructor for them. So, I guess, they disagree with the word "lucky" in some aspects, as they've been beaten to a pulp by Fran in her evolved form.

However, Fran seemed to be more interested in a different matter.

「There aren't many Beastmen in this academy?」

「Yes. There's only a few of us here」

How was it possible for an academy of this size to have almost no Beastmen? But as I thought back, I certainly hadn't seen any of them.

Could it be that in this country or academy, Beastmen were discriminated against?

「Why?」

「Simply put, it's because this academy was an Academy of Magic, and Beastmen aren't very good at magic」

To my surprise, it wasn't because of discrimination.

Come to think of it, I've heard that Beastmen weren't very good at magic.

「Beastman who are good at magic, like the Black Lightning Princess-dono are very rare. And just like what I said before, I'm not very good at magic

either」

I see. In teachers' case, it doesn't matter as long as they can teach, so they don't have to be able to use magic, huh?

「Let me explain in detail. First of all, most Beastmen have low magic power. This is a Racial Trait, and is more prominent than in Humans and Dwarves」

「I see」

「In addition, it also has something to do with their personality...」

「Personality?」

「Yes」

Fran tilted her head in confusion, but I somehow figured it out.

「The training of magic is very simple, and it's also boring, and the results of the daily training won't be easily visible」

「Nn」

「In other words, many impatient Beastmen are unable to endure that kind of training」

It was not that they couldn't endure it, but they were certainly not suited for it. Not all Beastmen were impatient and short-tempered, but I'm sure that was the general tendency for them.

Among them, the Beastmen who could use magic simply had tremendous talent from the start. They were probably the kind of people who, with a little training, could learn magic in a blink of an eye and handle it with ease. I guess you could also say that they have a keen perception.

The Beast King and Mea seemed to be that type.

「Moreover, many Beastmen aspire to become fighters; they start training when they are about 5 or 6 years old, and many of them start working as apprentices when they are about 10 years old. Therefore, they have little interest in the academy. It is common for them to think that they would rather learn on the job rather than studying」

If they plan to become adventurers or soldiers in the future, it may be indeed more efficient for them to train from an early age.

「Then there is the geographical issue. In this country, the statuses of magicians are great, while in the neighboring countries, the statuses of adventurers are great. As a result, there's no particular discrimination here, but most of the Beastmen choose to go to the Kingdom of Kranzel」

However, if you wonder if the Beastmen were absolutely unsuited to be magicians, I've heard that this was not the case. One of the major advantages was that the aptitude for magic that each race could use was already determined to some extent.

Unlike Humans, who may have an aptitude for all kinds of magic, Beastmen often have uneven characteristics in their respective races. Let's use Horial for example. He was from the Blue Deer Tribe which made it almost certain that they had an aptitude for Water, Earth, and Tree magic.

Therefore, it was said that they could shorten their training time considerably on that element. On the other hand, he also said that not many of them could use the other elements.

「It's difficult for us to make it big as magicians because of our low magic power, but it's easier for us to train as Magic Warriors」

However, it would still be very difficult to get the Beastmen to practice magic. Do you think Fran and the Beast King would be able to continue their plain training for years? That would be absolutely impossible.

# Chapter 564: Gods Return

Horial's class continued further.

They had gotten a little sidetracked and ended up talking about the Beastmen's aptitude in magic, but he managed to bring the class back to the topic of evolution.

「Well then, Charon-kun. What is the only species in this world that does not evolve?」

「Yes. It's us, humans」

「That's right—」

Maybe it's for Fran's sake, but Horial said it was just a review of previous lessons and briefly reviewed what they've learned so far.

It was quite a strange combination of natural anthropology and mythology, but it was considered factual in this world.

To put it simply, after the Gods created this world and finished creating nature, the Great Gods worked together to create man. Then each God created their kindred based on human beings.

If they're kin of the Beast and Insect Gods, they would be born as a Beastman or an insect-kin. If they're kin of the Forest Tree Gods, they would be born as Elves. If they're kin of the Earth Gods, they would be born as Dwarves or Demons. That's how it works.

Each of the demi-humans created by the Gods had special powers given to them by the Gods, and that was why they could evolve.



It may seem that the humans were the only race that didn't have any special powers, but actually, the humans were given the power of the Ten Great Gods in a balanced manner. That was why humans were an excellent race with lots of capabilities and high fertility. So, it was not that they couldn't evolve, but that they didn't need to.

Well, it seemed that the interpretation of that also differed depending on the place. As there's no way for a country ruled by Human Royals would teach their people that humans were a poor race with no good qualities.

The Beastman countries too would teach that the Beastmen were the strongest and noblest race that didn't rely on the puny thing known as magic.

「Well, let's talk about evolution now. First of all, non-humanoid races can naturally evolve if they level up and meet the requirements. There are also cases of mutation, but please differentiate between mutation and evolution, okay?」

I learned that demons don't evolve, but they mutate. Evolution was a big change that came when someone reached their level cap, while mutation was a small change that was possible to achieve regardless of their level as long as the conditions were met.

「It doesn't matter if they're Beastmen, an Elf, a Dwarf, or Dragonmen, they can still evolve」

However, it was said that among the species that could evolve and mutate, there were individuals who sometimes undergo a special kind of evolution.

The Ten Primordial Beastman races, for example, were said to have that kind of special evolution. But there were also special evolutions in other races as well.

Ashwrath's race, the Calamity Demon, was a legendary race whose existence was always questioned. It may not be clearly proved yet, but it was clear that a special evolutionary process had made him stronger than normal.

「Among these special evolutions, there is a particularly rare one. It's the evolution called the Gods Return or the Ancestral Return. Some researchers even refer to them as the "Godlike beings"」

That's quite a big name.

「As the word suggests, it is believed to be an evolution of a species that is close to the Primordial Races that were created by Gods themselves. Well, perhaps I should call it a "Regression" rather than an "Evolution", but I'll talk about it as a form of evolution here. As far as I know, the High Elves are one of the examples of a Gods Return」

The main difference that differentiates the Gods Return from a normal evolution was the change in races.

Take the Elves, for example. They have sub-species such as Wood Elves, Leaf Elves, and Grass Elves, but no matter how much they evolved, they would still be Elves.

In Weena Rhyn case, however, things were a little different.

She was a High Elf but also seemed to be a Demigod herself.

(Amazing, she reached the gods)

『Really? So, that meant that Weena Rhyn was like a god herself?』

Both Fran and I were so surprised, but it seemed that was not the case. A Demigod was not officially a God but was positioned as beings second to the Gods.

「However, there's only a few of them in history, so this is just my opinion based on what I've read and what I've heard from the director」

「Other than the High Elves, are there other races that have achieved the Gods Return?」

The other students then began to actively ask questions, as if their nervousness about Fran's presence had completely disappeared.

「That's a good question. As far as I know, the Elder Dwarves achieved the Dwarven God Return and the God Demons achieved the Demon God Return」

「So, what about the unidentified races?」

「Let's see. First, there's the Divine Dragonmen, they're said to be the Return of the Dragon God, but the documents about them have been lost due to the destruction of the Continent of Gordisia. However, their existence is still known among the Dragonmen, so there's a high possibility that they actually exist」

The Divine Dragonmen. I had an idea of what beings they were. In the battle in the Royal Capital, Velmeria, who was being controlled by The Sword of Blind Devotion - Fanatics, and went out of control, must have some kind of skill to become a Divine Dragonman.

And I've witnessed how tremendous her power was when she used that skill.

So, wasn't that the Divine Dragon?

「And for us Beastmen. I've once heard that there's a saying that some of the oldest kin among us also has a being called as the Divine Beastman」

「Divine Beastman?」

「Yes. It's said to be a being whose power even transcends the Ten Primordial Races. And there's also a story of it defeating a Divine Sword with its bare hands」

「Eehh?」

「That's, really...」

The students then made a commotion when they heard Horial's words. There were also classes about the Divine Sword in this academy, and that must have been told of its tremendous power.

Maybe, they must think that Horial, who is also a Beastman himself, was exaggerating about the Beastmen's Gods Return.

But Fran and I have different thoughts. Because I've actually witnessed Velmeria fighting evenly with Ashwrath, a Divine Sword user, and as for Weena Rhyn, we hadn't seen her using all of her power, but she seemed to have enough power to fight a Divine Sword.

『And if that Divine Beastman has the power of Weena Rhyn or Velmeria class...』

「Nn. There's a possibility of it winning against a Divine Sword」

Fran's muttering seemed to have caught the ears of a surprising number of students. Horial, too, asked back with great interest.

「Do you have any thought about it, Black Lightning Princess-dono?」

「Nn. I've fought Weena Rhyn before, so I'm pretty sure she's strong enough to fight a Divine Sword」

「...Have you ever seen a Divine Sword?」

「I've seen Ashwrath fight with his Divine Sword」

「I see. So, you've seen both the Divine Sword and the Gods Return, huh!?!」

The noise in the classroom got even louder. Apparently, the story of her seeing a Divine Sword in an open state was shocking. She was then bombarded with questions from the surrounding students.

I was afraid that Horial would get angry with her for sidetracking the lesson, but he ended up asking her a question about the Divine Sword himself.

He just liked the legends in this world, so it couldn't be helped.

In the end, they ended up talking about Ashwrath and his Divine Sword until the class ended.

# Chapter 565: Cooking Drill

Once Horial's class was over, the next class was the Cooking Class.

However, for some reason, the class was held outside, not in the cooking room or the cafeteria. The students were gathered in their uniforms on the grass field.

The ground was covered with the blue sheet that I had seen at the Adventurer's Guild before, and on top of it were the corpses of about ten magic beasts.

It looked like a one-meter-long raccoon. Its fur was dry and shaggy, and it was not very clean.

And it smelled bad. It was faint, but it smelled like rotten eggs.

This magic beast was called the Skunk Raccoon. Its meat smelled so bad that even if you cooked it properly, it wouldn't be very edible. In fact, an ordinary adventurer would probably only collect its magic stones and poison glands and discard the rest.

The fur and other materials are of low quality and are not worth selling too.

But, could it be, they were expected to cook this thing?

A large woman was standing in front of the blue sheet. Her name was Yafi, and she was also a former adventurer.

「Today's Cooking Class is designed to teach you how to process and cook the magic beasts you've killed in the field!」

It seemed that they didn't just have to cook it, but they also had to dismantle it themselves as well.

「You have to dismantle and cook this Skunk Raccoon, remember what I've taught you so far! You can make anything you want with it!」

As I've expected, this Skunk Raccoon was prepared for them to cook. She'd prepared them a quite nasty prey, hadn't she?

「Split up into groups and each group must take care of one of them! And make sure you make enough portions for all of us!」

It seemed that this class was meant to prepare for the times when they lose their food, as they were forced to cook and eat nasty prey.

When Urushi realized that, he quietly disappeared into Fran's shadow.

「Umm, you must be Fran, right? I wonder what task to give to you... Have you ever dismantled a magic beast or cooked one?」

「I've experienced both of it」

「Huh? Really?」

「Nn」

「As expected of a solo high-ranked adventurer. If that's the case, where should I place you then?」

「How about she join our group?」

It was Charon who raised her voice. Although her group's members didn't reject her idea, their faces looked a little uncertain.

「But, I wonder if Fran would like to join her group」

「Okay」

「Aaah, and also, you don't have to hold back, okay? You can use whatever spices you have on hand」

「Is that so?」

「It's pretty common for adventurers to have unexpected companions to join their party. But can you really ask them to hold back just because your share would be reduced?」

「I see」

「In fact, if you can't draw out the abilities of those irregular companions and cooperate with them, you shouldn't consider yourself as a pro」

That was probably true. I'm sure there are times when multiple parties will take on a joint request, and there are also times when a solo adventurer who knows a particular region will be temporarily added to the party.

「Well, I'd also like to have at least some good food too」

So that was her real intention!

Nevertheless, I'm not going to do anything to help Fran this time. Aside from dismantling, if I interfere with the cooking process, the food will usually taste better. But I want Fran to have to gain her own experience too.

「I look forward to working with you. Fran」

「Nn. Me too」

「Also, I'd like to introduce you to my group members」

「I-I'm Rellus. It's nice to meet you」

「I'm Marquez」

「I'm Osless. Nice to meet you」



The frail-looking guy was Rellus. He seemed to be a magician from the Demon Kin. He was quite an unusual student of the Special Battle Class, as he was a pure magician type.

The serious-looking macho guy was Marquez. He was the opposite of Rellus and was probably a shield user.

The last man was a frivolous-looking gentleman. He's Osless. And he looked to be in his early twenties.

Well, since the Academy of Magic does not limit admission by age, so some of them are older than others.

It seemed that these three people, including Charon, were a group in the Cooking Class. At first, I thought they were friends who had formed a party at the Adventurer's Guild, but it seemed that was not the case.

「We don't have a fixed party when we take quests at the Adventurer's Guild」

「It's also unlikely that we'll be able to make a party with our classmates after graduation」

If they were to form a party with only their classmates, they would not be able to respond flexibly in times of need. In order to prevent this, the students of the Special Battle Class are required to change their combinations in turns when they take quests outside.

「I know in yesterday's class that Fran has dismantling skills, but what about cooking?」

「Nn... It's so-so? I'm not as good as Master」

「Hmm? Fran's master? What kind of person is he?」

「Master is the best, he can do anything」

「Th-that is... Well, he's Fran's master, so I'm sure it's true」

Fran's master must be even more screwed up. That must be what she thought of me.

「So, what do you want us to do? We don't mind you giving us instructions」

「Okay」

How could you ask Fran, who still hadn't mastered her Cooking Skills to give you instructions...? Charon, you're quite a gambler, aren't you? No, did she decide to just follow a high-ranked adventurer, which was, in a sense, a natural thing to do for an adventurer?

Her group members don't seem to have any objections as well. Rather, they were nodding happily. The one who was clearly happy with it was Osless

「Uwaah, we're saved. All the guys in this group are really bad at cooking」

「Is that so?」

「Well, yeah. It's because everyone except me is totally useless~. Well, all three of them are nobles, so it's no wonder」

It seems that the three of them were children of small noble families, but still, they had a maid or two in their houses. But after entering this academy, they've worked a little harder, but they were not good at it.

Osless, on the other hand, was the son of a Chief Soldier and came from a commoner family. Therefore, he had been helping his mother in the kitchen since he was a child, and he seemed to have no qualms about cooking.

「I'm not really skilled at it, but I'm better than these guys. And I also have some useful skills as well」

And so, they choose Fran to be their leader, with Osless as her assistant, and the other three ready to take instruction.

「Are there any spices in this group's inventory?」

「Yes. Each group has its inventory」

「Then bring them all. And bring some cooking utensils too」

「Understood」

「What should we do?」

「First, secure the prey, get the best one」

「Even if you tell us to get the best one, they're the same magic beast, you know? And their size is about the same too. Will that really make any differences?」

「It probably took days to prepare it. So, obviously, there's a difference in its freshness」

「How can we tell the difference?」

「The smell, the hair, the cloudiness of the eyes. And the color of its tongue」

「I see」

Now, I wonder what kind of food she'll make.

# Chapter 566: Cooking Drill, Start!

Fran started by checking the seasonings and discussed what kind of dish she was going to cook.

「Umm, Fran? Shouldn't we split up and start dismantling?」

「The other group has already started dismantling, you know...?」

「No problem. I can dismantle such a magic beast in no time」

「As expected of Fran」

「She's so reliable—」

I sneaked a peek at the other group's work, and it was pretty bad. They were slow as they didn't understand the structure of their prey, and their overall work was poor. It would probably take them more than half an hour just to dismantle it.

On the other hand, as long as she was careful with the Skunk Raccoon's poison glands and magic stones, it would only take Fran less than five minutes to dismantle it.

Well, it was thanks to our Dismantling Skills though. Come to think of it, I'm a lot better than I was when I first came to this world. I missed the old days when I tried to dismantle something randomly and ended up tearing the materials apart.

「Is this all the seasoning we have?」

「Eh? Yeah...」

「Muh」

Fran made an unusually small grunt when she saw the seasonings that Charon and the others had prepared.

Well, I knew how she felt. After all, on the table, there were only rock salt, pepper, and two kinds of herbs. The rest was seasoned salt mixed with chopped mushrooms and oil. That was all they had.

The seasoned salt seemed to be handmade by an amateur, and the herbs were of a weak type with little aroma and taste.

Apparently, they only have things that could be collected in the wild. When she asked them about it, they said that it was the seasonings that they had collected in their previous classes.

「...Can we buy some?」

「It's allowed, but we're not very familiar with the seasonings...」

Until now, they had only been able to get the food to be edible by adding salt and herbs and heating them.

But this time, the Skunk Raccoon won't be that simple, you know? We couldn't get rid of its foul scent by just heating it.

But as expected, we don't have the time to go to town and buy the seasonings now.

「Okay, I'll do something about the seasoning then」

「Do you have some?」

「Nn. I have a lot of them」

「Aah, now that I remember, Fran can use Space-Time Magic, isn't she?」

And so, Fran and her group decided to proceed with the dismantling first.

If Fran gave her best, it would be over quickly, but she chose to dismantle it while giving some details to Charon and the others. This was probably because it was part of the class. Fran must have understood that she shouldn't do everything herself.

But before Fran and the others could start dismantling, there was a scream from the other groups. And then, the other group started screaming too, while holding their eyes and noses.

「Ugh—!」

「What smell is this...!」

「It stinks! Stink, stink, stink!」

「Kyaa—!」

Apparently, a group had damaged the poison gland during dismantling. The venom of the Skunk Raccoon was only slightly poisonous, but the smell was very horrible.

People tend to think that's what causes the smell of its meat, but it's actually not. In the blood of Skunk Raccoons, there was a component that helps them withstand their own poisonous gas. The chemical-like scent of these ingredients was the true source of its meat's smell.

On the other hand, the poison smelled like strong sulfur. The smell also seemed to have spread to the surrounding area all at once. All the groups were in agony with tears in their eyes.

Charon and the others were starting to smell it too. Aside from the three men, that must be horrible for Charon, she was a daughter of a Nobleman after all. Fran also seemed to have smelled the gas for a moment and was frowning.

However, she immediately used her wind magic to blow the air around her and put up a barrier to block the smell.

「I-I was saved」

「Th-thanks」

「That was really terrible」

「Uwaah, you all look awful」

The people around them were in a half panic, but Fran didn't really care. Once they were sure that their surroundings were no longer smelly, she went back to explain the dismantling process.

「Then, use a knife to cut here」

「Eh? Ah, yes!」

Charon and the others quickly concentrated on Fran's hands, remembering that they were behind in their work.

They proceeded in this manner and finished almost all the dismantling in about 10 minutes. Of course, she didn't make any mistakes that could damage the poison glands and cause a foul-smelling commotion again.

「That was an amazing technique」

「I-I'm impressed」

「Anyone can do it once they get used to it. More importantly, what should we do with this?」

「If we can harvest its magic stones, we give them to the teacher later」

It seemed that teachers would bring it to the Adventurer's Guilds and the like to cover some of the costs of conducting the classes.

「We got quite a lot of meat. But what should we make with it?」

「S-somehow, it smells strange...」

「The color is also bad」

「There's quite a lot of muscle too. I wonder how it tastes?」

Charon and the others looked at each other as they didn't think it wouldn't taste good before they ate it. Fran could only nod at that.

「Nn. It was very smelly and quite unappetizing. This is nothing a little roasting can fix」

「Uwaah. Then... What should we do?」

「We don't have any choice. Let's use this」

What Fran took out from the dimensional storage was a variety of curry powder that I had blended. The aroma and spiciness could be adjusted according to the ingredients and cooking methods.

「Umm, what is this?」

「Curry powder made by Master. With this, any ingredient can taste better. The supreme seasoning!」

「Hee, is curry the name of the dish?」

「Nn. The best food」

「That sounds awesome. But its scent was quite strange. I wonder if it's a mixture of spices?」

Osless was the only one who took a bite out of the curry powder. If they were not interested in cooking, it was just a rare seasoning for them.

But soon, Charon raised her voice.

「Wait a minute. When you say curry, isn't it a new dish that has recently started to become popular in the Kingdom of Kranzel?」

「Master made it」



「Could it be, Fran's Master is the rumored Curry Master? I've heard that he's a very skilled cook... But wasn't your Master an adventurer?」

「Master can do everything. His cooking, his fighting, his magic, everything is top-notch. He is my master of everything」

「I-is that so? Is he a famous adventurer?」

「Not an adventurer. Master is Master」

While they were talking, Osless had checked the curry powder.

「How do I use it? Do I just sprinkle it on and grill it?」

「That's fine too, but I'll use it differently this time」

After that, they all proceeded with the cooking, with Fran giving the directions.

It's quite hard to believe that Fran was telling people what to do and working together to cook... If it had been her before, she would have finished it all by herself and ate the food alone.

I could feel Fran's growth, and I'm about to cry. But I don't have tear glands though.

# **Chapter 567: Fran's Cooking**

## Chapter 567: Fran's Cooking

Fran and her group had decided on the dish they were going to make and started cooking it, but the way they cooked was very different from the other groups.

While the other groups were cooking with pans over the fire, they were using improvised stoves made with Earth Magic.

Moreover, Fran provided them with top-grade knives and pans from her dimensional storage. It was a very high-quality product made by a Dwarven master.

The seasoning used in the preparation and the milk used to remove the smells was also used lavishly.

She also used a makeshift pressure cooker made with a combination of Earth, Fire, Wind, and Water Magic to cook the meat until it was tender.

The makeshift-pressure cooker looked simple at first glance, but it was actually a technique that required a high level of skill and was very difficult to maintain and adjust in combination with magic.

Well, no one was aware of that though. But if a Magic Teacher were to see it, they would be amazed at the waste of its use.

Yafi, the teacher in charge of the Cooking Class, was admiring all the dishes that Fran and her group had laid out in front of her.

「Hee? It has no distinctive pungent smell at all. It's almost hard to believe that you used Skunk Raccoon meat for this」

From the white porcelain dishes, it was hard to believe that they were used for outdoor cooking. No, it was not only Yafi but the rest of the groups seemed to think so as well.

「What kind of cooking is this?」

「Well, I wonder...?」

「It looks delicious... Moreover, they even made four dishes in such a short time...」

It was not just the cooking that the students were impressed with.

「Did you see how fast they dismantled it? That was amazing」

「I also listened to her explanation, and it was very informative」

「As expected of a real active adventurer...」

「Or rather, I never thought that magic can be used like that」

「One day, I'm gonna be able to do the same...」

Even if she had simply cooked outdoors, they could feel the difference in their abilities. They looked exhausted and looked at Fran with envy.

Well, the students were probably tired because they were physically and mentally drained from the multiple foul smell disturbances that had occurred. Perhaps, half of the groups had failed to dismantle and damaged its poison glands. If they had smelled the fainting stench over and over again, they must have been exhausted.

「This looks delicious」

Yafi's words probably summed up her feelings pretty well. As far as I could tell, the food had not been good so far.

It was all about herb-crusted grilled food and salty soup. She couldn't stop eating for the assessment, and it was quite hard for her.

The only thing that seemed to be better was the cooking of the group that received good reviews in this class every time. A brown-skinned, platinum-

blonde, fresh-looking man from another continent was in charge of the cooking as the leader of that group.

He seemed to come from a desert country called the Kingdom of Azalea, which was apparently famous for its cuisine that used a lot of spices. In this class, he was also making Azalean soup and a tortilla-like dish with grilled meat sandwiched between flour dough.

At first glance, I thought the soup might be a curry soup, but it seemed more like a stew with spices.

The filling of the tortilla was a layer of thinly sliced meat that has been baked and then sliced into thin strips, just like a kebab.

The spices and coconut milk seemed to have removed a lot of the smell from the meat, but it was not perfect due to the lack of preparation such as draining the blood. Yafi's assessment of it was 「It's so-so」.

Now, how would the cooking that Fran and her group had cooked, be evaluated?

「I'll dig in then」

「Nn」

「I wonder if this is pounded and minced Skunk Raccoon meat? Is that cheese on top?」

「After removing as much fat as possible from the abdomen, we crushed it into small pieces, mixed with special seasoning, rolled up and baked」

Well, to put it simply, it was a hamburger steak mixed with curry powder and baked, with cheese on top of it.

「And how does it taste——」

Yafi then used her fork to cut up the hamburger and slowly brought it to her mouth.

「Mogu mogu...!」

(\*munching SFX)

Immediately after chewing once and twice, her eyes widened in surprise.

「Delicious! What the hell is this!? It tastes like something that you'd normally need to pay for! And it has the most complex taste I've ever had... It's a little bit spicier than Azalean food, but... What is this spiciness——」

Yafi was surprisingly accurate in her analysis of flavors. I thought she was just an adventurer who wanted to teach outdoor cooking, but it seemed she was well versed in food and cooking.

「Is this jerky? You did a great job making it in such a short time」

「Fresh jerky made with magic」

「Your magic is quite amazing then... Hmm... It has a unique taste from the seasoning and spices. Aah, it made me want to have some alcohol」

「And this. I made it with meat miso. Wrap it in this flour crepe」

「Another unusual dish. Mogu mogu—— it's also delicious. Incredible!」

Fran, whose Cooking Skill was already at its highest level, had used spices and miso to cover up the smell and taste. She chose a dish that she could make right here from the many dishes I've made in the past and recreated it.

「And last but not least, the mysterious soup... Is it soup? It looks oddly thick」

「It's curry. The most delicious food in the world」

「Th-that's quite a big one. Let's find out how it tastes... Mogu mogu」

The other dish that Fran prepared was a curry with a lot of ingredients. There was no rice though.

It was a slightly spicy red curry with meat and vegetables tenderized in a makeshift pressure cooker. When Yafi took a bite of the curry, she looked even more surprised than before.

「Th-this is! What a complex taste! It's spicy, but it only makes me want to eat more of it...!」

Yafi, who had only eaten a few bites of the other group's dishes before, said that she couldn't judge well if she was full, but right now, she was gobbling up Fran and her group's cooking.

This would be an unquestionably high evaluation.

「W-we'll have some of that too」

Charon and the others, who had been holding out so Yafi could assess it first, couldn't wait any longer.

「Nn」

「I-I can finally eat it」

「It looks delicious」

「I-ta-da-ki-ma-su!」 (Note: Thanks for the food!)

「Woof woof!」

Urushi also came out and got some curry. However, his actions were quite disgraceful. He then ate the curry while paying attention to Fran who made it, but I could tell by the way his tail wagged how happy he was.

But Fran was not angry at him. Rather, Fran herself had a subtle expression on her face. For Fran, who loved curry, the taste must not be satisfactory.

Even so, it was very well received by her group. Fran was comparing it to my cooking, so it's a harsh assessment, but I'm sure it was a lot better than most of the cooking the other groups made.

The other classmates looked enviously as Charon and her group ate their curry while saying how delicious it was. The rule was that they had to eat everything they made, so all the groups were forced to eat their food.

「...H-hey. If you have any leftover, could I have a bite of that food?」

The first person who approached her was the handsome young man who made the Azalean dish. He was good at cooking and seemed to be very interested in it.

「Sure」

「Really!? Thank you!」

「Eh! I want some too!」

「Me too! Me too!」

In the end, everyone raised their hands in the air. However, there was not enough for everyone who wanted it.

Well, to the students who lost in rock-paper-scissors, good luck next time!



# **Chapter 568: The Curry's Impact**

## Chapter 568: The Curry's Impact

They got a high mark in Cooking Class. They made the best use of what they had and made delicious food.

But even after such class, Fran still went to the cafeteria to eat lunch.

Charon and her group members were following her too. It was probably because the amount of food they ate in the Cooking Class was not enough for them.

But for their classmate, they probably just want to remove the bad taste from their mouth.

While everyone else was enjoying the food served in the cafeteria, only Fran was eating something different. In the cafeteria, people were allowed to bring in their food from outside. Well, it was just a school cafeteria after all.

The students, especially those who do not live in the dormitory but commute from the town, seemed to get their meals from outside.

And of course, what Fran was eating was the curry rice.

The Skunk Raccoon curry that they made wasn't quite satisfying for Fran. So, she decided to eat some curry...

「Nn. This is for you」

「Woof!」

Fran then continues to shove the curry into her mouth over and over again. Urushi too, but since he ate his curry in his puppy mode, his mouth was all messy.

Looking at Fran and Urushi eating, Charon seemed to be a little envious.

「That must be a dish made with the curry powder from the Cooking Class earlier, isn't it?」

「Nn? Yes, but different」

「Ummm...? It isn't curry?」

「It's curry. But it's completely different from the one we had earlier. This is the real thing. The one we made earlier was a total failure」

「The one we made earlier? It was so delicious though?」

「Nn. Have some」

「Eh? Th-thank you. Now, if you'll excuse me... Aaah」

Charon hesitantly sipped at the spoon that Fran had offered to her.

「Th-this is...! I-it's delicious! Certainly, it can't be compared to the one we had earlier!」

I don't know how many times I've seen that look of astonishment today.

Well, the food they made in the Cooking Class may have been delicious, but the ingredients used were not good, and the curry powder was not mixed properly. On the other hand, what Fran just made her eat was the best curry I made with all my heart.

Needless to say, this one should have tasted better.

Looking at Charon who was impressed, Fran showed her smug face.

「Fufun」

「Is that the one that Fran's Master makes?」

「Nn!」

「Is he really an adventurer? Not a cook?」

She must feel very happy for her to praise the curry. Fran then took out a bowl of curry from the dimensional storage and placed it in front of Charon.

「I-is this for me?」

「Nn」

「Thank you very much!」

Charon thanked her with a radiant smile. She had already filled her stomach with the lunch provided by the cafeteria, but she seemed to still be able to eat more.

「Thanks for the food」

As one would expect from a noble, the way she moved the spoon was elegant at first, but her pace then became incredible. Her hand never stopped moving the spoon, and the curry in the bowl was steadily decreasing.

「I-is it that good? H-hey, let us have some too...」

They came to the cafeteria after the Cooking Drill, so Osless and the other boys were sitting together at the same table as Fran.

Seeing Charon eating the curry so deliciously, I guess they couldn't hold back anymore. Osless then said that he wanted to eat it too.

If it was Fran from before, she would have found it hard to share the curry. However, I wondered if she had developed a sense of friendship after the short time they spent together in the Cooking Class.

Fran then willingly served them some curry. She also served it with a side of sliced vegetables pickled in soy sauce.

「It's delicious!」

「Oh, God! This is so good」

「Gatsu gatsu!」 (\*munching SFX)

It was just that, you know if she serves curry to only Osless and the others here——

「...Gulp」

「...Slurp」

All their classmates around were looking at Fran's table with a menacing look like starving beasts.

No, even the other students, other than their classmates, were also looking at them.

「Muh」

「Woof」

Fran and Urushi, who can smile even when surrounded by a pack of magic beasts, were being pressured by the students.

「...This, have some too」

『Ah! If you do that——』

「 「 「 「Uwooh」 」 」 」 」

The moment Fran took out one of the barrels from the dimensional storage, an earth-shaking cheer suddenly rose. It already sounded like a war cry.

『Pa-panic will occur here!』

I braced myself for that, but Osless, Marquez, and Rellus voluntarily took charge of serving the food and organizing a line.

「It seems like it's our fault... So, let us at least do this」

「He's right」

「I-I don't know what will happen if we leave them alone」

The Special Battle Class seemed to be well respected, and the students from other departments obediently followed their instruction. Thanks to that, we were able to finish distributing the curry smoothly without any incident breaking out.

「It tastes much better than cafeteria food!」

「It's already more than a few degrees higher」

「You're right! This is certainly hundreds of times better!」

While Fran gazed sadly at the empty barrel, there were shouts of joy in various parts of the cafeteria. Apparently, the curry was well accepted.

However, other people besides Fran could not simply be happy about the situation. But it was not Charon and the others.

「Hey, you. The little Beastman there」

「Nn?」

「What the hell do you think you're doing here without telling us?」

The words alone sounded as if he was part of the town's hoodlums, but I suppose that was to be expected.

The man who was staring at Fran with a blue mark on his forehead was an elderly man dressed in a white cook's uniform.

「I'm Noritz, I'm in charge of cooking here. Can I have a talk with you for a moment?」

# **Chapter 569: Academy's Cafeteria Reform**

## Chapter 569: Academy's Cafeteria Reform

The cook, Noritz, showed up looking a little pissed off, but after listening to him carefully, I found out that he was actually very interested in the curry.

His tone of voice made him sound like he was angry, but the words that came out were a request to eat the curry. A tsundere old man. Good grief, that wasn't moe at all!

He really wanted to try my curry himself, and he was angry at us for causing a scene, but the smells are so delicious. He was a little offended by what the students were saying, but he was interested in the unique dish.

It seemed that such a mixture of emotions resulted in his tsundere response.

「Ugh... This is delicious, isn't it? This must have used a lot of spice to make it...」

Noritz analyzed various things from the curry Fran had given to him.

「As expected of the one who developed it, they are two of three steps ahead of the recipes they sell」

「You know about the curry recipe?」

「Yeah. They sell it at Lucille's Trading Company. I'm also interested in the fact that it was developed by a silver-ranked cook」

Apparently, Noritz was a member of the Cooking Guild. It was not a very big organization, but most cooks from big restaurants were members.

And when he learned that the developer of the curry was a Silver Rank member of the Cooking Guild, he decided to buy it.

「I was shocked by it. However, if I make it by following the recipe, the cost would be quite high...」



Noritz said that the most important thing he paid attention to when he cooked was nutritional balance. Next is quantity. The last is taste. Of course, he does not want to serve bad food. However, there was a limit to what he could do within his budget.

There may be many ways to make this at home, but they have to make food for thousands of people with a small number of people. They also don't have enough time or labor for even a small amount of innovation.

「By the way, what is the cost to make this?」

「It was——」

When she gave him a rough idea of the cost and the ingredients used, Noritz put his head in his hands. The soup stock was made from the bones of magic beasts, and a variety of their meats were used. Magical plants were used lavishly too. So it was probably not something that could be served in a school cafeteria.

It seemed that Noritz was also trying to make a good and cheap curry, but it just didn't seem to be working. If he reduced the number of expensive spices, it becomes just like a soup with a few spices.

In the first place, spices were expensive in this country. Well, since Barbra was a port town, it was particularly cheap to buy there. So if he used such spices as in the recipe, the cost will inevitably go up.

Seeing Noritz so distressed, Fran seemed to feel sorry for him. She could tell that deep down he wanted to make sure that the students had the best food possible.

(Master, can we do something?)

『Hmm, I actually had an idea』

Noritz's mistake would have been to try to replicate the taste of the recipe based on the one sold at Barbra. I guess it's because he had an assumption

that that was how a curry should be... But with a limited budget and ingredients, it was impossible to do so even for me.

「...I have an Idea」

「Huh? Could it be, you want to help us?」

「Nn」

「Oooh! Thank you! Then, what should we do?」

「Let me use the kitchen」

「Understood!」

Fran then cooked and prepared the dish according to my instructions. Naturally, it was Fran and Urushi who were the first to taste it.

Seeing how well they ate, Noritz followed suit and took a bite of her cooking.

「This is... It is curry, but it's not the curry I know. However, it's cheap and delicious」

「It's Curry Mapo Rice」

「Mapo? What an interesting name」

「It's a little different from curry, but it's delicious」

What we made was a curry Mapo with fewer spices and more sansho (Japanese pepper). In this country, a variety of sansho could be obtained inexpensively. After all, they grew naturally everywhere.

But Noritz and the others never thought of it as something they could use for the curry. They never thought that the inexpensive sansho, which they usually used in large quantities, would be a good substitute for expensive spices. The smell was quite different too.

I took advantage of that and made a curry-like version of a dish that originally existed in this area, a dish similar to Mapo seasoned with sansho, soy sauce, and sugar. The spiciness of this dish was different from that of curry, but I've tried to make it addictive.

In terms of cost, it's not so different from what we've done in the past, but it's a recipe that we, with all our cooking skills, really thought about. Moreover, by using even a small amount of spices from abroad, we were able to create something new. I'm sure the students would love it.

「If you change the seasoning or the thickness a little, you can put it in steamed bun or sandwich」

「I see what you mean! We can freely change the ingredients! You've taught me something good!」

In addition to that, I'll teach him how to arrange existing dishes, like curry fried rice. With Noritz's skills, I'm sure he can make the cafeteria's food taste even better than it already does.

「Thank you. With this, now I can give the students a good meal. But, about your reward...」

「Nn? I don't need it」

Fran refused the reward. Well, this is half as an apology for making a scene, and half for the sake of the other students.

Besides, we've seen Noritz and the others making tearful efforts to keep the cost of ingredients down. If we were to receive a reward for the recipe, it would be meaningless for us to teach them how to make it cheaply.

When she told him that, Noritz said that he couldn't accept it for free and that he would pay for it out of his pocket.

And after a short discussion, we settled on asking him to write a letter of introduction to a business association that does business with the academy. After all, I also wanted a lot of sansho for our future use. So, it's just right.

We finished our work at the cafeteria, but then, we had an unexpected encounter. It was when we were heading for the exit to leave the cafeteria.

「...!」

「?」

It was a brown-haired boy who looked to be only about three or four years old. The boy came running into the cafeteria with a smile on his face as if he was really looking forward to eating, but he stopped moving the moment he saw Fran.

「 「...」 」

Fran and the boy looked at each other. The boy's smile had changed and he was now glaring at Fran. There was strong anger in his eyes and a slight hint of fear. I never thought a boy like him would look at her like that.

After a few seconds of staring at each other, the woman who was with him gently touched the boy's shoulder.

「Romio-kun, you'll disturb everyone if you stop here」

「...I-I'm sorry」

「Shall we go then? Hmm?」

「Yes」

As we passed each other, the woman bowed her head apologetically——while Romio was still staring at us. She must be a caretaker.

『So that was Romio』

「...」

『Fran, don't overthink about it too much』

(That eye... I feel like I've seen it somewhere)

『Eh? You mean, from Romio?』

「Nn」

I thought she was depressed because Romio was staring at her, but actually, she had something else on her mind.

『You've seen it somewhere? You can't remember?』

「Nn...」

We had never met Romio before. So I'm not sure if the hostile and frightened look in his eyes was the same as the one we used to fight with.

「But where...?」

# Chapter 570: First-Year Student

It was the day after our encounter with Romio.

Today, the atmosphere at the Academy of Magic was different from this morning. It was because there was an entrance ceremony for the new students.

However, the ceremony was quite modest.

It seemed that new students entered this academy every four months, and that was why the entrance ceremony was not such an important event.

Only the new students and a few teachers would attend it.

Fran was also told that she did not have to attend. She could attend if she wanted to, but of course, she didn't. Even at her entrance ceremony, she was sure to doze off, and she would definitely fall asleep at someone else's entrance ceremony.

So, she wouldn't bother to tarnish the bright memories of the new students.

The bustle of the freshmen, filled with excitement and expectation, seemed to light up the academy.

『I guess it's the same in every world that freshmen are always excited』

(In Master's world too?)

『Yeah, they are similar. Well, it's rare to find freshman with varying ages in my world though』

Since there was no age limit for admission, the new students were of varying ages. Some were as young as ten years old, while others were over twenty.

The most common age group is around 12 to 14 years old. The same age as Fran.

In a part-time school system, an age difference of this magnitude would be normal. However, children and adults should never be mixed. It was like elementary school students and college students studying in the same classroom.

However, this was not unusual in this world, and the adult freshmen mixed in with the children did not seem embarrassed, nor did the children seem to look at them strangely.

However, it was inevitable that people of the same age would tend to stick together. It was the same as on Earth.

The new students were gleaming with excitement as they saw the facilities of the Academy of Magic. As we were heading towards the classroom with them at our side, we were approached from behind.

「Fran-san?」

「Nn?」

「I knew it was you!」

Fran turned around and looked unusually surprised when she saw the face of the person who had called out to her.

「Khanna? Why are you here?」

「That should be my line」

In front of Fran's eyes, the girl was Khanna, the girl who had been with us on the pass from the Kingdom of Kranzel.

And she seemed to be a freshman as she was wearing the uniform from this academy.

「Fran didn't come to the entrance ceremony?」

「Nn? What do you mean?」

「No, it's just that I didn't see you there. But if you're here, does that mean you were able to enroll here?」

「Nn. I'm enrolled here」

It was not like she was enrolled though. She was just being treated as a temporary student here.

「But I was told that I didn't have to attend the entrance ceremony」

「Ara, really?」

「Nn」

「But it's good to see you again. Since we couldn't find you anywhere, I was wondering if you had abruptly canceled your enrollment. But it's impossible for Fran to not be accepted because of her ability」

I had a feeling that Fran and Khanna were not quite on the same page, and now I know why. It seemed that she thought that Fran was a new student just like her.

Come to think of it, she only told Khanna that her destination was the Academy of Magic.

Fran's age was just right for enrollment, and it was not surprising that Khanna misunderstood.

「Since we're both new students, please take care of me」

As I thought, she seems to have misunderstood.



「But your uniform is...? It's so different from ours」

「This is the Special Battle Class uniform」

「Eh? The Special Battle Class? Isn't that an advanced class...?」

「Nn」

「You didn't get into the Elementary department?」

At this point, Khanna must have finally realized that something was wrong.

They then exchanged information with each other, and finally, she realized that Fran was not a new student.

「I see. I never thought you'd be an instructor. Well, it was natural for someone as capable as Fran-san」

「So Khanna wanted to get here from the start?」

「Eh? Well, that's right, but...」

She didn't reveal that the purpose of her trip was to enter the Academy of Magic because she wasn't sure if she would be able to get in.

「You said this place is open to everyone, right?」

「Well, I have a lot of things going on my side...」

I was aware that she had her reasons, but what exactly was the reason that might have caused the rejection of her admission?

Well, she wouldn't tell us even if we asked. I guess Fran was not really interested in that either. So, she asked a different question.

「Hey, what happened to the other two?」

「Dianne and Shella?」

「Nn. Those two」

Fran had completely forgotten the name of Khanna's companions. Well, she was always like this though.

「Shella is looking for a job in town during our stay. If I can successfully graduate, then we'll return to our home country together」

It would take years for Khanna to graduate. If Shella waited that long, it would cost her a lot of money just to keep staying at the inn. She was looking for a job at Lady Blue to raise as much money as possible to pay for her stay.

「And about that knight?」

「I don't know what Dianne is going to do. Originally, her job was to accompany me to this place. She said she would return to the country with me, but she is allowed to act at her discretion during her stay」

「I see」

「She said she was going to train as a warrior, but she hasn't decided where she's going yet」

I'm rather glad that she was not here.

「Aah, I have to go. I'm sorry to keep you with me」

The teacher leading the new students called her, and Khanna hurried back.

「Umm, hey!」

「Nn?」

Looking back at her, Khanna opened her mouth with a somewhat thoughtful expression.

「Can I meet you again next time?」

「Nn. See you」

「Yes! See you!」

Khanna smiled with relief and with a nod and wave at her. It was probably because she hadn't seen Fran smiling during the conversation and thought that she was annoying her.

But from Fran's point of view, she was actually quite happy to see Khanna again.

『I'm glad you meet someone you know here』

「Nn」

# Chapter 571: A New Resolution

It had been ten days since we had come to the academy.

Fran was feared as an instructor, but as a student, she was becoming familiar with the academy and her class.

She greeted students as we passed them, and if they had a mock battle scheduled for that day, they would often ask her to go easy on them. She ate together in the improved cafeteria and taught each other what she lacked in the class.

Fran also seemed to be enjoying life at the academy.

As for the classes, she didn't doze off all the time. Several classes caught Fran's interest, including the class on spirits and the class on magic. Well, if she was not interested, she would just doze off though.

I tried to wake Fran up at first. But she even devised a way to ignore my calls and stay asleep. I gave up trying to wake her up because of her persistence. After all, if I nag her too much, she might even start to hate the academy.

And besides the boring classes, she seemed to have other complaints as well.

『I mean, this is an academy, we can't really go crazy like that, you know?』

「...Nn」

「...Woof」

Both Fran and Urushi seemed to be frustrated by the fact that they hadn't been able to really exert themselves for the past week or so.

The first few days were still better. She was able to vent some when they were introduced to each class. But after that, there was hardly any fighting except for mock battles with the students.

If we were outside the town, I could have played with Fran and Urushi, but we couldn't do that in the town. I wondered if we could borrow the academy's training grounds, but that also seemed to be quite difficult.

The field outside, where they wouldn't trouble anyone for being serious, was usually used by one of the classes. But when it was free, Fran had a class to attend.

I thought about going there after school, but that time was filled with club activities. The clubs' names were quite fancy, like the Society for the Study of Military Arts, and there were also clubs with quite dangerous names.

『Besides, we're going to have an off-campus survival training tomorrow. So, you'll get a chance to kill some magic beasts and stuff there』

「Really?」

『...I'm not sure though. Besides, once we're out of town, you can have a mock battle with Urushi』

「Oooh! I see」

「Woof woof」

『So, don't make the mistake of using the wrong amount of force in the next mock battle, okay?』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

As a matter of fact, several classes, including the Special Battle Class, had a tradition of going outside the academy for training every year at this time.

The location was planned to be on the shores of Lake Vivian. Apparently, it would also allow for swimming practice for the students.

As long as they lived in this country, they should visit it at least once, and visiting that huge lake would be a great experience for students from outside the country.

And Fran was going to participate on the instructor's side.

(Looking forward to it!)

『You're going to be their escort too, remember?』

Well, it seemed that adventurers from around Lake Vivian will be hired, so the students wouldn't be in danger that often. And the students themselves were quite strong.

I heard that they would use carriages for transportation. Three days to get there, three days to stay, and three days to return.

『Once that's done, your job as an instructor is over』

「Nn...」

『Hey?』

「Hmm?」

『If you want to stay, we can get yourself officially hired by the academy, you know? Well, it's also okay for you to enroll as a student though』

This was Fran's first time at the academy. In fact, it was the first time for her to be in contact with so many people of her age.

If Fran felt comfortable being in the academy, staying was an option.

However, Fran' replied with a shake of her head

「...No」

『Are you sure?』

「Nn. It's fun here, but being an adventurer is more fun. Besides, I won't get stronger by staying here」

『But you'll gain knowledge. It may go a long way, but it'll help you get stronger』

「No need. I've thought of something when I heard about the evolution」

『Is it about the class?』

「Nn. Horial's story. When I heard that, I thought that it would be great if everyone could evolve too」

By “everyone” she must mean all of the Black Cats except herself. In the past, Fran had fought for the Black Cat kin in her mind.

She wanted to break the curse that had been placed not only on her but on the entire Black Cat kin.

Apparently, after listening to Horial's lesson, she reconfirmed her feelings and made them stronger once again.

『You're ready for it, aren't you?』

「Of course」

Breaking the Curse of the Black Cat kin. It would be an arduous path that would make the word “thorny” sound rather bland.

The power of the Black Cat tribe alone had to be enough to defeat the Evil People or the underlings of the Evil Gods with a threat level of S or higher. That was the condition for them to break the curse.

However, at present, there was no other Black Cat kinsman besides Fran that could participate in the battle.

The Black Cat people of the Beast Nation would have already started training and hunting the evil people. However, it was going to take quite some time before it would bore fruit.

In addition, if they want to fight an evil person with a threat level of S or higher, the strength they had gained through power leveling was not enough. They needed to have a core strength that was based on experience as blood, training as flesh, and everything that they had acquired on their own.

I wonder how long it would be before the Black Cat people would reach that level.

So, we have to go it alone or find a companion. The Black Cat kin was said to be the weakest, and their evolution had been blocked. However, there was an exception, Kiara. She was said to have gained that much strength thanks to the extra skill of the God of War's favor. There was no guarantee that something similar would not happen to the other Black Cats.

But I don't even know if there was someone as strong as her out there. So, there was no way we could rely on that alone.

「I need to get stronger and even stronger」

『Yeah, you're right』

In the end, whether she was going to take on the challenge with a companion or alone, Fran needed to become even stronger than she was now to accomplish the ordeal.



# Chapter 572: Our Last Night Staying at the Inn

「Here it is. Tonight is your last night staying here, so I made a big one for you」

「Oooh—!」

「Woof woof!」

Tonight was our last night staying at the Green Ancient Tree Pavilion.

Tomorrow, we were going to an off-campus survival training exercise, and her job as an instructor would be over. So, we would have to leave this inn.

When we told her that, she prepared an even more sumptuous meal for Fran and Urushi.

Fran and Urushi ate a large portion of pasta and grilled meat at a super speed. I thought they had ten servings worth of pasta in their stomach already, but still, they didn't slow down.

Or rather, weren't they eating a little too much? I'm worried about tomorrow. No, before that, I'm worried what the innkeeper would think of this.

「Mogu mogu mogu mogu!」

「Momu momu momu momu!」 (\*munching sfx)

「You sure eat a lot, aren't you?」

The old lady was smiling and giggling when she saw how much Fran and Urushi were eating.

In the middle of that, the old lady suddenly looked up at the ceiling. Both Urushi and I followed her gaze but found nothing but an ordinary ceiling.

But not so for the old lady.

「Aah... Spirit-sama is sad」

「She's there?」

「Yup」

Fran, reacting to the old lady's words, stared at the same spot. She continued to stare at the ceiling for a while, occasionally squinting her eyes.

「Can you see it now?」

「I still can't see it」

Fran responded to the old lady's words with a shake of her head. However, there was more to Fran's words.

「But, I somehow know」

「Hou? You mean you can feel it?」

「Nn」

Fran straightened up her posture and relaxed her entire body. In addition, she stopped using the various skills she normally used unconsciously. In particular, the amount of information coming in must have been greatly reduced by turning off her sensing skills.

She intended to focus all of her senses on her eyes. The way she opens her eyes reminded me of a cat staring into an empty sky. It was called the Ferengel Staden phenomenon\*. Well, I heard it was not really a phenomenon though.

As I watched over Fran, I was reminded of the class on spirits we had taken a few days ago.

There were two types of special lectures on spirits at the Academy of Magic.

One was the Spirit Magic Class. As the name implied, this was a class to teach and train students about Spirit Magic.

The other was Spiritology. This one was a class for students who could not use Spirit Magic but could sense the presence of spirits, to learn Spirit Magic. Students learn the basics and train themselves to be able to feel them.

Fran decided to take the course in Spiritology.

It was unusual for Fran to take the class so seriously. She must be very interested in the subject.

According to the class, Spirit Magic was a very special kind of magic. I thought I knew about it, but its uniqueness was actually beyond my imagination.

First of all, our skill level was not proportional to the strength of the spirit we could handle. It seemed that the skill level of Spirit Magic would just indicate how well our ability to communicate with spirits was.

If we have a high level of Spirit Magic skill, we might be able to see spirits clearly, hear their voices, and share a lot of magic power with them.

However, spirits were fickle beings with a will of their own. No matter how well we listened to them and conveyed our voice to them, it was compatibility that counted in the end.

And it was a matter of luck whether or not we would be able to meet a higher-level spirit with whom we would be compatible.

The reason why there were so many Elves among the strongest Spirit Magicians was actually due to this fact. In fact, it seemed that many Elves

were favored by spirits because of their racial characteristics.

In addition, the Elves know the places where spirits tend to gather due to their experience and knowledge accumulated over the years. This was one of the reasons why they were able to find and make contracts with spirits that were compatible with them.

However, it takes a long time to find a spirit that was a good match for them. There was even an Elven saying that says, “You’ll meet a spirit once every hundred years”.

In other words, if we don’t have the lifespan of an Elf, we probably won’t be able to master Spirit Magic. However, it was not impossible for a human being to make a contract with a spirit.

In Fran’s case, she could sense them, so she should have been able to learn Spirit Magic as her connection with the spirits deepened.

In the class, she even tried to train herself to sense the presence of the spirits in the academy. However, even after those classes, she was unable to reach the level to be able to see them which was necessary to acquire Spirit Magic.

「...I still can’t see them...」

『I see』

「Woof」

For about five minutes, she stared at the place where the spirit-sama would be, and then her shoulders slumped and she fell back to her chair.

Almost every day in the inn, Fran sensed the presence of the spirit, but in the end, she could not seem to see it.

However, when Fran looked depressed, the old lady kindly called out to her.

「Don’t worry. I’m sure you’ll be able to communicate with the spirit-sama since you’re so well-liked by the Spirit of the Great Tree」

「Really?」

「Yeah. I guarantee it. Besides, you've come to understand the spirit that you couldn't sense at all at first, right?」

「Nn」

「I've never seen anyone grow so fast like you」

She was right. In the first place, it has only been ten days since Fran became aware of Spirit Magic. If she were able to use it, the world would be full of spirit users already.

Rather, it was amazing that she could sense the presence of spirits on her own, without even relying on my abilities.

「Thanks」

「That should be my line. It's been a long time since I and Spirit-sama had this much fun. Please come again」

「Nn」

She was greatly comforted by the old lady's words. Fran then nodded slightly and smiled.

(If not now, someday I'll definitely be able to talk to a spirit!)

『Yeah. It must be nice if that happens』

(Nn!)

# Chapter 573: At the Off-Campus Training

『Our convoy is longer than I imagined』

「Nn. Lots of carriages」

「Woof」

Fran and Urushi muttered in agreement to my unintentional comment.

We were currently outside the Lady Blue, about 20 meters up in the air. Fran, riding the Thoroughbred-sized Urushi, was looking down at the long line of carriages.

(Note: Thoroughbred > name of a horse breed)

Today was the start of our off-campus survival training. We were traveling to Lake Vivian with 40 carriages, including those for transporting our supplies.

Over 200 students were participating in the event, and 30 instructors were accompanying them as their guards. In Fran's case, she was given the role of a scout, so she could keep an eye on the entire group and respond to any dangerous magic beasts that might appear.

On the other hand, if it was a small fry, the students were supposed to handle it by themselves, and we were not supposed to help them.

Senior students such as those in the Special Battle Class would take turns escorting the carriage as it moved. However, some students rarely got off the carriage and were just escorted to their destination.

About thirty new students were accompanying them on this off-campus survival training. This seemed to be a tradition of the academy, and the students of the Special Battle Class had also experienced that when they enrolled in the academy.

Even on Earth, there was a joint school activity with the upperclassmen, and I guess, this event was similar to that.

In one of the carriages that don't have a roof, we saw Khanna chatting with her classmates.

There were three freshmen and three upperclassmen in each carriage. However, there were always two upperclassmen guarding the carriage outside, and they took turns to rest.

Charon and her group were the ones who were guarding Khanna's carriage. In case Charon and her group couldn't handle the situation later, they had an instructor sitting on the coachman's seat, and if that wasn't enough, they had Fran and Weena Rhyn as support.

『Well then, Let's get going too』

「Nn. Urushi」

「Woof! Woof!」

By riding on Urushi, we were going to keep an eye from the sky.

As Urushi ran out by leaping in the air, I could see that the students below us were looking up at us.

It was not every day they got to see a giant wolf running in the sky. Urushi was particularly magnificent, and I'm sure that this sight would make a great picture.

『It's going to be more troublesome if we get a bunch of the small fry than just a big one』

「Like goblins?」

『And maybe a bandit, or a swarm of bug types monster』

It would be a disaster if a large magic beast were to run into them. So, it might be better for us to defeat the big ones as soon as possible.

『Let's keep looking for the enemy!』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

...

Six hours after our departure.

The convoy had passed the first rest stop and was now entering the forest area from the plains. From here, the visibility was very poor, and we need to be more vigilant than before.

It must be a difficult place for the students playing the role of escort, as I could clearly see the tension in the whole group increasing.

As for Fran, she was now a little further away from the convoy. We were not slacking, okay?

Rather, we were currently doing our job.

「Haaa!」

「Gii! Giii!」

We were in a battle with a magic beast that lived in the forest area. Our opponent this time was a Tall Mantis. It was a giant praying mantis with unusually long arms and legs. Its body was seven or eight meters long, but its legs were probably more than ten meters long. It was a magical beast with a threat level of E. It used its arms and legs to move dexterously through the deep trees.



It must have sensed the signs and smells of the many prey moving. It was approaching the convoy at a fairly fast pace, so Fran went out to intercept it.

However, it was quite an unusual magic beast, as it possessed a martial arts skill called Scythe Technique. It was able to catch Fran's first blow with its sickle. Even though it was just a check to gauge our opponent's strength, it was pretty impressive.

Moreover, its scythe was covered with electric shocks. If it hadn't been for Fran, who was immune to lightning, they might have been paralyzed.

However, the magic beast's resistance only ended there. Fran, who had found a blind spot where the scythe could not reach, sliced it in half from the back and it fell apart.

I heard that this was a troublesome enemy that would rain scythes down on us from above when we fought in the deep forest, but for someone like us who could always attack from the sky, it was an opponent full of openings.

『Now that we've cleared all the big ones, let's get back to the convoy. It seems they're fighting with goblins right now』

「Okay」

The reason for our return was not to help them but to heal any students who were badly injured. However, their opponent was just a normal goblin, and no one would be injured enough to need Recovery Magic.

The students of the Special Battle Class were capable enough to handle them. They were also able to strip materials from the defeated goblin skillfully. I could even see relaxed expressions on their faces.

However, the new students looked pale.

Not many students were able to remain as calm as Khanna. In her case, she already had actual combat experience and she was capable of defeating goblins.

However, most of the children must have had no experience in fighting. So, if they were suddenly shown a fight with a magic beast in front of them, it was inevitable that they would become frightened.

「Master」

『What's wrong?』

「That」

『Aah, you mean the Heavenly Dragon's Lair, huh? We can see it clearly from here』

「Nn!」

Fran doesn't seem to be interested in the fights below us, she was looking up at the floating island that stood so majestically far above us.

We didn't get the chance to see a Heavenly Dragon today either. However, the sight of the floating island covered in white clouds never got boring no matter how many times I saw it.

Both Fran and Urushi stared at the floating island with sparkling eyes. However, they quickly turned their gaze back to the ground and stared deep into the forest with sharp eyes.

「Master, Urushi, Let's go!」

「Woof!」

『This time they came as a flock huh!? Let's kill them all at once!』

「Okay!」

We sensed the presence of magic beasts approaching the convoy. And they were much stronger than goblins.

They were called the Assassin Apes, magic beasts that excelled at killing their target with a single blow by a sneak attack. They were slightly larger

than a Mountain Gorilla, but their threat level was the same as that of the giant Tall Mantis.

In fact, these beasts were more troublesome to deal with than the larger target, like the Tall Mantis, as they could move quickly and had the attack power to kill their target instantly.

There were six of them. Six of them, using tree branches as platforms, repeatedly leaping towards the students at a tremendous speed.

The way they eliminated their presence was that of a seasoned adventurer, so the students were probably still unaware of them.

「Urushi, take care the two on the right」

「Woof!」

『I'll take care of the two on the left then!』

「Nn!」

We were the first to attack them, as we were a step ahead of them in terms of eliminating our presence, and in terms of detection. Moreover, we could also teleport.

It took less than a minute for them to be annihilated after the first one was cut down by Fran, who had appeared with teleport in front of them. They hadn't thought that they would be taken by surprise in the forest. A look of astonishment was still on the face of the big ape that was about to die.

『For two types of magic beasts with a threat level of E to appear in such a short time is... It looks like we'll be pretty busy until we reach Lake Vivian』

「Nn!」

Fran looked happy when she nodded to my words. She must feel refreshed after being able to rampage against those magic beasts. Well, it was better for her than being stressed out and frustrated.

**Chapter 574: Meeting eaChapter  
other at the off-campus training.**

## Chapter 574: Meeting each other at the off-campus training.

The first night after our departure.

The convoy from the Academy of Magic camped out in a large open space in the middle of the forest.

They formed a wall by arranging the carriages in a circle and set the tents inside of it. Guards took turns resting and patrolling the outside of the carriage's lines.

And in one corner of the camp.

Fran had been called to Weena Rhyn's tent. We left Urushi on patrol because I was not sure if the two greatest warriors of the group would be at ease leaving their posts, but it seemed to have been unnecessary.

「We have spirits with us」

『Hee? Where are they?』

「Around there? And over there too」

『...I can't see them though. But is that all?』

「There are a few more of them. Maybe」

『Are they strong?』

「Dunno」

Even though Fran's ability to sense spirits were getting stronger, she still couldn't seem to discern what kind of spirit they were.

Perhaps, the spirit that dwelt in the great tree of the inn was a spirit of some high rank. The Elf innkeeper even addressed it with “sama” and she also said that it had existed for over a thousand years.

However, Fran could not distinguish between the lower-ranked spirits of the academy and the spirits of the inn. Were they a lower-ranked spirit or a higher-ranked spirit? What attributes and abilities did they have? She had no idea about that.

I couldn't sense spirits at all, so I could only imagine from Fran's poor description, but she said she felt like she could hear a slight sound that spirits made. And it seemed that she could only hear something that sounded like ringing in her ears if she concentrated very hard.

Based on the direction and interval of the sound, she judged that spirits were there.

『Are they Weena Rhyn's spirits?』

「I don't know, but they've been in the same place all the time」

They must be spirits sent out by a spirit magic user as a guard. There were quite a lot of them, and they seemed to be fine without us.

In the first place, they were doing the same event every year, so they should be fine without her.

She walked straight into Weena Rhyn's tent and found that the High Elf magician was not the only one there.

「...Zelos Reed」

「...」

Zelos Reed sat on a chair behind Weena Rhyn. Beside him was the boy, Romio, who was glaring at Fran.

We already knew from their presence before but decided to face them. Fran seemed to be suppressing her feelings by clenching her teeth. Well, her

murderous intent was leaking out though.

「Even though I've sealed his power, I can't just leave him at the academy without me, right? So, I had no choice but to restrain and bring them here」

Just as Weena Rhyn said, metal bracelets were restraining both of Zelos Reed's arms. Moreover, it also seemed to have some kind of sealing magic power, further suppressing Zelos Reed's power.

But with Weena Rhyn close by, he wouldn't be able to do anything.

「...」

「...」

Fran and Romio glared at each other.

Well, Fran wasn't really glaring at him, but she just couldn't help but be concerned when he expressed his hostility so straightforwardly.

On the contrary, Zelos Reed barely showed any emotion when he saw Fran. He was shocked for a moment, but he quickly returned to his calm face.

I guess he decided to stay out of this as much as possible because anything he said would be offensive. But Fran didn't like that attitude. Well, she didn't like everything about Zelos Reed.

She glared at Zelos Reed with irritation in her eyes. She might not have violent outbursts anymore, but there was no way she could control her feelings in front of someone she would kill right now if she could.

But then, it was Romio, who clung to Zelos Reed's leg and looked up at Fran, who broke the tense atmosphere.

「Don't bully Oji-chan!」 (Note: Uncle)

「...I'm not bullying him」

「Liar! I know everything!」

「...」

Fran, however, didn't want to argue with Romio as she knew that Romio didn't mean anything bad by it.

Besides, the current Fran, who emitted murderous and angry intent, must be quite frightening for a child like him. She was slightly impressed by Romio's courage to confront her to protect Zelos Reed.

But it was not a time to praise him.

In the end, she didn't seem to know what to do next, and with a bitter smile, she removed her gaze from Romio and asked Weena Rhyn why she had called us.

「You need something?」

「Yes. I'd like to talk with you about your escort's job for tomorrow onwards」

I thought her purpose was to bring her together with Zelos Reed and Romio, but that didn't seem to be the case.

Weena Rhyn showed us a rough map of the country and explained the terrain ahead. Beyond the forest area, she said there was a plain that was inhabited by a large magic beast that would be hunted by the students.

And the reason why Weena Rhyn had called Fran was to talk about that.

「The target is the Slow Tortoise. It's a tough and strong magic beast, but it moves so slow that even the students can manage to hunt it down」

The Slow Tortoise was an herbivorous magic beast that spent most of its time holed up in its shell when facing strong enemies. It should've been a relatively easy magic beast to hunt as long as they were careful to avoid some of its attacks.

Its threat level was E, but she said that the students could defeat it with proper preparation. She also said that they had magic tools to stall and



defend from its attack so it could be said that they were already well prepared.

「What is my role then?」

「You don't have to do anything to help the students to hunt down the Slow Tortoise. But a lot of magic beasts will come close to them when they smell the Slow Tortoise's blood. Especially those goblins, they show up every year」

Fran's role was to defeat those magic beasts that would try to steal the student's prey.

「Okay」

「And also, I'll make this guy work too」

「...Why?」

「Since we have so many available forces, shouldn't we use it all for the safety of the students?」

「...I understand」

Fran nodded quietly, neither disagreeing nor agreeing with her.

『Are you sure?』

(...I don't know)

As we returned, Fran didn't seem to understand her feelings either.

If Weena Rhyn said it was for the students, she won't be able to object. Besides, if he would work as forced labor or a meat shield, it would sound like a punishment for him. Denial and affirmation swirled in Fran's chest, and she couldn't seem to sort it out.

# Chapter 575: In Sheftent Again

On the third night after we had left the academy.

The off-campus survival training group had reached Lake Vivian as planned.

On the second day, they had to hunt the turtles for food, but a horde of goblins attacked them, which increased the challenge, but apparently, it was expected by the teachers.

They smiled at each other and said that it was just like every other year.

On the other hand, the students' faces were showing signs of great fatigue. It was because this was not only a long journey, but they also had to fight on their own.

Moreover, we didn't camp out on the second night.

In the forest areas where it was dangerous to march through the night, we had no choice but to camp, but in the plains where night marching was possible, we continued to drive through the night without stopping our convoy.

This should be a good experience for them.

The students acting as guards must have taken turns taking naps, but they still looked very sleepy. The teachers, who should've been under much harsher conditions, were still in good spirits, probably due to their status and experience.

And Fran? Fran was fine. She could take a nap on Urushi's back after all. And of course, she was always ready to wake up if a magic beast came

closer.

Due to Urushi's evolution, sleep was less necessary than ever before, and he could be active for several days without sleeping. Well, he liked to sleep, so he usually slept like normal.

He was reliable in a case like this trip. In fact, he hadn't slept since our departure, but he was still full of energy.

『We're now back in Sheftent again』

「Nn」

The place where the convoy from the Academy of Magic was setting their tent was next to the town of Sheftent. It didn't have an outer wall or anything like that, but the ground was flat and level and looked like an easy place to set up camp. They used this place as a base for their annual training at Lake Vivian.

「Everyone looks sleepy」

『I don't think they'll be able to do their duties properly』

We could see a group of sleepy students standing guard at their posts. I'm sure they'll miss any suspicious person walking past in front of them right now. And they would surely get scolded later.

「Charon! That was a close one」

『I never thought a serious girl like her would doze off』

She dozed off, or rather, she fell asleep. It seemed that she was awakened by the boat's momentum. She then looked around in panic and was relieved to know that there was nothing wrong happening.

We proposed an idea to build a wall around the camp with Earth Magic, but Weena Rhyn rejected the idea.

It seemed that one of the purposes of this off-campus training was to experience camping and escorting others in an exhausted state.

If there was a wall, the students would feel less tense, and if the magic beasts do not show up, it wouldn't be a good experience for the students.

It was just like Spartan training, but I guess they have a point.

The best we could do was to look around to make sure no big ones showed up. Since we were near the town, it was unlikely that any big one would appear, but the scent of many preys might draw them in.

However, that was no longer necessary.

「Master, a lot is coming」

We could see a group of adventurers coming from the town towards the camp. They were about thirty in number.

『They must be the adventurers from Sheftent. They were probably hired by the academy as escorts』

「Jill is there too」

『The Guild Master came here in person?』

The leader of the group was a small, old woman. However, the magic power emanating from her body was that of a First-Class Mage. She was probably the strongest among the adventurers, who ranged from young to more experienced.

She was Grandma Jill, the Guild Master of Sheftent. She was also the one who asked Fran to be an opponent for the adventurer promotion test before.

As we looked down from Urushi's back at the figure, Fran suddenly turned her gaze to somewhere. But all I could see there was the darkness of night.

『What's wrong?』

「It's the spirit」

『What?』

Immediately after Fran said that a dim mass of light appeared as if springing out of the empty darkness. It was the size of a bowling ball, and the intensity of the light was about that of a bulb.

And I don't feel any hostility coming from it.

「Fran. Can you come to the tent?」

「Okay」

『I see, so this the visualization of spirits, huh?』

The greatest advantage of using spirits was their stealth ability. However, there were times when this was inconvenient.

For example, they can be used as messengers as it was now. It would be difficult if the spirits were invisible in case of emergencies.

Therefore, there was a technique to visualize spirits so that they could be seen by anyone. It was said that this technique could be used by any Spirit Magic-User. However, it was said that only Advanced Spirit Magic-Users could use it to send their voices far away.

The one who sent a message to us this time must have been Weena Rhyn, and the technique used must be quite the advanced one. When we were in Alessa, the Guild Master, Klimut, had shown us the same technique, but he had actually done it with great difficulty.

As we followed the spirit to Weena Rhyn's tent, we saw Grandma Jill outside, exchanging greetings with her.

Some of the adventurers around them were faces we had seen during the promotion exam. However, the boy who had sent a killing intent at Fran wasn't there. Well, I don't want to be bothered by anything strange during this escort, so that would be more convenient.

「I look forward to working with you again this year, Weena Rhyn-sama」

「Yeah. I'll count on you this year too」

The two then shook each other's hands. At first glance, Grandma Jill looked more experienced and important, but in fact, it was the opposite. I could tell that Grandma Jill's words were filled with awe and respect for her.

「I'd like to start their training on the lake tomorrow, but how things are going there?」

「As expected of Weena Rhyn-sama. Did you already know?」

「The spirits told me」

「There has been a change in the lake recently. So, I'm afraid it won't be the same as last year...」

# Chapter 576: Side: ???

『Hey, buddy, what's wrong?』

「Oji-chan, I think they have arrived」

『They're finally here, huh...?』

My partner, who had better detection abilities than me, was staring out the window of the inn.

It was already nighttime. The stars were shining bright in the sky, and the curtain of darkness had fallen.

But I was sure that my partner could feel it. He could feel the presence of the many people within the darkness of the night.

Not many people had that ability, even for an E-ranked adventurer. In particular, his ability to sense presences and danger had grown remarkably as a result of struggling on his own for years.

On the other hand, my ability to sense things had dropped significantly since I got into my current body. I guess it was because my survival instincts and intuition had been dulled. However, I am now able to sense things that I couldn't sense before.

I focused my attention to look for any presence. Even though I don't have the same accuracy as my partner, I could still sense the presences if I concentrated.

And Indeed, I could feel the presence of a large number of people outside the town.

They were finally here, huh?

10 years... It felt like it had been a long time, but it also feels like a blink of an eye. But I couldn't turn back time, so I had to be prepared.

『It looks like Romio was also there』

「Yeah. But he's crying like a baby as if he doesn't know what's going on, which is annoying」

An annoyed look showed up on my partner's face as he spoke about Romio.

『Don't say that. It's normal for someone of his age, right? For a child like that, all he sees must be new to him』

「You're right...」

『There's also that damned High Elves near Romio』

I guess it was just like before, huh? I've brought Magnolia's bloodline with me in case of emergency.

We were the ones who leaked the information about Romio and Zelos Reed to lure that High Elf. We thought it would be better than them being captured by Zelyse and treated as lab rats.

But was this really the right thing to do? That High Elves also had her eyes on the sealing technique that resided within Romeo after all.

At this rate, we'll just end up in the same situation as before... But we had prepared to prevent that from happening, so we should be fine.

「As expected of a High Elf, her presence is so tremendous」

『I'd like to beat her to death, but It's impossible for us now』

「She's too strong. I just realized how monstrous a High Elf is at my age」

『...』



She had killed my previous partner before, and now, she might kill my new partner too.

But I must prevent that from happening.

However, I couldn't find any hint of dislike or hatred on my partner's face when he talked about the High Elves. On the contrary, he seemed to genuinely admire her.

『Are you sure you want to do this?』

「This is the surest way」

『That's true, but...』

「I'll do my best to prevent that from happening again」

『Well, unlike last time. Zelyse won't intervene this time. The seal has loosened considerably due to the replacement, but we can still manage it for now』

「I'll do something about it too」

『Ou』

It seemed that this slow-witted kid had learned to talk some sense.

「And it seems, there's also an adventurer named Fran there...」

『That girl, huh? You've seen her before, aren't you?』

「Yeah」

『Don't make such a face. It would be different this time. You wanted to see Romio, right?』

「I know, but...」

My partner's face turned into a hateful expression. He even exuded murderous intent.

For me, Weena Rhyn was far more unforgivable, but my partner didn't seem to think so. He had a strong desire to kill the girl from the Black Cat kin.

Seeing him made me feel uncomfortable. But I wouldn't be surprised if the girl from the Black Cat kin hated and wanted to kill me as I had killed someone important to her.

I've been living my life just like that. A life of being resented, a life full of negativity, and an endless cycle of bloodshed. All of that only brings more and more struggles to me.

As a result of that, I don't mind if someone wanted to kill me for revenge. I would accept it. However, even if I told him not to hold a grudge, my partner would not forgive her.

And so, the endless cycle of negativity would only continue. Even after I've rotted away.

What I've done——

「——Chan?」

『...』

「Oji-chan?」

『Oops, I'm sorry. I was just thinking about something』

「Thinking about the seal?」

『It's a bit different, but let's focus on the seal for now』

「The thing we need to be most vigilant for now is the presence of Zelyse...」

『Even I don't know where he is right now. I wonder if he's anywhere near here』

「He was here before. So, there's a good chance that he's here this time too」

He was the Alchemist, Zelyse.

He was a man who acted based on his own desires. He didn't care how many people he had to sacrifice to achieve his goals. Rather, he was a man who found joy in the number of sacrifices and the increase of his infamy.

「Zelyse used me for his own gain before, but not anymore」

『You're right. But that bastard is tricky. No matter how much of an advantage you have, he always seems to have a trump card that can turn the tables to his favor』

「Yeah」

『More importantly, I don't even know how long I can hold my ground against him. He might even have something in store for me』

「...Yeah」

As for me, I think my current body is convenient, but I'm sure it was because of the magic stones and the sword that Zelyse had implanted in me.

Zelyse was a very careful person. I wouldn't be surprised even if he had planted a curse to manipulate me in anticipation of this.

「But can Zelyse use that now?」

『Well, I wonder...? But we should assume that he might use it, so we can deal with it when the time comes』

Weena Rhyn, Romio, Zelos Reed, and Fran. While all the key people were on the stage of doom, only Zelyse's whereabouts were unknown.

And yet, we would prevent our demise. That was what we've been doing for the past eight years.

「I know for a fact that the fleet is suspicious. Let's look again for any abnormalities」

『Yeah, let's do so』

Next time, I would save my partner.

# Chapter 577: The Survival Training Begins

It was the day after we had arrived at Lake Vivian.

The Academy's students were dispatched in groups of ten around the town of Sheftent. They were asked to gather medicinal herbs and defeat any magic beasts with a threat level of F there.

Since it was an official request from the Adventurer's Guild, each group must have a student registered with the Adventurer's Guild, and the other students would be treated as their party.

Many students were active as Adventurers in Lady Blue, not only in the Special Battle Class but also in the Advanced and other classes. They must have thought that the request this time would be quite easy for them, but actually, it was not that easy.

It was because the vegetation, animals, and weather around Lady Blue and Lake Vivian were quite different. If they thought it would be the same as usual, they might have a hard time later.

Each group was accompanied by one instructor and one Adventurer, and the spirits seemed to be following us as well. So, without any abnormalities, there wouldn't be much danger for them.

「I'm Charles」

「Fran」

「I'm looking forward to working with you. It's reassuring to know that the Black Lighting Princess is with us」

「Likewise」

Fran was also assigned to accompany one of the groups. The adventurer who was assigned to accompany the same group as us was a young E-ranked Adventurer.

They seemed to have balanced the instructor and Adventurer pairs, with strong Adventurers paired with weaker Adventurers and the weak instructors paired with stronger Adventurers.

And that was the reason why Fran, the strongest instructor they had, was paired with Charles, the weakest of the Adventurers. Moreover, I don't know if they were aiming for it or not, but Charon and Khanna were in the same group as us.

「I look forward to working with you, Fran-san」

「Nn」

「Me too, I'm glad to be in the same group with Fran」

At first, the students were uneasy when they saw how unreliable Charles looked, but when they knew that Fran would accompany them, their smiles returned.

The upperclassmen probably knew that Fran was second only to Weena Rhyn in terms of ability.

But still, it was the new students who seemed anxious. They only saw Fran as a fledgling Adventurer.

They should have seen her riding on Urushi's back before, but she hadn't properly shown them her abilities yet. They must think that she was a strong magic beast user, but Urushi was now hiding in her shadow, and they only saw Fran alone.

Thus, they might think that their escort was the newbie duo of Charles, who was a fledgling, and Fran, who looked just like a child. That was probably what made them feel uneasy.

Currently, Fran and the third group were asked to gather medicinal herbs and defeat a pack of wolves. Our location now was in the middle of the mountains, a little away from the lake.

Charon was walking in the lead while looking at the map. Those requests could be done in no time if I or Fran helped, but this time we had to let the students do it.

「Let's pick some herbs around the river ahead」

But then, it was Khanna who replied to Charon's words with an uneasy expression.

「Eh? But you sure you want to come closer to the water?」

「It's the lake that we should stay away from. So, there wouldn't be a problem on the river, right, Charles-san? It's safe for us to go near the river up ahead, right?」

「Eh? Yeah, you're right. It's fine if it is the river up ahead」

「Thank you very much. Let's head there then」

「Yes」

Charon, she was quite good, wasn't she? She casually extracted the information that there was a river up ahead. Charon's map was taken from the Adventurer's Guild in Sheftent, but I'm not sure how accurate it was.

Some rivers would disappear depending on the season, and if the information was old, there wouldn't be a river anymore. However, Charles' slip made her sure that the river was still there. That was unless Charles hadn't purposely told a lie.

Well, I guess it was simply just a slip from him. He doesn't even seem to be aware that he had given her a hint, as he was talking to Charon in a carefree manner. So, it was unlikely that he had told a lie to her.

There were some restrictions set for the students in this off-campus survival training. One of them was to stay away from Lake Vivian. This restriction was not set by the Academy, but by the Adventurer's Guild.

It was because the Modoki sightings were increasing and it had become too dangerous for the students to be there.

When we reached the river, Charon and the others started looking for medicinal herbs. Then one of the students shouted with joy.

「I've found it! This must be some kind of medicinal herbs, right?」

「Ooh, isn't that a Scarlet Water Weed!? They're short in supply right now, so they must fetch a high price!」

It was the Scarlet Water Weed that we had found before. We were told that there was a shortage of it back then, but it seemed that there was still a shortage now.

The Scarlet Water Weed was supposed to be a cure-all for this country's unique endemic disease, but was the endemic infection still spreading?

I asked Fran to ask him about that. But even Charles didn't seem to know the details either.

「It's not a big deal around here. But in the eastern part of the country, the demand seems to be rising. You all came from the Magic Academy, right? I'm sure you know a lot about it, don't you?」

『Well, I haven't heard anything about an endemic disease spreading though』

「I don't know」

「Really?」

「How about you, Charon?」



「I don't think there is that kind of problems at the Academy. Even last year, there were only a few students from other countries had been affected by it」

It seemed that Charon didn't know much about the endemic disease either.

「Is that an epidemic in other towns?」

「No, Fran-san. That's not possible」

They told us that children were more likely to be affected by this endemic disease and that the number of patients increased at the Academy of Magic when there was an epidemic. In other words, the disease couldn't be prevalent elsewhere when it was not prevalent at the Academy.

「Then, from where is it?」

「I don't know about that either. Maybe it's only prevalent in the coastal areas in the eastern region」

Oh, and by the way, Fran was fine. The potion made from the Scarlet Water Weed was supposed to be preventive medicine, and Fran has already taken it.

「Khanna, what's wrong?」

「Eh? No, I was just wondering if I could make some money by procuring the medicine that is short in supply」

「Ooh, as expected of a student of the Academy. I didn't know you could come up with something like that from what we just talked about for a while」

「I'm the daughter of a trading company's owner after all」

# **Chapter 578: The Modoki's Attack**

## Chapter 578: The Modoki's Attack

Charon and her group, with Fran as their escort, were searching for a pack of wolves to kill while gathering herbs.

However, the search was not going well.

In the vicinity of the academy, they live in holes on the plains, but the wolves around here have their dens in the forests. In addition, they dug holes in the trees' roots and hid in them.

If they didn't know that, they would have had a harder time finding them. But the receptionist of the Adventurer's Guild would tell them that hint right away if asked. Even Charon, who had thought about getting a map at the guild, didn't seem to think that the wolves' behavior here would be so different.

Charles, their escort, had an indescribable expression on his face. He wanted to teach the students, who were continuing their fruitless search, about the wolf behavior here but that would not be a good experience for them.

He wanted to teach them, but he shouldn't. The frustration must be torturing him from within.

We knew about the wolves' behavior because we've tracked and spotted them many times during our herb gathering before.

I think they were probably the closest to the wolves when they were looking for medicinal herbs at the river.

Since Urushi was hiding in Fran's shadow, Familial Hatred didn't seem to have shown its effect before, but it might do so to an advanced wolf-type magic beast though.

We followed the students at a leisurely pace, keeping an eye out for any magic beasts that might approach them.

We have only had one encounter today. And that was only because we went to kill a Lesser Wyvern that was in the distance by teleporting.

But we had been in some good fights these past few days, so Fran doesn't seem to be frustrated today. It must be so refreshing for her, unlike being in the stifling city. And she was also in the mood for a picnic with Charon, Khanna, and the others today.

As we continued to move, Charles issued a warning.

「Aah, please don't go any further to the lake」

「Oh, we're already that close?」

「Yeah」

When we were at the lake before, the Modoki used to appear only near the center of the lake, but it seemed that they would appear in a wider area now.

A few cases of people being attacked on the shores of the lake had also been reported. Therefore, the Adventurer's Guild decided to restrict the students from approaching the lake for their safety.

However, that only applied to the students of the Academy of Magic. They could not deprive the local people of their livelihood, so there were no restrictions on the traffic of the ships.

And the result was the scene in front of us right now.

「Eh? Hey, that ship seems to be under attack!」

「I-it's true!?!」

A cargo carrier had been attacked by a Modoki.

When Charon and Khanna shouted, the other students seemed to notice it too.

「W-wait! Don't go!」

Charles was desperately trying to hold back the students who were about to run away.

「But, if we don't do something, they'll sink that ship!」

「Yeah! We can help them!」

「Oi, you guys need to calm down!」

「We can't even go there, you know!?!」

Some of the students appealed that they should go to the rescue, but the students who remembered the information about the Modoki were against it. However, the students in the rescue group were appealing with good intentions while the students who were against it were the weaker ones.

The ones who were against it would also like to help if they can.

However, if the students go there, they will surely be killed by the Modoki.

(Master, let's help them)

『Yeah, the students would be reckless if we leave them alone』

(Nn)

『Urushi, we'll count on you here』

「Woof!」

The students' eyes then focused on Urushi as he jumped out of Fran's shadow.

「I'll go help them, but Urushi will stay behind, so don't worry」

「Eh? But...」

The new students, who had not yet seen what Fran was capable of, looked at her like she was a child who won't be able to do much to help them, but the upperclassmen seemed to agree.

「We'll leave it to you!」

「Yeah, we'll be counting on you!」

「Nn」

The ship's mast had already been broken, and the tentacles of those Modoki were stuck to its deck. We'd better hurry.

『Let's jump at once!』

「Okay!」

We then made a long jump and teleported directly above the ship.

『People are floating on the lake. Are they the crew members?』

「They're still alive」

『So, the Modoki is still attacking the ship, huh...?』

The Modoki continued its attack without paying attention to the crew members who had been thrown out into the lake. Doesn't it have the habit of preying on humans? As I was wondering, we saw a man still on board being coiled and lifted by its tentacles.

『That guy is in danger!』

「Let's help him!」

Fran used her aerial jump to dash towards the ship. Noticing the appearance of a new enemy, the Modoki tried to attack us with its tentacles but Fran managed to dodge them all and landed on the deck.

「Haaa!」

We rescued a man who was about to be dragged into the lake by slashing its tentacles.

The man who fell from a height of about five meters shouted in pain, but he wouldn't be badly injured, as the tentacles that were gripping his body served as a cushion.

「Ugh...」

「Are you okay?」

「Y-yeah」

「Just wait there, I'll be right back」

After leaving the man behind, Fran jumped out again because to save all of them, we had to do something about the Modoki.

『Fran, thunder-type magic is no good, it'll include the crew members』

「Okay. Let's shoot it down then!」

『Roger!』

With Fran's intentions in mind, I instantly changed my shape. I transformed into a one-handed sword with a cone-shaped blade without a brim, suitable for throwing. It would be easier to understand if I said I transformed into the smaller version of the jousting spear.

「Haaaa!」

『Let's go!』

I activated my telekinetic catapult as she threw me straight down, and I turned into a super-high-speed bullet that shot through the Modoki. Its hard shell would be just like plywood in the face of this attack.

Thanks to the fact that the power was concentrated at one point, there was no damage to the surrounding area. And the crew members floating in the lake did not seem to be suffering from the aftermath.

The Modoki that was pierced by me melted into a mushy mess. Oh, that reminded me, we wouldn't be able to collect materials or magic stones from this thing.

「Let's help everyone before other Modoki come」

『Yeah. Let's bring them to the shore for the time being. That ship was already useless』

「Nn!」

However, it was just a normal-looking ship, why was it attacked by a Modoki? Was there a reason for its strange behavior? Or did they just randomly attack large moving objects?

I have no idea.



# Chapter 579: Strange Occurrence in the Lake

「Young miss, thanks for saving us...」

「I can't believe that Modoki would even go to this area...」

「Aah, our cargo is...」

The five crew members who had been rescued by Fran were grimacing on the shore. Some of them had drunk a lot of water, but their lives shouldn't be in danger.

The old man, who seemed to be the captain, lamented as he stared at the sinking ship.

「Is your cargo is something that shouldn't get wet?」

「We have no choice but to let go of the grains we brought. But we have to recover the Scarlet Waterweed medicine back somehow. There's a shortage of it after all. It's stored in a sturdy crate, and I'm sure some bottles are safe」

「Scarlet Waterweed medicine?」

「Yeah. It's the recently developed medicine made from Scarlet Waterweed. It works the same as the conventional pills against the endemic diseases, but I've heard that its efficacy is enhanced by being made into a potion」

And he told us that that ship was loaded with that new medicine.

「I guess we'll have to ask the adventurers to pull up the medicine later... I hope this is a place with few magic beasts though」

I wonder about that. Right now, thanks to the Modoki, the other magic beast seemed to have escaped, and there was no sign of them. But I'm sure they would come back after a little while.

(Master)

『You want to help them?』

(Nn)

Well, we can go get it now though.

「Where did you store that medicine?」

「Eh? It's in a storage room on the port side. Right around where that damned Modoki pierced our ship」

The captain pointed to a large hole on the port side of the ship, which was sinking with the starboard side facing down.

(Note: port, nautical terms for ship's left side, starboard > right side)

It wouldn't be a problem for us if it was there. Rather, that big hole would make it easy for us to get into. Well, that hole was half of the reason the ship was sinking though. The other half was the cracks that had formed all over the hull. It was because of the Modoki's tentacles.

「I'll be right back」

「Y-young miss!？」

Waving lightly at the surprised captain, Fran jumped out again.

「Let's retrieve the medicine」

『Wait, let's see if I can store the hull itself first』

「Aah, I see」

That would be the fastest way to do this. However, I failed to store the whole hull. Maybe there were living beings inside the ship. It didn't have to be human beings, just a fish or a rat, and it wouldn't be able to be stored in the dimensional storage.

「It won't be stored...」

『We don't have any choice. I'll take care of the air for you to breath, Fran, use your water magic to move』

(Okay)

If we were going to explore the small ship, it would be safer for Fran to move around on her own.

Fran then jumped into the ship through the hole made by the Modoki. The inside was already filled with water and half of it was submerged.

Fran landed on a half-flooded crate and looked around the storage room.

「Where it is?」

『Hmm...』

The captain had told us before that it was a magic potion, so I tried to use my magic detection to find it, but I got no response here.

But I could feel a small hint of magic power in the entire water in this room. Perhaps the bottle of the scarlet potion had been broken and the contents had dissolved into the water.

It's just that there's something weird about it...

『We had no other choice, we'll have to check the label on each crate 』

「Nn」

I checked the crates that had not yet been submerged in water, but there was no Scarlet Waterweed medicine. No, at this point it would be better to stow all the crates away and check them later.

『Let's just store it all away for now』

「Okay」

Then I started to store the crates in my dimensional storage, Fran, who had gone underwater, quickly swam out of the water.

It was not that she looked like she was in a hurry, but she seemed to be a little surprised.

『What's wrong?』

「...I felt strange when I used some magic」

『Strange?』

「Somehow... It feels like my magic worked a little too well」

『What do you mean?』

When I listened to the details, it seemed that the output of the magic she used was higher than she had imagined. It was just a small difference, when she manipulated the water to move about 10 centimeters, she went a few millimeters further than she had estimated.

Normally, this wouldn't bother her, but Fran, who had gained a high level of magic control through her training, seemed to feel a slight discomfort.

『There might be something other than the Scarlet Waterweed potion leaking here then』

It's probably not poisonous, as my crisis perception wasn't triggered, but it was a little creepy. Let's get it over with and get out of here.

I went into the water, leaving Fran behind, and quickly stowed the cargo.

I also tried to use water magic, but it definitely felt strange. It seemed that there was a problem with the water itself, rather than something being wrong with the water magic that I had activated. There was a high possibility that some kind of magic potion was dissolving in the water.

Or was it the effect of the Modoki that had dissolved in the water? That sounds possible too.

『Anyway, let's get out of here quickly』

「Nn」

By using Teleport, we returned to the shore at once. And at the same time when the captain saw us, he rushed over to us with an expression of relief.

「Are you safe!? We can get the medicine pulled up later, you know! Don't be so reckless!」

「I'm fine. More importantly, I brought it with me」

「What? No, since she used teleport before... Could it be that you can use space-time magic?」

「Nn. Should I bring it out here?」

「A-Aah, yes please」

They had already selected the most well-rested crew members and sent them back to Sheftent. He said that help would be coming soon.

But as Fran stacked the crates, the captain's face was changing rapidly. First joy, then confusion, then a look of impatience, and finally, astonishment.

Space-time magic was very weak at a lower level. It wouldn't be strange if its capacity was only the size of a small crate.

The captain must have thought that she only managed to retrieve a crate of Scarlet Waterweed potion. But we've retrieved the entire cargo instead.

With nearly 30 crates piled in front of him, he was beyond happy.

「Is this fine?」

「A-ah, yes... T-thanks」

He seemed to be troubled. But still, he didn't forget to say thanks, so he must be quite a nice person.

However, we can't help them any further. We're in the middle of escorting the students. Since it was an emergency, we had to leave to save them, but we need to get back to the students as soon as possible.

We could help them carry the cargo back to the Sheftent, but that would have disqualified us as an escort.

Oh, before we went back, we asked him about something that had been bothering me. It was about our discomfort when using the water magic before. However, the captain didn't seem to understand it either. He said that they didn't have any magic potions other than the Scarlet Waterweed potion on board.

Then, was my theory about the Modoki's dissolved body was right? Well, it was also possible that the Scarlet Waterweed potion itself was the cause though.

But since they were in shortage of this medicine, I can't ask them to share it with me for experiments.

We'll have to ask someone who seemed to know more about this later——like Grandma Jill.

# **Chapter 580: Romio's Strange Behavior**

## Chapter 580: Romio's Strange Behavior

The night following our slaying of the Modoki that attacked the cargo ship.

When we returned to the camp, we had an evaluation meeting with Charon and the others. At the end of the day's training, the escorts were now allowed to give them some advice.

Fran and Charles point out their mistakes of the day's mission. Despite his low rank, Charles was still one of the adventurers who made his living around this lake.

When it comes to gathering and hunting, he could give more precise advice than Fran.

When the meeting was over, Fran was on her way to the tent she had been assigned to sleep in. Perhaps because she had Urushi with us, she was allowed to use a tent without sharing it with anyone else.

But on our way there.

We spotted a small shadow crouching in the grass. It could not be an animal as it seemed to be wearing proper clothes. So, it should be a small child.

It seemed to be Romio.

No, we knew he was there from his presence, but when we approached him, he looked strange. His cheeks and forehead were flushed red, and he was breathing heavily.

「Ugh!」

Fran rushed over to him and hurriedly picked up his little body. His fever seemed to be quite high. His cheeks, which were peculiarly puffy for an infant, were red from the fever, and his forehead was covered with a lot of sweat.



「...」

Romio opened his eyes slightly to see Fran, but he didn't even seem to have the energy to speak anymore.

Fran didn't ask him if he was okay as it was obvious that he was not.

(Master, what should we do? Use Heal?)

『No, don't use Recovery Magic』

(Why?)

『I don't know what will happen to his physical exhaustion...』

I had heard that if you use Recovery Magic on a child who didn't have much strength, it could cause them to lose extra strength and worsen their condition instead.

The same went for potions. And I don't even know if he was injured, sick, or just tired.

It wasn't simply a matter of using magic.

My appraisal told me that Romio's condition was fatigue. But I don't know how reliable that was.

The fact that he was in a contract with Zelos Reed, an evil person, made things more complicated as some of the results of my appraisal were displayed as unknown.

Some skills were impossible to identify, and the statuses had holes in them, so I didn't get to see everything.

『Let's bring him to Weena Rhyn right away!』

「Nn!」

Fran gently picked up Romio with the so-called princess carry. It was refreshing to see Fran holding someone like this.

Romio tensed up slightly, but he didn't have the strength to move much.

「Don't give up」

「...!」

When Fran called out to him, Romio's eyes widened in surprise.

Fran was like an enemy for him. To Romio, who was only about four years old, the world had only recently begun, and in that world, Zelos Reed was a dependable guardian for him. At least that was how Romeo perceived it.

I don't know how he behaved in front of Romio, but I'm pretty sure he didn't treat him badly. Otherwise, there was no way Romio would miss him.

That enemy had unreasonably attacked Zelos Reed before, the most important person for Romio. And that enemy was Fran.

Well, for that matter, Fran understood that it was no use getting angry at a child who didn't know any better.

That was why we have very little in mind for Romio. It was not that we didn't think about him at all, but it was not to the point of being hostile with him. At most, I have a sense of dislike for him.

Just like now, we were honestly worried about Romio, who was in poor physical condition.

And that was what surprised Romio.

Seeing Romio's confused expression reminded me of Fran when she met Zefmate. The guy from the Blue Cat kin. Zefmate was the first Blue Cat kin that Fran had encountered in her life that was friendly to the Black Cat Kin.

At that time, Fran also had a confused look on her face. Romio's face was just like Fran's at that time.

Romeo was just a young child——well, because he was a child, he must have thought that the world was clearly divided into friend and foe.

So why would Fran, who was supposed to be his enemy, help him? I guess he wouldn't understand that for now.

「Weena Rhyn! I found Romio lying on the ground!」

「...Can you put him down here?」

「Okay」

Zelos Reed was not here. It seemed he was doing some chores right now, and that must be the reason why Romio went to look for Zelos Reed.

She laid the limp Romio on the bed as Weena Rhyn had told her. Weena Rhyn, without seeming to be in a hurry, began to do some sort of medical examination.

「Hmm... He's just simply tired. Well, just being around Zelos Reed could get you affected by the evil spirits, so it can't be helped」

「Is that so?」

「He must have been through so much exhaustion, hadn't he?」

Weena Rhyn said so and shrugged her shoulders.

Well, as a High Elf, childhood was a long time ago for her. She might not be able to understand Romio's suffering.

「Romio will be fine?」

「Well, it's not life-threatening」

「I see, that's good then」

「I'm surprised. I thought you'd hate him」

「Not really」

Fran shook her head in response to Weena Rhyn's question.

Well, it was not that she didn't hate him.

It was just that she didn't know how to treat him.

# Chapter 581: The Spirit of Time and Water

「!! I'm leaving!」

Fran took one last look at Romio's face and hobbled to the entrance of the tent.

「...」

「...!」

She sensed that Zelos Reed was coming back. We passed each other at the entrance but did not say a word to each other.

Soon, however, we heard Zelos Reed's voice behind us.

「Romio!」

Fran, who had been expressionless when I saw her face, widened her eyes when she heard Zelos Reed's voice. The expression on her face was not one of frustration or anger. If anything, the look on her face was one of surprise and panic.

『Fran, what's wrong?』

「...No, it's nothing」

It doesn't seem like that though... I wonder what part she thought was so surprising about Zelos Reed?

Fran continued to walk in silence and returned to our tent.

The look of panic she had shown earlier was no longer there, and on the surface, she seemed to be calm. However, Fran was quite emotional when it came to Zelos Reed. To be exact, she was nervous.

She didn't know whether she should call out to him or not...

When I was thinking so, someone suddenly called out to her.

「What's troubling you?」

「Who!」

『Who is it!』

「Grrr!」

Fran, Urushi, and I all turned around in a panic.

I couldn't sense their presence after all. Although we were a little distracted, we were not defenseless. However, none of us could detect any sign of the owner of the voice.

This was a really strange situation.

No, there was one possible existence.

That was if the other party was a spirit. Urushi and I couldn't sense any sign of it, and Fran would have to be very focused to sense it.

But that doesn't seem likely either.

What I saw in front of us was not a spirit at all. On the contrary, it was a girl we recognized.

However, unlike before, she was not wearing an eye patch.

「The one from the food stall?」

「Long time no see」

It was Rhyn, a blind girl who ran a food stall in the town of Kiarazen. She was a beautiful white-skinned girl with beautiful loose blond hair in half-twins.

However, now she had removed the eye patch that covered both eyes and was exposing her eyes. We could see that her right eye was purple and her left eye was green, it was the so-called odd eye.

Even in this dimly lit tent, lit only by a single pale light from a small magic tool, her eyes were as clear as if they were shining.

I guess that was what you would call eyes that seemed to suck you in. I couldn't take my eyes off Rhyn's odd eyes, which sparkled like jewels.

Her eyes seemed to be firmly focused on Fran. Wasn't she blind? I'm pretty sure the appraisal at the time showed that she has lost both of her eyes...

I tried to appraise her again.

『Wha!』

(Master?)

『My appraisal was blocked』

I should have been able to appraise her before.

「Fufu. Sword-san. It won't work on me」

「...What do you mean?」

「Fufufu」

She actually knows what I am!? But Rhyn had no intention of pursuing the matter. She smiled and looked at Fran, who played dumb.

「I'm here to see Fran today」

「Why? Besides, are you... a spirit?」

『What?』

(I could feel the sign of a spirit coming from Rhyn)

For real? But certainly, I couldn't feel Rhyn's presence at all. It was as if an illusion was standing right in front of us. But I sensed her human presence when we were in Kiarazen...

Was she really a spirit? I've never thought I'd be able to see a humanoid spirit like her. Long ago, Klimut told us that a humanoid spirit was a high-ranking spirit.

If so, was the girl in front of us a high-ranking spirit?

「I'll tell you my name again. I'm a spirit, Rhyn. The spirit of time and water」

「As I guessed, you're a spirit... Amazing, you look like a human」

She was a spirit. And her right eye was purple and her left eye was green? Wasn't that the characteristic of the Great Spirit, who is said to be guarding Lake Vivian?

However, when she told us that she was a spirit, I was convinced of her mystical beauty. In fact, there was a sense of detachment of the worldly sense that made it hard for me to be convinced otherwise.

「I came here today because I wanted to tell the both of you about something」



# Chapter 582: Possible Tragedy

「I came here today because I wanted to tell the both of you about something」

「...What is it?」

Rather than trying to pry into Rhyn's identity, Fran decided to listen to her first. There was something about the serious expression that Rhyn wore that made it difficult for her to say no.

「Through water, I can see the cause and effect of the past. And from the vision of the past, I can know the future」

「The future?」

「Yes. There is no such thing as a fixed destiny in this world. But there is an outcome called the future, which is likely to come if we do nothing」

Rhyn seemed to have some kind of psychometric ability. Since she could predict the future, she must have been able to analyze the past in great detail. Moreover, it seemed that she could also predict the future by performing calculations based on past information.

Maybe it was because of that ability that she found out I was not just a simple sword. If she could see Fran's past, then, of course, she could see me in her past too.

「Of course, this is not a sure thing. It's just that, as it is now, there's a high probability that it will come」

「So what does that mean?」

「There's a tragedy coming for the both of you」

「Tragedy?」

「Yeah. You've saved my life before, and I wanted to return that favor」

「Before? What are you trying to say since a while ago?」

「I'm sorry. If I interfere too much, the future I see might change into something completely different. But I'm really worried about you guys... Sword-san. To avoid this tragedy, you'd need to be ready」

Rhyn's eyes definitely focused on me.

「You must haven't noticed, the changes in yourself」

『...What do you mean?』

I'd been completely exposed. There was no point in hiding it any longer. I was worried about the tragedy that was coming to Fran too.

「You are, becoming a sword」

『Becoming? I'm already a sword, aren't I?』

「The body is. But not the inside. You're still a person inside」

Aah, so that was what she meant. I'm a former human being, so it couldn't be helped.

「However, you're becoming less and less of a person. The change is accelerating, from a human spirit to a spirit worthy of the sword」

『Is that bad?』

「In the past, you hesitated in a situation where you would have stopped Fran. Nowadays, you are taking a step back and looking at Fran from behind」

『Well, that is——』

「No, definitely not. You acted like a guardian before. But now, you act like a sword, just like what any sword does」

『Well, it's because I'm a sword, right...?』

「And you're starting to feel more comfortable by thinking that way」

『No... I-I'm...!』

I tried to argue with Rhyn and was surprised at how weak my words sounded. What was it? I tried to shout, “No! I'm not just a sword!” but failed.

「You must haven't noticed the change in Fran too」

『What?』

「Was she frustrated because she couldn't freely move her body? Did you really think that was the case?」

What do you mean? When I looked at Fran, she laid her ears flat and turned her head down with an indescribable look on her face. She looked apologetic, sad, lonely, and a mixture of other emotions.

「I'm sorry...」

『Why are you apologizing?』

「I had noticed that Master was a little strange. But I was afraid to tell you」

『Fran...』

The uneasiness I was having was making her irritated and agitated...? Because of me?

「You are indeed a sword. But you're also a person. Don't forget that」

Right after she told us that, Rhyn's body started to fade.

『W-wait!』

「You're her master, aren't you? Don't just be a mere bystander. Keep your mind strong. You are Fran's teacher——」

『Rhyn! Wait! Please tell me more about it!』

It was no good. She had said all she wanted to say and disappeared.

『Fran, can you sense Rhyn's presence?』

「She is gone」

『I see...』

But, I was becoming a sword? How did that lead to tragedy?

「Master」

『What is it?』

「I prefer Master to remain as my master」

『Fran...』

There was a definite sadness in Fran's voice. Her eyelashes trembled, and her eyes moistened slightly.

Fran pulled me out of the scabbard and hugged me tightly. I could feel Fran's warmth and the beating of her heart.

「There are many swords. But Master is my only master」

『I'm...』

Fran was afraid. She was afraid I would turn into a sword. She even shed tears for me.

I was terrified at that moment.

Even though Fran had done so much for me, I wasn't afraid of the fact that I was becoming more like a sword. If it had been me when I first met Fran, I would have definitely felt sorry and scared.

As Rhyn had said, I was on the verge of becoming a sword. The moment I became very aware of this, I was hit by a terrible chill.

『Guh...』

「Master!？」

It was the first time I felt this way since I became a sword. The next moment, I felt my body tremble with an unfamiliar urge that took over my mind. No, I don't have a body to tremble though...

『Gha...』

「——！」

Then, I suddenly realized that I had a strong fear of becoming a sword.

This is——.

「——! Master!」

I became blind and couldn't see my surroundings. I couldn't even hear Fran's voice anymore. However, the moment I heard the sorrowful call, I was able to rapidly regain my composure.

『...Fran?』

「Master! Are you okay?」

『A-aah, yes, I'm okay. I'm totally fine. Sorry, I was just a little distraught... Hey, have I been acting weird lately?』

「Just a little. But it is really just a little」

So, it was only a little, huh? Apparently, that was why she couldn't bring herself to say it. But Fran was clearly relieved.

『Fran』

「Nn?」

『I'm still myself. I'm Fran's master』

「Nn...」

Just what am I supposed to do? Rhyn told me to be strong-minded. I guess that means we can still do something about it.

『I'll do my best』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 583: Person and Sword

Chapter 583: Person and Sword

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

I'm about to become a sword to the soul and will be nothing more than a bystander.

That's what Rhyn said to me.

If that was the case, I would be a person and a guardian for Fran.

It seemed like I had been talking less and less lately. And I had been letting Fran decide what to do. No, I had always let Fran do whatever she wanted to do.

But lately, I had probably been tossing judgments at Fran rather than trusting her to do the right thing.

It was hard for me to be aware of it, but I was going to try to get it back, starting with a conversation.

『Hey, Fran』

「What is it?」

『Earlier, when you heard Zelos Reed call Romio's name, you were surprised, weren't you? What's wrong with that?』

Even in such a conversation, Fran happily responded.

「He sounded just like someone」

『Just like someone?』

「Just like Master」

『Huh? Just like me?』

「Nn. It was the same voice that Master used when he asked me 『Are you okay?』 ... A gentle voice」

I didn't expect that answer.

Do I sound like him? A gentle voice? Of course, it was not the tone of the voice, but the feeling of it... I couldn't tell it myself, but Fran seemed to be sure.

『So, do you think that Zelos Reed is really worried about Romio?』

「Nn」

I heard that the Magnolia family's bloodline could even influence someone...

『Is the Magnolia bloodline really that powerful? So powerful that it can change the very foundation of a person's personality』

「I don't know. But his words were sincere. Without a doubt」

『...If Fran thinks so, then I'll believe it』

「Nn」

I finally understood why Fran was so confused. She must have been surprised to see the kindness that her enemy, Zelos Reed, showed to Romio.

She also felt sad when she compared the good changes in Zelos Reed with the bad changes in me.



Had I... failed as a guardian? I didn't even realize that I was making Fran sad.

「Hey, Master」

『Hmm? What is it?』

「Can I sleep with you today?」

『...Of course』

「Woof woof!」

「Urushi can join too」

「Woof!」

I don't think I've seen such a happy smile on Fran's face in a long time. I was even shocked by that fact.

『Then, let's sleep together!』

「Woof!」

「Nn!」

Fran then dove into the bed with me in her arms.

My sword blade was completely exposed. But when Fran wanted to be pampered, she would hug me without a sheath like this. Oh, I'd already transformed to remove my blade.

「Hey, Master」

『What is it?』

「...Tomorrow, will you make breakfast for us?」

『Tomorrow?』

「Nn. You can't?」

『Of course I can, what do you want?』

「Pancakes!」

『Aah, I see. I haven't made those in a while』

「Nn. Hey, Master」

『Yeah~?』

「You know——」

While being cuddled up in Urushi's fur, Fran and I continued to talk. It was not a particularly interesting conversation, just a casual chat.

But it was probably the most important thing for us right now. Fran seemed happy with it.

That made me happy too.

We must have been talking for almost an hour. Our conversation ended when Fran couldn't stand the drowsiness and fell asleep.

『...They're asleep, huh?』

「Shu~ Shu~」

「Gu~ Gu~」

I won't make Fran sad because of me anymore, and I'm not going to turn into a mere sword

That was what I thought when I saw Fran sleeping in a cuddle with Urushi.

『Announcer-san』

〈Yes〉

『My soul... Is it really on the verge of becoming a sword?』

〈Yes. The soul of the individual named Master is beginning to adapt to the vessel of the sword〉

『I see. Hey, how can I prevent it? What should I do to avoid making Fran sad?』

〈Your desires are conflicting. I can't provide a definitive answer〉

『Huh? What do you mean?』

〈The way to keep your soul as a person is simple. The solution is to erase the sword adaptation from the system〉

An adaptation system. I didn't know I had such a thing. But it seemed that my soul really was becoming a sword.

『By conflicting, do you mean that if I stop adapting to the sword, Fran will be sad? But why?』

〈The adaptation system is salvation provided by God. By stopping the adaptation, there is an 88% chance that the individual named Master will lose his mental stability and go crazy〉

『Wha...!!』

Are you saying that the fact that my soul was trying to become a sword was God's way of saving me? But, I was pretty sure I was told that if they put a person's soul into a sword, they would definitely go crazy...

〈There's 100% chance that the individual named Fran will be saddened if the individual named Master went crazy〉

In other words, If I tried to stop it, I'd become crazy one day and would make Fran sad. But if I don't, that would still make Fran sad?

『Then... What's the better choice? What should I choose?』

〈Suggestion. As long as the individual named Master succeeds in retaining his soul as a person and developed enough mental flexibility and resilience to not go crazy as a sword, there is no problem〉

『Is that even possible?』

〈It has 5% chance of success〉

『...So, it's not zero?』

〈Yes〉

Just a few minutes ago, I decided not to make Fran sad anymore. So, I was not going to give up, even if it only had a small chance of success.

『Let's do it. Announcer-san, you're going to help me too, right?』

〈Yes〉

I wonder why. Even though her voice was inorganic as usual, I felt as if Announcer-san was happy. Was it only my imagination?

# Chapter 584: What Was Causing the Strange Occurrences in the Lake?

The next day.

Fran, who was in a good mood after she had my special pancake, was on her way to Weena Rhyn's tent.

She called us because she had something to say.

「Morning」

「Morning, Fran. I need a little advice from you」

Weena Rhyn cut straight to the point without much greetings. There seemed to be a subtle hint of impatience on her face.

「What is it?」

「You must have noticed that there's something wrong with the lake, right?」

「Nn. The Modoki are coming out」

「Yes, about them. To be honest... I didn't even know why this was happening. It wasn't like this until last year...」

The strange occurrence must have really happened very recently then.

「I need you to find out what's going on」

「Me?」

「Yes. You're the strongest person I could ask. And I'll also relieve you of your guard duty temporarily」

「Master?」

『Fran, you must also be curious about what's going on with the lake, right? After all, we have encountered the Modoki many times already』

「Nn」

『Then, I guess you should take it』

「Okay」

Besides, Fran was now employed by Weena Rhyn, and if she was given a new job, she should do it.

This was not what an Instructor would do though.

But we were not going to complain because we would be able to go out there and investigate what was going on in the lake that we've been wondering about.

But I did have one question.

『Wouldn't it be faster if you do this on your own?』

She was an ocean magic-user who controlled water, and a spirit user who might be useful for reconnaissance. In addition, she had local connections, power, and money. If you wanted to investigate the lake, Weena Rhyn was definitely the right person for the job.

But apparently, that's not possible as Weena Rhyn shook her head at my words.

「For various reasons, I want to stay as far away from the lake as possible」

「? We're close now though」

「This is the very edge. I shouldn't get close to the lake」

「Why?」

「That is... Don't tell anyone, okay? If it ever leaks to the other countries, it'll be a disaster」

「Understood, I'll never tell anyone」

「That said, I don't have time to tell you the whole story. But let me give you a short explanation」

「Nn」

「First, there is a certain magic beast sealed at the bottom of Vivian Lake」

「Magic beast?」

「Yes. A huge magic beast that I'm sure must have a threat level of A or higher」

We've heard about it in Kiarazen before, Lake Vivian used to be a much smaller lake in ancient times. However, due to a natural disaster, it was connected to the sea and then separated from the sea again, becoming the large lake it was today.

And she said that that natural disaster was actually caused by that magic beast.

Even though it was at the sea, it sensed the presence of the Great Spirit that lived in Lake Vivian and tried to devour its power.

And it seemed that in order to reach the spirit in this lake, it connected the sea and the lake.

「In the end, the spirit of the lake was devoured by the magic beast, and that magic beast gained tremendous power. The entire continent was on the

verge of a great disaster that time」

The magic beast was so large that it could sink part of the continent into the sea and had absorbed the Great Spirit. That's why she said that it could have been classified as a threat level S.

If it ever got out of control, the continent of Zilberd would surely be destroyed.

However, an acquaintance of Weena Rhyn succeeded in sealing the magic beast. He separated its source of power, the sea, and sealed it in the bottom of the newly formed lake.

Since the magic beast was a sea-dwelling being, staying in freshwater for a long time would surely weaken it.

And after that acquaintance died, Weena Rhyn took over the seal and had been protecting it ever since.

She didn't go into detail about her acquaintance, but they might be a High Elf. I could sense the affection in her tone, and she even took the trouble to take over the seal after their death.

「As soon as I took over the seal, I entered into a contract with the magic beast. Or to be more precise, by making a contract with the guardian spirit of the lake that was absorbed by the magic beast, I also made a contract with the magic beast」

「The guardian spirit, is still alive?」

「It's a spirit, so I'm not quite sure if you could even call it alive, but it hasn't disappeared yet. It was now a part of that magic beast and continues to exist」

By using her contract with the spirit, Weena Rhyn seemed to have been able to keep the huge magic beast under the seal quiet.

「A part of the power of the magic beast and the spirit has been contained within me. Therefore, if I ever get closer to the lake, that power will be



attracted to the magic beast and it will be revitalized」

That was why Weena Rhyn couldn't go near the lake. Even so, she had tried to find out the cause of the anomaly and talked to the spirits living in the lake, but she was unable to find any clues.

『In the first place, what is the Vivian Guardian, which is the origin of the Modoki? I heard it's not just a magic beast. What does it have to do with that sealed magic beast?』

「The Vivian Guardian is the guardian of the seal. Well, it actually wasn't me, but the spirit inside that magic beast that created the seal」

So that was why, huh? She said that the Vivian Guardians don't attack people, but tried to prevent anyone from entering a certain place.

「What if they attack us and then go out of control?」

「I don't know much about it either, but I think it must be a warning. It tried to warn anyone who ever got close to the seal」

「I see」

Then I asked her about something that had been bothering me.

『Is the name of that spirit is, Rhyn?』

「Ara? How did you know?」

『That's what she called herself』

「We met her yesterday」

Fran took over my words. And it was right after that. Weena Rhyn's expression changed dramatically.

「What... did you say...!?」

# Chapter 585: Investigating the Anomalies

「What... did you say...?」

Hearing Rhyn's name come out of our mouths, Weena Rhyn's expression changed dramatically.

The look on her face was of suspicion and astonishment. She stared at Fran with eyes that were opened to their limit.

「You must be joking, right...?」

Weena Rhyn's expression looked as if she hoped it was just a joke. But Fran shook her head.

「I'm not」

「Really...?」

「Nn」

Then she stood up with enough force to knock over the chair she was sitting on and shouted in disbelief.

「That's ridiculous! That shouldn't be possible!」

「Why?」

「Rhyn is...! That child is...!」

With a weak gesture, she placed her hand on the desk and panted as she spoke.

「As long as I'm here! As long as Weena Rhyn exists, Rhyn shouldn't be able to show up...!」

『What do you mean?』

「Weena Rhyn?」

「Yes, I'm still Weena Rhyn... What does this mean? Is this why the lake is so strange lately?」

It was no good. She's completely ignoring what we were saying. She was scratching her hair with a look of confusion and dismay on her face.

Of course, if Rhyn was the spirit from Weena Rhyn's story, and she was inside the great magic beast, then I can understand why it would be strange for her to show up.

However, it seemed that Weena Rhyn didn't mean it that way.

「...Fran」

「Nn?」

「Can you investigate the lake as soon as possible?」

We didn't dare to ask Weena Rhyn any more questions than we already had. Weena Rhyn's face was so intense that even Fran could sense its pressure.

「...Okay」

The words that came out of her had an indescribable power that could not be denied. To be honest, even I was not an exception.

「I'm sure there are a lot of people in the local guild who are working on this, so you can talk to them」

「Nn」

「You may use my name as well. I'll even allow a little recklessness」

『Oi, oil, that isn't quite peaceful』

「That's just how bad the situation has gotten」

A situation that would even alarm a High Elf? Wasn't this a seriously dangerous situation then...? It seemed like we had to do whatever it took to find out what was going on.

「I'm counting on you」

「Nn」

We were about to leave the tent, but Weena Rhyn's next words stopped us.

「Hey, did Rhyn say anything about me?」

「Nn? Not really」

「I see...」

Was there something wrong with my sight? As there seemed to be a hint of loneliness on Weena Rhyn's face.

...

One hour later. We arrived at the Adventurer's Guild in Sheftent.

When we arrived here, we realized that we forgot to tell her about Rhyn's stall. It seemed that we were a little overwhelmed by the sheer intensity of Weena Rhyn before. Well, we'll tell her the next time we meet her.

「Please come this way」

「Nn」

The receptionist seemed to remember Fran, and it had become a face pass already. She told her that she wanted to see Grandma Jill, and she let her through right away.

「Hmm? Isn't it the Black Lightning Princess, what can I do for you?」

「Nn. I was asked to investigate the lake」

「...Why is that again?」

「Weena Rhyn asked me」

Fran said in a halting voice that Weena Rhyn had asked her to investigate the lake. This probably made her realize that the situation was more serious than she had imagined.

Grandma Jill then straightened up her figure.

「I see. So, she's worried about the situation too」

「Nn. Do you have any information?」

「Of course, we're investigating into it as well, but it's not going anywhere」

To begin with, the central part of Vivian Lake, where the Modoki appeared, was still guarded by the Vivian Guardians. Because of this, they couldn't investigate the source of the problem.

「Are there any adventurers investigating the anomaly?」

「There are some. The adventurers you know would be Lovren and Sierra」

I remember Lovren. He was the rank B adventurer of the Commercial Fleet. She had a small talk with him when she acted as an examiner for the promotion test there. He was a very composed man with a gentle nature.

But I had never heard the name Sierra before.

「Sierra? Who is he?」

「Oya? You don't know him?」

「Maybe?」

「Aaah, come to think of it, he didn't give you his name that time. He's the kid who had taken the promotion exam and got promoted. His hair is brown and I think he's got a peculiar interest in you, don't you remember?」

Could it be that boy with the killing intent?

For some unknown reason, he was an F-ranked adventurer who had turned his killing intent on Fran, whom we had never met before. Well, I guess he was an E-ranker now.

Fran asked her about his features, and it seemed that it was him. Could we ask her to tell us about him? Well, let's see.

「Lovren is the only one we've sent a request to. But Sierra seems to be investigating on his own. Well, it's not just Sierra though」

The Adventurer's Guild was still looking for more information about the anomaly, and they had even asked Lovren, a senior adventurer, to help.

It seemed that many adventurers wanted to make a name for themselves by solving the mystery of this anomaly or to make their presence known to the guild by competing with the senior adventurers.

「For now, let me tell you what information we have」

「Please」

「First of all, the Modoki often aim at boats. We still don't know the reason yet. And unlike the usual, they also eat people now」

「It ate people? Like musha musha?」 (munching SFX)

「Yeah. Well, it looks like it's doing it to absorb magic power. It's also been confirmed that it also attacks the other magic beasts」

The only time a Vivian Guardian attacked a living being is when it was attacked. And even then, they did not eat them, they would only attack them.

When I thought about it, I found out just how abnormal the Modoki were.

「Why would they attack a boat?」

「We don't know much about that either. I thought about narrowing it down based on the cargo, but almost no ship carries only a single item」

Wasn't this almost as if they didn't know anything? When I thought about it, they actually had some good information.

「It's just that the commercial fleet has the highest probability of being targeted by far. It may be that a large number of ships makes it worthwhile to attack them, but it is also possible that there are other reasons」

I see. We would have to look into that too. But let's talk to Lovren first.

# Chapter 586: The True Nature of the Endemic Diseases

Should we go talk to Lovren Right away? Well, I think it was better for us to go back to Weena Rhyn first and report about Rhyn's stall. I was sure she had calmed down by now.

But before we left, I remembered that there was something I wanted to ask Grandma Jill.

「Hey, does the scarlet waterweed medicine have any effect on the surroundings?」

「What do you mean?」

「Yesterday——」

She explained that when she saved a boat from the Modoki attack, she felt some discomfort with her Water Magic and that the cause may have been the spilled Scarlet Waterweed potion or the Modoki's dissolved body.

Then Grandma Jill nodded her head in agreement.

「I see... If it's someone in your class, they might be able to feel it. Perhaps that's the effect of the Scarlet Waterweed potion」

「Is that so?」

「You can use the Space-Time Magic, can't you?」

「Nn」



「Then it's no wonder that you're so sensitive」

Then Grandma Jill explained to her.

「The water in this lake has a slight amount of magic power in it」

「Magic power?」

「Yeah. It's a magic power similar to Space-Time magic?」

「Hmm, but why?」

「Well, we don't know much about that either. All I can say is that it's been that way for hundreds of years」

People living around here seemed to live their lives thinking that was the way it was, and don't question it much.

「Of course, it's so slight that you wouldn't normally be able to feel it at all. Even you can't detect it either, right?」

「Nn」

Indeed, if it hadn't been for the Scarlet Waterweed potion, we wouldn't have noticed it either. It seems to be a very small amount of magic power.

However, it wasn't completely unaffected the surroundings. It has become an endemic disease that has taken root in this country.

Apparently, it is not caused by pathogens, but by continuous consumption of the water from Vivian Lake, which is their water source, since birth.

In fact, the disease is not endemic in areas of the country that get their water from other sources.

The process is simple. If they keep drinking the water from the lake, they will accumulate Space-Time Magic power in their body.

As a result, the magic power of the water made them feel slightly hasted. In other words, the water in the lake acted as a very weak Haste potion.

However, since the effect was really slight, no one noticed it. Because no one noticed it, the person's senses and the body's reaction to it keep deviating from each other, causing fatigue to build up and making the person even more intoxicated. This was the true nature of the endemic disease.

The reason why adults rarely develop the disease is that once they do, their bodies will get used to it and it becomes less of a problem. Many of them might even adapt without developing the disease at all.

Also, no matter how severe, no one died from the endemic disease alone. It must feel like terrible car sickness.

Besides, it can be cured quickly by ingesting a special medicine. Therefore, the people of this country did not consider this endemic disease to be that important.

It was like measles, which you may get only once in your life and was not deadly. Of course, some die from complications due to other illnesses or from accidents caused by poor health, but that was no different from the common cold.

「And the cure is also imbued with Time-space Magic-type magic power」

Scarlet Waterweed, which grew only in the Vivian Lake ecosystem, was tolerant of that water.

Simply put, the stems had the effect of repelling and disrupting Space-Time Magic, which protected itself from the waters of the lake.

And inside, it seemed to have the power to accumulate and control the magic power contained in the water it absorbs from its roots.

By extracting those effects from the scarlet waterweed, a cure for the endemic disease could be created.

When they took the medicine, the Haste effect on their body was further enhanced. As a result, the brain would be aware of any sensory discrepancies and adjust to them immediately.

The human body was an amazing thing, it seemed that once it understood the feeling, it would never get sick again.

「According to a guy who had an aptitude for Space-time magic, it's only 1/100th as effective as Haste, even after they have taken the potion and are enhanced」

But to Fran, who was used to using Haste regularly, it must have felt like a big discrepancy.

Moreover, if the water itself was filled with magic power, it was even more difficult to act as usual.

However, some questions remained.

From what we just heard; an endemic disease was not the kind of thing that can be transmitted. So how was it possible that an epidemic like this year's could happen?

It was inevitable that there would be a certain number of cases every year, but I didn't understand why there would be a sudden epidemic.

When Fran asked that, Grandma Jill gave a few reasons.

「It's caused by various things. First, the number of children born. Do you know how some years, after a war or something, there are more children born than any other year?」

In addition to that, the number of patients could also increase after a few years of accepting immigration from foreign countries. After all, if there was an increase in the number of people who were not resistant to the disease all at once, it could be a trigger.

「It also depends on the climate. In years when it's a little warmer and there's a lot of fog, the amount of water that gets into the body increases.

That's sure will increase the number of patients」

「I see」

「Other reasons include the popularity of new types of crops that use a lot of water and the development of new methods of making sake. Aah, there was even a time when the popularity of water-soluble incense led to an increase in the number of patients」

Since water was an inseparable part of human life, trivial reasons could lead to an increase or decrease in the number of endemic patients.

「So what's the reason for the increase in patients this year?」

「I don't know why it's so widespread this year. Maybe you could ask Weena Rhyn-sama about that」

So, it was not under the jurisdiction of the Adventurer's Guild? Certainly, the reason for the epidemic disease was the responsibility of the government and research institutions.

We were going back to Weena Rhyn after this anyway, so let's ask her then.

# **Chapter 587: Zelos Reed's Request**

## Chapter 587: Zelos Reed's Request

Supporter: Asekhan

「Weena Rhyn is not here?」

『It seems so... We've only left for about an hour though』

After talking to Grandma Jill, we came back to the camp. We wanted to talk to Weena Rhyn about Rhyn's stall. However, there was no sign of her in the tent.

「...Weena Rhyn, where did she go?」

「She didn't tell me where she's going」

Fran asks Zelos Reed, who was tied up in the tent, but he didn't seem to know where she was.

『Maybe she went to investigate it herself』

(What should we do now?)

『Hmmm...』

We have no choice. I guess we should leave a message with Zelos Reed and go talk to Lovren. She was able to have a normal conversation with someone like Zelos Reed with him now.

Even so, I wondered if it was okay to leave this man alone, but it seems that the spirits are closely watching him. I guess they wouldn't have much problem if it was the current Zelos Reed whose power was greatly suppressed.

However, with chains around his ankles and restraints around his neck, he looked like a slave. Even so, the way he stayed still and didn't start raging,

made it hard to believe that he was the same person as that battle junky he was before.

「...Tell Weena Rhyn that Rhyn might be still in Kiarazen. She's running a food stall there」

「...Understood」

They exchanged such looks with no expressions on each other's faces. Fran still hated Zelos Reed, but what about him?

Does he hate her? Or just dislike her? I couldn't tell which one it was.

But when Fran, who had said what she had to say, was about to leave the tent, she was unexpectedly stopped by Zelos Reed.

「Wait」

「...What?」

Fran stopped for a moment and replied in a sharp voice.

「...I have a request to ask」

「Request? Request you say...!?」

Fran snapped immediately after Zelos Reed uttered those words. She muttered to him with an angry expression.

Uncontrollable killing intent covered the surrounding area. However, Zelos Reed showed no sign of fear and knelt on the spot.

It was not that he was not afraid, but he was prepared for it. Here, even if Fran cut him down, he must have thought that it was inevitable.

The eyes that stared at Fran while he was down on his knees were so clear that it was hard to believe they belonged to Zelos Reed.

「I have, a request」

I could hear the blunt sound of gnashing teeth coming from Fran's mouth. I couldn't help but notice that her hand, which already stretched out on my handle, was trembling in disbelief.

『Fran! Wait! This place——』

(...Don't worry)

The fire of anger still burned in her eyes. However, Fran let her hand go from my hilt and slowly lowered her fist.

(I know...)

I wonder, did Fran allow him to at least tell her his request after seeing his look? Zelos Reed then opened his mouth again.

「...In exchange, you can take my life」

「!？」

「Weena Rhyn is going to cancel the contract between me and Romio. After that, she can do whatever she wants with my life」

「Do you know what that means？」

「Yes. If just by killing me is not enough, you can also torture or do whatever you want to me」

「...」

「My request is for Romio. I want you to bring Romio to an orphanage in Barbra after I die」

「...」

「Romio wouldn't be happy if he stayed with me. So, please」

Impossible. Even I thought that. Did he really entrust Romio to us with his life as the price? But he was not lying. He really meant it.



As if in a daze, Fran's strength loosened from her arms. And at the same time, the killing intent that had been so prevalent dissipated into thin air. This time, the atmosphere was eerily quiet. Her hands that were hanging down were swinging limply.

A dumbfounded expression appeared on her face. Was she dumbfounded after hearing the unexpected words? Or did her anger break through the limit?

But to my surprise, Fran nodded lightly to Zelos Reed.

「...I understand」

「Really?」

「Nn. With your life as the price, I will take Romio to an orphanage」

「...Thank you, very much」

「...Hmph」

Fran then turned her back to Zelos Reed, who continued to bow down on his knees. And just like that, she walked away with an indescribable expression on her face.

『Fran, well done for holding back』

(...That guy... has changed. He's not the same Zelos Reed I remember)

『Will you forgive him?』

(...I'm not going to forgive him, but...

Fran seemed to find it difficult to put it into words. Even so, it seemed that Zelos Reed had changed to the extent that made her willing to listen to his words instead of immediately drawing me. No, was it Fran who had changed?

Her hatred was still there, but it seemed that different feelings were also growing.

『You did great』

「...Nn」

At that moment in the Academy of Magic, when Fran slashed Zelos Reed, I thought that it couldn't be helped.

If I were in Fran's position, for example, I would have definitely attacked him. I wouldn't care if it involved people who had nothing to do with it.

With that in mind, I thought that it was only natural for Fran to attack Zelos Reed. That was why I was too late to stop her, and I also wondered if I had the right to stop her.

Besides, I was Fran's sword, and I was willing to follow her to the end, even if it would lead to her demise.

But that was ridiculous. That's not what a guardian should do.

I am disqualified as a guardian, aren't I?

Wasn't it the guardian's duty to scold, even if he has to put himself on the line? It reminded me of my parents. They were not saints, nor were they good adults. If I were to list their virtues and faults, I would say that they had more faults than virtues. When I was little, my parents would scold me and I would think, 「Don't tell me what to do」

But they still scolded me and raised me. In the first place, it was the job of a guardian to show a good example of what not to do.

I'd even say it was a job because it was not only love that parents needed to give. Parents also have a duty. They have a duty to raise the children under their care in a healthy and proper manner.

As a self-appointed guardian, I will have to remember that.

So, I praised her. I praised Fran for being able to suppress her hatred and being able to contain herself.

『You did great, Fran』

「Nn」

However, what I was wondering is whether Fran was really going to take Zelos Reed's life or not. However, Fran turned over with a troubled look on her face at that question.

「...I don't know」

『Is that so?』

Apparently, a spur-of-the-moment decision at that time had made her promise to do so.

「...But」

『But?』

「I still can't forgive Zelos Reed」

『I see』

「Nn」

"Still", huh?

# Chapter 588: Urban Legends: The Phantom Stall

We were now back in Kiarazen again.

We were told that Lovren was here.

It was close to other countries, and the legend of the Lakeside Maiden was popular here. It was a place that shouldn't be missed when investigating the strange occurrences in the lake.

Besides, we'd like to visit Rhyn's stall again.

But her stall was not in the same place as before. We looked around the town to see if she had moved locations, but she was nowhere to be found.

In the end, we even went to the merchant association that organizes the stalls in this town to ask them about it. But they replied that there was no such merchant by that name.

They didn't lie as their answer was not a lame response. After all, we even mentioned Weena Rhyn's name and showed them Fran's adventurer card. In addition, I also used my doppelganger to accompany her as her guardian this time.

This was also meant to be a test to see if this skill would be effective in keeping my soul as a person. I wanted to try having a conversation with someone in this state and see what happens.

In addition to the big shots, we also met with the high-ranking adventurers. The person in charge of arranging the stalls in town was even shaking with

a blue face. I felt a little sorry for him when I saw him going over the list of names again and again.

The chairman of the trading company, who could not stand to see the situation, even took over the handling of the situation, but his investigation did not change the results.

However, he remembered something in his mind.

「There is an urban legend in this town」

「An urban legend?」

「It's a story that people are very uncertain about whether it's true or false」

Apparently, there is a rumor among the merchants that there was a phantom stall that could not be normally encountered, although they do not know when it all started.

They never knew when or where it would appear, but there were stories of travelers who had encountered strange food stalls and had been sold amazingly delicious food.

「The vendor of the stall is said to be a mysterious looking girl with black cloth covering her eyes」

「Nn. Without a doubt, she's the one I'm talking about」

「Could it be, the rumor was true...? But then, we have no more information to go on. I've heard that some people have tried to find it before, but they couldn't find it」

「I see...」

「But it could be the Lakeside Maiden disguised as a girl to watch human activity, or a demon taking human form」

So, in the end, we didn't get many results. But it seemed that no one had ever been able to find it. They couldn't even get a clue.

Rhyn must have some kind of status disguising ability that was at the level at which even my appraisal is completely fooled.

Well, from what Weena Rhyn had told us before, she was originally a high-ranking spirit that was fused with the huge magic beast. In addition, she was in a contract with Weena Rhyn. She's probably overwhelmingly superior being to us. Even if nothing was done to her, there was a high possibility that she could not be appraised. There was nothing we could do if her disguise skills were added on top of that.

Also, does she possess the ability to block perception? She was a spirit, so she should be invisible to normal humans, but that alone didn't explain why they couldn't find her stall. Maybe she could also use it for anything besides herself.

『Well, it can't be helped that we can't find her. Let's go to Lovren for now』

「How is it? Has anything changed?」

『Hmm? Oh, you're talking about my body』

「Nn」

Fran tilted her head and looked at my doppelganger.

『Umm, I don't know...』

「Nothing changed?」

In the first place, my main body was a sword, but at the same time, my doppelganger was moving, so it was not as if I had completely gone back to a human body. Besides, my doppelganger had weak senses, so it was hard to feel that it was a human body at all.

It felt like controlling a full dive avatar in a VR game, maybe? Anyway, I was feeling a strong sense of wrongness. In fact, I felt that pretending to be a person reminded me more that I was a sword.

Also, Fran seemed to be slightly uncomfortable with it. To Fran, I'm a sword. That was the way it should be, and she felt uncomfortable seeing my doppelganger for the first time in a long time.

『Well, it's not exactly the goal I'm aiming for, and I'm not sure I'd use this skill often enough』

「I see」

But Fran seemed to be a little happy while saying that. After all, she didn't really like the idea of me using my doppelganger's body.

From now on, I would use it from time to time, but I wouldn't use it all the time.

Then I erased my doppelganger and urged Fran to move

『Well, let's go to the harbor~』

「Oo~」

According to our information, Lovren had been at the harbor until about an hour ago.

He was a very famous person in this area, so when we asked the merchants, they immediately knew where he was.

We headed to the place we were told to go to, but there we ran into someone we didn't expect.

「It is... Err...」

『It's Sierra』

There was Sierra, the boy with the killing intent.

He was holding a somewhat sinister-looking sword with a jet-black blade in his right hand, and for some reason, he was dipping the tip of the sword into the lake. I wonder what he was doing?

「——I guess」

「——maybe?」

He was mumbling something in a low voice, but I couldn't hear him clearly. It seemed as if he was talking to someone, but there was no one around. Did he have a habit of mumbling to himself?

As we approached the boy, he turned around and looked at her.

「...!」

「...」

Sierra and Fran stared at each other for a while.

In contrast to Fran's curious look, Sierra's gaze toward Fran was filled with killing intent.



# Chapter 589: The Evil Sword and Sierra

「...」

「...」

Fran and Sierra stared at each other in silence. But Fran was just as silent and expressionless as usual.

Eventually, Sierra looked away and walked past Fran to get past her.

But at that moment, Urushi, who was standing beside Fran, grew huge at once and intervened between Fran and Sierra.

「Grrrr...」

Urushi growled with the full force of intimidation. Sierra stopped in surprise at his reaction, which was even laced with killing intent.

However, Urushi's gaze was not on Sierra—but on the sword at his hip.

Does it mean it was his magic sword that Urushi is wary of? No, but that didn't explain this reaction. Was it because the person releasing the killing intent was in possession of a powerful magic sword?

I wondered as I appraised Sierra and his magic sword.

『Not that it matters, but...』

Sierra's status was the same as before. He was certainly strong for his age, but his abilities were at best at those of a D-ranked adventurer.

But after appraising the sword, I understood why Urushi was so wary.

『What! All of its descriptions were displayed as unknown!?!』

If the opponent's rank was higher than mine and the appraisal fails, it would end up not showing up anything rather than showing up as unknown.

The only things that showed up as unknown were evil people and things possessed by an evil spirit. Come to think of it, Urushi should have had the skill to detect evil spirits. So, I'm sure he had sensed a very small amount of evil in the sword that even Fran and I couldn't detect.

『Urushi, hold back a little』

「Grrr...」

Urushi reverted to his large dog size and lessened his intimidation. However, he was still in a position to attack at any time. Sierra, who could understand this, was bracing himself with a sense of caution.

「That sword... Where did you get it?」

「...Do I have to tell you?」

We had never heard his voice before. It was higher-pitched than we expected.

「I can sense the evil in it」

「Then?」

「Nothing」

「Hmph」

His reaction now, Sierra seemed to know that there was an evil spirit hidden in his sword. Honestly, we were not sure what to do now.

But we couldn't sense any evil in him, and just because he had an evil weapon didn't mean he was evil.

It was the same for me. No, rather, am I even worse? After all, a part of the Evil God's soul was sealed in me. Was it evil of Fran to use me? No, not at all. It was just that the sword I'm using has a bit of a story behind it.

I guess it's the same for Sierra.

The boy frowned uncomfortably and walked away. It was amazing that he was only slightly surprised by Urushi's intimidation. In terms of his ability, it wouldn't be strange if he would instantly die from being shocked... It seemed that he had tremendous courage.

It was then at the moment after he avoided Urushi and passed Fran, Sierra stopped and opened his mouth.

「...Weena Rhyn might kill Romio」

「! What do you mean?」

「But the fact that she decided to do it means that it needs to be done. And when she does, don't do anything you don't have to do」

「Wait! Please explain!」

「...Just ask Weena Rhyn yourself」

That was all Sierra said and tried to walk away, but Fran wouldn't let him. She walked around in front of him and glared at him.

「...The power of the 『Evil God's Sacrament』 is hidden in Magnolia's bloodline. But if she uses that power, Romio will die」

「Evil God's Sacrament?」

「It is a fearsome grace given by the Evil Gods to rule over the evil people, to devour them, to absorb their Evil Soul, and to transform them into power. That is the Evil God's Sacrament possessed by the Magnolias. The Grace of

the Evil God passed down to each family is what gives the three Gordician families their power」

The three Gordician families were the guardian families that were supposed to keep the Evil Gods at bay, right? They are Magnolia, Camellia, and Wisteria. I've heard that they've already been ruined though...

But now he's telling me that they were empowered by the Evil God? In other words, they worshipped the Evil God? And yet, they sealed away the Evil God?

「Was it given by the Evil God?」

「You're gonna have to find out for yourself. What's important now is this lake. The magic beast sealed in here has also taken in the power of the Evil God's piece. The best way to suppress its power is to sacrifice Romio and use the power of the Evil God's Sacrament to seal it」

Oi, oi, the huge magic beast in this lake has even had the power of the Evil Gods?

「How do you know all this?」

Certainly, Sierra knew too much about Romio. It was hard to believe that he could know so much from mere research. However, there was no way Sierra would answer it.

「It's none of your business. Just stay out of my way and Weena Rhyn's. That's it」

Sierra told her so with a cold expression on his face, to which Fran replied in protest.

「Romio will not die!」

「...? You, aren't you supposed to be Romio's enemy?」

「Why?」

「You're an enemy of Zelos Reed, aren't you?」

「Nn. Zelos Read is my enemy. But Romio isn't really an enemy」

「...Tsk」

How much does Sierra know about anything? I'm not sure why he even knew about Fran's relationship with Romio and Zelos Reed.

Who was he? I wondered, and Fran questioned Sierra's back as he was walking away.

「Are you... Romio's big brother?」

「I'm not」

Sierra only answered with that and disappeared into the crowded streets of the town.

『Romio's big brother? What made you think so?』

「He knew a lot of things」

『I see. Well, I guess that's why he even knows about the power of Magnolia's bloodline and all that』

「Moreover...」

『Moreover?』

「He looked like Romio」

『Is that so?』

Sure, they had the same hair color, but did they look that much alike?

「Nn, their eyes look similar」

『Eyes?』

「Their eyes are similar when they stared at me」

Ah, now that she mentioned it, they may indeed be similar. Romio's eyes towards Fran, and Sierra's eyes towards Fran. The sharp eyes mixed with hostility; the feel was very similar.

Why did he teach Fran such a thing? What was he aiming for?

I wonder who exactly he was. Anyway, I'm sure he was no ordinary adventurer.

# **Chapter 590: The Modoki's Target**

## Chapter 590: The Modoki's Target

After Sierra left, we were finally able to come in contact with Lovren.

We had been so focused on Sierra that we hadn't noticed that we were already in the harbor.

「I'd be grateful if you could be a little calmer around the town, you know?」

Lovren, of course, must have seen our encounter with Sierra earlier. He was complaining to us right now.

Especially regarding Urushi. A big wolf that had suddenly appeared and growled ferociously while radiating intimidation in the town.

Fortunately, there were no people in the harbor, but it could have caused a huge commotion. It would have been no surprise if Adventurers and guards had been dispatched to check the situation.

『Fran, Urushi. You should apologize. It's definitely our fault』

「I'm sorry」

「Woof」

「As long as you understand, just be careful next time, okay?」

Huh? Was that all? I think a little more scolding would have been in order.

Well, even though he was a high-ranking adventurer, he was a very meek man after all.

「Hey, the sword Sierra was holding. What's that?」

「Are you curious?」



「He was dipping it in the lake before」

「Eh? He did that?」

「Nn」

「Hmm, Sierra already had it when he first became an Adventurer, maybe around six or seven years ago」

What? Six or seven years ago? Sierra was just a kid, right?

「In this country, can a child that age become an adventurer?」

「Well, he could only register, he wouldn't be able to move up from G rank until he was 12 years old, so he could only do chores」

I see. There was no way a child who wanted to be an adventurer had a decent background. Even if they turned him away, he would probably end up committing a crime or dying in the wild. So, it would be better for the child if they gave them a job.

「That sword... We called it the Cursed Magic Sword around here. It's because every Adventurer who had tried to steal it always ended up with bad luck 」

「...Did they die?」

「No, no, no, at most they would be badly injured. At first, they thought that Sierra might have done something, but he had an alibi for everything. However, I don't think that Sierra had anything to do with it. Hence, it must have been a curse」

「I see」

Could it be related to its Evil Spirit? There was no sign of a curse being placed on it, and curses should be prevented by our resistance to abnormal conditions, so Fran should be fine.

Well, let's get our focus back on the anomaly pertaining to the lake for now.

「I knew Sierra was looking into the Modoki, but... I wonder if he's onto something? Maybe I'll ask him next time I see him」

「Let me know when you do」

「Hmm? Could it be that Fran is also investigating the anomaly?」

「Nn」

Apparently, Lovren had already gotten the information that Fran had become an instructor at the Academy of Magic.

Then it would be quick. Read only at travis translations.

We explained why we were looking for Lovren and asked if he had any information for us. Of course, we made sure to use Weena Rhyn's name. It was the quickest way to get the information out.

Then Lovren nodded his head in agreement.

「I see. So Weena Rhyn-sama has started to act too」

「Nn」

「Actually, I was just about to go to the merchant association and get some documents?」

「Documents?」

「Aah, why don't you come with me, if you don't mind? I'd really appreciate it if you could help me there」

It would be faster to get the information and we would like to hear more about the story. It would be better for us to help him.

「Okay」

「Ooh, thanks. Then, let's go」

When they saw Fran back at the merchant association again, they must have thought she had come to complain about the lack of information. The same person in charge as before had turned pale, but when he found out that was not the case, he became very polite.

「I don't know what's going on, but you are really helpful. I didn't expect they'd let me get the documents so easily」

Some of the information about the cargo may violate the confidentiality of the merchant association. Even though Lovren was a B-ranked adventurer, it was rare for him to be shown such information so easily.

But this time, when he asked, he was immediately taken to the reference room. He seemed to be really surprised by that.

「Usually, we have to ask what kind of documents we want, and they'd bring it to us later」

In addition, it was forbidden to take them out of the country, and even making copies of them was not looked upon favorably.

If someone were to look at the documents, they would be able to find out all about the inner workings of the Merchant Association and the status of its purchases. That was why they usually didn't disclose all of their information to adventurers.

「I mentioned Weena Rhyn's name when I came here earlier」

「Aah, that's certainly quite frightening. If they go against her, they won't be able to survive in this country」

In the meantime, we arrived at the archive room. There were already several documents on the desk.

They also served tea for us, along with some snacks beside it.

This was already more than satisfactory. It seemed that they were really afraid of Weena Rhyn, as they were trying to make things as convenient as possible for Fran, who seemed to be her subordinate.

「What are you looking for?」

「The cargo of the boat that was attacked」

To my surprise, Lovren said that he was going around the town to investigate the cargo of the boat that was attacked by the Modoki.

In some cases, he even talked to the captain of the boat.

「I was trying to figure out if people were being attacked for their Magic Power or if a specific cargo was being targeted. Fran, please check the documents over here」

「...Okay」

For a moment, Fran looked really uncomfortable.

But she couldn't say no after coming all the way here.

『Fran, do your best』

「...Nn」

So, the two of them read the documents and made a list of the ship's cargo. It was a task that required a lot of patience, but Fran still managed to do it.

She almost dozed off a few times, but as soon as I called out to her, she got right back up and got back to work. Well done, Fran!

It was an hour later when they finished checking all the documents.

After comparing it with the list of other merchant cargo that Lovren had already gone through, he came to one conclusion.

「Did you find out anything?」

「Yeah. Every boat that was attacked always had a certain cargo on board」

「What is it?」

「The Scarlet Waterweed Potion, or the Scarlet Waterweed from which it is made」

Indeed, all the boats were loaded with Scarlet Waterweed Potion or Scarlet Waterweed. The rest were foodstuffs, but it was unlikely that the modoki would target bread and wheat.

「I'm not completely convinced that they're targeting people's Magic power...」

「They could target the Magic Beasts instead. It's weird that they only attack people」

「I know, right?」

If they wanted to get magic power, there would be more appropriate prey. A magic beast like the Lake Murderer would have more magic power than a human. And if it was the Modoki, they wouldn't have any problem preying on them.

「...Let's go to the Atelier」

「Atelier?」

「The Atelier where the Scarlet Waterweed Potion is made」

「Where it is?」

「It's in the Commercial Fleet」

# Chapter 591: The Fate of the Intelligence Weapon

Even though we were heading for the Commercial Fleet, we were not currently in the harbor. We had to head to the Sheftent first and then take a fast boat to it.

(Master, Weena Rhyn is back)

『You're right. Let's show her our faces then』

(Nn)

From the Academy of Magic's camp built next to the Sheftent, we could feel the presence of Weena Rhyn there.

We decided to give her a brief update on our investigation. We also asked Lovren to report to the Adventurer's Guild while we returned to the camp.

In the tent, we saw Weena Rhyn sitting in a chair, concentrating on something. Romio and Zelos Reed seemed to be in the next tent.

『What is she doing? Her magic seems to be flowing in strange ways』

「There's a spirit...」

She was apparently communicating with a spirit. Fran was about to turn on her heel, thinking it would be a bad idea to interrupt her, but then Weena Rhyn opened her eyes and called out to her.

「Fran, it's fine」

「Are you sure?」

「Yeah. I didn't do anything serious. I was just gathering information from the surrounding spirits」

I've heard that communicating with spirits was a challenge even for a skilled Spirit Magic User, but apparently, it was no big deal for Weena Rhyn.

「I got your message. You think Rhyn's in Kiarazen?」

「I'm sorry, but I couldn't find her」

『We went there again. But we didn't get to see Rhyn, we also heard a rumor that there was a stall run by a mysterious girl』

After that, we reported to Weena Rhyn about our previous conversations with Rhyn and the circumstances of our encounter.

Maybe it was because the time had passed, she didn't get so emotional at the mere mention of Rhyn's name anymore. Thanks to this, we were able to talk calmly.

First of all, there was the time when we met her at a stall in Kiarazen. We told her about how at first, we only thought she was a blind girl, and how she could still see us.

「...She was running a food stall in town?」

「Nn. It was delicious. But why did Rhyn, a spirit, would do something like that?」

「I'd like to know that too」

「Even Weena Rhyn doesn't know?」

「Yes, I don't know...」

I could see the deep anguish on Weena Rhyn's face as she muttered. She really didn't seem to understand the reason for Rhyn's actions.

「I really don't know what she's thinking... I guess we'll have to get in contact with her after all. Well, that's fine for now. Tell me the rest」

「Nn」

At Weena Rhyn's urging, we talked about the next time we saw Rhyn again. We told her about her sudden appearance and the advice Rhyn had given us.

「Does Rhyn really have the power to see the future?」

「Yes, I'm sure of it. And spirits don't lie unless they're ordered to do so by their contractors. Her case is a little more special, though... But I don't think she's lying」

『So, if my soul adapts to the sword, it'll be a tragedy for Fran...?』

「That's what it's gonna be」

『Hey, what do you think I should do then?』

She was a person who had lived for thousands of years. So maybe she could give me some advice.

To be honest, I wasn't really expecting much, but Weena Rhyn put her hand on her chin and started thinking.

「Hmm... That's a very difficult question. First, Master doesn't want to go crazy. But in order not to go crazy, he has to adapt to being a sword」

『Yeah』

「However, if he becomes a sword, he will lose his human emotions. Moreover, a tragedy might befall on Fran」

『Yes』



「In other words, you have to adapt to the sword without going crazy, but you also have to keep your human heart」

『You think that's possible?』

Weena Rhyn pondered my question.

「...Oh right. I've met intelligence weapons several times in the past. But most of them had gone crazy. However, their craziness was different from each other」

「Different?」

「One was in an irrational, manic-depressive state. It was in the type of state that would come to mind when you think of the word “crazy”. But what they all had in common was that they hated their sword bodies and were tired of living as swords. I guess it was that the ego of the human being could not accept its sword body」

Just like the Fanatics. He was the type who didn't know what he was going to do next.

「Then, there was the type that didn't feel like it had true sentience. Just like if you took away all emotions from a human being and gave them the ability to just answer questions」

Just like a machine, huh?

「Of course, an artificially created being is not uncommon. Golems with a conversational function are one example. However, if a being that was originally human is sealed in something, or if a being that has had its soul transferred without a way to help them to adapt then they would surely go crazy」

Announcer-san was originally created to support the sword, so she couldn't be called crazy. That was because it was only natural for her to not go crazy.

But if I become like Announcer-san, I would surely go crazy.

『The former is when they're too conscious of being human. They couldn't adapt to the sword and went crazy. And the latter was when their adaptation to the sword advances too far』

「Yeah」

I was on the verge of becoming the latter. And I didn't even notice it myself. It was scary.

「Thus, the existence of the only intelligence weapon that I have met that was not crazy becomes important. Now that I think about it, a sword and a person. I suppose both sides were balancing each other mentally」

「How did that sword manage to not get crazy?」

「...This was something I couldn't say for sure. Still, there was one thing that made it different from the other swords, it was its bond with its wielder」

Weena Rhyn said that the swords that went crazy had passed through the hands of many different wielders and were regarded as powerful and rare.

However, the exceptional sword had been used by the same wielder ever since it was created, and had apparently formed a bond with that wielder as if they were partners.

「It was both a sword and a person. It was proud of itself and had accepted itself as a sword. I think that's what sustained its soul」

『I see...』

A bond with the wielder. But what exactly should I do? Should I communicate more with Fran?

However, Fran smiled at me with a look of relief on her face.

「Then, Master will be fine」

『Eh?』

「Because we're the greatest combination」

『Fran...』

「That's why, Master will be fine」

Fran wasn't talking in a comforting or wishful way, she seemed to really mean it. She was smiling, as if this problem was no longer dire.

When I saw her like that, I felt the frustration that had almost taken me over unknowingly disappear. If I'm with Fran, I'll be fine. I should think that without any worries.

「If you're afraid that you might go crazy, it might trigger an imbalance in your mind. I also think it's better to be as optimistic as Fran, right? There's no perfect way to deal with this, and I think it's important to stay aware of it」

『...I see』

「Nn」

「As soon as you understand your problems and start struggling to do something about them, the future might change. Then the fate that Rhyn had mentioned may have already been averted」

Rhyn had said, 『There's a high possibility that it will come true if we did nothing about it』. Indeed, the future could have been different once we understood the problem.

『But I don't know if that's enough to avoid the tragedy. We don't even know when it will be coming in the first place』

Aside from the possibility that I might or might not be going crazy, what was the tragedy she mentioned? From Rhyn's words, it seemed to be coming soon. However, the sense of time of beings who have lived for a long time was often different from ours.

I couldn't deny the possibility that 10 or 20 years to us may feel like a day or two to Rhyn.

『Hey, where's that intelligence weapon that didn't go crazy, right now?』

I wasn't sure if we would be able to make it in time for the tragedy Rhyn had told us about, but if we meet it, it might be able to give me some insight.

「Let's see. I'll let you know if you can figure out what's the cause of the lake's anomaly. What do you think?」

I didn't think it was petty, and neither did Fran. The information was really valuable for us. But it was information that had nothing to do with the current incident. So Weena Rhyn had no obligation to give it to us without any compensation.

「We'll definitely find out the cause of the anomaly!」

『Ou!』

Fran had been serious on our investigation so far. But she wasn't in a hurry before. She was just doing what she could because her current employer, Weena Rhyn, had asked her to.

But now it became a case that was actually involving us. Fran's motivation was clearly visible.

「I'm counting on you」

「Nn!」

Author-san note (or was it his editor, dunno XD):

The ability handed down in the Magnolia family has been revised from “Evil God's Charms” to an ability called “Evil God's Sacrament”, and a light explanation of it has been added.

To summarize, the Sacrament of the Evil God is an ability that absorbs Evil Spirits from evil people or pieces of Evil Gods and converts them into power.

The power of the three Gordician families, including the Magnolia family, was actually given to them by their ancestors from the Evil God.

# **Chapter 592: Khanna's Information**

## Chapter 592: Khanna's Information

We were still in the camp, not at the meeting point with Lovren, after being asked by Weena Rhyn to investigate the cause of the anomaly again.

It was also because we wanted to greet Charon and the others.

At Weena Rhyn's request, Fran has been relieved from her duty as an instructor for Charon and her group. But because we were so overwhelmed by Weena Rhyn before, we went out to investigate without even saying something to them.

Fran was concerned that she hadn't said anything to Charon and Khanna. They didn't seem to be the kind of girls who would blame her for that, but she wanted to at least greet them.

We went straight to the tents for the students. There, we found Charon's group and Charles, the adventurer. In addition, there was also an instructor we knew with them. It seemed that he had taken Fran's role as Charon group's escort.

Apparently, they were on their way to take on a request. However, when they saw Fran, they greeted her with a smile.

「Fran! You have returned?」

「Nn. I didn't get a chance to say something to Charon and the other before because of the job Weena Rhyn had asked me to do」

「So you came all this way to greet us? Thank you very much. But I heard that you were investigating the anomaly in the lake, so we won't blame you」

It seems that they understand the weight of Weena Rhyn's direct request. In addition, Charon and the others, who were born in this country, seemed to

be interested in the anomaly of the lake, and they asked her a lot of questions about it.

Fran told Charon and the others that it was very likely that the Modoki were aiming for the Scarlet Waterweed Medicine, and advised them to check for Scarlet Waterweed around them when approaching the lake's shore.

Oh, we had Weena Rhyn's permission to tell them about it, so it should be okay.

But we told Charon and the others not to spread the word, citing the fact that we were still investigating. She told them that it was also Weena Rhyn's order, so they wouldn't dare to spread the word.

We were almost certain that it was true, but it was still unconfirmed. Weena Rhyn also feared that if this information spread, it might cause widespread panic among the people, and Kangaroo Courts could be rampant.

(Note: Kangaroo Court: an unofficial court held by a group of people to try someone regarded, especially without good evidence, as guilty of a crime or misdemeanor)

There was no doubt that some sort of witch hunt would even take place if that ever happens.

With that in mind, it would be bad for rumors to spread at this stage.

First of all, we needed to confirm whether or not the Modoki were really after the Scarlet Waterweed medicine. Well, Weena Rhyn will be the one to look into that though, so we were going to head to the Commercial Fleet with Lovren as planned.

Charon and the others looked worried. If the cure for the endemic disease was being targeted by the magic beasts, then the people of this country would surely be concerned about it.

In the midst of all this, Khanna was reacting in a somewhat unusual way. She seemed to be more surprised than anxious.



「Khanna?」

「Ah, no...」

Fran became curious and called out to Khanna.

「What's wrong?」

「...Fran-san, may I have a moment?」

Then Khanna looked at Fran with a somewhat serious look. She took Fran's hand and moved away from everyone.

「...Actually, I have some information that might be useful for you」

「About the lake anomaly?」

「I'm not sure if it will lead to that yet... but you can look into it yourself. I would like to share this information only with Fran-san if possible, as I was able to get this information through my parent's contacts」

When Khanna said so, Charon seemed to understand and distanced herself. The other group members also followed Charon's lead.

If it was a message from a nobleman or a trading company, it might contain a lot of important information. Being a noble herself, Charon probably understood that it was better if they didn't listen to it.

「So?」

「This information is about the Scarlet Waterweed medicine」

Khanna's said that she had been investigating the Scarlet Waterweed and the medicines that use them since she arrived in this country. She had been gathering information on everything from prices and raw materials to efficiency while traveling.

Support the translation team by reading the translated chapter at [travis translation's website](http://travis-translation.com).

「Why?」

「I was thinking that I could use it as a commercial product」

In this country, Scarlet Waterweed was only recognized as a raw material for special medicine for endemic diseases. However, it was still a material to make magic potions. Depending on the research, it could be used in various ways.

Apparently, Khanna thought it would be a shame if she couldn't purchase the Scarlet Waterweeds and sell them outside the country. As expected of the daughter of a trading company owner.

However, it seemed to be quite difficult. Even though it was not life-threatening, a disease was a disease. Scarlet Waterweed was the raw material for the cure, and it was still impossible to cultivate, so it was practically impossible to sell outside the country.

It was not that they were prohibited. However, many citizens tended to be reluctant to ship large quantities of it out of the country. Merchants were not an exception. After all, they were reluctant to export Scarlet Waterweed in case they ran out of the special medicine in case of emergency.

And if there was a shortage because of her doing, it would make it harder for her to live in this country.

「Still, I was looking for some way to do something about it, and I did a lot of research... But at some point, I got a hunch that something wasn't right」

「What do you mean?」

「Even though it is impossible to export in large quantities, it is not so difficult to buy in small quantities. So, I decided to start by buying them from various places and send them to my home」

She also said that the reason why she bought it from various places was to study the differences in the growing areas. Otherwise, she would not have

been able to collect the necessary amount for her research.

However, Khanna suddenly noticed the difference in prices. Normally, in the area near the lake where most of the plants could be collected the price should be cheaper, and the further away from the lake, the more expensive it should be. However, the Scarlet Waterweed was actually the most expensive around the lake and was sold at the same price around the Academy of Magic.

And the reason for the skyrocketing price was said to be the increase in the number of patients in the eastern region...

「But actually, there has been no increase in the number of patients」

「...Really?」

「Yes. By using my family's contacts, I checked the number of endemic cases in each city in the Kingdom of Belios. And they said that they're all the same as usual」

But they were actually experiencing a shortage of Scarlet Waterweed medicine, right?

「So where do you think the Scarlet Waterweed medicines that were supposed to be sold domestically disappear to?」

「You know that too?」

「The distribution of the Scarlet Waterweed potion is quite strange and is almost monopolized by a certain trading company that has signed a contract with the workshop that succeeded in developing it. And that trading company is actually connected to the Kingdom of Raidos from behind the scenes」

「!!」

Seriously? So, the reason behind this anomaly is actually because the Raidos Kingdom is doing something behind the scenes?

「We don't know what's going on yet. However, around the same time as the lake's anomaly, a new special medicine has been developed, and the shadow of the Kingdom of Raidos is flickering in its wake... Furthermore, there are signs that the information is being manipulated by someone. And if one doesn't check very carefully, one may not realize that the increase in endemic cases may be false information 」

Was the merchant association involved in this incident? Or was there some kind of conspiracy behind it? It was suddenly starting to smell fishy.

# **Chapter 593: The Rumor's Purpose**

## Chapter 593: The Rumor's Purpose

Having unexpectedly learned some valuable information from Khanna, we returned to Sheftent and met up with Lovren.

There, we also gave him the information we had received from Khanna.

「The Merchant Association has ties to the Kingdom of Raidos? It's kinda hard to believe...」

Lovren was also quite surprised. He said that the Mesther Merchant Association, which was selling the Scarlet Waterweed medicine, was a very old merchant association with a high reputation in this country.

「We'll need to double-check that first」

「Nn. But, Lovren didn't notice it? That the disease wasn't really an epidemic」

Indeed. That was what we were most curious about. Anyone who did a little research would know that the epidemic was false information, but was anyone else in the country aware of it?

「Well, yeah. In the first place, we don't have anyone who'd investigated such things」

「Why?」

「Because there's no one in trouble」

Although it was said that there was a shortage of Scarlet Waterweed medicine, it didn't mean that there was no distribution at all. There was always a certain amount of it available in the country. But still, it was thought that there was not enough for everyone...

「Actually, even if the disease was not endemic, I'm sure it would have been properly distributed to all patients. So, no one would be making a fuss about the shortage」

「Nn」

「And its price was still the same as in the previous years」

Furthermore, the distribution was being handled by the Mesther Merchant Association, a relatively big merchant association. If the source of the rumor was the Mesther Merchant Association, no one could point out anything strange about the distribution.

After all, although it was being said that there is a “shortage of scarlet water pills,” not many people had been affected by this. The only people who had suffered were the adventurers near the lake, who had to collect more Scarlet Waterweed than usual.

「But why would they spread such rumors?」

「Well. I could understand if they wanted to raise the price of Scarlet Waterweed medicine by spreading false rumors that the disease that was not actually an epidemic had become an epidemic... But if that was not their aim, maybe they were actually aiming at the Scarlet Waterweed medicine itself」

「What do you mean?」

「They could disguise it as a domestic sale and ship it elsewhere. Like the Kingdom of Raidos for example. But I don't know what their purpose is though」

In other words, there was a high possibility that their objective was to obtain the medicine.

「How should we investigate it then?」

「Well, I guess our best bet would be to ask around to the people in the merchant association」

Well, he was right. I would also like to hear from their top brass if possible.

「Where is the merchant association?」

「Its headquarters is in the Commercial Fleet」

It seemed that both the atelier and the headquarters of the merchant association were located in the Commercial Fleet.

「The problem is that we can't just barge in without an appointment and expect them to listen to us」

「Don't worry」

「You got a secret plan?」

「Just give them Weena Rhyn's name」

Both Fran and I already witnessed the tremendous influence Weena Rhyn had in this country.

I didn't think there was anyone who would dare to defy us with Weena Rhyn's name. We were already at Komon-sama level, weren't we?

(Note Trivia (skip this if you're not interested in these details as it is quite long XD): Mito Komon (Tokugawa Mitsukuni), was a Japanese Daimyo (feudal lord) that lived in the 17th century. During the latter half of the Edo period and the Meiji period, a kōdan (narrative tale) named “Mito Mitsukuni Man'yūki” fictionalized the travels of Tokugawa Mitsukuni. This tradition of dramatizing his life continued with a novel and, in 1951, the first television series to portray him as a wanderer, masquerading as a commoner, who castigated evil in every corner of the nation. The most memorable phrase of the series is 「この紋所が目に入らぬか!!」 (Kono mon dokoro ga me ni hairanuka!!) “Don't you know whose family seal is this!?” while his escort shows up with the Tokugawa family's emblem. Well, you should get the idea about the references already)

(Another Trivia: In the light novel Death March kara Hajimaru Isekai Kyousoukyoku, the main protagonist quotes Mito Komon frequently)



Moreover, she gave us a valuable but frightening assurance that she would cover things up for us.

I have no intention of abusing it, but it was times like this that we needed to use that power.

「Hahaha. Now that you mentioned it, you're on a mission for Weena Rhyn-sama, aren't you? Let's go with that strategy then」

「Nn」

We had planned to head to the Commercial Fleet by boat at first but decided to ride on Urushi instead. It was much faster that way.

If we didn't get lost, that was.

This lake was the size of a small country. If we ever lost our direction, we could get lost. In fact, it was said that several ships a year fail to return because of it.

This time, however, the Commercial Fleet was relatively close to shore, and we had a guide to lead the way. Well, there was no need to worry about getting lost, since Lovren was familiar with the route.

「I see it」

「Haha! So fast! Amazing!」

「Woof woof!」

About three hours after we left Sheftent, we had managed to find the Commercial Fleet.

Lovren seemed to be in high spirits. He seemed to like the experience of riding the flying Urushi more than he thought he would.

His praises also put Urushi in a good mood.

「The ship is a little behind that one in the center. Can you go down there first?」

「Okay, Urushi」

「Woof!」

It was hard to tell from above, but it seems to be the ship of the Adventurer's Guild. The Adventurers on deck were surprised to see Urushi descending from the sky.

Some of them even raised their weapons, but the commotion quickly died down when they saw Lovren on his back.

It was a good thing we had come down here. If it had been any other ship, we might have caused a commotion.

「Well, let's head to the Mesther Merchant Association first」

From here, the Commercial Fleet was apparently much more organized than I had thought. The Commercial Fleet seemed to look like a mess of ships, but in fact, the specific placement of each ship was carefully regulated.

Therefore, it seemed that those who were familiar with it already knew where some things were.

「Which ship?」

「That one. The ship with the red flag」

It looked surprisingly close, but we had to take quite a detour to get there. Well, we had to move from ship to ship. Sometimes we crossed a simple suspension bridge that connected the ships and even had to move from ship to ship in a small boat.

「Can't we just ride on Urushi?」

「We can't. It would only cause a fuss here」

Well, it couldn't be helped. The Commercial Fleet was just like a town after all. Flying over it on Urushi was just like running around the town on Urushi.

# Chapter 594

The ship of the Mesther Merchant Association, which Lovren had led us to, was small but had a rather grand appearance. The railings were carved, and there were even plants on the deck. This place might have even been regarded as the lobby of an ordinary merchant association already.

The entire ship itself seemed to belong to Mesther Merchant Association

At first, I thought it was a rather ordinary thing, but apparently, it was difficult for a small business association to even own a single ship here, so they'd rent a corner of a large ship to use as their office. In other words, they were using the so-called tenant system.

With that in mind, I could tell how wealthy the Mesther Merchant Company was, as they could own an entire ship in this Commercial Fleet.

I wondered if they would listen to us when we suddenly visited such a merchant association... But to my surprise, we were able to meet with their top brass without much difficulty.

「I heard that you, one of the top Adventurers in this lake, came to visit us unexpectedly」

It seemed that it was thanks to Lovren that we didn't have to wait long. But come to think of it, there was no way that a merchant association of this size did not know Lovren, a famous Adventurer around this lake.

「Could you introduce me to the young miss beside you?」

「She is Fran. Even though she looks like this, she's still an Adventurer, you know? She's been a great help to me」

「Nn. I'm Fran」

「I see. My name is Gregory from the Mesther Merchant Association. I am pleased to be able to make your acquaintance」

He hadn't realized that Fran was the Black Lightning Princess? Although he was polite, I felt like he was treating her as a companion of Lovren up till now.

「So, what can I do for you today? If there's anything you need, I'll do my best to get it for you」

「Thanks, I appreciate your kindness, but I'm not here to make a deal today」

「Hou?」

The conversation started with a smile. But soon enough, the other side's face turned grim.

「Actually, I'm working on a request from the Adventurer's Guild. I was hoping you could help me with my investigation」

「Investigation?」

「We're investigating the anomaly in the lake」

The moment Lovren said that Gregory stiffened for a moment. It was only for a moment. His expression did not change, neither did his voice.

But for us, who had strong suspicions from the start, even that was enough of a hint. Both Lovren and Fran looked convinced that Gregory knew something.

「Hohou? Then what brings you to our merchant association? I don't think there's anything I can do to help you with your investigation about the lake, right?」

「Then, would you mind showing me the bookkeeping records and the warehouse of Mesther Merchant Association?」

「What did you say!?!」

We know that they may have prepared a forged version of their bookkeeping. But our purpose was to see how the other party would react.

And if they really did bring out fake bookkeeping records, we might be able to use it as evidence to prove their crimes. No matter how well they did their bookkeeping, it could never be perfect.

「Can you please let me check all the bookkeeping records containing the sales records of the Scarlet Waterweed potion at Mesther Merchant Association, as well as the storage warehouse where the Scarlet Waterweed potion is stored?」

Having been convinced that the Mesther merchant association was hiding something, Lovren became quite bold.

「Hahaha. What are you talking about... you know that's impossible, right? It's our merchant association's trade secret after all」

「That's why I'm asking you to do something about it」

「Do you have any suspicions about our merchant association? Do you think we have something to do with this incident?」

「Well, yes」

「That's ridiculous. Our merchant association has nothing to do with it」

Gregory stood up with a stern expression on his face. It was probably his way of saying that he had nothing more to say.

「Please leave now. It's truly a shame, Lovren-dono. I thought you were a respectable man for an Adventurer. We'll never do business with you again」

Gregory turned away and walked toward the doors.

But we couldn't let him get away. After all, this guy had lied about a lot of things. Not only did he say that there was nothing he could do to help in the investigation of the lake, but he also lied about his claim that they had nothing to do with the lake's anomaly.

He was really suspicious.

『Fran, this guy definitely knows a lot』

「Nn. Wait. I still have something to talk」

「But I don't」

「Maybe you don't, but I have」

Fran's words made Gregory look even more pissed. But before he could raise his voice in anger, Lovren opened his mouth.

「And also, unlike me, she's working on a commission from a different place. We're just working together on the investigation」

「From different place?」

「Fran-san has been entrusted with full authority by Weena Rhyn to investigate the recent anomaly」

「Weena Rhyn, you said!? A kid like her is working for her...?」

「Fufu. She is indeed a kid, but her strength is well known. She's a B-ranked adventurer that even has her own alias, and she also happens to be a special instructor at the Academy of Magic」

「What...!? An alias!? Could it be, she's the Black Lightning Princess...!?」

「Nn. I'm Fran, a B-ranked adventurer. Nice to meet you」

「I can vouch for her identity」

When Lovren said so, Gregory stopped in his tracks.

He seems to be struggling with something.

But it was no surprise. I suspected that Gregory just wanted to pretend to be angry and make Lovren and Fran leave.

However, it was a different story when Weena Rhyn's name was mentioned. To put it bluntly, she was a much more influential figure in this country than the Royal Family. There was no way that a mere merchant association would refuse an order from someone who claimed to be Weena Rhyn's representative.

If he still refused to allow us to check their bookkeeping records and warehouse, it's like he was saying that he had something to hide.

Lovren already had some clues and was suspicious of the Mesther Merchant Association. So, if he still refused Fran's request to conduct an investigation even after she mentioned Weena Rhyn's name here, his suspicions would be confirmed.

Support the translation team by only reading this translated chapter at [travis translation's website](#).

Well, Fran and Lovren were already convinced of it, but it seems Gregory thought that he could still handle this.

With Lovren's confirmation, there was no doubt that Fran was Weena Rhyn's representative. I suppose he could argue that it was just hard to believe, but...

Gregory froze for about ten seconds, but eventually, he nodded bitterly.

「Very well then. But since it will take some time to prepare for the bookkeeping records, let me show you our warehouse first」



Gregory called a person and told him to lead us to the warehouse. Then he said that he would prepare the bookkeeping records while we checked the warehouse and then left.

I attached a piece of string that I had created using my transformation skill to Gregory. If it was someone like Gregory, he wouldn't even notice it. Well, if he turned around for no reason, he might see it though.

However, I managed to remain undetected. Gregory ordered his men with a yell, and they were clearly visible through the thread. No matter how thin it was, it was still a part of me.

「Oi! We'll have to advance our plans! Hurry up and prepare to withdraw to the homeland!」

「Is something went wrong?」

「The Adventurers have noticed us!」

「Th-that is... How could a mere Adventurer notice our plan...!?!」

「Idiots! Do you really believe all that propaganda about them being incompetents and incapable of doing anything was real? I've told you to think of them as being on par with the Red Knights, right!?!」

「I-I'm sorry」

「Enough. Anyway, I'll leave the preparations for the withdrawal to you. And also, tell the President」

「V-very well. But what about the Adventurers?」

「I've ordered someone to take them to our third warehouse. The rest can be left to that creepy corpse. I'm sure it'll be happy to kill them」

「A-are you sure?」

「According to that man, those black corpses are stronger than the Red Knights. So, I'm sure it'll be fine」

As I'd expected, there was no way he would just let us check their warehouses so easily, and it seemed like something was waiting for us there. But, corpse, he said? In other words, it was an undead? He even said that they would withdraw to their homeland, didn't he? It seemed that these people were from another country—from the Kingdom of Raidos, I guess.

(Master, how is it?)

『It seems that an enemy is waiting for you at the warehouse. Stay alert』

(Nn. Okay)

# Chapter 595

We readied ourselves while being led by the people of the merchant association.

Lovren's face scrunched up dramatically. He must have understood that a frightening enemy was waiting for us at our destination.

Lovren also began to secretly prepare the magic power within his body.

The man guiding us didn't seem to realize what we were doing, due to his complete lack of combat skills. But still, it didn't mean that he couldn't feel anything.

From time to time, he would look back at us and turn his head around, but he didn't seem to know what we were doing.

After a few minutes of walking, we were led to a gloomy area close to the bottom of the ship. Our guide stopped in front of a seemingly ordinary door in one corner.

「T-this is the warehouse」

「Okay」

I couldn't sense any magic or presence from behind the door. There must have been some kind of barrier on the walls.

Well, we would just have to check it out ourselves.

I once again turned into steel thread and entered the room through the doorway. To Lovren and the others, it would appear that Fran had the skills of a thread user.

「Eh?」

「I need to do a quick check before we enter. You're going to show us the inside later anyway, so why not?」

「Th-that is...」

The guide looked troubled. Lovren then moved quietly behind us, it seemed that he intended to stop him if he tried to interfere with us.

Once inside, there was indeed a hint of the undead. But it was really faint. Did that mean it wasn't a strong undead?

I searched lightly to see where it was and found the magical power of the Undead was emanating from a coffin placed in the center of the room.

The coffin itself seemed to be a magic tool. It seemed to be able to suppress the undead's presence and reduce the consumption of magic power while it was sleeping.

But weren't they going too far just for it? They even had a coffin-shaped magic tool for an undead... Well, I guess its purpose was to hide it, but it was too obvious.

『Well, whatever. I'll just launch a preemptive strike for now』

I manipulated my steel thread body with skills to stretch it around the coffin. Then, I activated my Magic Steal Skill multiple times.

Since the undead lived by magic, they weakened when their magic was absorbed and then disappeared when their magic ran out.

I could feel the magic power in the vicinity begin to decrease rapidly. It would not only affect the coffin, but also the undead.

Well, what should I do next? It was an undead, so I wouldn't know until I checked it.

It was probably aware of the changes that were about to happen to it, but if it moved now, Fran and the others would find out about it.

The undead, who still thought it could take us by surprise, seemed hesitant to make a move here.

In the first place, he wouldn't even know if it was an attack by Fran and the others or not.

After about a dozen seconds, there was finally movement in the coffin. With a bang, the lid sprang up from the inside, followed by a corpse raising itself.

『A Wight King, huh!?』

It was the Wight King, a magical beast with the threat level of B. No doubt. It was the same as the one we fought in the Plains of the Demon Wolf. It was just as intimidating and had just as much magic power as that Wight King.

They looked very similar. The robes it wore were probably almost the same.

Wait, wasn't that strange? Even if they were the same kind of magic beast, it was unlikely that they could have the same equipment. Could it be that this Wight King belonged to the same group as those guys? In other words, they might have been working for the Raidos Kingdom.

「W-what the hell is this...! Thread...?」

It still hadn't grasped the situation. However, it soon realized that the threads all around him were sucking up his magic power.

Magic power began to gather in the palm of its hand. It was going to blow me up at once.

But I wouldn't let him.

『Ora-!』

「Nuoooh! T-This is, Purification...!?!」

I wrapped my thread body around the Wight King's body and activated the Purification spell. My skill level was still low, so it was not powerful enough to defeat an opponent of the Wight King's level, but I should be able to weaken it significantly.

The Wight King's cries can be heard from outside the door. What was more, it sounded as if it was in some kind of pain.

The guide seems to be confused.

『I'll leave the rest to you! Fran!』

「Nn!」

「Why, why did I——Guoooh!」

It was going to take us by surprise, but it was the one who got caught by surprise instead and was not able to respond to us in time.

It seemed that it had tried to respond to Fran's attack by kicking down the door and putting up a barrier. However, the activation was blocked by my Magic Steal and Purification Magic.

「Ghaa——!」

Being tied up with threads, it couldn't even twist its body and was left defenseless to Fran's attacks. Before Wight King could even use its signature necromancy, it was cut in half by Fran.

『All right, good job Fran』

「Nn...」

Even though she had killed the Wight King in the blink of an eye without causing any damage to those around her, Fran's face did not look happy.

『What's wrong?』

(We didn't get it magic stones)

『Aah, now that I think of it, you're right』

This Wight King, just like the Wight King we defeated in the Plains of the Demon Wolf, didn't have any magic stones in its body. Could it be that the Wight Kings were a race that didn't even have a magic stone?

Well, we need to explain things first to Lovren, who looked stunned.

# Chapter 596

Fran-san...?」

「Nn?」

Lovren was stunned by the sudden battle that took place in front of him. No, it was not a battle, but rather a one-sided fight.

『Fran, we need to explain it to him』

「There was an undead inside, so I defeated it」

「Undead?」

「Nn. And there's no Scarlet Waterweed medicine inside」

Hearing Fran's words, Lovren peeked inside the warehouse. In addition to the remnants of the undead and coffin that had been cut in half, he confirmed that there was indeed no medicine in the warehouse.

He then threw a glance at the guide.

「What's the meaning of this!?!」

「Did you know that there's an undead inside?」

Lovren and Fran asked the question at the same time, and the guide trembled.

「N-no! I had no idea there's something like that inside!」

『He's lying』



「Did you also know that there is no Scarlet Waterweed medicine in there?」

「I didn't know!」

『He's lying again』

I guess that meant that this guide knew what was happening to some extent.

「Lovren, this guy knows something」

「Hou?」

The guide shivered at Fran's words. I guess it was because he knew that his lie had been exposed. Then he blurted out the information he knew once we hurt him a little.

He was from this country, but it seemed that his deceased father was from the Raidos Kingdom. That country has been sending spies into hiding for a long time. This man's father must have been one of them.

However, since he was not a native of the Raidos Kingdom, his loyalty was low. He was answering all of our questions without lying.

「What does the Raidos Kingdom plan to do in the lake?」

「I-I don't know! I swear! It's just that the alchemist under the Eastern Duke is giving orders to the merchant association!」

「Eastern Duke?」

「Y-you don't know him?」

「You know him, Lovren?」

「Just the name. We don't have much information on Raidos, so I only know that he is one of the four Dukes in the Raidos Kingdom」

There were no diplomatic relations between the country, and no adventurers came from and went there. Therefore, even Lovren was not familiar with the Raidos Kingdom's domestic affairs.

According to the guide's explanation, the current situation in the Raidos Kingdom was quite chaotic. First of all, it seemed that the King had died in an accident and no one had taken over the throne.

And among the children of the deceased King, no one had been chosen to be the next King.

Several factions were trying to push their own candidates to take the throne, but they seemed to be in a deadlock. The King's oldest child was still 13 years old, and the fact that there was no better candidate who could take the crown seemed to further prolong the problem.

The main players behind the chaos in the Raidos Kingdom were the Four Great Dukes, who held positions and territories second only to the King.

In the past, Raidos Kingdom was just one of the many small nations that were scattered in the northern part of this continent. However, one day, a Supreme King with an overwhelmingly superior military talent took over the throne, and under his kingship, they conquered the surrounding nations and built the country that we know today.

At that time, four generals, who served as vassals of the Supreme King, played an active role in the war. The four armies, led by the Eastern, Western, Southern, and Northern generals, launched their invasions of the surrounding nations at breakneck speed, and the Raidos Kingdom expanded rapidly.

At the end of the war, each general was appointed as a Duke by bonding their family with the Royal Family through marriage.

However, it seems that the Dukes still had some sort of hierarchy within them. The most powerful was said to be the Northern Duke, followed by the Western Duke. The Eastern and Southern Dukes were said to be almost equal in rank.

The reason for that was due to their war records. The Northern General had skillfully manipulated a small number of troops to achieve his goal of completely conquering the northern part of the Zilberd Continent. As a result, the Northern Duke was highly regarded by the people and nobility.

The Western General is said to have almost conquered the western part of the continent in his hand but failed in the face of the Kingdom of Philias, who possessed a Divine Sword, the Diabolos. However, they were regarded as the most economically prosperous by their slave-trading practice, and the Western Duke was also said to be as strong as the Northern Duke.

On the other hand, the Eastern and Southern Dukes were said to have weakened in power. Although they were not going to fall, they were probably less than half as powerful as the Northern and Western Dukes.

That, too, was influenced by past battles. Weena Rhyn to the East and the Kranzel Kingdom to the south stood in the way and stopped the advance of both generals. Because of this, the two families had slightly smaller territories and less influence than the North and West.

Apparently, the two families were not happy with the current situation and continued to fight even after they were appointed as Dukes, and fell into a vicious cycle of continuous defeats that skyrocketed their war expenses that put pressure on their economy.

These days, they had stopped waging war head-on, but instead seemed to be working on various schemes under the surface.

It seemed that the Eastern Duke was the main culprit this time as well.

「But a lackey like me won't even know the details! I just heard Gregory-san mutter something like that!」

All the guide knew was that the Mesther Merchant Association was a front for the Raidos Kingdom, and its head was the Eastern Duke. Also, the alchemist who was sent by the Duke was currently giving them orders.

「Who is this alchemist?」

「I-I don't know... But I heard that he was frequenting the Scarlet Waterweed medicine-making atelier...」

After we got some information out of him, we punched the guide and knocked him out, and then tied his limbs and rolled him over.

「What would you do now?」

「What about you?」

「Capture the top brass. Urushi is keeping an eye on them, so it won't take long」

「Can I leave it to you then? I'll return to report to the guild and then head straight for the atelier」

「Okay」

Certainly, there would be less chance for them to escape if we split up. Lovren picked up the guide and headed straight for the Adventurer's Guild.

If the Raidos Kingdom was behind this, it meant that it was not a simple matter anymore.

『Let's capture Gregory』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 597

Relying on Urushi's presence that we could feel from a distance, we made our way through the ship.

If we met any people from the merchants' association along the way, we would try to put them to sleep as gently as possible. This was because we didn't know if they were all from the Raidos Kingdom or just hired locals.

But if they turned out to be the enemy, we would just simply break their legs.

『Fran, he's around the corner』

「Nn」

Fran arrived at the corner of the ship's upper floors. They probably used the upper floors as offices and the lower floors as warehouses.

『Urushi』

(Woof)

When I called him, Urushi showed up from the shadow of a decorative plant.

『Is Gregory in this room?』

(Woof woof!)

『Fran, let's capture everyone in the room』

(Nn!)

『Urushi, keep an eye out for anyone who might try to escape from the ship. Don't hesitate to use violence to prevent them from escaping』

(Woof!)

Then, after we saw Urushi off, we stepped into the room in front of us.

The people inside finally noticed us when they heard the sound of the door being slashed open by Fran.

Gregory, who had been rummaging through his desk, turned his gaze towards us.

Then, a look of astonishment came over his face.

「H-how...!?」

「How come you're still here, did the undead not kill her!?」

「!!」

With those words, they must have realized that their attempt had been exposed.

「Jag! Vade! Kill her!」

Besides Gregory, there were other men in the room who looked like Adventurers.

They didn't seem to be strong, as they couldn't even detect Fran's presence outside the room before. Well, their abilities as warriors were just average, but their skills outside of combat, such as detection, seemed to be mediocre.

「...Haa!」

「Nuuuoh!」

However, it seemed that they were well trained. Without uttering a single unnecessary word, they attacked Fran.

I guess they had been trained to follow orders regardless of the opponent's background or age. Their level of coordination was not bad either.

If their opponent had been an E-ranked adventurer, it might have worked. But something like that wouldn't even work against Fran.

Fran's fist, which she swung like a flicker jab, struck them both in the jaw in rapid succession, reaping their consciousness in an instant.

Even though it was just a simple jab, they still received a hit from someone like Fran. Their jawbone would be shattered at the very least.

「Wha...! S-she took out two knights in instant!?!」

「I've defeated your undead, so there's no way I'm gonna had a hard time against these people」

Gregory was astonished for some reason, but Fran told him so while tilting her head.

Then Gregory's eyes, which had been wide open, widened even more. I didn't know human eyes could get that big.

「You've defeated it... you said!?!」

「Nn」

「Liar!!」

「I'm not lying」

「That's a monster that can even destroy a small country, you know...!? It was a non-fighter, but no ordinary adventurer should be able to hurt it! That's why—...!」

「But I've defeated it」

「That's ridiculous!」

Apparently, he thought that we had noticed the undead and went away without a fight. Well, knowing the strength of the Wight King, he probably could not help but think that.

Even at the sight of two men instantly defeated in front of his eyes, he didn't seem to believe that Fran was stronger than the Wight King.

But he seemed to understand that she wasn't an opponent he could beat anyway. There was a hint of anger and impatience in Gregory's eyes.

「Little girl... If you didn't get out of here now, we'll——」

He was probably thinking of scaring Fran to get out of this situation. However, as if to interrupt Gregory's words, Fran opened her mouth.

「We know that you are connected to the Raidos Kingdom」

「Ha, hahaha... What are you talking about? Where did you get that false information...?」

At this stage, he still tried to make an excuse, but it was of no use. There was no point in arguing with him here.

「Shii」

「Ghaa!」

Fran stepped in easily, keeping low, and drove a body blow into Gregory's stomach. Fran's fist went in deep enough to completely bury itself in Gregory's plump flesh.

「Ughaah!」

Gregory cowered in place, spitting out various things from his mouth.

He was plunging face-first into his vomit, but the pain in his abdomen must have been so unbearable that he didn't even notice it.



Even when he didn't have anything left to spit out, he was still holding his stomach and groaning on the floor.

Even so, Gregory looked up at us with a miserable expression on his face, as if he was feeling somewhat better after a dozen seconds. He seemed to have completely understood his position.

「I'm gonna have you talk about a lot of things」

「...Kuh」

After that, he was able to endure some of it, but again, for not being a fighter himself, Gregory did not have a high pain tolerance.

I guess he was prepared for a violent interrogation, but his resolve seemed to have been shattered when he was actually beaten.

It was quite rare to see people who looked so desperate when they were being healed.

「Ghaah... Talk...! I'll talk...! L-let me talk, I beg you!」

Ten minutes later, he was crying and begging for it himself.

# Chapter 598

When we spoke to him, we found out that Gregory was a nobleman of the Raidos Kingdom. To my surprise, he was actually a Viscount.

However, he said that he had never lived like a nobleman since he entered the Belios Kingdom disguised as a merchant more than twenty years ago.

I thought it was amazing that he remained loyal to the Raidos Kingdom, but it seemed that his fear of being killed if he betrayed them was stronger than his loyalty.

In fact, some of his fellow spies had been killed for trying to betray their homeland.

Maybe there were even spies watching over other spies.

Besides, spies from the Raidos Kingdom were somewhat unique. Instead of always conducting operations against the other country, they usually worked earnestly so that they could move easily in case of emergencies.

He mentioned that a Knight named Saruth, who had infiltrated the Kingdom of Philias, also worked normally in peacetime to gain trust.

Gregory was the same, and it seemed that he was really a decent merchant, except for the fact that he sent information to the Raidos Kingdom once every few years.

Because of this, he had gained the trust of the people around the lake, and their scheme involving the Scarlet Waterweed medicine had been able to proceed smoothly.

Gregory and the others were under the command of the Eastern Duke, and they were helping the alchemists under his command with their plans.

「Who is this alchemist you're talking about?」

「Zelyse, a man who behaves like a child」

「Zelyse!? He's in this country?」

「Y-yes...」

Fran's eyes widened. She never thought she'd hear his name here.

He was the crazy, psycho, good-looking alchemist, who had done several things to us in Barbra. Well, we did manage to thwart his plans as well, so I'd say it was even between us.

But still, is he on the Raidos Kingdom's side? Or did he originally belong to the Belios Kingdom? But he also said something like he was raised in the Kranzel Kingdom at that time...

「Is Zelyse a subordinate of Raidos Kingdom?」

「I-It would be more accurate to say that he was a subordinate of the Eastern Duke...」

「Even though he's being hunted elsewhere?」

「Criminal records in countries that are hostile to our country are irrelevant. Besides, in the Raidos Kingdom, where there is no Adventurer's Guild, the bounties issued by the Guild is meaningless...」

In other words, they would accept criminals from other countries as long as they were capable. On the contrary, it was even possible that they were actively accepting those who were wanted in the Kranzel Kingdom. Just like that saying went, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend".

『Could it be that that undead are under Zelyse's command?』

When Fran asked him about it, he said that it had nothing to do with Zelyse. He said that the undead was loaned by the Black Skeleton Army, an organization under the control of the Southern Duke.

To my surprise, it seemed that the Black Skeleton Army had created a technique to transform necromancers into undead while retaining their human consciousness.

「How is that even possible?」

「I-I don't know. But even that Wight King was still able to hold a decent conversation. Although his mind was greatly corrupted...」

It seemed that it was not possible to tell which class of undead a slave would turn into depending on the affinity of the person who became the base body, so the current method was to force a slave to turn into an undead after making them learn necromancy.

After they were turned into undead in this way, they were then controlled by higher-ranking necromancers and made to swear allegiance to the Raidos Kingdom.

The advantages of turning a human into an undead were strong reasoning and the ability to talk. The undead, who were usually too mentally deranged to carry out complex missions, could be transformed into fearsome and powerful soldiers by having human thoughts.

However, he said that those who became undead must sleep in a coffin during normal times because their bodies and minds would gradually deteriorate over time.

The coffin also had a powerful concealment effect, so powerful undead could be hidden inside their luggage and be transported. In some cases, it was even possible to carry them close to the heart of the enemy country without being detected.

The Wight King we had just defeated was said to be one of the few remaining top-level forces in the Black Skeleton Army. When we

mentioned Weena Rhyn's name before, they must have seen us as a possible enemy. Well, we killed it instantly though.

However, the Scarlet Waterweed medicine was more important than the undead right now.

「What is your purpose? What are you going to do with the Scarlet Waterweed medicine?」

「Z-Zelyse hasn't told us his main goal! He just asked us to mass-produce the Scarlet Waterweed medicine!」

「Where are you sending that Scarlet Waterweed medicine?」

「N-nowhere...」

「Nn?」

『Huh?』

What does that mean? Aren't they trying to make Scarlet Waterweed medicine and use it for something?

However, Gregory told us that the Scarlet Waterweed medicine was still stored in large quantities in the ship's warehouses.

He said that all of them were left here except for those that were distributed for domestic use.

They assumed that it would eventually be transported somewhere else, but the situation had remained the same for over a year now.

(But why? Isn't their purpose is to get the Scarlet Waterweed medicine?)

『Well, I don't know about it either... Besides, I don't even understand the connection between the fact that these guys are from the Raidos Kingdom and are working under Zelyse's orders and the anomaly in the lake』

We thought that the anomaly was caused by something that the Mesther Merchant Association had done. In fact, we thought that the Scarlet Waterweed medicine had been misused in some way to cause the current anomaly.

But was that really the case?

「Did you know that there's been some kind of anomaly in the lake?」

「Y-yes」

「Are you guys the ones behind it?」

「T-that's outrageous! There's no way we could do something that big!」

『For real? But this guy seems to be serious』

Was it just that Gregory didn't know about it? Or did they really have nothing to do with it?

『Fran, It seems we need to get Zelyse to talk, even if we have to force him to』

(Nn)

Fran then asked Gregory where Zelyse was.

「T-the atelier! He should be in the Scarlet Waterweed medicine making atelier!」

# Chapter 599

We got Zelyse's whereabouts out of him. Apparently, he was in the atelier where the Scarlet Waterweed medicine was made.

(Should we head to where Lovren is going?)

『Yeah, but...』

Could he have possibly run away from this? It wasn't like I was making a fool of Lovren, but I didn't think he could handle Zelyse.

If they found out that we were suspicious of their atelier, Zelyse might try to flee immediately.

But we couldn't leave this ship unattended either. We hadn't been able to capture all of their top brass, such as the head of the merchant association.

As I was wondering, I then heard Urushi's howl from outside. And at the same time, I could sense that multiple presences were coming towards this ship.

『It looks like the Adventurers have arrived』

There was no hint of tension in Urushi's voice. So, they were probably not enemies.

As soon as we stepped out onto the deck, we saw a group of Adventurers coming towards us in a small boat. Some of them looked familiar to me. They were Daghour and some C-ranked Adventurers that we fought during the mock battle.

「Black Lightning Princess-dono! It's been a while! I'm glad to see you are well!」

「Nn. Likewise」

「Hahaha. Well then, we've been asked by Lovren-dono to assist you to take over this ship, but what's the current situation?」

She then explained to Daghour, the leader of the group, that Gregory, who was tied up and lying next to her, had told her everything, and that this merchant association was a front for the Raidos Kingdom.

「I had heard about it from Lovren-dono, so it was actually true, huh...?」

「Can I leave the rest to you then?」

「Yes, you can leave it to us. But Black Lightning Princess-dono, what are you gonna do now?」

「I'll head to the atelier」

「I see」

「No one has escaped since we went in. But I don't know if they could have teleported or not」

As she said, it would not be surprising if their top brass had some kind of teleportation device to help them escape. However, they should not be able to travel very long distances.

In fact, it would be just far enough to escape from the ship. It would have been impossible for Urushi and I to not notice if someone had teleported that close to us.

However, there was a possibility that they had a magic tool that we did not know about, and there was also a possibility that the president of the merchant association was actually a Space-Time Magic-User himself. In that case, there was honestly nothing we could do.



「For now, we need to capture everyone on this ship」

「Understood」

With this handled, we could finally head for the atelier. We just didn't know exactly where it was, so we would need a guide. It would be much easier if we could just see it from here.

But just as I was thinking that——

Boooom!!

「Uh!」

「Woof!」

「Wha!」

Fran and Urushi were surprised at the sudden explosion. I was so surprised that I couldn't help but let out a yelp.

When I looked in the direction where the sound came from, I immediately knew the cause.

A huge pillar of fire was erupting into the sky from a small ship that was part of the Commercial Fleet. There must have been something that exploded.

What happened?

Was there an accident? Or was it attacked by a magic beast?

The ship that was still engulfed in flames was similar to an oil tanker that I had seen on the news. Well, this one is smaller in scale though.

But still, with that sort of fire, the surrounding ships might be in danger of catching fire, and it would be difficult to save them.

『I wonder what ship that is?』

The ships of the Commercial Fleet had a wide variety of functions and ownerships. Some were used for residency, fishing, offices, workshops, and even the Guild Headquarters. That's why it was hard for outsiders like us to identify them at first glance.

「Daghour. That ship, what ship is that?」

「T-that is the atelier that Black Lightning Princess-dono said she was heading for!」

Eh? That ship?

『Is Lovren and the others safe?』

(Master, is this Zelyse doing?)

『I don't know!』

But still, that possibility was very high.

『Let's head for that ship for now!』

「Nn! Urushi!」

「Woof!」

Fran jumped on Urushi's back and headed towards the burning ship. Since it was an atelier, it was probably filled with flammable chemicals, and from time to time explosions of various sizes occurred.

Moreover, it seemed that a hole had appeared in the hull and the ship was sinking at a considerable pace. This could be quite a catastrophe.

This didn't seem like something that could be handled by just pouring water on it with magic.

『Oi oi, what's going to happen to Lovren and the others...』

「Master! Over there!」

At where Fran pointed, I could see Lovren floating in the lake, holding on to a board.

「Lovren!」

「Aah, Fran-san...」

Maybe it was because he had already seen Urushi many times before, Lovren didn't seem to be frightened by his giant wolf appearance. Or maybe he just couldn't afford to be, though.

I then used my telekinesis to pull Lovren up onto Urushi's back.

「Are you okay?」

「I somehow made it out of there... But the Adventurers who went into the atelier with me are...」

「What happened?」

Fran asked the tragic-looking Lovren about the cause of the explosion.

「The alchemist in the atelier suddenly unleashed powerful Fire Magic. Then his magic ignited the medicine inside the ship」

「Do you know who that alchemist was?」

「He must have been caught in the explosion... I don't think he could survive from something like that」

According to Lovren, he was a young man with blond hair and blue eyes, however, he spoke just like a child.

「But he's not just an ordinary alchemist. He's more like a terrifying opponent... Just looking at him gave me goosebumps」

No doubt about it, he must be Zelyse. With his sharp intuition, Lovren must have sensed that he wasn't just an ordinary person.

『Fran, we must prioritize on rescuing those in danger for now』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 600

Urushi and Fran split up to rescue the people floating on the lake.

「Are you okay?」

「I-I'm saved...」

「Woof?」

「Hiiii!」

The ones we rescued were not only the Adventurers who stepped onto the ship with Lovren, but also ordinary people who worked on that ship.

The Adventurers were generally grateful to us, but those who weren't screamed when they saw Urushi approaching them. They probably thought that they were going to be attacked by the giant wolf.

Urushi was using his mouth at first to pull them up after all... A normal person would find it hard not to be frightened at the sight of his giant body and dreadful looks.

『That's why so don't be so upset』

「Woof...」

Later, the Adventurers who could walk on water like Lovren joined in the rescue, and we were able to rescue quite a lot of people.

But still, not everyone was safe. We also recovered a lot of dead bodies floating on the lake.

「...Zelyse...!」

『Where the hell did that bastard go!?!』

「Grrrr!」

At the sight of the wreckage, Fran muttered in anger. The same went for Urushi and me.

Zelyse must have had some kind of teleportation ability, but I didn't think that he had gone very far yet. Could we just find him with Urushi's nose? Or maybe, the current us now could detect his presence with our skills.

『Zelyse should still around here somewhere——』

Boooooom!

『W-what!?!』

「Another explosion!?!」

「Woof!」

As we were thinking of ways to find Zelyse, we heard a loud explosion again. We hurried to check it and saw a pillar of fire coming from a different ship than this one.

We knew right away what ship that was. That was where we were just a moment ago.

『That's the Mesther Merchant Association's ship...!』

Just like the ship that had been set on fire by Zelyse, the Mesther Merchant Association ship was also engulfed in flames and smoke and was slowly sinking.

The fire was spreading incredibly fast. It seemed that the ship had been modified in some way to destroy the evidence.

「Let's go!」

『Yeah!』

We once again went to the rescue. However, we were only able to rescue the Adventurers.

Many of the people from the merchant association must have been tied up and could not escape the fire. Even if they had successfully jumped into the lake, some of them would have drowned because of their tied hands and feet.

But things didn't end there.

Crack!

There was another loud sound again.

However, the sound this time was not caused by an explosion.

Rather than an explosion, it sounded more like a fracturing sound, as if something was creaking and breaking.

Crack! Boom!

And I could hear it happening over and over again.

『Fran!』

「Nn!」

We ascended and looked in the direction where the sound came from.

『This is... quite bad, isn't it...』

「Master! Let's go!」

『Yeah! Urushi, hurry up!』

「Woof!」

It seemed that our detection skills had not gone crazy.

『Why are there so many Modoki coming here...!?』

「Did Zelyse summon them?」

『That's crazy! The people living around the lake didn't even know their ecology, right!?』

To our surprise, several ships in the Commercial Fleet had been attacked by the Modoki. Some of the ships were already surrounded and had large holes pierced in their hulls.

Many Adventurers must have been sent to the Mesther Merchant Association and the atelier ship, so the security around the Commercial Fleet was quite weak right now.

And then, because of the sheer number of Modoki, they couldn't deal with them in time.

Was this a coincidence?

The Modoki were suspected to be after the Scarlet Waterweed medicine. And when the atelier ship and the merchant association ship exploded, a large amount of Scarlet Waterweed medicine must have been spilled into the lake.

Moreover, the loud noise and the conspicuous pillar of flame were still happening around here.

That must be the reason why Modoki was attracted here.

We didn't know exactly how many there were, but there must have been more than 30 of them around the fleet. And more of them were likely to be coming here.

『Anyway, let's hunt the Modoki!』



「Nn!」

『Fran, Urushi, don't use any flashy magic, okay? We'll kill them in close combat so as not to cause any damage to the fleet!』

「Just like before. Don't worry」

「Woof!」

『All right! Let's go!』

We split up into two groups and took the nearest Modoki down first.

I actually thought about splitting into three groups. If I fought underwater, it would be unlikely that I would be exposed as a sword that could move on my own.

But I decided not to do that.

There was a chance that Zelyse might still be in the vicinity. And I didn't want to leave Fran alone in such a situation.

I think it was unlikely that the current Fran could be easily defeated. However, something was unsettling about Zelyse that could not be measured by strength or status. I was afraid of what he might do.

「Master?」

『Aah, sorry. I was just a little worried about Zelyse's whereabouts. Anyway, we'll have to deal with the Modoki first』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 601

There were a lot of them, but we didn't have much difficulty dealing with the Modoki.

It took a lot of effort to hit them because we couldn't do anything too flashy, but we rarely took any damage. Even if we did, it was only a slight scratch.

Well, we could perform surprise attacks on the Modoki that were attacking ships, and we were much stronger than them to begin with. That was why we wouldn't have much difficulty dealing with them.

But we wouldn't let our guard down.

(Master, someone is watching us)

『Yeah, I could feel it on me too. But I don't know from where it is coming——』

(I don't know too)

We could clearly feel that someone was watching us.

It was not coming from the people of the Commercial Fleet that were watching in amazement at the mysterious girl who one-sidedly defeated the Modoki.

It was a much more persistent and disturbing gaze. It was as if they were observing an interesting subject for an experiment. Or as if they were planning to kidnap a young girl they spotted on the street. It was quite unpleasant.

I was eager to find out where they were and beat the shit out of them right away.

And it was not just us they were watching. Apparently, they were observing the entire battlefield.

I wonder who they were? We would find out when we caught them, but we didn't even know where they were.

It was either they were too far away from us, or they had advanced stealth abilities.

But that was just what I and Fran felt.

(Woof woof!)

After evolving into a Ragnarok Wolf, Urushi's keen sense seemed to have caught the owner of the gaze for sure. As expected of Urushi.

『Urushi, keep tracking their whereabouts』

(Woof!)

The first thing we needed to do was to get rid of the Modoki. The other Adventurers had started to join the fight, but we still didn't have enough strength to handle all of them. If we left now, the fleet would surely suffer a great deal of damage.

『Our next strongest forces are Lovren and——Sierra, huh?』

(Nn. That sword is amazing)

『Yeah...』

To Fran's surprise, the jet-black sword wielded by Sierra was a much more powerful magic sword than she had imagined. Although she couldn't appraise it due to its Evil Spirit, there was no doubt that it was a high-ranking magic sword.

It was not simply about its attack power. I could see that it was clearly raising Sierra's strength. Moreover, the strengthening rate was quite great.

But still, the movements of the D-ranked Sierra were nowhere as good as Lovren's.

However, the sight of him holding a jet-black sword and running across the water at high speed, slashing through the modoki one after another, was unlike that of a D-ranked Adventurer.

But for some reason, I could sense something akin to impatience from Sierra. It seemed to be different from either caution or anger towards the Modoki.

I wondered if it was his determination in the face of such a powerful opponent that made him think that way, but with Sierra's ability, he would be able to fight even a pack of Modoki without a problem. It was strange that he seemed to be so tense.

So then why did he seem that tense?

As I observed Sierra taking down the Modoki, he seemed to be looking for something.

Apparently, he seemed to be looking for the same person who was observing the battlefield just like us.

『Well, we'll be the one to find that person first!』

「Woof!」

I was so proud of our win, but it was entirely thanks to Urushi.

『All right, we've defeated most of the Modoki, I'll leave finding that guy to you, Urushi!』

Once we were sure that there were no more Modoki in the fleet's vicinity, we made our move without a moment's delay. We didn't want to let them get away.

『Let's get to the owner of that gaze before they escape!』

(Woof!)

Our strategy this time is quite simple.

Urushi would use his shadow transfer to surprise the hiding opponent, and then we would follow Urushi's signal and teleport there. That was it.

The only problem was if the opponent is too far away to be reached by our teleportation——

「Wooooof!」

It apparently wasn't a problem. Urushi then dove into the shadows on the spot.

And in the next moment, Urushi's presence appeared a few dozen meters behind the fleet.

『How should I put it, aren't they quite close!?!』

「Nn」

This meant that they must have been highly skilled in their stealth abilities, and the fact that they could deceive Fran and I when we were only 200 meters away was quite impressive.

『Don't let your guard down!』

「Nn!」

I teleported with Fran, who was ready for battle, to where Urushi was. Of course, we'd made sure to leave no trace of our presence. It would be pointless for us to take them by surprise if they discovered us right after we teleported.

We teleported slightly above Urushi, and below us, Urushi and a man were facing each other.

Black tentacle-like things were wriggling around Urushi and the man standing on the water's surface. It was probably a binding spell that Urushi had unleashed. But it seemed to be blocked by the barrier that the man had set up.

『Zelyse!』

The blond-haired, blue-eyed man looked familiar. He was the psycho handsome guy, Zelyse. I had a hunch, but as I thought, it was this guy who was watching over us before.

「Master!」

『Okay!』

Fran quickly readied me. In response to her words, I transformed myself into my katana form. It had been a while since I'd felt this way. It may have been the first time in a long time that we'd been able to communicate so well as a team.

A sword and its wielder. I was Fran's guardian, but I was also her sword. Therefore, it was inevitable that the place where we could understand each other best was in battle.

「Nn」

『Yeah』

I understood. I understood what Fran was telling me.

She readied her Sheaths of Wind and aimed it to slash at Zelyse. Without using teleport, she added the power of falling to her slash. The reason why she used the Wind Attribute was to hide our presence. And of course, she also activated a variety of other skills at the same time in this attack.

Fran narrowed her eyes in satisfaction and smiled slightly as she saw that I had activated the skill just as she had wanted.

『Here we go, Fran!』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 602

When Zelyse was being held back by Urushi, Fran, who had made herself unnoticeable, launched a surprise attack.

「——!」

Fran was silently descending from the sky to the lake surface. The natural signs of sound, air movement, and body heat were being completely eliminated by her skills. Even her own shadow on the lake surface had been erased by magic.

By the time Zelyse noticed Fran falling from the sky, the distance between them had already shrunk to only a few meters.

「Uwaaa!」

「Shii!」

Fran swung me down at Zelyse, who was making a dumb face.

I could not sense any martial arts capabilities from Zelyse. He may have possessed the skill, but he didn't seem to be a master. The only unusual thing was that Zelyse had noticed Fran's surprise attack before he was cut down.

As I thought, he was no ordinary opponent. With that in mind, I activated multiple attribute swords at the same time.

『Eat this!』

And then my blade slashed through Zelyse's body. It was not that I had sliced through him so easily that he couldn't even resist. But I didn't even



feel a slicing sensation at all. It was as if I had cut through an illusion, and my blade went right through his body.

The slash that Fran unleashed slipped through Zelyse's body, only to cut deep into the water at his feet.

Just a moment before Fran sliced Zelyse, I could clearly feel his presence at that spot.

But it has changed now. Even though I could see him, I couldn't even feel any presence or magic coming from his body.

He looked exactly like when we used Dimension Shift, but he didn't seem to have used any Space-time Magic.

I have no idea of what he has done.

However, Fran and I were not that surprised by it. We were not that surprised, because we had thought, somewhere deep inside our minds, that this guy might dodge.

That was why we could still move on to our next action without getting freaked out.

「Haaa!」

『Orraa!』

Fran unleashed a series of slashes without pause. And at the same time, I continued to shoot Lightning, Fire, and Storm Magic at him.

I didn't know what kind of permeability power Zelyse was using, but if it was a Dimension Shift kind of power, it shouldn't last that long.

If that was the case, we would just have to keep attacking until that ability wore off. That was our strategy to handle this situation.

「Oya! Isn't it Fran-san!? Long time no see!」

「Even at a time like this...!」

『Does he think he can afford to be so relaxed!?』

「Don't make such a scary face~」

Zelyse flashed a carefree smile without a hint of hostility at her. Seeing that, Fran increased her speed even more, but Zelyse's permeability power did not seem to be disrupted at all.

No matter how many times Fran's sword struck that smug face of his with powerful telekinesis, he just stood there smiling and laughing.

『Then how about this!』

「Ahahaha! I'm so surprised you can even use the Space-time Magic with no chanting!」

I unleashed my Space-time Magic, the Dimensional Sword. It was a technique that ignored the opponent's defenses and dealt damage, but it was also effective against Dimension Shifts.

However, Zelyse's annoying smile remained on his face.

『Tsk!』

My Dimension Sword had been repelled! It appeared that he had prepared all countermeasures against it. However, the fact that he had prepared a countermeasure for it meant that attacks with the Space-time attribute were effective.

『Urushi!』

「Grrrr!」

「Uwaah! Even this wolf!?」

Urushi used his Dimensional Fang skill. It had the same Space-time attribute as my Dimension Sword, but it was far more powerful.

Perhaps what he was using was not Space-time Magic, but a skill similar to Dimensional Magic, which is the superior version of Space-time Magic.

Seeing the approaching fangs, Zelyse created a barrier in front of him. The barrier, which was put up in the spur of the moment, couldn't have blocked Urushi's attack, but he hoped it could buy him a moment of time.

Zelyse's figure drowned into the water then appeared a few meters from where he had been standing. But the weird thing was, I couldn't detect if he had activated any magic at all.

I was constantly paying attention to our surroundings in order to anticipate if he was going to use teleportation. And yet, I was unable to detect any sign of him using teleportation at all.

Then was it possible that the Zelyse we were facing was just an illusion? No, if he was just an illusion then I should be able to feel the magic power of his illusion. However, I couldn't feel anything from this Zelyse at all.

Then, was that figure of his a mirage, a false image created by natural phenomena? I couldn't help but think that was the case...

But if that was the case, there was no way he could have a conversation with us.

Moreover, he could block my Space-time Magic and dodge Urushi's attack. So, it seemed, he must have erased his own entity in some way.

『...Fran, unleash your Space-time Magic at full force』

「Nn」

Even if the Space-time Magic was not very powerful, it could be strengthened by putting too much magic power into it.

『Urushi, focus on your attack. I need you to attack that guy without pause』

「Grrr!」

It was Zelyse we were facing, and he was always quick to escape. So even if this would use up all of our magic power, we must bring him down here!

「Fran-san, why did you even come to this place... Or have you perhaps been following me by any chance?」

「No. Rather than that, what are you doing here?」

「Ee~h? You want to know?」

「I know you've been working for a very important person from the Raidos Kingdom. So, what are you up to in this country?」

「Fufu~n, if you're that curious, I'll tell you about it then」

In response to Fran's question, Zelyse easily spoke up and started blabbering about his misdeeds. Yes, this was what kind of guy he was.

Well, I'm grateful for that because it allows me to ready my skills and understand his circumstances.

「It wasn't the Scarlet Waterweed medicine we were after!」

「Nn?」

They were not aiming at the Scarlet Waterweed medicine? But why have they been hoarding so much of it?

「You're wondering why, aren't you?」

「Then, why have you gathered that much Scarlet Waterweed medicine in the first place?」

「We didn't really mean to gather that many, we just threw the unnecessary ones in the warehouse」

I didn't understand. Didn't they make the Scarlet Waterweed medicine and store it in the warehouse because they needed it?

「What we wanted was something that came out of the Scarlet Waterweed medicine's manufacturing process」

「Something that comes out of it?」

「Its waste liquid. Well, for me, that's the real deal, and the Scarlet Waterweed medicine is just like the real wastewater」

# Chapter 603

「It's waste liquid. Well, for me, that's the real deal, and the Scarlet Waterweed medicine is just like the wastewater」

The endemic medicine in its pill form that was originally manufactured in this country was made entirely from Scarlet Waterweed.

First of all, the outer skin of the Scarlet Waterweed's stem had the effect of disrupting Space-Time Magic, dissipating the Space-Time Magic power accumulated in patients' bodies. And its stem had the effect of regulating Space-Time Magic inside the patients to cure their Space-Time Magic sickness.

However, it seemed that the Scarlet Waterweed medicine manufactured by Zelyse and the Mesther Merchant Association only used the part of the stem that had the effect of regulating Space-Time Magic.

As a result, there was a big difference between the two. It took longer for the pills to take effect. The potion was said to work right after they took them, but the pill took a few hours to actually start working.

Its potion form may sound superior, but there was a big reason why they had never manufactured it.

First, the pills were easier to produce, while the liquid form required complicated extraction, separation, and bottling, as well as expensive equipment. But the pills only needed to be boiled in a pot and dried. Well, the process of making them still required skills and some chemicals, but it was not difficult to produce them.

Moreover, the pills were easy to store, easy to carry, and inexpensive. They had no side effects and were better against endemic diseases.

Its perfection as medicine was already high. No one had ever bothered to produce the liquid medicine when the manufacturing method for it was already widespread.

It seemed that when the Mesther Merchant Association started selling the product, while many people were pleased, some were surprised to hear that they had been conducting such a useless experiment.

However, the Mesther Merchant Association still manufactured it. I thought for sure that the medicine itself was useful, but...

I never thought that the medicine itself was not important to them, but the waste liquid from its manufacturing process was actually what they were aiming for. If what Zelyse said was true, then the Scarlet Waterweed potion was just a byproduct for them.

「That thing, what would you use that for?」

「I actually have some business in the center of this lake, but you see, I can't get closer because of those troublesome guardians」

It seemed that even Zelyse could not break through the Vivian Guardian's defenses. But still, what business did he have in the center of the lake? Could it be that Zelyse's true purpose was the sealed great magic beast?

「So I was wondering if I could get rid of them somehow... I knew that they were magic creatures born with Water and Space-Time Magic. So, I thought that if I dumped a large amount of the extracted Scarlet Waterweed into the lake, they would disappear」

So that was their reason for aiming for the waste liquid!?

「I thought that even if they didn't disappear, it would at least weaken them, but... I never thought it would mutate them like that. Moreover, it seems that the abnormal Guardians were suffering from a magic disorder and turned violent. Ahahaha! Isn't it interesting!?!」

「Not at all」

「Well, there's also something else that's interesting. The abnormal Guardian is now seeking the Scarlet Waterweed potion. I think it's their instinct to try to get back to normal. Don't you think so?」

I see so that's the reason why many ships were attacked by the Modoki.

「But still, how did you manage to get to us? We've taken a great deal of care to make sure we didn't get found out, you know?」

「It was obvious」

「Hu~h?」

Fran replied to Zelyse's question with a triumphant look on her face, but it was Khanna who did the research, right, Fran? And I didn't think it was that easy.

「That's strange... Other people were sniffing around too, but none of them could even get to us... So, is there a traitor within our ranks...? Hmmm...」

It seemed that Khanna's information network was quite impressive. I thought that she was coming from a small merchant association, but it seemed, they were actually a large, cross-country merchant association.

「Rather than that, what's your real goal?」

「Well, I wonder...?」

「...Are you going to bring back the magic beast inside the lake and destroy this country?」

「Ahahaha! Too bad! Wrong guess! I'm not interested in that! That would be great if it could destroy the world. But if it could only destroy this country, it would only be talked about for hundreds of years at best, right? Ahahahaha, that's worthless for me!」

Zelyse said so and laughed with an innocent look on his face.



「You know the magic beast sealed in this lake is not normal, right? I've heard that it was a strange mixture of various things, so it might be useful for the ultimate magic beast I'm trying to create, right? Even I was shocked at my uncontrollable intellectual curiosity!」

After all this scheming, his goal was just to satisfy his curiosity? I still didn't quite understand this guy. It just reminded me that I couldn't let him go unchecked.

『Fran, you ready?』

(Nn)

『Urushi?』

(Woof!)

Alright, it seemed that Fran and Urushi were both ready. And of course, I myself have completed my magic and skills preparation.

『I'll make the first attack to create an opening. Then, you must attack him from the opening I make for you at once』

(Okay)

(Woof!)

I was about to unleash my magic, intending to land a hit on Zelyse's annoying handsome face.

But just before we made a move, I sensed a new presence behind us. It was a powerful presence that gave off a presence that I couldn't ignore. It was coming from the Commercial Fleet and heading towards us at tremendous speed.

It was a presence that I remembered.

When we looked in that direction, I saw a young boy with brown hair running across the water as if he were bouncing. It was Sierra.

I was wondering if he had come to help us...

「Zelyseee—!」

「Oya?」

Sierra's eyes were staring straight at Zelyse. From his fierce expression, it seemed that they had some sort of connection.

Sierra's gushing murderous intent towards Zelyse was very similar to Fran's when she attacked Zelos Reed.

The anger and hatred that was so strong that he could not control it must be what drove his body. He didn't even look at Fran, he was just staring at Zelyse with the eyes as if he was going to kill him.

But Zelyse's face twisted into a grin when she saw Sierra coming at him in a straight line.

「Could it be, he is... Woah, he has gotten big, hasn't he?」

As I thought, they seemed to know each other. But what kind of relationship did they have?

# Chapter 604

It was not every day we could get a chance to take down Zelyse, so we would use Sierra as bait.

『We'll make our move as Sierra attacks!』

(Nn!)

(Woof!)

Just like before, the attacks we launched still slipped through Zelyse's body, but we used this as a cover to build up our strength. We would then use all of that power on Zelyse, who was still distracted by Sierra.

『You ready?』

(Nn)

Immediately after, Sierra jumped up at him with his jet-black sword raised above his head.

I didn't know what kind of attack Sierra was planning to launch, but I didn't sense any Space-Time Magic coming from it, so I didn't think he could damage Zelyse with it.

However, it was enough to keep Zelyse's eyes on him.

『Now!』

It was just before I was about to unleash my dimension sword, which I had put more than the limit of my magic power into...

「Evil Release!」

Sierra shouted those words. Then, an enormous surge of Evil Spirit began to fill the surrounding space.

「Eh?」

『Uoh?』

Zelyse and I both make a dumb sound at the same time.

The surge of evil that was released from Sierra's sword was so enormous. I knew that an Evil Spirit was sealed in Sierra's sword, but...

I never thought that it was this powerful!

The evil coming out of the sword Sierra held was so enormous that it wouldn't be possible if the Evil Spirit sealed inside his sword was not a super-powerful Evil Spirit.

(Master, what is that?)

『I don't know! But don't let your guard down, okay? That thing is already beyond the realm of what a mere adventurer could handle!』

「Nn」

『But still, this Evil Spirit is...』

I didn't think there was any kind of wavelength inherent to Evil Spirits, but I felt that I remembered something about it. This intimidating feeling... This was not the first time I had felt something similar to it.

『I wonder where I had felt this... Do you know, Fran?』

(Nn)

『Eh? You know?』

(It's similar to Zelos Reed's Evil Spirit)

I see. That may be true. Perhaps we unconsciously perceive Evil Spirits that were more powerful than a certain level as being similar to each other.

However, the current situation was not good. I would always feel an indescribable disgust every time an Evil Spirit was close to me.

Our minds were inevitably shaken slightly by the unexpected exposure to such a powerful Evil Spirit. If our minds wavered, the accuracy of our skills would also decrease.

『Fran, don't lose your focus!』

(Nn)

But it was actually just the beginning. In the next moment, we were exposed to even more psychological shock.

「O Reason, let there be chaos!」

As if in response to Sierra's shout as he jumped towards Zelyse, the jet-black evil sword emitted an evil light. No matter how I look at it, it was probably the kind of light that we shouldn't get caught into.

I've tried to put up a barrier as quickly as I could, but——

Booom!

We both fell into the lake by the big waves caused by his attack.

『Eh?』

「Huh?」

「Woof?」

Without any sign, Fran and Urushi's aerial jump suddenly stopped working.

And that was not all. The magic that I had prepared had also disappeared just before it was activated. It wasn't that the magic had been blown away, or that it had been blocked.

How should I put it, the skills themselves were disturbed and failed to activate... The Strengthening Magic and Detection Skills that I had activated were all canceled out.

In all likelihood, it was the black light from Sierra's sword that did it, huh?

I tried to use my telekinesis to pick up Fran and Urushi who had gotten all wet as soon as I could, but it was working fine.

It seemed that the skills I had activated or prepared for the moment I was exposed to the light earlier had been canceled out.

But it wasn't just us.

「Uwaah!」

Zelyse had also fallen into the lake. Moreover, I could clearly feel his presence now. It seemed that the mysterious skill he had been using had been canceled by Sierra.

A fearsome Evil Spirit and a mysterious ability that canceled skills in its vicinity. To tell the truth, we had underestimated him. It seemed that Sierra had powers that surpassed our imagination.

「Die! Zelyseee!」

「Kuh! That hurts, you know!」

「Tsk!」

Sierra, who was running in the sky, swung his sword down at Zelyse, who had been thrown out into the lake. His sword had definitely sliced through Zelyse's body. His spurting blood was proof of this.

Zelyse was slashed from his right shoulder to his lungs, and I saw him spit out a lot of blood from his mouth. However, Zelyse escaped from the water into the sky, moving as if he hadn't taken any damage.

Although he said it hurt, I didn't see a hint of pain on his face. However, I could tell that the life force that I could now feel from Zelyse had definitely decreased.

Although he had already used some potion to close his wound, it was obvious that Sierra had cornered Zelyse.

We could consider Sierra to be an ally to us, couldn't we? But because he had previously shot killing intent towards Fran, I did not doubt that Sierra might be harboring some sort of malicious intent towards Fran.

But he was just concentrating on Zelyse now...

『Fran, can you move?』

(Nn!)

It looks like their skills were already working properly. Both Fran and Urushi then went in with their aerial jump.

In the meantime, the battle had shifted from the surface of the lake to the sky, and the fierce battle between Sierra and Zelyse had just begun.

Sierra moved fast, but his swordsmanship was not that great. His status may be strengthened by his sword's ability, but his skills were probably still the same.

From the distance, we could see Sierra's evil sword and the beautiful sword made of crystal that Zelyse had taken from somewhere were fiercely clashing.

「Kuh! Zelyseee!」

「You're pretty fast, aren't you! But that's not fast enough to reach me!」

On the other hand, Zelyse's movement was quite unbelievable for someone like him. He was suddenly moving like a master. He definitely possessed the Sword Saint Skill. And it must be at a pretty high level.

No, maybe it was the effect of his magic stone weapon. He must have developed a technique that allowed him to use the skills contained in the magic stone for a short time. That was probably how he got his swordsmanship skills.

「Haaa! Dieee!」

「Ahahahah! Well, that's a tall order!」



# Chapter 605

Zelyse smiled happily as he continued his fierce battle with Sierra.

Under normal circumstances, his smile would look like a fresh, handsome smile, but I couldn't help but feel a sinister feeling coming from it.

「Ahaha! Amazing! What an amazing sword!」

「...」

「Uwaah, I can't believe how much that little kid from that time has grown up like this!」

「Tsk! Bastard! There's no way the current you know the current me now!」

Sierra frowned at Zelyse's words. They seemed to know each other, didn't they? But Sierra denied it with strange words.

The current you? What did he mean by that? Was he saying that he should have forgotten about him by now?

I couldn't figure out the relationship between Sierra and Zelyse. Was it something like Zelyse experimenting on him and abandoning him a long time ago?

「Fufu~n. Do you really think so?」

「...Nonsense! Are you trying to confuse me?」

「No no no, I really know who you're, right, Romio-kun?」

「...My name, is Sierra!」

「Is that what you call yourselves now? But I know you guys pretty well, you know? Romio-kun and... Zelos Reed-san?」

「H-how did you...」

What did he mean? Romio? And moreover, Zelos Reed...? The boy's real name was Romio, and Zelos Reed was hiding somewhere? What the hell did that mean?

「Have you been... watching us!? That shouldn't be possible, but still...」

「Well, I wonder...?」

「...It does not matter. If I kill you, the culprit here, it will be all over!」

「You think you can kill me?」

「Sure I can!」

I guess it was time for us to join the fray. Although they were immersed inside their own world, our hatred towards Zelyse was the same.

We could ask him about their name and what happened with Zelyse later.

『Fran!』

(Nn!)

For some reason, Zelyse had not been using his permeability, and now was our chance. Was he wary of it being canceled out again by Sierra, or was it something that he couldn't use often?

Anyway, he was definitely tangible right now.

「Let's get serious!」

『Ou! We'll bring him down here!』

I didn't want to involve Sierra in this if possible. But I had some questions I wanted to ask him, and he was on our side, for now.

Therefore, we could not use a ranged attack or a large-scale attack that would involve him in it. If that was the case, then the only thing we could do was to put all our strength into this and strike Zelyse with all our might.

「Awakening——Brilliant Lightning Rush. Sword God Transformation!」

『Here we go!』

The characteristic devastating magic that covered my blade and the strange feeling of one's thoughts being strengthened enveloped Fran and me.

「Black Thunder Roll———!」

The strengthening of the Sword God Transformation was not limited to our swordsmanship alone. It also brought out the best of what we were capable of at that moment.

The power of the Black Heavenly Tiger that resided in Fran's body and the swordsmanship associated with the Gods. In addition, the skills I possessed.

When they were fused, it became a killing blow that no one could dodge. The speed of the Black Lightning, the best slash, and its refined stealth was packed into this one strike.

I was confident that this attack would work against the strong opponents we had struggled with in the past. Even against the Lich and Amanda, I was confident that we could defeat them as long as we could activate it.

After all, there was a good chance that we would be taken down before we could even use it.

Sierra was completely unable to react to the sudden appearance of Fran in her Black Lightning Roll. Neither his eyes nor consciousness was directed at Fran, who had appeared right next to him.

But on the other hand, Zelyse was able to react to this somehow.

He then sacrificed his left hand to catch Sierra's sword, while moving to block me with his drawn crystal sword. If his reflexes and swordsmanship weren't on par with ours, this move would have been impossible.

I had thought that he had acquired skills at the level of the Sword Saint Skills, but apparently, it was even higher. In addition, there was no doubt that he had acquired a skill similar to super-reactivity through his magic stone weapon.

He had used his extra skill, the Thief's Favor before. With that in mind, it was no surprise that he could use any skill he wanted.

However, Zelyse would not be able to prevent the slash we unleashed.

「Eh?」

Zelyse blinked in surprise at the strange phenomenon that had occurred before his eyes.

The moment I made contact, the sword in Zelyse's hand disappeared completely without a trace.

Immediately after that, with the feeling of my stomach being filled, magic power flowed into me.

『Thanks for the meal!』

Zelyse's sword, which looked like a crystal, was actually made of a magic stone. I recognized it as we approached, so we slashed at it.

A magic stone weapon that enabled the use of Magic Stone Skills for a certain period of time. A golem made of magic stone, a magic stone soldier. In addition, his research on implanting magic stones into humans, we could even say that Zelyse was an expert in magic stones.

The sword that Zelyse was using was made of a magic stone. It was probably a powerful magic sword that had some special abilities.

But in front of me, it was just a treat.

「W-wait...!」

It made me happy to see the look of genuine surprise on this Zelyse bastard's face!

「Haaa!」

「Ghiighaaah!」

Immediately after, my blade slammed into the defenseless Zelyse. I could definitely feel it slicing through his flesh. No doubt, this was his real body.

Moreover, the attack with the Divine Attribute seemed to have been unexpectedly effective. Zelyse, who hadn't changed his complexion when Sierra slashed him, screamed in disgust.

Perhaps the Divine Attribute, which was superior to all possible attributes, had an effect that nullified pain-dulling skills and the like.

「Even the Divine Attribute... That's not... fair...」

# Chapter 606

「Even the Divine Attribute... That's not... fair...」

Like a crucified saint, Zelyse, with his hands stretched out to either side, spat out a large amount of blood and fell backward to the surface of the lake.

But I felt something was odd with my slash. I aimed my blade at his heart, but it collided with a hard object on its way from his left shoulder to his right side.

If I were an ordinary sword, I might get caught in his spine or ribs. But what we just unleashed was a killing blow from the current Fran...

Her slash should have been able to cut through not just bone, but even some hard metal like tofu. So, there must be something inside Zelyse that was strong enough to withstand our blow just now.

Actually, I remembered a similar feeling to this. It was during the incident in the Royal Capital of the Kranzel Kingdom.

It was the same feeling as when she slashed someone who had the pseudo fanatic sword stuck in him. However, there should be no way that Zelyse had a pseudo fanatic sword stuck in him——.

「...So, this is it, huh...」

With a slamming sound, Zelyse's body fell into the lake. The blood that flowed from his body then dyed the surface of the lake red.

And it wasn't just blood that was flowing out. It seemed as if even the life force within his body was dissolving and vanishing into the lake.

The light and fervor drained from Zelyse's eyes, and his presence faded rapidly.

「Aah... Goodbye——...」

Zelyse smiled at the last moment when his life force was entirely gone. Immediately afterward, his body swelled from within, swelling several times in an instant.

With that momentum, Zelyse's body spewed out a purple mist from within. No, it wasn't from inside the body. But Zelyse's body itself turned into a mist and dispersed.

Bushwooooohh!

『This is bad!』

My danger detection started to ring like crazy, but I didn't even need it to know that it was something that we should never get close to.

『He won't just simply die, isn't he!?』

Urushi and I hurriedly used teleport to get some distance. We were more than a hundred meters away, but my danger detection was still ringing. But I guess it couldn't be helped. We could see a waterfowl between us and the spot where Zelyse had fallen, thrashing and suffering to death.

『Let's hold it back with wind!』

I enclosed a large area with my Wind Magic and then narrowed the wind wall as if I were compressing it. It seems that I've managed to block out all the poisonous fog with my Wind Magic. At the very least, the purple mist was not in the visible range.

There's nothing we could do about the amount that had dissolved into the air and water, but since my crisis detection was hardly reacting anymore, it shouldn't be a problem.

In the end, I would just devour them all with my Poison Absorption Skills. Even if it was a skill like a vampire that turned his body into a poisonous mist, he shouldn't be able to revive once it was all been absorbed.

『Wait, was Sierra okay?』

「Over there」

『Ooh, so he's safe...』

Before I knew it, Sierra had also distanced himself from it, and he didn't seem to have been poisoned. It seemed that Zelyse's last attempt was in vain.

「...Did we win?」

「Woof?」

Fran and Urushi looked somewhat unconvinced. I too felt the same way.

『Is this the end?』

It seemed to be a suicide attack. An attack that assured him that he could pull off an eventual comeback even against a superior opponent.

But was it really this easy to win against him?

Our opponent was Zelyse, right? Differently from our fight with the Lich, he should have been a difficult opponent to fight against.

Honestly, deep down I knew that he might have been able to dodge even that attack.

And yet——.

But we definitely witnessed it. The moment when Zelyse lost his life force and died. That moment when Zelyse's face, body, and limbs crumbled and turned into that purple mist. And the moment when that mist was devoured by me.



Without a doubt, Zelyse had perished, and his body vanished.

Fran and Urushi seemed to feel the same way, and there was something other than joy on their faces. But there was no way he could have survived in that situation.

Even though we were not convinced, we had to admit that Zelyse was dead.

While we were standing still, Sierra came up to us.

「...Did you, killed Zelyse...?」

「Nn」

「I see... I was saved...」

I was slightly surprised when Sierra bowed to us. I hadn't expected him to thank us so frankly. I was expecting him to say something like, 「Don't do something you shouldn't have」 or 「That was my prey」.

I guess that was how much Sierra wanted to defeat Zelyse.

Sierra returned the jet-black sword, which still radiated a weak evil aura, to its sheath at his waist. Fran's eyes were then drawn to his sword.

「Hey, Is that sword... safe...?」

The tremendous evil that had just been emitted, and the ability to counteract skills. Even if it wasn't Fran, they'd probably be wondering about the same thing.

In response to Fran's not-so-specific question. Sierra nodded back.

「No problem. As long as I can handle it, no harm will come to me」

「Is that so?」

「Y-yeah」

Sierra looked surprised when Fran nodded easily at his words. He was probably expecting to be pursued further.

For Adventurers, it was bad manners to persistently ask about the origin or source of a weapon that someone else was using.

But the point about whether Sierra really could handle it or not could have been pushed further.

After all, the existence of a powerful sword that emitted a large amount of evil was a problem that could even cause a lot of damage if left unchecked.

However, Fran was satisfied without asking anything further into the matter. She seemed to have lost interest in it.

Well, Fran had me, and I was a hell of a sword. I have free will, I have fragments of the Evil God sealed inside of me, and there were many other secrets within me.

Compared to that, a little bit of an Evil Spirit was tolerable, I guess.

Fran then asked Sierra, who had a subtle look on his face.

「You know Zelyse?」

「Y-yeah... We have a bit of history...」

He apparently didn't try to brush it off by saying 「It's none of your business」 .

# Chapter 607

It seemed that Sierra had known Zelyse for some time. However, given that he was surprised that we knew Zelyse, they probably weren't close to each other. At the very least, they must have seen each other many times before.

Maybe he was involved in some kind of a conspiracy with Zelyse, or maybe he suffered some kind of harm from him.

「I've been looking for him for a long time already... How did you find him?」

I wondered if Sierra had approved of her now that she had killed Zelyse. His old harsh attitude had softened and he even talked about himself. Well, it was just briefly though.

Sierra had been looking for Zelyse for years. He had information that he was working around this area, but he just couldn't find him.

Not only was he unable to find Zelyse, but he also failed to get any information on the Mesther Merchant Association, which had connections with him, and the Kingdom of Raidos behind it.

Still, he was sure that Zelyse was in this area, and he had been looking for him in this area for a long time.

But I still didn't think he was going to talk to us about what we were most concerned about.

Fran thought so, too, and questioned Sierra again.

「Why did Zelyse called Sierra with Romio?」

「Aah—...」

「Is Sierra Romio? That Romio?」

「...That is...」

The fact that you kept it quiet without denying it was like saying you knew something about it, you know?

「I am——」

『Fran!』

「Tsk!」

It was just when Sierra was about to say something.

Magic Power began to swell in the water. Then, at the bottom of the deep water, I saw something moving at high speed.

It was clearly not a living thing. It had no life force, and I couldn't sense any signs of life from it. However, there was no doubt that it was covered by powerful Magic Power.

Moreover, the place where it appeared was directly under the place where Zelyse had sunk. We couldn't just ignore it.

Sierra——Romio? Well, I guess we could call him Sierra for now. Sierra also seemed to have noticed the mysterious moving object. He then put his hand on the evil sword at his waist again and followed Fran as she ran off.

The moving object seemed to be heading north in the water.

We were not at our full speed yet, but if Sierra didn't do his best and ran hard enough, Fran was going to leave him behind.

Sierra was in a desperate state. Compared to Fran, who still had some leeway, he seemed to already be at his full speed. In terms of physical

ability and aerial jump skill, Fran probably had the upper hand. If she increased her speed any further, he might end up being left behind.

『I'll find out what it is first. Get me in the water』

「Nn!」

I was thrown by Fran and quickly approached the mysterious moving object. The depth of the lake was quite deep, and the water was muddy from the aftermath of the battle, so I couldn't see to the bottom.

But I could definitely feel some kind of presence breaking through the water and pushing forward. It was a little smaller than me, and elongated in shape.

『Hmm?』

I used my Light Magic to create multiple light sources. The strong light then illuminated the surroundings, and I succeeded in catching a clear image of it.

『A sword...!?』

It was a thin sword, the blade of which had snapped off from the middle.

Moreover, it looked familiar.

『Isn't it a pseudo fanatic sword!?』

The hardness that I felt when I slashed Zelyse a while ago. Could it be that it really was a pseudo fanatic sword?

However, if it was a pseudo fanatic sword, there was a possibility that it would work by itself. It was, after all, a kind of an intelligence weapon.

However, I never imagined that there would be a working pseudo-fanatic sword now that the main source, the Fanatics, had been destroyed. And it was also beyond my wildest imagination that it was in the hands of Zelyse.

No, was it really a pseudo fanatic sword? If that breakage was caused by my slash, then it was strange that my cannibalism hadn't been triggered.

What the hell was going on here then?

『I'll try to block its movement for the time being』

I tried to use telekinesis to capture the pseudo fanatic sword, which still thrust forward like a torpedo. But it was unsuccessful.

『Just now, it dodged my attack?』

I clearly witnessed it as it evaded my telekinesis.

After that, I tried several times to release telekinesis and Light Attack Magic, but all of them ended up in vain.

Its movements were somewhat just like a living thing.

It didn't seem to be a predetermined evasive action that was mechanically programmed. It was clearly the movement of something that had seen my attack and was thinking about how to move on the spot.

The sword was likely the same kind as me——an intelligence weapon.

Name: None

ATK: 442

MP: 4680

Durability: 1000

Magic Conductivity: B+

Skill:

Malice Detection, Subspace Navigation, Demon Knowledge, Exorcism, Stone Working, Stone Devourer, Masonry, Chant Reduction, Keen

Smelling, Keen Taste, Stealth, Dismantling, Recovery Magic, Dissection, Flame Resistance, Flame Magic. Martial Arts, Blacksmithing, Wind Magic, Detection Jamming, Appraisal Jamming———

That was all I'd been able to see. I couldn't seem to be able to see everything due to the effects of its Appraisal Jamming.

『That's crazy!』

My overall performance was better than it, but what was with all those skills? From the looks of it, it was probably still in possession of a large number of skills. I knew it, something was wrong with this sword!

『———』

『I'm not letting you go!』

The pseudo fanatic sword gained even more speed. Moreover, it was surfacing with a deafening boom.

Perhaps it chose to escape in the air, where it could gain more speed than in the water, where there was more resistance.

On the water, Fran and Urushi were now running at their full speed. And Sierra had already been left behind.

『Fran! Urushi! Don't let it get away!』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

Fran and Urushi reacted immediately to my instructions and started moving at once. Fran unleashed her Thunderbolt Magic, and Urushi unleashed his Dark Magic, trying to shoot it down.

Magic was heading to it from all directions.

But our attacks didn't hit it. It just simply passed through that sword.

『Isn't that... the same skill that Zelyse used!?』



# Chapter 608

The Pseudo Fanatic Sword continued to flee at high speed while activating its permeability. It seemed that it had already decided to use this strange ability to slip past all of our attacks but always evaded our Space-Time Magic.

The main feature of this ability was of course the inability to be hit by attacks, but it had another annoying point.

It eliminated all the signs and such, so I couldn't tell the level of exhaustion on the other side.

If we knew how quickly its magic power was decreasing, we could understand when its current state would be lifted and how much of a burden it was for it.

However, because all of this information was blocked, it was impossible to predict how much longer that sword would be able to maintain its permeability.

If I had Divine Attributes, I would be able to break through that defense, but I was battered by the Sword God Transformation earlier. So, I wouldn't be able to use it for a while.

Then, Urushi would be the one to use teleport and attack it at once——

Booom! 「Kyain!」

(Whimpering dog sfx)

He had been hit with a painful counter by its Flame Magic. The moment he was about to bite it, an explosion of flame was generated in his mouth, and

Urushi jumped back in panic.

It hadn't attacked us at all before, so I guess it didn't expect us to unleash such powerful magic.

And because I couldn't read that sword's flow of magic, I couldn't predict when it would release its magic.

But his attack was not wasted in vain.

At the moment of the attack, I could definitely feel the presence of that sword. But soon after, its presence disappeared again, so it seemed that it had to cancel that state of permeability when it attack.

「Urushi, are you okay?」

「Woof!」

The fur around his mouth was slightly scorched, but it was not a serious injury for Urushi. It was just as bad as if a human had drunk hot soup without care.

He jumped back, not from the damage, but in surprise. I guess that was why Urushi looked a little embarrassed.

『But in that one moment, I was able to measure its magic power』

「How is it?」

『It only has about half of its magic power left』

Compared to the time just after it started moving at the bottom of the lake, its magic power had been reduced by half. After all, there was a price to pay for using that permeability ability.

「Let's keep going!」

『Ou!』

「Woof!」

『Urushi, It's good to get a little excited, but don't get carried away and make a mistake like that again, okay?』

「W-woof!」

We started attacking again, but the situation remained the same. The other side didn't seem to be attacking us anymore, and we were just chasing it.

(Master, there's something I want to try)

『Hou? What is it?』

It seemed that Fran had come up with something. If she had something that could overcome our current situation, we should try it.

However, there was something I needed to confirm.

『It's not dangerous, right?』

(...Maybe?)

It was so important, and yet, Fran answered while tilting her head.

『M-Maybe!? What on earth are you gonna do!?!』

(Don't worry. It's definitely not dangerous... Maybe)

『Like I'd said! If you keep adding “maybe” in your words, I'll just get even more uneasy!』

(It's gonna be okay. Besides, as long as I have Master, he'll definitely help me)

『Guh...』

It was hard for me to disagree when you say that!

『O-okay. But if I judge that it is too dangerous, I'll stop you by force』

(That's fine)

『All right. Go ahead and try it!』

「Nn! Brilliant Lightning Rush!」

Fran was once again clad in her Black Lightning. However, she did not immediately move to attack.

「Urushi」

「Woof!」

She called Urushi over and jumped on his back.

「Let's chase it」

「Woof」

Leaving the chase to Urushi, Fran closed her eyes and began to focus on her consciousness. She kneaded the magic power in her body and strengthened it.

「Fuuh...」

She went into a completely meditative state. What was she going to do if it attacked us in her current state? No, that was exactly what my part was. I have to live up to Fran's trust.

「Haah...」

The more Fran concentrated, the more magic power she managed to gather within her body.

She looked calm without the slightest irregularity from the outside. But deep within, the power that Fran had gathered was raging like crazy within her.

Fran's face contorted in distress. She must be struggling a lot just to suppress the power she had concentrated on herself.

I was about to call her, but I stopped myself from doing so. If I were to distract her here, Fran's life would be in danger. So, I had to trust and watch over her for now.

Then, after a long, long few minutes had passed.

「...Nn!」

Fran's eyes snapped open and then she released her power.

「Black Thunder Roll!」

Turning into a black thunder, Fran's figure disappeared from Urushi's back and instantly appeared in front of the Pseudo Fanatic Sword.

That sword could detect the activation of Space-Time Magic, but it couldn't react at all to Fran's Black Thunder Roll. That skill was just a high-speed movement skill after all.

The Black Thunder Roll was not a teleportation type of skill, but a movement skill with lightning speed, it was so fast that it even looked like a teleport. That was why reacting to it required the ability to physically detect it.

「Haaa!」

『T-that was...!』

It wasn't me that Fran swung at that sword. It was her unclasped left hand that she held high in the air.

But for anyone who could perceive magic power, that was not just a simple bare-handed attack. I could sense the dense magic power that was released in the shape of a sword that was being held in Fran's left hand.

Immediately after, that magic power transformed, and black lightning gushed out.

In Fran's hand, a sword formed of black lightning was created.

「Black Lightning God's Claw!」

It was the ultimate technique of the Black Heavenly Tiger, which could only be used when she used the potential release before. A black lightning sword, with Divine Attributes. It was a technique that even Fran, who was able to control the Black Lightning Roll, had trouble using.

Apparently, she succeeded in triggering it at the last minute——.

「Aah」

『Eh?』

It was at that moment that Fran was about to swing the sword of black lightning at the sword in front of her.

The sword of black lightning lost its shape and disappeared with a burst. It was fortunate that the impact on the surrounding area was surprisingly small. It seemed to be only a slight breeze and a light electric current.

「...It failed」

『I knew it would not work out that way!』

# Chapter 609

Fran and Urushi start to run once again, chasing after the Pseudo Fanatic Sword that slipped past us.

Fran also seemed to be quite eager and fired off some ranged magic at it. The surface of the lake was swirling like a storm due to our attack. And if there were any ships around, they would have capsized.

We had already traveled a great distance. We must have gone very deep into the middle of the lake, which was about the size of a small country.

I wondered where in the world the Pseudo Fanatic Sword was going.

But it was just after I wondered about it.

『Fran! Stop!』

「!!」

Fran reacted immediately to my voice and tried to perform a sudden stop. But she couldn't just stop instantly, and her heels skidded on the surface of the lake.

The water splashed violently like a fountain.

And despite getting herself drenched, Fran managed to come to a stop.

『Fran, let's get some more distance for now』

「Nn」

「Woof!」

『Urushi, welcome back』

Both Fran and Urushi must have already noticed. They followed my words and moved back about 30 meters from the spot.

『So this is the place, huh?』

My various detection skills are telling me not to go any further. I couldn't see anything on the surface of the water. However, there were signs of what seemed like countless magic beasts in the water.

「The Vivian Guardians」

『Yeah, no doubt』

This must be the Guardian's domain, where the Vivian Guardians would attack if anyone tried to enter.

I didn't sense any hostility. As I recalled, they would only block our way if we had accidentally entered the area. I guess we were still at that stage.

「But what about that sword? Moreover, will it be fine to pass through this area?」

『Hmmm... Maybe it's because that sword is an inorganic thing, or maybe it was because that sword doesn't have a presence... I'll give it a try』

「You sure?」

『Well, I'll run right away if it getting dangerous』

「Nn. Be careful」

「Woof」

『Ou!』

I moved slowly toward the area where I could sense the presence of the Vivian Guardian, with Fran and Urushi looking over me.



In normal circumstances, I was sure they'd let a single inorganic sword pass...

However, I soon realized that this attempt would fail.

After all, I could tell that the gazes of the surrounding Vivian Guardians were focused solely on me.

They must have noticed me.

Nevertheless, I broke into the Guardian's territory with a ray of hope.

Immediately after, a pure white magic beast with a form similar to a squid stood in front of me. Not just one, but five of these guardians used their bodies as walls to block my way.

『Hmm, so they won't let me pass, huh?』

I tried to block out as much magic as possible for now. It now seemed like I was nothing but a lump of metal, with almost no magic power.

But that didn't work. I took a detour, but the Vivian Guardian still came in front of me.

『Their detection ability shouldn't have been that good, though...』

Then how about this.

I activated my dimension shift and tried again. Although I was visible, I was just an inorganic thing and had no signs of life. Right now, I should be in a state similar to that Pseudo Fanatic Sword when it uses its permeability ability——.

『Go!』

As I'd thought, the Vivian Guardians did not move at all, it seemed that they couldn't react to an opponent in another space.

If I kept going forward like this——.

「Stop right there」

『Eh?』

「You've gone quite far, haven't you?」

『Rhyn?』

「Yeah」

It wasn't a Vivian Guardian who suddenly appeared in front of me. It was the familiar, odd-eyed girl.

As usual, I couldn't feel her presence, but I could see her figure.

「You shouldn't go any further than this yet」

『You know what that sword is, don't you? And what's up ahead?』

「...You have to stop Zelyse. At this rate, we won't be able to stop the tragedy」

『Tragedy!? H-hey, did you mean the tragedy that you told us before?』

Rhyn shook her head with a sad expression to my question.

「One of the tragedies has been avoided. But a new meddler is standing in your way」

『And this meddler, was Zelyse?』

「Yes. Because of him, the future I knew is beginning to change drastically. You may have avoided the tragedy that stemmed from you, but Zelyse will eventually cause a tragedy to happen」

『When you say tragedy... Can you tell me the specifics!』

「If the path has changed this much, I guess it can't be helped... There's a great magic beast sealed in this lake. You know that, right? But because of

Zelyse, the seal of that beast is very shaky right now」

『I knew it!』

「If the great magic beast is resurrected, this country won't be able to do anything for itself. Even Fran, who is nearby, will lose her life」

So that was the tragedy!? But after hearing it, a new question came to my mind.

『Why would my complete adaptation to my sword body lead to a tragedy? Is there any connection between me and the great magic beast's seal?』

「It's related, Romio, that child has the power of the Magnolia. With him, no matter what Zelyse does, the resurrection can be stopped. But that didn't happen before」

『Before...?』

She had said it a few times already but Rhyn didn't answer that.

「With you becoming a sword, Fran is going to change a lot. She will become desperate and more aggressive. You, who should have been the one to stop her outbursts, had stopped saying anything」

That seemed to be a possible future. It was an undeniable fact that Fran adored me. What would happen if I became an emotionless sword? That would be terrible.

「As a result, Fran will fight and defeat Zelos Reed. They end up in a fierce battle that engulfs everyone around them. Romio, who lost his only protector, Zelos Reed, went out of control in his disappointment, and the seal on the great magic beast failed」

I see. If that had happened, the great magic beast would be resurrected and Fran would be affected.

So, it was a tragedy for us and those around us.

「Zelyse is up ahead. He has already reached the seal by taking advantage of the guardians' anomalies」

It was Zelyse who had caused the Vivian Guardians to go berserk by pouring a lot of waste liquid from the Scarlet Waterweed potion into the lake, but it seemed that he had already achieved his goal.

『If that's the case, shouldn't we——』

「No, don't. I won't stop you if you can definitely win against him. But when that guy is cornered, that guy won't hesitate to resurrect the great magic beast. And it seems, he already figured out how to do that」

It was indeed difficult to win against him for sure.

「That man is still playing around now. He's not even going to resurrect the great magic beast yet. There's still time」

『In the meantime, you want us to get ready to take him down?』

「I'll leave that to you. But we don't want any serious harm to come to any humans. We just want to prevent that from happening somehow」

『I'll do my best for Fran's sake』

「That's fine. You should cherish those you care about」

Rhyn smiled at the end and disappeared as if dissolving into the water. She was a spirit after all.

『Aah! I forgot to ask what she meant by “before” again!』

Did Sierra, who seemed to be deeply involved in this matter, know what that meant?

# Chapter 610

After Rhyn suggested that I not go any further, I went back to Fran.

She said it should be fine for now as Zelyse was still playing around right now, but it also depended on his mood, which is the least stable thing in the world.

We should talk to Sierra and ask for Weena Rhyn's help as soon as possible

「So, you want me to talk to Sierra?」

『Yeah. In all likelihood, Sierra seems to know something』

If it hadn't been for that Pseudo Fanatic Sword earlier, we would have been able to get something out of him.

「A little more」

『It looks like we're getting closer』

We had traveled quite a distance, but we were making our way towards each other. At this rate, we should be able to meet up soon.

「Urushi, dash!」

「Woof!」

We were able to meet up with Sierra soon after. However, he seemed to be exhausted.

「Haah, haah... That, sword...?」

「It got away」

「I see...」

It must have been hard for Sierra to keep running on the water. Both his magic and physical strength seemed to be exhausted. But since he thought that sword must have something to do with Zelyse, he must have pushed himself to run.

I didn't think he would fall over any time soon, but he needed a break.

We decided to move to an island that we could see in the distance. The island was a rocky chunk about ten meters in diameter.

When he landed on it, Sierra felt weak and sat down involuntarily. Apparently, after weighing his fatigue against his pride, he had become relaxed enough to even show his ugly side in front of Fran.

We waited for a few minutes, and when Sierra had caught his breath enough, Fran opened her mouth.

「Tell me everything you know」

「...」

We didn't know where to start asking questions, so we decided to just let him tell us everything. I wanted to know who Sierra was, what he knew about Zelyse, and all sorts of things he knows.

After a few seconds of silence, Sierra suddenly opened his mouth.

「Do you think it's possible to cross through time?」

「Time?」

「Yeah」

「...Hmm?」

Fran pondered for a moment and tilted her head. I guess she didn't quite understand the meaning of his words.

「You in the present, under the influence of some force, suddenly travels to the past. Do you think that's possible?」

「That's impossible」

「You think so?」

「Not unless you have a God's power or something」

「Yeah. But it was surprisingly possible. There are already three people who have experienced it after all」

I see! So that was what was going on!

Fran tilted her head, but after hearing Sierra's words, I understood what was going on to a certain extent.

When I thought of it as a time travel from the future to the past, then it made sense that there would be two Romio!

I briefly explained it to Fran.

「So you're Romio who's traveled through time?」

「Yes. I'm the present little Romio who get back eight years into the past and had grown older」

It seemed that it was not the adult Romio who crossed time but was the present Romio who got back as a young boy and grew up.

So, this must have been the meaning of the "before" that Rhyn mentioned to me. I explained this to Fran, but it was just simply unbelievable. It was just like a time slip, wasn't it?

「I see」

「You believe me?」

But Fran didn't seem to be surprised.

「You have the same eyes」

「Eyes?」

Now that she mentioned it, she said something like that before. She said that when Romio and Sierra glared at her, their eyes looked the same.

Sierra himself was not quite convinced. Well, it was because she said he had the same eyes after all. He then groaned and stroked his own eyes.

However, he decided to accept it, for the time being, thinking that it was okay since she believed him.

「Well, it doesn't matter as long as you believed me」

「Then what happened?」

「...It has already been 8 years ago for me, but you guys of now... have become a lot different from the people I had known, so the same thing that happened before might not happen anymore」

Sierra slowly told her what had happened to him before as if he was recalling it himself.

It happened eight years ago for them.

It seemed that Romio and Zelos Reed had escaped to this country at that time as well. However, the timeline had changed drastically between the current Romio and Zelos Reed and the one from the past.

This Romio from the past said that they were captured by Zelyse in this country before. I never thought that someone as strong as Zelos Reed could get caught.

「It was because he took me hostage...」



As a result, Zelos Reed was at the mercy of Zelyse and had become the subjects of various kinds of human experimentation.

「Experiments on human?」

「He was implanted with a magic stone, a Pseudo Fanatic Sword, and given a wide variety of drugs. I was so young at that time that all I could do was watch my uncle's physical form change」

Uncle, huh... It seemed that the relationship between Romio and Zelos Reed was good even in another timeline. So, he got caught and became an experiment subject, huh... But the Romio that was under the protection of the academy never said anything like that, didn't he?

「Not like the Romio over here?」

「It was because we were the ones who led them into their current situation」

In their timeline, they ran away from the adventurers from the Belios Kingdom and Weena Rhyn but ended up being captured by Zelyse. But in this timeline, Sierra dared to leak the information about Romio and Zelos Reed's whereabouts to the Adventurer's Guild that led them to their current situation.

「We knew that Weena Rhyn wouldn't simply kill us before. If that was the case, it was far better than being played around by Zelyse」

「I see」

Romio and Zelos Reed from another timeline then continued to be used by Zelyse for good. But it seemed that it was Romio alone that was protected by Weena Rhyn.

Zelyse, who was investigating the seal of the great magic beast, was detected by Weena Rhyn and his hideout was raided.

「That's when I learned about my bloodline and the power that lies in it. I also learned that I was bound with my uncle without his knowledge...」

However, a few days after Romeo was taken into care by Weena Rhyn, things suddenly changed. Zelyse appeared at the site of the seal, aiming to resurrect the great magic beast.

It was Weena Rhyn and her hired help, Fran, who worked to stop him.

Fran, who had been targeting Zelos Reed as her revenge, attacked him without listening to the warnings of those around her when she saw him. In the aftermath of that fierce battle, the Commercial Fleet was said to have been destroyed.

That was the same as what Rhyn had said to me before. I guess I had turned into a mere sword and there was no one to stop Fran. No, there was someone who could have stopped her.

「Weena Rhyn didn't stop me?」

「Even if it means she'd abandon the commercial fleet, she made a priority to keep my uncle out of her reach」

It seemed that while Fran was holding back Zelos Reed, Weena Rhyn tried to reseal the great magic beast, which had begun to resurrect. At the cost of Romio's life.

「Magnolia's power can be used to absorb the power of an evil person. Normally, it would go straight to the user's power, but Weena Rhyn decided to use it in a special way」

The power of the Sacrament of the Evil God was hidden in the blood of the Magnolia family. With this power, she absorbed the power of the Evil God's shards that were captured in the great magic beast and used the absorbed power to use a large-scale sealing technique.

In other words, it is a way to weaken the great magic beast and use its power to seal itself.

「I wouldn't have a problem if it was a matter of absorbing the evil power within something of a goblin size. But that time, the opponent was really

bad. If she continued to absorb power from the Evil God's shards and then let them act as a channel for the sealing technique, the young Romio would not have been able to withstand it and would have died」

However, Weena Rhyn still didn't want to stop the process. No matter what the cost, she was going to seal the great magic beast.

「I can only understand her reason now too. So, I won't blame her」

Even though he had been sacrificed, Sierra's voice showed no sign of resentment. He seemed to have accepted that it was inevitable.

But there was someone who couldn't accept Romio's death. That was Zelos Reed. He tried to save Romio somehow, but when he showed an opening, he was cut down by Fran.

「To be honest, I don't remember what happened after that either. As soon as I decided to save my uncle somehow, my powers went out of control, and——」

He found himself lying alone in the woods.

After saying that much, Sierra then pulled out the sword at his waist.

「There was no one else there. Just this sword that had fallen beside me」

# Chapter 611

Fran stared at Sierra's sword. The appraisal was still ineffective due to the Evil Spirit. However, she could sense the indescribable awesomeness of the sword.

「What's with the sword?」

「I don't know if you'd believe me, but...」

Sierra seemed a little hesitant to continue his sentence. I wonder why someone who had said that he had traveled through time would hesitate.

Sierra then stared at the sword for a few seconds and then fell silent. It was as if he was having a conversation with the sword.

Then, as if he had made up his mind, Sierra looked up and spoke seriously.

「This sword... contains the consciousness and power of Uncle Zelos Reed」

Does the sword contain the consciousness of Zelos Reed? That means that sword was——

「So it is an intelligence weapon?」

「Yeah」

「Hoo——」

It was hard to believe, but Sierra wasn't lying. It seemed it was really an intelligence weapon inhabited by Zelos Reed.

It was not like they were talking to each other even now, but I guess they were really talking to each other.

「Y-you're not surprised?」

「I'm surprised. Woah」

No one would know it unless they were me. Fran was really surprised. But she wasn't so much surprised as taken aback.

Originally, I thought it was a strange sword with many mysteries. To Fran, who was used to using an intelligence weapon, it was just a strange sword that had become a super strange sword.

「Zelos Reed is in that sword?」

「You believe that too?」

「Nn?」

From his point, he was not convinced that Fran would simply believe anything he said.

It was actually because of my Principal of Falsehood and Fran's wild intuition. But to anyone, she seemed like a strange girl who believed anything.

As Sierra looked at her, Fran raised a question.

「Can Zelos Reed talk to others?」

「Aah, no... He can't have a conversation with anyone but me. It was because we're talking with a skill called Synchronization, which allows me to communicate with my equipment」

「I see」

As Fran muttered this, the jet-black sword in Sierra's hand suddenly emitted a high-pitched squeak. It must have been a sign that it had a will of its own.

「Uncle is trying to say he's sorry」

「He's sorry?」

「...You have a grudge against Uncle Zelos Reed, don't you? I know that」

It seemed that the Zelos Reed from another timeline had changed, just like the Zelos Reed of this timeline.

Fran raised her eyebrows and frowned lightly, but she was no longer enraged. His appearance had changed completely, so she didn't really feel it.

Besides, Fran, who had already gotten over her anger, seemed to be confused when this Zelos Reed apologized to her now.

Sierra then bowed deeply on the spot.

「But can you wait just a little longer to take your revenge?」

「You're not gonna tell me to stop?」

「I know how you feel... But there are some things we just have to do. And until we do it, we have to stay alive」

「Revenge on Zelyse?」

「Yes. I've been through a lot in my previous timeline too. To me, you were unforgivable too」

I guess that must be the reason why he shot that killing intent at Fran before. Even though there were differences between then and now, it was the same Fran. She had driven Zelos Reed to the brink of death—or maybe she had killed him, considering that he had become a sword for some reason.

Such resentment toward Fran lingered in Sierra.

But it seemed to be small compared to the hatred he had for Zelyse. I was sure Zelos Reed also thought so.

「The reason why Uncle Zelos Reed is in this state must be because of his experiments on him. Besides, if he hadn't resurrected the great magic beast, we wouldn't have been involved in the first place」

A dark flame seemed to be lit in Sierra's eyes as he said so. His eyes resembled those of Fran, who had attacked Zelos Reed.

Maybe they were similar to each other. Even though they were young, they were caught up in a difficult fate, yet they were still strong and steadfast towards their goals. They were also the same in that they had acquired an intelligence weapon and used them as their partners.

「I'll deal with you when I've settled things with Zelyse. So, until then, you'll have to let me go. I beg you」

I now understood why Sierra told us their secret. Rather than have Fran distrust him and turn against him here, he would rather tell his secret and gain her trust.

Fran, who was staring down at Sierra as he continued to lower his head, nodded her head.

「...Nn. Okay」

「Thanks」

She didn't really have a direct grudge against Sierra.

So she then decided to ask Sierra a question that had been bothering us.

「I now understand that Zelos Reed has become a sword. But how? Did Zelyse do something to him?」

「Yeah. We don't know the specifics, but he said he was using a Pseudo Fanatic Sword to seal human consciousness into the sword」

「He can do that?」

「I'm sure he could... After all, here's the proof of it. It seems that a magic stone was implanted in his body and the magic stone in the Pseudo Fanatic Sword was used as a medium, but I don't know how it worked. In the first place, uncle was not a sword until we traveled through time」

「Is that so?」

「When I let my power get out of control and was swallowed by the light and sent back to this time, uncle somehow turned into a sword. And he looked completely different from the Pseudo Fanatic Sword. That's all I know」

So, he's saying it's just a coincidence that Zelos Reed became an Intelligence Weapon? If so, would it be difficult to mass-produce?

The worst I could imagine was that the Intelligence Weapon would be mass-produced by Zelyse and it would end up in the hands of the Raidos Kingdom.

But it seemed that we didn't have to worry about that.

As I was relieved, Fran opened her mouth again. It seemed that there was something that was bothering Fran too.

「Can I ask one more question?」

「If I can answer that」

「Earlier, you said three people had traveled through time, right? Sierra and Zelos Reed, but who's the other one?」

I'd been wondering about that too. I had a prediction in my head, but my rational mind refused to tell me the answer. Was there really the other one? Such a thing would only cause me a nightmare.

But what came out of Sierra's mouth were the worst possible names of all.



「It's Zelyse」

I knew it! I thought so too!

「We didn't know it until just now too, but that must have been Zelyse from that timeline. Or was it the current Zelyse, who had gotten information from the other one——?」

「It looks like you're talking about me. Hi hi~!」

Suddenly, Sierra's words were interrupted by a familiar voice.

「Hello, Romio and Fran. I was waiting for you to come after me, but you didn't come at all, so I came to you」

I turned my eyes in the direction of the voice and saw Zelyse standing there, holding a Pseudo Fanatic Sword with a chipped tip.

「It's me, Zelyse de~su!」

# Chapter 612

It's me, Zelyse de~su!」

It was Zelyse who had just escaped. But when Fran saw her, she tilted her head.

(Is he really Zelyse?)

『No matter how you look at it, it is him, right?』

(...Something felt strange, is he Zelyse's younger brother?)

Fran seemed to feel something strange about the Zelyse in front of her. But before she could question him about it, Zelyse opened his mouth first.

「You seem to be interested in this sword, aren't you?」

What he held up was unmistakably that Pseudo Fanatic Sword. The blade of that sword was missing from the middle.

I was pretty sure that it was that Pseudo Fanatical Sword that we had chased before.

「What is that sword?」

「This sword is an Intelligence Weapon that we created. The name of this sword is——The Transcendence Invincible Strongest Sword——well, it's a bit long, so let's just call it the magic sword, Zelyse, shall we?」

The moment Zelyse said that the Pseudo Fanatic Sword's appearance changed. Like a piece of candy, the supposedly hard sword expanded, stretched, and deformed.

A few seconds later, Zelyse had a sword in his hand that did not resemble the Pseudo Fanatic Sword.

It had a poisonous-looking purple hilt and a huge knuckle guard. It was a short sword with a flashy fluorescent pink blade. No, maybe it was even shorter than that. The blade was thick and looked sturdy, but the base of the blade was thicker than the tip, it was basically something like main-gauche.

The blade, which had been broken, had been completely repaired in its transformation process.

What bad taste, that was all I had to say of it. However, it had a tremendous presence. It seemed that it wasn't just a change in appearance.

There were also changes in the information that was visible in my appraisal.

The part of the name that had been "None" was changed to Magic Sword, Zelyse. And the skills and other information became completely invisible.

Perhaps the naming process had raised the sword's status. It might be a phenomenon similar to how I named Urushi and evolved him.

「That sword, is an Intelligence Weapon?」

「That's right! It's the sword with a will, the one that sealed me in before!」

Could it be that he had created his own Intelligence Weapon? After all, he has been experimenting with various things using Zelos Reed as his test subject...

It was almost legendary if I do say so myself. It could even be considered rarer than the Divine Swords.

What was more, he said it sealed him in before?

「I don't get it」

「Fufun? Want to know?」

「Nn」

「Then I'll tell you!」

Zelyse exclaimed proudly. He really was an easy guy, wasn't he?

「You see, I've been researching the possibility of creating an Intelligence Weapon for a while now. Well, I couldn't figure out how to seal a soul into a specific vessel, so my interest shifted to the Chimera」

I was created by the Gods, so I've never really been aware of it, but I thought it was difficult to seal a soul, which was usually under the authority of the Gods.

「But I still collecting research materials and conducting simple experiments on it」

「Hmm」

「Then, I've made a lot of new discoveries over the past few years. Well, it's thanks to the data of Zelos Reed-san that was provided by me from that timeline though」

Zelyse then stared at the jet-black sword that Sierra was holding. “By me from that timeline”, So this was Zelyse from this timeline!

「Plus this Pseudo Fanatical Sword. This thing is really interesting. After all, it was capable of thinking for itself like an Intelligence Weapon, albeit a temporary one!」

Marquis Ashtner, who had acquired Fanatics, was connected to the Kingdom of Raidos behind the scenes. And Zelyse had taken refuge in the Kingdom of Raidos. It seemed that the information had been passed on to Zelyse through that channel.

But the Kingdom of Raidos also seemed to be in a state where the various forces are fighting each other, so I don't know how far Zelyse was cooperating with the Fanatics' plan.

However, they were probably related to each other to the extent that he had access to the research materials on Fanatics and the actual Pseudo Fanatic Sword.

「I've been doing a lot of research based on the data "I" remembered and the fact that Zelos Reed turned into an Intelligence Weapon since then」

It seemed that if someone lived with a Pseudo Fanatic Sword embedded in their body, not only did their body but also their soul would think that that state was normal. I guess it meant that the Pseudo Fanatic Sword had been mistakenly seen as part of their body.

When their body perished in that state, the soul that struggled to survive somehow seemed to get absorbed into the Pseudo Fanatic Sword.

「Of course, I had to implant the same type of magic stone on both sides to create a channel of passage, and there were many other prerequisites as well! Well, as a result of my hard work, I have succeeded in becoming an Intelligence Weapon in this way. Uwaah~. The me from that timeline is happy too. After all, it's not every day in history that a person becomes an Intelligence Weapon! And the only thing left to do was to transfer my soul to the sword, but after you guys killed 'that me', he decided to give it a shot, and I'm glad it turned out so well」

「Is that the same sword that 'that Zelyse' used to fight us with earlier?」

「Yup!」

It seems that 'that Zelyse' volunteered himself to become a sword. So, he used himself as a tool for his experimentation... What a mad fellow.

But now I knew why Fran felt so uncomfortable with this Zelyse. The previous Zelyse and this one were different in ages. Just as there was an eight-year age difference between Romio and Sierra.

However, in Zelyse's case, since he was a half-demon, it would hardly show in his appearance. Rather, it was just Fran who sensed even the slightest unusualness in him.

(...Nn?)

Fran tilted her head. She must have been confused by what he said before and what he said now.

『The Zelyse that Fran just defeated was the one from another timeline, and now he has become a Pseudo Fanatic Sword. And the one in front of us is Zelyse from this time. That's how it is』

「I see」

「Oya? Did you believe me? I was going to give you a lot more evidence though... Fran-san, aren't you being too naive? You'll be deceived by bad people if you're like that, you know?」

「You're one to talk」

「Ahahahah! Well, you're right! But take a look! Cool, isn't it?」

Zelyse said so and raised the Pseudo Fanatic Sword——no, the Magic Sword, Zelyse, above his head. His face looked just like that of a child who found a cool branch.

「'That me' says hello again to you guys」

「I can't hear him」

「Oh, right. Sorry sorry. I didn't know you guys couldn't hear 'that me'」

Hmmm, with it not moving, I couldn't tell if the sword was really conscious or not. But seeing how it moved in the water and the air before, I'm pretty sure it was.

This guy had really created an Intelligence Weapon.

What was more, my fears were about to come true.

「Can Intelligence Weapons be mass-produced then?」

「I have a concept, but it's still a long way to go. I'm still relying on chance. Hmm? Ah sorry, sorry. That's right. You want to be active too, right?」

If we didn't know anything, he was just like a bad guy who suddenly started a conversation with someone we couldn't see. I would have to make sure that Fran was more careful in the future if we came across anyone like that.

「I think “that me” is getting bored, so I'm going to stop chatting for now and ask you to join me for a bit」

「...For what?」

「Ahahahaha! It's just for my last little experiment!」

# Chapter 613

A tremendous amount of magic power then erupted from the Magic Sword Zelyse, that Zelyse holds.

This magic power alone showed that he was an opponent to be reckoned with. But, of course, that was not all.

『Fran, the Magic Sword Zelyse must have quite a few skills. It must have all the skills that Zelyse had! Be careful!』

「Nn!」

The first thing we needed to watch out for would be the barrage of magic and skills. It was no exaggeration to say that this was a basic tactic for Fran and me.

The fact that the sword and the wielder could use the same skill meant that he could do something beyond that.

「Ahahah! Here I come!」

「Haa!」

「Haha! Great! You're good enough to fight with that sword!」

Every time the magic sword Zelyse and I struck each other, our durability value whittled down. Even so, he was not destroyed by a single blow but continued to recover by self-repair. As a result, Fran and Zelyse were constantly clashing with each other.

Furthermore, their magic barrage was still flying to us in this state.



「Muh」

『I'll block them. Fran, just focus on slashing!』

「Nn!」

I see now, facing a nasty enemy like this was really troublesome!

There was no sign that he was chanting, but suddenly, great magic was activated. It was as if he was not chanting at all.

Because of their stealth and concealment skills, it was also difficult for us to detect their magic flow. Even if we knew that the sword was going to release magic, we would still be caught off guard. But it was no surprise that we couldn't dodge the magic attacks of an opponent we fought for the first time.

Moreover, their attack intervals are strange. Immediately after releasing a skill or great magic, his body will inevitably stiffen and his movements would slow down. However, it could be ignored as Zelyse and the magic sword repeatedly attacked in turn.

It was something we did all the time, but when it was done to us, we now understood how absurd it was.

As soon as he threw an obvious big move, he would throw the exact same big move without pause. It would be a nightmare for the opponent who thought they had a chance and went into it.

What was more troublesome was his permeability skill. Zelyse's presence disappeared, and our attacks slipped through his body.

However, the way it was used was completely different from before. The on/off intervals must have been longer before.

Once he used this mysterious skill, he kept on using it for a while. And during that time, the other side didn't attack us either. Maybe they couldn't attack us while the skill was active.

But now it was different. They turned it on and off frequently and attacked hard.

It seemed that when he used the magic sword, Zelyse, he could now reduce some side effects of that skill.

「Come on! Come on!」

「Tsk!」

「Ahahah! You couldn't kill me, huh? Too bad!」

On the other side, we had Fran and the grown-up Romio—or Sierra, but we were lacking in offense.

We were simply too exhausted. I was still in tatters from the after-effects of the Sword God Transformation, and Fran had consumed a lot of her magic power too.

Against a tricky opponent like Zelyse, she couldn't be so careless as to use all of her remaining strength, and she ended up fighting by keeping an eye on his movements.

We were waiting to counter for the time when Zelyse's skill was in cooldown, but he seemed to know our aim too. He was able to offset its timing and all our three attempts failed.

Sierra also showed no attempt of using that mysterious ability that made his skills disappear. I wonder is he concerned about us?

「Hey, Romi—... Sierra?」

「Just call me Sierra」

「Sierra, why don't you use the power you just showed me before?」

「I can't use it yet」

That was what I had expected. It must have been an ability that couldn't be used successively. It seemed that it was either too exhausting or it came at a high cost.

It was such an ability. There was no way he could just use it multiple times.

Still, I had a strange feeling of discomfort as our fight with Zelyse continued.

So, this was what he meant, huh? He said it was just for a little experiment, but it didn't seem like Zelyse was really planning to attack us. Of course, his attacks were fierce and if we were not careful, we might get hit.

But was this the best he could do after using an intelligence weapon, the magic sword Zelyse?

That was what didn't make sense to me.

I thought that he was fighting lightly as a test run, but it seemed that this was not the case. Whenever we clashed, Zelyse repeatedly said and did provocative things, but now it seemed that he was even more conscious of provoking Fran and Sierra.

「Come on! Come on! Is that all you got! What a disappointment!」

「You can just run away, you know?」

「You still think you can kill me? Not a chance!」

「Why don't you guys just run while you still can? I'll even let you off scot-free if you just run away right now, you know?」

「Uwaah! That was a hell of an attack! As expected of you! But it's too bad——!」

The things he said about letting us run away were lies. I was starting to get it. It seemed that he wanted to provoke Fran and Sierra to keep them here.

In other words, his real purpose was to stop us. He didn't want us to go any further.

So, it would be better to go further than to deal with Zelyse here. I was sure it would all be over once we defeated Zelyse, but I didn't know if we would be able to finish him off with any certainty since we couldn't even use the Sword God Transformation right now.

(Then what should we do?)

『Ideally, I'd like to have Sierra stall Zelyse』

While he stalled Zelyse, we would go further with my dimension shift to check what was going on up ahead. Something terrible must be going on in there.

Fran approached Sierra and whispered to him.

「Can you stall him?」

「You want to do something?」

「Zelyse aims to stall us. So, I'm going to see what's going on up ahead」

「I see...」

「Then?」

「Okay, I'll use my trump card then」

Sierra said confidently.

In fact, we still didn't know the depth of Sierra and his magic sword, Zelos Reed. Since he was so confident, we might as well just leave this to him then.

「I need you to distract him for a second」

「Okay」

After a brief discussion, Fran then lunged toward Zelyse.

By making it look like she was aiming for an obvious counterattack, she made it harder for Zelyse to attack as he was forced to focus his attention on Fran. There, we struck him with a series of time-space magic and dimension sword attacks.

A dimension sword in an over boosted state, with an excess of magic power, poured into it, was quite powerful.

We released twelve shots. They attacked Zelyse from all directions.

Ideally, he would have deactivated the permeability and tried to prevent it with a barrier or something——.

But Zelyse stopped in place while still maintaining his permeability. He then swung his magic sword, Zelyse, to strike down the flying dimension swords one after another.

It seemed that he even had a space-time attribute.

But that was also within our expectations. Don't underestimate an intelligence weapon!

Our real target was his feet.

「Groouf!」

「Kuh! Don't tell me you were aiming for this!?!」

The Dimensional Fangs from Urushi's Shadow Transfer had swallowed both of Zelyse's legs.

To his surprise, Urushi attacked just as he was caught in a barrage of dimension swords. Urushi emerged from the shadows and was hit by several Dimensional Swords.

But Urushi was also prepared for this. Although he had deep cuts in several places, he had certainly caught Zelyse with his fangs.

There, Sierra plunged in at once, with his jet-black sword clothed with a tremendous evil spirit.

「Ooooooooo!」

The mass of evil energy released from Sierra's hand sprang like a snake and entangled itself in Zelyse's arm.

「Evil Binding, Black Chain!」

Well, it looked like a chain. Then, Zelyse suddenly lost his stance.

「Kuh! W-what is this...!?」

「It's an evil chain. How's that? Hard to keep your skills up, isn't it?」

It seemed that the chain made of Evil Spirit has similar properties to the one he used earlier to cancel out the surrounding skills. It didn't seem to cancel them out completely, but I guess it could last longer.

「Is this good enough?」

「Nn. I'll leave him to you」

「Eh? Where are you going, Fran-san? Are you running away from me!? I haven't seen you for a while, and you've become such a coward!」

「...Hmph」

「Ah! W-wait」

Seeing that Fran had ignored him and ran off to the center of the lake, Zelyse hurriedly tried to follow her. However, Sierra stood in front of him.

As long as there were evil chains, he couldn't ignore Sierra and come after her.

「Oi, Zelyse. Your opponent is me」

「Shiii—t...!!」

# Chapter 614

With Zelyse's frustrated cries at their backs, Fran and Urushi ran through the lake.

『From this point forward, we'll use Dimension Shift to proceed』

「Nn」

『We don't have that much magic to spare, so we'll move quickly. And Urushi, follow me as I moved with your shadow transfer』

「Woof!」

I activate the Dimension Shift after feeling the Vivian Guardian's attention towards me.

Urushi was moving through the shadows of the rocks and other objects on the bottom of the lake, as he couldn't get together with us. But apparently, Urushi who was moving in the shadows was noticed by them.

The place where Urushi was hiding was then surrounded by the Guardians.

『Urushi! Get back!』

(Woof...)

If we forced the Guardian to follow him any further, they would get agitated and go out of control. So, we would have him wait here to intercept Zelyse.

Fran and I then made our way through the water without any problems. After a while, we caught a strange object in front of us.



『What's that...?』

「A pillar?」

As Fran said, it did look like a pillar.

A white column, about five meters in diameter, rose from the water to the sky. And it was not just one there.

『Let's take a look at it from above』

「Nn」

Looking down from above, we saw that there were twelve white pillars. They were evenly spaced in a circle. No matter how I looked at it, this must be the center of the lake.

『And I'm feeling some kind of magic power from it』

「It felt gross」

I felt a strange magical power coming from the center of the circle. It was not evil, but it was not normal magic power either. As Fran said, it was a weird and unpleasant magical power.

「Master, let's get closer」

『We don't have a choice』

I really wanted to act cautiously, but I didn't have much magic power left to spare. But we couldn't just leave it there, so we would check the source of this magic first.

Fran then plunged into the water with the momentum of her descent.

The water depth seemed to be quite shallow in this area. It was less than ten meters deep. And at the bottom of the lake, there seemed to be a mysterious structure.

At first glance, it looked like a temple. It was paved with the same white stone material as the stone pillars, and there was an altar-like structure in the center.

I think it was quite old, but it was still very clean for such an old thing. No moss, no debris, no dirt, just a pure white structure.

And in the center of the temple, there was a strange source of magic.

In this beautiful white temple, it was clearly a foreign and hideous-looking object. It seemed to be an artifact and was made up of a purple crystal.

「What is that thing?」

『That must be a magic stone weapon!』

Moreover, it seemed to be absorbing the magic power of its surroundings and pouring it into the temple. The creepiness we felt was probably the sickening feeling of having our magic power sucked out of us.

「You've gone so far, haven't you?」

「!! Rhyn!」

Suddenly, the spirit, Rhyn, appeared.

「This place is special. It's safe to cancel your Space-Time Magic now. The guardians won't be able to get into this place」

I followed Rhyn's words and canceled our Dimension Shift. There seemed to be no sign of the Vivian Guardians making any noise outside the temple. So, it seemed they really couldn't get in this place.

I then put up a wind barrier and continued talking with Rhyn.

「Have you guys seen that huge magic stone?」

「Nn」

Rhyn stared at the magic stone weapon with sorrowful eyes.

『Is that nasty device gonna resurrect the great magic beast?』

「Yes. It's using the magic around it to devour the magic beast's seal little by little」

「So if we destroy it, the magic beast won't be resurrected?」

Rhyn shook her head sadly at Fran's question.

「The seal on the magic beast has already loosened considerably. If we don't perform the resealing ritual, the seal will break by itself in a few weeks」

「Then, should we do the ritual?」

「We need to prepare for the resealing ritual. If we hurry, we might make it in time」

「How do we perform that ritual?」

「I know Weena Rhyn knows about it, but I'm not sure if she'll perform the ritual or not...?」

「What do you mean?」

「Ask her yourself」

Rhyn still didn't want to speak about the most important thing as usual, did she?

「Then, let's destroy that thing first for now」

「That's impossible. Zelyse has reinforced it with multiple layers of protection. I tried it myself, but I couldn't get a scratch on it. That's gonna be impossible unless we have the power of a High Elf」

Rhyn herself was a high-ranking spirit, but that spirit can't even get a scratch on it... That thing certainly was amazing.

But that would be the case for anyone else.

「Rhyn. Just answer me one question. Is it okay to destroy that thing?」

「If you could. But you probably can't, so get out of here, out of this country, before you get caught in this」

「"If you could". That's fine with me. Master」

『Ou!』

「...I don't know what will happen to you, you know?」

With Rhyn's pitying words behind her, Fran slashed at the magic stone weapon.

「Brilliant Lightning Rush——Heaven Judgement!」

While being clad in black lightning, she unleashed a slash at a godspeed.

Clank!

However, the result was a little different from what I had imagined. It felt dull as if she had struck a hard rock with a blunt sword.

「Huh?」

There was no change in the magic stone weapon in front of us. Fran tilted her head, but I knew the cause.

『We can't even get a scratch on it, huh...』

My magic stone absorption is the ability to eat the magic stones that I cut. In other words, if it doesn't get even a scratch, the ability won't be activated.

「Muh...」

『We have no other choice... Let's use the Sword God Transformation』

This was probably the situation where I had to push myself. But Fran shook her head, looking like she was about to cry.

「Noo!」

It seems that Fran has been a little worried about me ever since she heard that I was going to turn into a mere sword.

『But otherwise, it's gonna be hard to scratch that thing, right?』

Even after she used Heaven Judgement before, it was still unscathed.

It's certainly quite dangerous for me to use the Sword God Transformation now, but I must withstand it for just a moment. However, Fran didn't give me a yes.

「I won't let you」

『Then, what should we do?』

「I'll take care of it」

Fran gave me a determined look and readied me again.

「I'll definitely cut this thing. So, Master doesn't have to push himself too hard」

# Chapter 615

Fran set me up and slumped heavily in front of the magic stone.

In this state, she concentrated on breathing slowly and steadily.

Her appearance was very similar to the one she had just a moment ago when she was kneading her magic to use the Black Lightning God's Claw. Only, it was a lot deeper now.

I guess she planned to build up her power little by little over time, rather than kneading it all at once.

To be honest, I really wanted to ask her to stop. The fact that she had failed earlier meant that it was still too early for Fran. Forcing her to use such a technique would be quite a burden on her.

I was worried about her because she shared higher-level skills such as Magic Control with me, so she could succeed if she pushed herself.

However, she had already controlled a large amount of magic power within her body and had entered a meditation state. It would be dangerous to stop her at this point.

Besides, she didn't have any other choice than this.

It couldn't be helped. I would just help Fran by maintaining the Wind Barrier for now.

Still, there seemed to be less waste in the flow of her magic power than before. Could it be that she had grasped something by trying to use it once?

There was far less distortion in the flow of magic power circulating in her body and the density of her black lightning. Of course, it was not perfect, and it didn't mean that the burden on Fran had decreased.

The evidence of this was the painful expression on the face of the enduring Fran. Just by looking at her face, I could tell that a great deal of pain was hitting Fran.

But I shouldn't heal her now. It would only be a hindrance for her to be hit with other magic while performing such a delicate and precise magic operation.

I gave Fran a shout of encouragement in my heart and watched her quietly.

But then, Rhyn unexpectedly raised her voice.

「Zelyse is coming!」

『...! I see』

This was not good. But I didn't call out to Fran. Fran must have heard Rhyn's words, but she didn't react to it at all.

I didn't ask any more questions either. We shouldn't interfere with Fran right now.

But still, I couldn't catch any sign of Zelyse. He must be using his permeability ability to fool the Vivian Guardian's eyes.

But Rhyn seemed to know. Was it because she was a spirit of time?

Fran breathed quietly beside Rhyn, who had an anxious expression on her face as if she were a human girl.

Then, after a short and intense time, I sensed a shadow jumping into the water.

It must be Zelyse. He then took out a magic stone from his pocket and threw it out at his feet. Then a powerful magic power was emitted, and the

scenery around him changed completely.

Apparently, it could manipulate the wind and create a dome. Was that a kind of magic stone weapon too?

Inside the dome of air created in the water, Zelyse pulled out his magic sword, Zelyse.

「I got you! Can you stop right there, please?」

It was Zelyse. His expression was quite impatient. The magic stone weapon was supposed to have strong protection, but even so, he seemed uneasy.

Was that how highly he regarded Fran? In addition, he was probably wary of her because she easily defeated his magic stone soldiers before.

But he was a step too late.

「!!」

Fran opened her eyes wide and used all her strength to deliver a blow with all her might. Her ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, elbows, wrists, and all the other parts of her body transmitted all of their power in a beautiful blow.

「Black Lightning God's Claw!」

At the same time, she shouted, my tip got covered with black lightning.

The Black Lightning God's Claw that Fran had tried to release before was a technique where she created a black lightning blade and wielded it in her hand.

However, the original form of the Black Lightning God's Claw was to be wrapped around a weapon.

Naturally, this one would be easier to use.

Fran knew that too. After all, the reason she chose to use it in the first place was that she was worried about me.



To wear the Divine Attribute twice in one day is too reckless. It was obvious that I was going to be in an even worse state than I was after being tattered by the Sword God Transformation.

But now, if we didn't destroy this magic stone weapon, many people would suffer. We had to succeed.

Besides, it would still be less damaging for me to be used with the Black Lightning God's Claw for a moment than to use the Sword God Transformation for the second time today.

That was why Fran didn't activate her Black Lightning God's Claw until the moment she released her strike. I was sure she was trying to minimize the amount of time I had to wear the Divine Attribute.

「Haaa!」

『Oraa!』

Clank!

The response was dull.

It was not so different from the time when she had just unleashed her Heaven Judgement at the magic stone weapon before. However, the result was very different from before.

『We did it!』

「Nn!」

The huge purple magic stone that had been in front of us vanished completely. Then, a large amount of magic power flowed into me.

『UWOOOOOOOOH—!』

What the hell was this? It was an unprecedented, tremendous torrent of magic power! It was a magic power that couldn't even be compared to the magical stone of a magic beast with a threat level of B.

『——』

My mind went blank, passing over any sense of pleasure I ever had.

(Master?)

『——』

(Master!?)

『——F-Fran?』

「Are you okay?」

『A-ah, yeah. Sorry, I've shown you something unsightly』

It was a close call. If Zelyse had attacked us now, I would have been completely useless. The magic stone used in that magic stone weapon was indeed a high-grade magic stone.

Aah, this was bad, I was still a little disoriented. I needed to pull myself together.

「...Oi oi... You really...!?!」

But Zelyse was still Zelyse, he just stood there with a look of surprise on his face.

「I finally understand what ‘that me’ from that timeline meant when he said to be careful with just you...」

# Chapter 616

With the disappearance of the magic stone weapon, the eerie magic that had been shrouding the temple disappeared.

But we couldn't afford to be relieved yet.

(Master, are you okay?)

『...I'm fine, I'd say...』

I was actually not that good.

I managed to get out of the disorientation of absorbing a large amount of magic power, but because I pushed myself too hard, I was losing a lot of my capacity as a normal sword.

My durability had drastically reduced and it didn't start to recover at all. It was also obvious that my self-repair ability was not working as a small chip remained on my blade.

It's probably a backlash from overusing the Divine Attribute.

『Honestly, it's pretty dangerous for me to engage him in combat right now』

(Okay)

Zelyse was still stunned, but we didn't know when he would attack us.

That was what I thought, but what Zelyse said next was completely different from what I had imagined.

「Haha... Ahahahah! Amazing! You're amazing, Fran-san! As expected of you!」

He started laughing, truly enjoying the scene. It wasn't a pretense. He really meant it.

As I'd thought, I'd never understood the inside of this guy's brain.

「Uwaah~. You see, that me from that timeline was really wary of you. And now I finally understand what he means. I'm sure, Fran-san had given him a pretty hard time」

What did he mean? The current Zelyse and that Zelyse are in cahoots, right? But based on what he just said, it sounded like he didn't know the details of why Zelyse from that timeline was wary of Fran.

「That Zelyse?」

「Do you want to know what kind of relationship that me and I had, Fran-san?」

「Partner? I already hate Zelyse when there's only one of it, but it's even worse when there's two of it」

「O-one of 'it'...?」

「Cause you're just like a pest」

「A-ahaha! That's harsh!」

(TLN: She's using 匹 (hiki) which is a counter for an animal. It's how Japanese playfully insult each other)

Fran was talking badly of him. She was in a very bad mood. She was probably feeling very angry at Zelyse for irresponsibly trying to break the seal of the great magic beast.

「W-well, regardless of what Fran-san think of me——」

「Shitty insect」

「Oh, come on! You might think that Zelyse from that timeline and I were, at best, or maybe comrades in research? But we have a surprisingly dry relationship, you know? We don't even get along as well as what Fran-san might think of us」

「Why? You can avoid any mistakes if you listened to him, right?」

「Because that's gonna be boring」

That again. But I guess that was a part of Zelyse's principles that could never be changed.

「To know what would happen and move accordingly? That's boring! Besides, the future can be changed so easily. Especially since Zelos Reed and Romio from that timeline are here too」

That was certainly true. In fact, because of Sierra's action, Romio and Zelos Reed have not been captured by Zelyse.

「It's too dangerous to move based on such vague information, right? That's why I rarely ask that me what had happened in the previous timeline. At most, I only ask for data on his research results」

So, the current Zelyse had heard very little information from Zelyse from that timeline.

「The future me is also aware of that. So, he doesn't force me to get any information from him. It's very convenient that we're on the same page, isn't it? A single word and we understand each other」

Indeed, normally, someone would try to tell themselves exactly what happened in another timeline.

At least if it were me, I'd definitely give my other self the details.

「But you see, there's one person that the future me is very cautious about, or rather, someone who'd keep interfering with my plans. And I haven't

heard any details other than that, but it seems, that person had given that me a lot of trouble in that timeline」

「And that person, was me?」

「That's right. Take the incident in Barbra for example, that's where I first met you. I was planning to let a lot of magic stone soldiers rampage in there」

「A lot?」

「I had a hundred of them ready to go, you know? But that me insisted that I shouldn't do that because it would have been a waste of resources. He insisted that we should use the magic stones for other projects, and so we changed our plans」

I see. Maybe Zelyse from that timeline had deployed a large number of magic stone soldiers at Barbra, only to have them wiped out by Fran. But from the way he put it, it must have had little to no effect for him.

If there was no significant difference in the results, and if Zelyse could save his precious magic stones, it was certainly better to give up the use of magic stone soldiers in Barbra.

It was very unfortunate for me though. I don't know how much magic stone value I could get from hundreds of magic stone soldiers.

It must have been a tremendous bonus for us at the time.

「Well, now that I've seen it, I understand why the future me was so wary of you. No, it was not you. It was your sword, wasn't it? Well, there's also Fran's skill as well. Anyway, you have the power to destroy magic stones. It doesn't matter the ability, power, or type of magic stone it is, as long as you manage to scratch it even a little, and it'll be destroyed」

「...」

「Fufun. You're being cautious now, aren't you? I guess that means I'm not too far off, right?」

Tsk, my ability has been exposed! A magic stone soldier, a magic stone sword, and now a giant magic stone weapon. If we show it to him over and over again, it's only natural that he'll notice it.

「As a self-confessed magic stone user, this is the worst match for me. You could even say that it's a natural enemy for me」

「...So why don't you just give up?」

「No no, I haven't lost yet, have I? Well, your powers are indeed a little troublesome」

Zelyse's gaze then turned to me.

Those were the eyes of someone who was looking at an interesting research subject. To be honest, I was used to being looked at as an object, but I just couldn't help but feel weird about the way this guy looked at me. I guess it was because there was something creepy about the way he looked at me, it felt like he could see right through me.

「I'd like to analyze that sword and do some research on it」

「I won't give it to you」

「Fufun. As I thought, there's a secret in that sword, isn't it? I'm getting more and more curious!」

# Chapter 617

「...What happened to Sierra?」

「Oh, that kid? Well, if you're that curious, why don't make me tell you?」

「I'll do that」

「You're still acting tough even when you're in tatters huh?」

As Zelyse said, we were still recovering. Fran and I were pretty exhausted after using the Divine Attribute twice a day.

It wasn't so bad that she was breathing heavily, but she couldn't hide her weariness. After all, using the Black Lightning God's Claw was quite straining.

『Urushi!』

「Grrr!」

「Uwaah!」

Urushi, summoned by my Familiar Summon, attacked Zelyse.

「I thought I'd taken care of it!?」

「Shii!」

「Grrr!」

Zelyse let out a pathetic scream, but he was able to avoid Urushi's surprise attack perfectly. I was sure he was wary of Urushi, who could unleash



attacks with the Space-time Attribute. However, while he was paying attention to Urushi, Fran and I made a decent slash at him.

As I felt in our earlier fight, he was quite strong as a warrior.

「Well then, I wonder what would happen if I use this?」

「Muh」

『A magic stone sword?』

When I received the attack of the magic stone sword that Zelyse took out, that was all it took for that sword to be absorbed by me. However, Zelyse did not show any sign of regret. Rather, his smile deepened.

「Hahahah! Then what about this!」

『Another one!?!』

Zelyse took out another magic stone sword again and attacked me in succession. Obviously, his attacks were aimed not at Fran, but me.

However, if I avoided it, Fran might lose her bearing and it would be dangerous for her. Therefore, I had no choice but to take it, and once again I met the magic stone sword head-on.

「That's amazing! As I thought, it really was the ability of that sword! A magic sword that can absorb magic stones! Amazing! I really want to do some research on it!」

What a freak!

But suddenly Zelyse turned serious and tilted his head. Then he looked at Fran with a serious expression.

「Eh? Is that so? Hmmm」

「What?」

「 Somehow ‘that me’ lost interest in you 」

「 Lose interest? 」

「 He said that the Fran in that timeline was stronger, scarier, and more dangerous 」

「 !! 」

Fran was annoyed by Zelyse’s words. Even the current Fran was quite strong. Did that mean that Fran in that timeline was that much different than this Fran?

The differences between that timeline and now were the people who slipped in time like Sierra and Zelyse... I see, come to think of it, there was surely a big difference between that timeline and now.

The incident at Barbra. If it was as Zelyse had said, we would have annihilated the magic stone soldiers and I would have been strengthened considerably. That was why I might have ranked up four or five levels at once.

What would happen as a result? There was a good chance that we would have been able to kill even stronger magic beasts, and that we’d have been able to strengthen faster than we had now.

But as a result, it was possible that my turning into a mere sword would have been hastened. In other words, while I would have been stronger than I was now, I would have completely lost my heart as a person.

As Rhyn had taught me, if that happened, Fran might run amok.

That meant, she was stronger than she was now (because I got strengthened), scarier (Fran had run amok), and more dangerous (I never advised her, so she wields her power as she runs amok) than she was now.

So, when I thought about it, were we saved by Zelyse from that timeline? No, it must be just a coincidence. If anything, it might actually be thanks to Fran from that timeline who had done us all the favor.

Thanks to Fran's rampage in that timeline, we were now able to be saved and have hope in the future.

『...』

(Master, what's wrong?)

『Ah, sorry, I was just wondering what happened to Fran in that timeline』

(I'm sure she's fine)

『Why is it?』

(Because Master will never abandon me. Even if I go out of control, I'm sure he'll come right back and save me. So, she must be fine)

『But Rhyn said I had completely turned into a sword, remember?』

(She'll be fine, she's with Master after all. I'm sure he'd do something)

I could feel Fran's straightforward thoughts.

『I see... You're right』

(Nn!)

It was strange how Fran readily believed in me and she really meant it. But she was right.

There was no way I was going to completely turn into a sword and leave this cute little Fran behind. I was sure myself in that timeline felt the same way too.

If that was the case, then maybe Fran was right and I would get my heart back again someday.

Fran was no different. Even if she did get a little out of control, she would soon realize her own mistakes. I was not there? It didn't matter. I was sure

that without my help, she would be able to regain herself, punch me in the face, and get me back to my senses.

Besides, there was no way for us to know what happened in that timeline.

We didn't even know if that timeline branched off and became a parallel world, or if it was overwritten by the current timeline and disappeared.

If that was the case, it was better for us to stay positive. Worrying about it was not going to help.

# Chapter 618

『Well then, Fran, you ready now?』

(Nn! Sorry I kept you waiting)

The current stalemate was created by Fran, although it was Zelyse who said that it was them who was losing their interest. Well, I guess Zelyse was also deliberately playing along with us.

I think he was still observing me during our fight. That must be why he didn't dare to attack me seriously.

(Master, let's do it!)

『Ou!』

Normally. Getting away from here would be the best option. However, if we ran away here, Zelyse might do something to the seal of the great magic beast again.

She said that the seal was already very weak, so we wanted to stop him.

That was why Fran was so determined to win. If we couldn't fight for a long time, then we would just have to fight for a short time.

『Haaa!』

「Thaa!」

『Resonance magic!』 (Resonance magic!)

The magic power released from me and Fran was merging into a single form.

This was our Resonance Magic, the secret technique we had acquired on the Plains of the Demon Wolf.

It was a technique in which multiple magic users resonated with each other's magic power and activated it. And apparently, it was a very rare form of magic.

It was a unique skill after all. And in order to activate it, everyone who cooperated had to have this skill.

Even with all that, it was unlikely that the activation conditions would be met. Besides, it was not something that could be used by just having the skill alone.

The wavelength and intensity of the magic power must be kept under control to match.

In other words, they had to have resonance magic skills and advanced magic control but there were not many people who could do that in this world.

Even Amanda said she had only seen it activated a few times. She said that it was used by a group of high-ranking magic beasts that appeared deep in the dungeon.

I think the skill was originally developed for magic beasts in dungeons. Because it would be rather easy to activate it in a dungeon that could generate a large number of magic beasts of the same species and the same ability.

Me too, I just happened to have killed a magic beast that had the skill in the Plains of the Demon Wolf.

It was a mysterious group of five slimes that were connected by a tentacle-like object to each other. And their name was the Resonance Slime.

Well, we killed them before they could even use their resonance magic though.

「Kuh...!」

『Fran! Hang on!』

Fran grunted. This was also the reason why this magic could not be used in actual battles.

Normally, this magic was designed to be used by groups of ten or twenty magic beasts. The burden on the user was tremendous, as Fran and I were the only ones using it.

In particular, the stress on the brain seemed to be quite severe, and Fran got a bad headache when she tried to use this skill.

Fran even said 「It feels like someone is hitting me with a spiked hammer in my head」.

Because of this, Fran's control was not stable at all.

「Aaaaa!」

『All right! You did a great job, Fran!』

But Fran, despite her screams, completed her part.

Fran mustered up all her mental strength and endured the pain as she completed the last part of the preparation. I then sensed my own magic power and instantly adjusted my output.

Then, a bolt of pale blue lightning shot out from us, rampaging in all directions and covering the surroundings.

「Ghaa! W-what is this...!?!」

「Grrr!」

「Guh!」

Zelyse, who was still in his permeable state, was severely shaken by the resonance magic and deeply wounded by Urushi's follow-up attack. Moreover, the lightning was still raging around us.

He must have thought it was just a Thunderbolt Magic. Zelyse was surprised that he received a direct hit by the thunderbolt while in a permeable state. It seemed that even Zelyse could not even tell what it was at first sight.

That was because of the effect of our Resonance Magic. Fran's lightning attribute and my space-time attribute blended together, and a bolt of lightning with the space-time attribute was released.

It could be changed in many ways depending on the nature of the magic that was put into it and the image of the user. That was what resonance magic was.

However, it was not very powerful as the user's magic power must resonate when it was used. It might fail if one of us used too much magic. In other words, it had to be matched to the person with the lowest of magic power.

And I was the one who had to adjust to Fran this time. In the first place, her headache already made it difficult for her to adjust to me.

Moreover, the magic power that was put into it was also consumed to combine the attributes, so the power was further reduced.

It was also weaker than Kanna Kamui and Heaven Judgement.

However, if the situation was one where multiple attributes were effective, as it was now, it was very useful magic. It had the speed of a thunderbolt, but also had a space-time attribute that could inflict damage onto Zelyse in his permeable state.

『Now's our chance while the effects of the Resonance Magic are still in effect!』



「Nn!」

Fran rushed out to cut Zelyse down.

Both Fran and I are resolved to put everything we have into this blow.

But at the next moment, I, Fran, Urushi, and Zelyse all cowered and looked astonished at the same time.

「This is...?」

「Woof」

『Oi oi oi! Something is coming out of the bottom of the temple! And its magic power is really great!』

「W-why is the seal of the great magic beast broken!? I haven't done anything...」

From the center of the temple, gray magic power slowly leaked out like it was crawling.

We then jumped back in a hurry.

「U-Uwaaah!」

Immediately after, Zelyse let out a scream. It was not a fake scream like before. It was his serious scream. But I guess that was to be expected.

「Kuh...! What's this! Let me go—!!」

There were layers of what looked like thin strings entwined around Zelyse's body.

If I looked harder, I could see that it was an extremely thin tentacle similar to those of a jellyfish. Countless tentacles overflowed from the gaps in the pure white floors and attacked Zelyse.

He should have been using his permeability, but apparently, it was pointless.

Seriously, is the great magic beast about to resurrect?

But why? Could it be because we fought here?

『Where's Rhyn!? I'm sure Rhyn can tell us what's going on』

(Nn? She's not here?)

But then from behind me, we could hear Rhyn's voice.

「See? I've told you to just run away...」

# Chapter 619

「See? I told you to just run away...」

「Rhyn?」

「It's already too late... I never thought that it would actually happen...」

『Rhyn! What are you saying!?!』

Rhyn continued her words as she suddenly appeared in front of us.

「Thank you... Fran. It was thanks to you that the great magic beast only made an incomplete resurrection...」

「Did Rhyn... do that?」

「Yes」

Fran couldn't believe it, but Rhyn, with a look of guilt on her face, clearly affirmed it.

「But why?」

「I really wanted you to get away... If you manage to survive, tell Weena Rhyn. Tell her to get prepared... Well then, goodbye...」

Rhyn said one-sidedly, and as usual, she suddenly disappeared too.

Zelyse was still unable to shake off the tentacles.

「Shiiiiit!」

I wondered why he wasn't using his permeability power, but apparently, he could not activate it properly.

It seemed that only a part of his body was in its permeable state. In fact, some of the tentacles had passed through Zelyse's Body.

However, not all of his body was permeable, so one of the countless outstretched tentacles had wrapped itself around Zelyse.

Even if it succeeded in penetrating one part of his body, it would fail to penetrate the other parts, and he would end up being caught by the tentacles.

『Fran! Urushi! Let's get out of here!』

We've got to get out of here as soon as possible.

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

「AAAAAAAAAAAA—!」

With Zelyse's screams at our backs, we left the scene at full speed.

I tried to use teleportation to get away from here at once——but it failed.

『Eh?』

「?」

It was not that the teleportation failed to activate. It was just that the teleportation didn't happen as it was supposed to.

If it had been true, we would have escaped at once to tens of meters above the surface, but we only moved a few meters to the side.

When I considered the fact that Zelyse, who was in a permeable state, was being held by the tentacles, there must be something in the area that was

disrupting Space-time Magic.

Was this the work of Rhyn, the Spirit of Time?

『We have no other choice, we have to run by ourselves!』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

In order to escape the countless transparent tentacles gushing out from the floor of the temple, Fran and Urushi jumped up at once in an aerial jump.

They kicked in the air, dodging the tentacles that attacked them, and sometimes intercepting them with magic. However, although we were able to knock away the tentacles, they were multiplying faster than we could handle.

Moreover, she couldn't use Brilliant Lightning Rush due to exhaustion.

I could see that our escape route was being gradually cut down. It reminded me of the attack of the thread user, Fermus, that we had faced in the martial arts tournament.

『This is bad! At this rate, we'll get trapped in the wall of tentacles!』

「Muh!」

A large number of tentacles were not coming from below but all sides. If we continued to struggle, we might get trapped in the tentacle dome.

Fran whipped her tattered body to increase her speed even more. Her face was contorted in pain.

Shit! I wish I was in better shape!

But it was right after I thought that.

『Hmm, wait... Could it be!』

I hurried to check my status.

『I knew it! Just a little more!』

If we do it right, I might be able to recover at once.

『Magic stone——... I don't have any of it, huh!?』

Yes. I just checked the self-evolution section. If I could get another 50 or so magic stone values, I would be able to rank up.

However, I didn't have any magic stones in my dimensional storage. There were a few goblin corpses, but that was not enough to get 50 magic stones value.

『Fran, do you have any magic stones in your storage?』

「Nn...」

No, wait.

『I know a guy who might have magic stones! Fran, just hold on a second!』

「Nn!」

I left Fran's hand and descended the water surface.

「Zelyse!」

「W-who!?」

I don't know how far I could fake it, but I ran up to Zelyse with the doppelganger that I created with my alter creation.

「If you have any magic stones, give them to me! It might even save your life if it works! Besides, we'll let you off the hook for now!」

「Eh? Eeh?」

「Hurry!」

「Aah, damn! I don't understand, but I don't want to be here anymore!」

Zelyse was confused for a moment, but I guess he also knew that it would be difficult to escape on his own. He decided to take my word for it, even though he doubted it.

He then pulled out a medium-sized magic stone from his pocket. He seemed to have a bag of items in his robe.

With just a snap of his wrist, Zelyse threw a magic stone at my doppelganger. It was probably a magic stone from a magic beast with a threat level of C or B.

「Take that, you thief!」

「Haha! I'll take that!」

When I received the magic stone, I turned my back to Zelyse so that my body could become a cover, and absorb it with my main body. Well, a little thought about what I was doing would probably expose it though.

「Here it comes!」 『Here it comes!』

My tattered body was restored at once, and I could feel an enormous amount of magic power flooding into my body.

Moreover, the backlash from using the Divine Attribute had disappeared as well.

『I'm fully recovered!』

# Chapter 620

I was able to absorb about 60 magic stones value. I had just barely achieved a rank-up.

I never thought I would be able to rank up in such a short time.

Because of Fenrir-san's weakened state, my accumulation of magic stones value was very slow.

It must have been thanks to the magical stone weapon that had been set up to break the seal of the great magic beast. Even the current me was sure to get more than 500 magic stones value worth from that one.

The number of self-evolutions points I had accumulated so far was 60, which wasn't much either, but it couldn't be helped. If I believed what Announcer-san said, I should be back to normal after my next evolution.

『Fran! Sorry I kept you waiting!』

I erased my doppelganger and went back to Fran.

「Urushi, come!」

「Woof!」

『All right! Let's clear them out! Fran, focus all your energy on getting out of here!』

「Okay」

This tentacle could be destroyed by magic. If that was the case, then if we could wipe out a large area in an instant, we would have a chance to escape



from here.

I was about to activate Kanna Kamui, the most powerful magic I had——But I was shocked.

『Wha! This is...!』

(Master?)

『I can't stabilize my technique at all!』

I thought that something would disturb the activation of Space-time Magic, but I was wrong. It seemed that if I tried to use more than a certain amount of magic power, something would interfere with it.

Obviously, external interferences were distorting the Kanna Kamui that I had constructed. It wouldn't activate because of it.

What should we do? Use dozens of weak spells that could be released rapidly? But that was not strong enough. I didn't think that would work well against these countless tentacles.

As I pondered for a few moments, I could feel the magic emanating from Zelyse.

「AAAAAAH!」

『A barrier huh!?』

「Use it... quick!」

What Zelyse threw at us was a magic stone weapon that contained a huge amount of magic power. This barrier is amazing. Not only did it block tentacles, but it even prevented the mysterious interference. My technique then gets stabilized at once.

The only reason he didn't use it himself was probably because there was no way for him to escape from the tentacles even if he could stop them from reaching him for a short amount of time.

Normally, it was a tool that would momentarily stop an opponent from performing a large-scale technique. But for me now, that brief moment was enough.

『Ooooooh! Blow them up!』

I activated Kanna Kamui at once. I purposely lowered the convergence rate to increase the range.

「Tsk, Even me too——」

As a result, six Kanna Kamui were released in all directions, and the whole area was then swallowed by the white lightning.

『Now!』

「Nn!」

Fran, holding the smaller form of Urushi, used the last of her strength to run to the sky at once.

She used a telekinetic air ride with me. Amid the bursting thunderbolts and explosions, I forcefully pushed through while using a barrier and ascended at a great speed.

Looking down, the area where the temple used to be was covered with vapor, making it impossible to see properly. I could hear the buzzing of the steam as it became electrically charged.

Zelyse must have been involved in it, but what happened to him?

I said it might help, but I didn't explicitly say it would. Rather, I released it intending to get him involved, but... I wonder if he managed to get away? Well, I don't think that guy would die from that thing.

I don't feel the need to keep promises to bad people, but I don't have the luxury of looking for him and chasing after him right now. As a result, my words to let him go had been kept.

『Let's leave this place!』

「Nn!」

「Woof!」

Urushi and I began to run at full speed.

A tremendous amount of magic power was starting to leak out from the place where we had just been. Even though we were already hundreds of meters away, me, Fran and Urushi were not feeling safe at all.

The hairs on both Fran and Urushi's bodies were standing on end. Even Fran couldn't help but break out in cold sweat.

I was under tremendous pressure that enveloped my entire body. No matter how much we moved away, it didn't stop. In fact, I think it was getting stronger.

『I don't think it's hostile or malicious, but...』

「It's frightening」

「Woof...」

「It was as if something wanted to devour us」

「Woof」

She was right. What we felt was hunger.

We felt a terrifying sense of hunger in this presence. Not only Fran and Urushi but even I was being recognized as food by it.

『Moreover, it's mixed with evil...』

「Nn...」

「Woof...」

It seemed that there really were some pieces of Evil Gods inside the great magic beast. The evil mixed with its magic power leaking out into the surrounding area was quite strong. It was not even close to the evil in Zelos Reed and Murellia.

「We need to go to Weena Rhyn」

『Yeah, you're right』

We decided to go to Weena Rhyn as Rhyn had told us.

I don't even know why Rhyn broke the seal on the great magic beast. In the first place, did Rhyn really break the seal?

We need to speak to Weena Rhyn to get answers to those questions.

『As I suspected, the influence is rather small when we're this far away』

「But I could still feel it a little」

「Woof」

I think we were already more than two kilometers away, but Fran and Urushi still seemed to sense something disturbing.

Just when we realized once again that the great magic beast was no ordinary being, Fran, who was looking back at it, gasped.

「!!」

At the same time, Fran's surprise was conveyed to me.

「Master, that...」

『Seriously...! I see, that surely is a great magic beast!』

Beyond our line of sight, there was something huge that split the lake to reveal itself. At this distance, we couldn't appraise it, nor could we perfectly estimate its strength.

But we could tell just by looking at it how huge it was. Even in its current state, it was probably more than 100 meters long.

The Midgardsormr was long and slender, giving the impression of being longer rather than wider. Besides, it was still underwater, so I didn't have a full view of it.

(TLN: Midgardsormr, a colossal serpentine dragon)

Maybe that was why this one seemed even bigger to me. I don't even know how big it would be when it was fully resurrected.

「Groooaaahhh!」

A grey creature was roaring wildly.

Its body was still in a terrifying-looking state of peristalsis and enlargement, and we could not get a full picture of it. The only thing I knew was that if we let it go unchecked, it would surely cause a lot of damage.

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Master's Stats

=====

Name: Master

Wielder: Fran (Fixed)

Race: Intelligence Unique Weapon

ATK: 1352

MP: 17452/17452 (Cannibalism +5352)

Durability: 15450/15450 (Cannibalism +3350)

Magic Conductivity: SS-

[Skill]

Appraisal: LvMax, Appraisal Block, Form Transformation, High-Speed  
Self-Repair, Self-Evolution (Rank 18, Magic Stone Value: 15310/17100,  
Memory: 50. Points: 60)

# Chapter 621

When we returned to Sheftent, the town was already in chaos. Many people were running around at the harbor.

Ships of all sizes were anchored throughout the harbor, some with broken masts and others with scorch marks.

They must be a part of the Commercial Fleet.

But there weren't many of them in here. Maybe only about a fifth of the ships that belonged to the Commercial Fleet were here. Could it be that many ships had sunk?

Adventurers were gathered in one corner of the harbor, staring at the great magic beast with grim faces.

It looked quite small from here, but Adventurers who knew the lake well could estimate its size.

When we got closer, they seemed to have recognized Fran right away. Well, she was obviously coming back from the direction where the strange thing happened while riding a big wolf. It was only natural that we would stand out.

「O-oi! Isn't that the Black Lightning Princess?」

「Ooh! It's true! Black Lightning Princess-dono!」

「Wh-what on earth is going on? What the hell was that thing?」

A few people called out to her.

「A big magic beast came out」

「Well, I can tell that by just looking at it...」

「I don't know much about it either. More importantly, I want to ask you some questions」

「Hmm? What it is?」

「Have you seen Sierra?」

「Sierra?」

「Oh, that kid? No, we haven't seen him」

「I see...」

In the end, we couldn't find out what Zelyse had done with Sierra. And I guess Fran was still concerned about Sierra's whereabouts.

But no one seemed to have seen him in Sheftent. He did not even get caught with our detection range on our way here.

And we didn't have the time to look for him any further now.

「Also, what happened to the Commercial Fleet?」

「It has become a horrible mess」

「Yeah, I never thought the fleet would end up like this」

The Adventurers told us so with grim faces.

Apparently, due to the Modoki attacks and the huge explosion, many ships were damaged and a large number of people were killed.

Even so, the safe ships managed to scatter around and dock in the surrounding towns, and many people were able to get off the ships.



Many of the damaged ships were docked in Sheftent, and people were still being treated at the moment.

「Right now, we're still trying to identify the people who have died. They're right there in the square」

「I see」

「Let me show you the way」

He then guided us to the square.

A large number of people and a dozen or so bodies were laid out in the square. It pained me to see people clinging to the bodies of those who were close to them in tears.

The wailing cries of the children were especially depressing.

I could see Fran clenching her fists and quietly stifling her anger. I felt the same too.

Seeing this scene, once again I felt the urge to kill Zelyse. When we escaped from the temple, even if I had to force myself a little, I should have put a Kanna Kamui right on his face.

But at that time, my priority was to get Fran out of there, no matter what. I didn't have time to take any unnecessary risks back then.

「I also heard that some of them haven't been found yet...」

(Master)

『Yeah』

We asked the people from the ship who were in the square to help us to arrange the bodies of the victims in the square. We didn't have much time, but we knew we couldn't neglect this.

It seemed that some of the ship's crew members who were here, had friends and relatives among them, and the square then filled with even more grief.

(Zelyse...! I'll definitely beat him the next time we see him)

『Yeah』

(Woof!)

Then we prayed silently and left the place.

Our destination was the academy's campsite, where I could detect the presence of Weena Rhyn.

When we arrived there, the students had gathered back at the campsite, looking somewhat anxious. I guess they still hadn't grasped the situation yet.

When Fran landed at the campsite, the students immediately surrounded her. The first one to call out to her was Charon.

「Fran-san! The town seems to be in an uproar. Do you know what's going on?」

「...The Commercial Fleet was attacked by magic beasts」

「Wha! How bad is the damage?」

「Quite terrible. I have to report to Weena Rhyn about that」

「I see. I'm sorry for stopping you」

When Fran mentioned Weena Rhyn's name, the students spontaneously cleared a path for her.

As expected of the students of the Academy of Magic. They probably understood that there was no point in panicking at a time like this.

「...It may get dangerous for us to stay here. Prepare to evacuate」

「Eh? But...」

「This is an order from an instructor」

「U-understood」

「Nn」

It was convenient to have authority at times like this. Well, she didn't have the kind of authority that would normally allow her to issue such an order, but this was an emergency.

『Let's talk to Weena Rhyn first so we can start evacuating everyone. She should have known that something is going on』

「Nn!」

In fact, it would not be surprising if she had known everything through the spirits.

「Weena Rhyn!」

「Fran...」

Weena Rhyn's face, as she sat in her chair, was dominated by a sadness that made me feel sorry for her. From the way her hair was in a mess, she must have ruffled her head many times already.

It seemed that Weena Rhyn was now so cornered that she could be convinced that she had done such a thing.

「How, how could the magic beast in the lake resurrect!? I'm sure the seal wasn't severely broken yet...!? If things continue like this, Rhyn might disappear!」

# Chapter 622

The Determined Weena Rhyn

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

Weena Rhyn let out sorrowful words while covering her face with one hand.

「If things continue like this, Rhyn might disappear!」

「But it was Rhyn who resurrected the magic beast」

「...Huh? Rhyn did? Really...?」

「Really」

「But why...?」

「I don't know」

『Well, we'd like to know about that too』

Then Fran and I told her everything that had happened at the bottom of the lake.

Zelyse tried to break the seal and we managed to stop him. But to our surprise, Rhyn resurrected the magic beast.

Weena Rhyn could not seem to believe it. She looked up at the void with a dumbfounded face.

「Rhyn has a message for you」

「!!」

「She told you to be prepared」

「...But then, that girl will...?」

We've known each other for a while now, but I still didn't understand Weena Rhyn and Rhyn's relationship. When she said that "that girl", was she referring to Rhyn? If so, they were not just ordinary acquaintances then. It seemed that they might have some kind of close relationship.

「What's Weena Rhyn's relation with Rhyn?」

「...We are... I wonder how should I put this...」

「I'm listening」

「Well」

Weena Rhyn smiled wearily at us. She seemed to be mentally overwhelmed.

「To put it simply, we're sisters, twins」

「Twins, even though she's a spirit?」

『Her twin is an elf. Is that possible?』

As expected of a race favored by spirits. But apparently, that was not the case. Weena Rhyn was shaking her head.

「Rhyn was originally a High Elf」

Weena Rhyn then talked about the relationship between herself and Rhyn.

「Rhyn made a contract with the spirit of the lake, which had been captured by the great magic beast, and made herself one with the spirit in order to

seal the great magic beast」

「She could do that?」

「It must have been possible because Rhyn was one of the High Elves who particularly excelled in Spirit Magic. It was impossible for me」

By becoming one with the spirit of the lake, which had become one with the great magic beast, it meant that Rhyn had also become a part of the great magic beast.

Then, Rhyn weakened the great magic beast from within and sealed it in the center of the lake with the sealing technique she had prepared.

Weena Rhyn's acquaintance who was said to have sealed the great magic beast was actually her twin sister, Rhyn.

「I then made a contract with Rhyn, who had become a spirit... If things were left like this, Rhyn would one day completely merge into the great magic beast and disappear」

Normally, a contract between a Spirit Magic-User and a spirit was not a contract that could be defined as assimilation.

It was more like a give and take relationship, where they worked together and lent each other power

However, Weena Rhyn's had strong feelings for Rhyn, their unusually deep connection as they were originally twins, and the High Elves' high affinity for spirits brought about an unexpected situation.

「You see. My name was just Weena」

「Did you change your name because you made a contract with Rhyn?」

「No, you're wrong. When I made the contract with Rhyn, our souls were fused into a single entity. As a result, we are neither Weena nor Rhyn, but a new individual under the name of Weena Rhyn」

It seemed that the base was Weena. Her memories and appearance were still that of Weena's. But there was a definite change. Rhyn's hobbies, tastes, and consciousness have become mixed in with Weena's.

When someone's spirit was assimilated into their own, a change would occur. To put it differently, it meant that they were no longer themselves.

No one would normally want that, but...

「I couldn't help but be happy. Now we could be together forever. That's what I thought」

As I'd expected, I still didn't understand the way the long-lived being think. But after listening to her explanation, one thing didn't make sense to me.

「So what about the Rhyn that we met?」

「The Rhyn that I made a contract with was the Rhyn that had become one with the Spirit of the Lake and turned into a spirit herself. But there's still half of Rhyn left inside the great magic beast」

So, you're saying that only a small part of Rhyn who had become one with the spirit became Weena Rhyn, and the rest is still sealed inside the great magic beast?

Maybe that was why Weena's consciousness was in charge of Weena Rhyn.

「Rhyn seems to be able to break out of the seal and materialize herself for a short time. The mysterious spirit that had been seen around the lake was probably Rhyn. She never came to see me though」

「Why?」

「If the Rhyn in me and the Rhyn in the great magic beast are attracted to each other, the seal could get weaker... But I wanted to see her though...」

Weena Rhyn was strangely unstable when she talked about Rhyn. She was just like a girl who was happy and worried about her loved one.

「What did Rhyn mean when she said you have to be prepared?」

「...」

「Rhyn said we'll find out about it if we asked Weena Rhyn」

「I won't let her do it. I'm not gonna let Rhyn disappear...!」

Weena Rhyn mumbled something for a little while, and then abruptly stood up from her chair.

「I'm going to reseal the great magic beast」

「You can?」

「It was impossible before. But now I should be able to do it」

Weena Rhyn said so and rushed out. But despite her determined expression, her steps were somewhat unsteady.

「I'm going」

「But first, what do we do with the students?」

「Aah, now that you mentioned them... Give them instructions to leave this town and evacuate. Fran, get the other instructors together and take care of them until they escape」

「Okay」

Weena Rhyn reacted as if she had forgotten about the students. As I thought, there must be something wrong with her right now.

However, only Weena Rhyn could seal the great magic beast. We had no choice but to leave it to her.

「Are you okay?」

「Don't worry, I'm okay」



She didn't look okay though. But we were afraid to point that out. That was just how intense the atmosphere of the current Weena Rhyn was.

「I'll definitely seal it」

# Chapter 623

I Don't Know

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

Weena Rhyn said she was going to do something and left. To be honest, I was not sure if it was safe to leave her alone, but evacuating the students was also an important task.

Fran then went over to the students, it seemed that they had already made preparations to evacuate. They abandoned the tents and everyone was carrying only food and other supplies.

「Fran-dono, what's going on?」

It was Inez, one of the combat instructors, who spoke on their behalf.

She was well respected by both teachers and students, and I guess this time she had become the leader of the whole group.

「A huge magic beast appeared in the lake」

「A magic beast?」

「Nn」

Fran's explanation was met with a puzzled look not only from Inez but also from the other instructors and students.

「Hasn't the Director dealt with the situation?」

「Yes, she has」

「Eh? Do we still need to evacuate then?」

Aah, I see.

Weena Rhyn was like an absolute existence to the people from the Academy. I guess they couldn't understand why they still had to evacuate when Weena Rhyn had made a move.

They must have thought that she could defeat the slightly stronger magic beast without causing any damage to the surroundings.

「The magic beast this time was really strong. Even Weena Rhyn said that she was unsure what would happen」

「F-for real...!?」

「Doesn't that mean, it's already certain that it is a magic beast with a threat level of A or higher...?」

「Nn, that's why we need to hurry and evacuate everyone」

「Understood!」

After Fran, the strongest among them explained the situation, they all seemed to understand the severity of the danger.

Weena Rhyn was said to be capable of single-handedly fighting against an entire country, but that Weena Rhyn was unsure if she could handle this great magic beast.

And if Weena Rhyn were to seriously confront the great magic beast, the damage to the surrounding area would be enormous.

「Did she say anything about the route we should take?」

「No. I'll leave this to Inez」

「Understood」

Then the students of the academy began their march to leave the campsite. Similarly, we could see the line of residents fleeing the town.

It seemed that the information had been passed from the Adventurer's Guild to the town chief.

The refugees were thinking the same thing, to get as far away from the lake as possible. There were many people crowded together on the road heading east.

We went along the road with the students of the academy. But then I realized something.

『I don't see Romio and Zelos Reed around』

(...Certainly)

『Are they in the back? Urushi?』

(Woof)

Even Urushi's nose didn't seem to be able to tell where Romio and Zelos Reed were. In other words, I guess they were not among these refugees.

『Where did they go?』

「I wonder are they all right」

『Hmm...』

We were actually more worried about Romio than Zelos Reed.

But as Fran started to frown, Charon spoke to her.

「What's wrong?」

「Romio, do you know where he is?」

「Romio...? Oh, that cute little kid that the Director brought?」

「Nn」

「Eh? He's not with us? That's a big problem then!?!」

The students around her nodded in agreement with Charon's exclamation.

「I mean, the magic beast this time was an opponent that even the Director has to fight seriously, right?」

「But we may not have enough time to find them now, you know?」

「This is bad...」

I didn't know if I would think of the students as kind or lacking a sense of urgency, as they were still able to worry about them even at a time like this.

However, Fran seemed to have a good opinion of them. I guess it was because she shared the same sentiment.

『Fran, Weena Rhyn only ordered us to take care of them until they had escaped, right?』

(Nn)

『And we've already made it out of town』

(Aah, I see)

Realizing that loophole, Fran then rushed to Inez, who was walking in the lead.

「Inez」

「Yes! Do you need anything?」

「Can you handle it from here on out without me?」

「Yes! That's not a problem!」

In response to Fran's question, Inez nodded in agreement.

Now there were also the Adventurers escorting people from the town among them, so the escort force was more sufficient than I had imagined. As Inez said, even if Fran were to leave, there would be no problems.

「Besides... It's not only the students we should protect, but that kid as well. We shouldn't just turn a blind eye and leave him there」

Apparently, the instructors regretted not checking for Romio's absence when they left. But it couldn't be helped. On the way from the academy to Lake Vivian, Romio and Zelos Reed were under Weena Rhyn's care.

Even after arriving at the lake, there was little to no contact between them and the instructors. So, it was asking too much to expect them to remember their presence during the evacuation.

However, it seemed that they had their pride as instructors.

「We leave it to you! Fran-dono!」

「Fran-san. We'll be counting on you. Please help that kid」

「Actually, it was soothing for me to see him」

「Yeah. You're right——」

「I hope he's okay」

「Okay. I'm going to go help Romio」

So, we headed back to Sheftent, with many instructors and students watching us as we headed there.

『Urushi, you find Romio's scent. Fran, focus on your detection』

「Woof!」

「Nn. Okay」

There was still no sign of Weena Rhyn doing anything yet. I didn't know what she planned to do, but we needed to find Romio before the large-scale battle broke out.

Moreover, we had one more thing on our minds.

「Sierra told us before, that Weena Rhyn in that timeline used Romio's power without caring that he was in mortal danger」

『Could it be, Weena Rhyn was going to do the same thing?』

「I'll ask her if there's another way」

『But what if she says there's no other way?』

「...I don't know」

# Chapter 624

Sacrifice

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

We returned to Sheftent and jumped straight into the campsite. However, we couldn't detect Weena Rhyn or Romio's presence there.

『I wonder where he went... Urushi, can you trace his scent?』

「Woof...」

Urushi nodded but seemed somewhat unsure.

It seemed that their scent still lingered in this area but he wasn't sure where they went.

Nevertheless, in search of clues, Fran walked off with Urushi in the lead.

「Here?」

「Woof!」

Passing through the townspeople who were busy making preparations for their escape, Urushi and Fran arrived at the harbor.

His gaze was fixed on the lake——towards the great magic beast. Did this mean that Weena Rhyn was on her way to seal the great magic beast?



『So Weena Rhyn, Romio, and Zelos Reed's scent are coming from the same direction?』

「Woof」

It seemed certain that Weena Rhyn had taken them both. Could it be that she was really going to use Romio's power?

Fran jumped on Urushi's back and pointed at the great magical beast.

「After them!」

「Woof!」

At Fran's urging, Urushi ran off again with a sharp look on his face.

And so, we were back on the lake in a few minutes.

『I see her! Over there! No doubt, it's Weena Rhyn!』

「But, isn't that...」

『Yeah! My worst fears may have come true!』

Near the great magic beast, a circular stage-like object about 15 meters in diameter appeared on the lake.

It was paved with pure white stones, and pillars that seemed to be made of the same material were built on all sides.

The vibe it was giving was very similar to the temple where the great magic beast had been sealed. But what mattered the most was the people on top of it.

We saw Weena Rhyn standing on top of that stage. Romio and Zelos Reed were also there together with her.

Well, it was not like they were there 'together with her' though...

Romio and Zelos Reed were lying on an altar-like place set up in the center of the stage. It was obviously a place for a sacrifice.

Was she really going to sacrifice Romio and Zelos Reed to re-seal that magic beast?

「Urushi! Get over there!」

「Woof!」

As Fran instructed, Urushi descended to the stage. But I wondered if it was already too late for us to do something.

There was dense magic power swirling around the area, and it was clear to me that some kind of ritual was in progress.

「Weena Rhyn!」

「...Fran. So, you came」

「What are you trying to do?」

「I'm in the middle of the sealing ritual. Please don't interrupt me」

After a closer look, Romio and Zelos Reed's limbs seemed to be bound by water shackles, forcing them to remain in place.

Fran's eyes then narrowed sharply.

「What are you going to do to Romio and Zelos Reed!?!」

「These two will serve as the foundation for the seal」

「...So, you mean they're a sacrifice!?!」

「Yes」

「!!」

She admitted it so casually!

But Weena Rhyn didn't seem to feel any guilt. She nodded as if it was a matter of course.

「Fran, this is something that I need to do」

「But——」

「You don't have to worry about us」

Fran's words were interrupted by none other than the restrained Zelos Reed. Romio seemed to be asleep, but Zelos Reed was conscious.

「...What do you mean?」

「I'm the only one who's gonna die and Romio will live. Right?」

「Yes. The Sacrament of the Evil God skill is sealed inside Romio. So, if he can bear the entire burden, Romio's life can be spared」

「Something like that. That's why you don't have to worry」

So, would Zelos Reed be the one to die instead of Romio? Was that what they meant?

「But if Zelos Reed dies, isn't Romio going to die too?」

「I've already severed their contract. But once a connection is made, it's not gonna be easily erased. By using that connection, it is possible to channel the burden that should normally go to Romio into Zelos Reed」

To be honest, I thought that might be the better choice. However, there was someone who objected to that.

「...Is there any way that neither Romio nor Zelos Reed dies?」

「Ara? You want to save Zelos Reed too?」

「...I've made a promise. After their contract is severed, I will take Romio to the orphanage in exchange for Zelos Reed's life. In other words, his life is mine」

「So what?」

「I'm not going to let him die on his own. Besides——」

「Besides?」

「I'd feel sorry for Romio if he woke up and found that Zelos Reed was gone... Me too, if Master was gone when I woke up, I'd be sad too」

Fran tried to compare herself with Romio.

「Hmm? Does that mean you're not going to listen to me then?」

Weena Rhyn muttered that while releasing a terrifying amount of magic power. She may be trying to intimidate us, but this killing power alone would be enough to kill an ordinary person.

A cold sweat broke out on Fran's forehead as she was hit by Weena Rhyn's murderous intent. However, she never turned her eyes away from Weena Rhyn at all.

「I'll ask you one more time. Is there another way to do this so that Romio and Zelos Reed don't have to die?」

# Chapter 625

Rhyn's Wish

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「I'll ask you one more time. Is there any other way that Romio and Zelos Reed don't have to die?」

「There's none」

Weena Rhyn responded to Fran's question almost immediately with an intimidating air. I guess this was what it felt like to be in over your head.

『Fran... She's lying』

(She's lying?)

『Yeah』

In other words, there was a way to do it without having to sacrifice Romio and Zelos Reed.

「...Liar」

「I'm not lying」

『I knew it, she was really lying』

Her words “I'm not lying” were a lie too.

「Tell me the way that Romio and Zelos Reed don't have to die!」

「...There's none」

「Liar」

「...Tsk」

Seeing Fran's convinced expression, she must have understood that her lie had been seen through. Weena Rhyn then sharply narrowed her eyes.

The intimidation radiating from her body increased. It could already be called a kind of bloodthirstiness now.

「I said I don't have any other way. That doesn't convince you?」

「Nn」

「...Haah」

She was clearly irritated. However, she still seemed to have enough sense not to try to get rid of Fran all of a sudden.

Well, maybe she just couldn't attack us because she was in the middle of a ritual?

The killing intent that Weena Rhyn unleashed was so devastating that it was a wonder why she hadn't made a move.

So, this was Weena Rhyn, huh? No, this must be the real Weena Rhyn.

Weena Rhyn then opens her mouth again in an annoyed tone.

「Then what's the difference between killing another person?」

「What do you mean?」

「Let's say there was such a way where we could handle the situation without killing Romio and Zelos Reed. But what would you do if it requires

another person to be the sacrifice?」

「Who?」

「I'm just saying」

「That is——」

「You don't have to worry about the sacrifice though」

Just as Fran was about to open her mouth. As if to interrupt her words, we could hear a girl's voice behind us.

「...Eh?」

Weena Rhyn looked behind Fran with a look of astonishment. Her expression changed drastically from frustration to astonishment.

「...R-Rhyn...?」

Weena Rhyn muttered in a faint voice. Yes, the identity of the voice that had interrupted us was Rhyn, the spirit girl with beautiful odd eyes.

「You look a little different?」

「I've become a spirit, and my form is just a mere shadow of my former self... I guess you could say that this is my true form」

Fran was right, Rhyn's figure that was floating on the ground was quite different. If it hadn't been for the same voice and eye color, I might not have recognized her instantly.

Rhyn's current appearance was quite slender and thin, with her long ears, her appearance reflected the characteristics of an elf and she looked just like Weena Rhyn.

「I'm glad you survived from that. Fran」

I wondered whether she was talking out of her mind, but I didn't sense any sarcasm or malice in her words. She seemed to be happy for Fran's safety from the bottom of her heart.

「Long time no see, Weena」

「Yeah. It has been hundreds of years...」

「Even if you leave it alone, the great magic beast will surely resurrect. Even if I and the Rhyn in you are attracted to each other, it doesn't matter anymore」

That reminded me, if Weena Rhyn ever got too close to the lake, the great magic beast would be revitalized and the seal would loosen.

I guess that must be why Rhyn couldn't see Weena Rhyn before. But since the resurrection was already inevitable, did that mean there was no point in not seeing her anymore?

But their expressions were in direct contrast. Weena Rhyn looked like she was about to cry but what she felt inside was definitely joy.

But Rhyn was expressionless. Moreover, there was no sign of joy on her face. Rather, she looked disappointed.

About what though? Besides, I didn't understand what she was saying earlier.

「Hey. What do you mean by saying we don't have to worry about the sacrifice?」

「Fufu. Because I was the one who's going to get sacrificed」

「Eh?」

Rhyn walked past Fran, who was tilting her head and stepped quickly in front of Weena Rhyn.



「Weena Rhyn... You are going to reseal the great magic beast, aren't you」

「Yes. Now, we can use the Sacrament of the Evil God to reseal it」

「...Yeah. Maybe we can reseal it with that」

「Right?」

「But you know that, don't you? That I don't wish for it」

Immediately after Rhyn said that Weena Rhyn looked as if she was about to cry.

「...What's your purpose, Rhyn!? What do you want to do by resurrecting the great magic beast!?!」

「Well you see, I want to be 'saved'. That's why I don't want it to be resealed」

「Why do you want something like that!?!」

I thought that she was unhappy about being sealed and was planning to resurrect it. After all, Rhyn and the great magic beast were connected, and she had broken the seal herself.

But apparently, her motives were not something that we had expected.

「I want you to liberate me」

She didn't want to be freed, but to be liberated?

「Weena Rhyn... I know you can do that」

「...」

Weena Rhyn's response to Rhyn's words was silence. However, the red blood that flowed from between her tightly clenched fists proved the emotions that swirled within her.

「Weena Rhyn——」

「I won't! Why must I do that!」

「I beg of you」

「I won't! I won't do that! I will never forgive you if you were to disappear!」

Weena Rhyn looked just like a spoiled child as she exclaimed that.

# Chapter 626

The Unimaginable Number of Wishes

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Weena Rhyn, if it's the current you now, you should be able to defeat that great magic beast that has been incompletely resurrected」

「I won't do that!」

「No matter how many times it is sealed, there is no telling when someone will plan to resurrect it like this time. It must be defeated here and now」

「I won't!」

Just like a child, Weena Rhyn covered her face with her hands and shook her head in disapproval. Seeing her like that, Rhyn seemed to have decided to change her approach

「I, too, want to be liberated... I'm tired of being sealed at the bottom of that dark lake」

「No! I said I won't!」

「Weena Rhyn...」

「Why would you say something like that!?!... I've been trying so hard for us to be together again, as Weena, and Rhyn!」

Weena Rhyn, who was now acting as if she had become a child, screamed with lots of tears streaming down her face. Well, maybe meeting with Rhyn, her twin sister, had returned her emotions to those of a child.

「I don't care about the people of this country! I don't care what happens to them! I just want to get you back!」

「That's not possible」

「Don't say it's not possible! I've been preparing for the day when I can separate Rhyn from that magic beast! I've also opened the Academy, which is one of Rhyn's dreams! I've also set up an environment to make it easy for spirits to move around the academy in case you're still in your spirit form! I'm even donating to an orphanage like Rhyn used to do, and protected the country to get them to recognize Rhyn!」

Fran backed away slightly at her cry, which even showed a glimpse of madness. Her tail was wagging from side to side and her ears flattened. It seemed that she was under a lot of pressure.

「Weena Rhyn...」

Rhyn's face contorted in sadness. I guess it couldn't be helped.

As far as I could tell, Weena Rhyn had dedicated her life to Rhyn. Everything she had done was for Rhyn. It might not be an exaggeration to say that even the kindness she had shown to others was for Rhyn's sake.

But the one Rhyn said she wanted to be liberated from was actually Weena Rhyn.

「I just... want to be together with Rhyn again...」

「If you only separated me from that great magic beast, it would only regain its full strength. If that happens, it could even destroy the whole world」

「Like I care! I don't want a world without you in it...」

This was bad. I could see Weena Rhyn's expression getting more and more negative, it was already as if she was talking without thinking at all. No, her suppressed emotions might have made her lose her self-control already.

「Separate her...? Maybe I can still do it now...? If I use the Sacrament of the Evil God, I might be able to rip off the power of the Evil God...? Can I bring Rhyn back with that...? I don't care what would happen to the world...」

Weena Rhyn's thoughts seemed to have been overwhelmed by negativity.

Seeing her like that, Rhyn's shoulders slumped sadly.

「Actually, I wished for Weena Rhyn to defeat the great magic beast without using the Sacrament of the Evil God...」

「...!」

Responding sensitively to Rhyn's murmur, Weena Rhyn shook her head multiple times, biting her lip so hard that it even bled.

「For now, let's start with the biggest problem, shall we?」

「The biggest problem?」

Fran muttered puzzled. There were too many problems, to begin with, and I was not even sure which one Rhyn was talking about.

「Do you know that we could use the Sacrament of the Evil God in many ways? Whether it's used to defeat or seal that great magic beast」

「But...」

「Do you really think we have to sacrifice Romio or Zelos Reed to achieve that?」

「Yes」

「Then we'll need their help. Come here」

Rhyn waved her hand lightly to the side, and a black light swirled next to her. From the looks of it, it resembled a dimension gate.

Immediately after, a figure came out of it. Fran then gave a small shout of joy when she saw the figure.

「Sierra! So, you're safe」

「Yeah, somehow」

Sierra and Zelos Reed stayed behind to stall Zelyse before, but it seemed that they were almost killed by his powerful magic stone weapon.

But then Rhyn saved them.

Immediately after being entangled in the tentacles that dragged them into the water, his teleport skill seemed to have allowed them to escape to a small island somewhere in the lake.

「I've just been resting there...」

So Rhyn summoned them and now they were here.

「Now I know that Sierra and Zelos Reed were safe. But why did you call them here?」

「Because this is their wish. Besides, it also serves my purpose」

What they wished for? Wasn't Sierra and Zelos Reed's goal to get revenge on Zelyse?

「Weena Rhyn. That ritual, we'll join in it」

「Huh? Who are you?」

Weena Rhyn didn't know about Sierra? No, they lived in different towns. It wouldn't be strange if they didn't know each other, wouldn't it?

「E-Ranked adventurer, Sierra. But my real name is Romio, and this sword is my partner. This is Zelos Reed that has become an Intelligence Weapon」

「...Eh?」

It seemed that even Weena Rhyn could not immediately understand the meaning of his words. Surprisingly, Weena Rhyn didn't seem to know anything about Romio and Zelyse from that timeline.

Then, Rhyn gave a brief explanation to her. Weena Rhyn looked at him with suspicion, but she must have decided to believe them because of Rhyn's words.

「I-Is that so...? Certainly, they do look alike」

The shock of witnessing an existence that had crossed time seemed to have calmed her mind. She seemed to have slightly snapped out of her negative thoughts.

A rational light then returned to Weena Rhyn's eyes.

She looked at Romio and Sierra, comparing their faces.

「Now I understand. Then, Romio that has grown up, what do you want?」

「I won't let that Romio or Zelos Reed get killed by the Sacrament of Evil God. That's what I want」

Sierra declared while looking at his other self.

「Y-you're Romio, you said..!?!」

「Yup, it's me oji-chan」

「Ha, hahah... am I dreaming...?」

「The one carrying the burden of using the Sacrament of the Evil God will die. Then why don't you also channel that burden to me and this sword?」

「I see! Now that we have two Romios, though I don't know if I should call them that——and Zelos Reed and Zelos Reed in his sword form」

「Yes. The effect of the Sacraments of the Evil God will be doubled but the burden will be shared between me, that Zelos Reed, and this sword Zelos Reed」

In other words, no one would die even after using the Sacrament of the Evil God.

Note: I'm sorry for the late update, I am sick, very, I just confirmed to got TBC, and need to be on medication for six month, but I can still TL, of course at a slower speed than ever, tenken will continue, at a slower speed. I also need to finish my bachelor degree first this year, wish me all the best on my health and study.



# Chapter 627

A Glimpse of Hope

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「I see. If we could do that, maybe no one would have to die」

Weena Rhyn muttered to herself.

「But that doesn't change the fact that it's dangerous. Just because you won't die, that doesn't mean you won't lose most of your powers」

「I'm prepared for that. I'm not going to abandon Romio and Uncle Zelos Reed. I'll definitely save them」

Sierra seemed to have understood that from the beginning. Their main goal now also seemed to have changed to saving Romio and Zelos Reed, hasn't it?

「But if you want to save them, why don't you make her stop the ritual then?」

「...If the fully resurrected great magic beast is left unchecked, those on this continent will be annihilated. That's how bad that thing is. If that's the case, it's better to take the better chance of survival at all costs」

This was the second time Sierra had seen that great magic beast. He understood the horror of it. He even said that the continent would be

destroyed if it was left unchecked.

In fact, Sierra's face was pale as he said that. He must have remembered the great demon beast and his fear of it.

That must be why they were willing to use the Sacrament of the Evil God to seal the great magic beast. Even if it meant putting themselves in danger to do so.

But was this a good thing from Rhyn's perspective?

Fran was trying to stop Weena Rhyn because she had been told that Romio and Zelos Reed were going to die.

But with Sierra joining them, the danger of death had been eliminated. In other words, there was no longer a reason for Fran to stop the ritual.

To be honest, I could understand Weena Rhyn, who didn't want to endanger her other half, Rhyn, and Rhyn, who wanted to free herself from it, and Weena Rhyn by being killed.

However, if we killed Rhyn, we would only be in a hostile situation with Weena Rhyn.

But when asked whether I wanted to take that risk and side with Rhyn... I'd probably stay on Weena Rhyn's side.

Rhyn seemed to understand that as well. So, she brought Sierra with her, but she looked somewhat troubled.

「It would have been better if they don't have to play a role in this though...」

I see. So, they were treated as insurance, huh? But as long as Weena Rhyn was determined to kill that great magic beast, we should be fine.

However, if she failed to persuade her, she would let her seal the great magic beast. But in that case, Sierra and Zelos Reed were necessary to use the Sacrament of the Evil God.

「Weena Rhyn...」

「...No matter how many times you ask me, I won't...」

The tension between Weena Rhyn and Rhyn, which should have been on the verge of settling down, began to rise again.

As far as I was concerned, the two of them were on the opposite sides and would never be able to agree as long as Weena Rhyn, who was taking the initiative, didn't give in.

And with the madness we just witnessed, I couldn't imagine a future where she snapped.

But of all people, it was Fran who stepped in.

Even though she was sandwiched in the middle of the intimidation emitted by the superior beings, she boldly asked a question.

「Hey. Is there really no way to make both of your wishes come true?」

「That's impossible. I want to be liberated. But Weena Rhyn——」

「I definitely am not going to let Rhyn be killed. One day, I'll bring Rhyn back to life, and I'll return to being just Weena」

「That's it」

Fran snapped her fingers at Rhyn and tilted her head.

「The reason why Rhyn wants to be liberated is because of Weena Rhyn, right?」

「That's right. I've been watching over Weena Rhyn through the spirits. But I can't stand to see her push herself so hard for my sake. Besides, there's something wrong with Weena Rhyn these days」

「Something is, wrong with me?」

「Yeah. But you know. Thanks to Master, I now know why. Regardless of how close we were as twins; it was a wonder how long two minds in one body could stay sane」

Oh! I thought Weena Rhyn's mental state was weird just because of her encounter with Rhyn... But actually, the fact that Weena's and Rhyn's consciousnesses were mixed was beginning to overwhelm her!

Wasn't that quite dangerous then? If Weena Rhyn went crazy and went on a rampage, the whole country would easily get destroyed. In terms of threat level, I'm sure she would get a threat level of A or higher.

「If I, the core of that magic beast, were to be destroyed, Weena Rhyn would be able to return to Weena. And not only Weena but many people will be saved too」

It would also bring Weena Rhyn back to her senses. Was that why Rhyn insisted on dying?

「In other words, if Rhyn returns to her original form and is freed from Weena, she doesn't have to be killed」

「But like I said, If I was separated from the great magic beast, it will regain its power」

「Can't we just do something about it with the Sacrament of the Evil God?」

I was impressed by Fran's words. She was right. Why didn't we just use the Sacrament of the Evil God to suppress its powers and separate Rhyn from it?

The current, incompletely resurrected, and weakened great magic beast could be defeated by Weena Rhyn, right? Then why didn't we use the Sacrament of the Evil God to weaken it further rather than letting Rhyn sacrifice herself?

But Weena Rhyn and Rhyn shook their heads in unison.

「We can weaken it. But we don't have any way to defeat it」

「Weena Rhyn can't defeat it?」

「I am the only one who can perform the ritual to weaken the great magic beast using the Sacrament of the Evil God. However, performing that ritual alone requires a lot of power. I won't have enough strength left to defeat it at that time」

「Can Rhyn do it in her place then?」

「I'm sorry. This body of mine is just a temporary one. I can use my inherent powers of Time and Water to some extent, but I can't do much more than that」

「I see...」

I guess things wouldn't work out that conveniently.

「If only that magic beast had been a little weaker...」

「What do you mean?」

「If only the magic beast's power was weaker, there's a chance I could defeat it with what's left of my strength after the ritual」

「Does that mean I can just damage it and weaken it?」

「That's not possible. You wouldn't be able to get closer to that magic beast」

Weena Rhyn muttered sadly.

We couldn't get closer to it? I could understand if it had a very thick barrier or its counterattacks were powerful, but what did she mean we wouldn't be able to even get closer to it?

Then they briefly explained it to us.

「You may not know it, but the Evil God has the power to control and drive all living beings mad. Unless you're a spirit like me, it's hard to resist it」

「Weak people would go crazy at the mere act of getting close to it. And the piece of the Evil God that lies within that great magic beast is the Evil God's throat. The voice it releases has a strong curse-like power」

Weena Rhyn said while pointing at the great magic beast.

「At this distance, don't you think it's strange that we can't hear the voice of the great magic beast? Even though we're still in the sealing ritual, we should at least be able to hear it, right?」

Now that she mentioned it, she was right.

「This stage is protected with a barrier to block out the voice of that great magic beast」

I see. I thought it was because of the distance, but it was actually because of the barrier that surrounded this stage.

「Even I can't get any closer to that great magic beast than necessary, as it could take control over me too. Although I can defeat it with a single shot, I can't weaken it by attacking it over and over again」

So, you're saying that if the attack can't bring it down, we would only be dominated by the magic beast? Therefore, we had to unleash one big attack that could instantly defeat it.

However, after hearing what she just said, Fran and I had some newfound hope.

『Control of the Evil God, huh...?』

「If it's Master, you should be fine, right?」

『Yeah, you're right』

Fenrir once told me. As someone from Earth, my soul was immune to the control of the Evil Gods.

『The only problem is, what would happen to my wielder, Fran...? Do you know something, Announcer-san?』

《A sword and its wielder are inseparable. So, it's possible for Fran, the wielder, to negate the Evil God's control》

『What about Urushi?』

《Urushi's soul connection with Master has been confirmed. Urushi is also capable of negating the Evil God's control》

『Alright! I guess that means we can fight together, right?』

《Yes. No problem》

Sankyu, Announcer-san. You are so reliable!

『Fran, Urushi. You heard her too, right?』

(Nn! We can save Romio, Weena Rhyn, and Rhyn. And while we're at it, we can save Zelos Reed too!)

(Woof!)

# Chapter 628

Our Strategy to Defeat the Great Magic Beast

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「We'll be the one to make the great magic beast weaker」

「Woof!」

「That way, after Weena Rhyn separates Rhyn from the great magic beast with the Sacrament of the Evil God, she will be able to defeat it, right?」

Weena Rhyn looked at Fran, who suddenly said that she was going to attack the great magic beast with a dumbfounded look.

Rhyn looked at us with the same look too. As expected of twins. Although Rhyn was much younger in appearance, they looked exactly alike when they had similar expressions.

Well, I guess that was why Rhyn had changed her appearance. Even if she was just acting like a mysterious girl, if she looked exactly like Weena Rhyn, it would only cause some kind of commotion.

「Were you listening to me and Rhyn? You can't get close to that great magic beast. These beings aren't so careless that a single strike would be enough to take care of it」

「We'll be fine」



「That thing was not something that can be handle with just your willpower alone, you know?」

「Urushi and I are immune to the Evil God's control」

「Eh?」

「Huh?」

「We can negate the Evil God's control, so we'll be fine」

「...Eeh?」

「B-but that shouldn't be possible...」

Hearing Fran's words, they both looked at Fran with a puzzled look. Sierra was as surprised as they were too.

「...You're not lying, are you?」

「...I've never even heard of such an ability」

「But it's the truth」

Even though Fran insisted, they didn't seem to believe her. They were clearly doubting her.

「To be honest, I don't know what should I do if Fran went out of control because of it...」

「But if Fran really can weaken the great magic beast... It may be possible to separate Rhyn from it」

「Just leave it to me」

In the end, no matter how much Fran argued, Weena Rhyn and Rhyn still doubted her. Well, it must be hard for them to believe that it was possible to negate the control of the Evil God.

If someone was strong enough, they might be able to repel the control, but that didn't mean that they could completely negate it. They could only resist it.

Even if it was evil, a God is still a God. There was no such thing as an existence that could deny their power. That seemed to be what their common sense was telling them.

「...I'm coming with you too」

「Sierra? But what about the ritual?」

「We'll return to the ritual once we've inflicted some damage to the great magic beast」

「But first, aren't you forgetting about the Evil God's control? As I said before, if you don't have a spiritual body like mine, you'll end up being controlled. Well, Fran was an exception though」

「You believe me?」

「I can't sense any lies from you... And my intuition tells me that we should let you do it」

「Intuition?」

「I am a spirit that rules over Time, you know? So, it can't be just a hunch」

It seemed that not only was she able to see the future, she also had some kind of power to predict the better options.

「And that intuition is telling me that Sierra will be okay too...」

「In my case, it was thanks to this sword. Thanks to uncle Zelos Reed that was sealed in this magic sword, I can now prevent the control of the Evil God from corrupting me」

Since Zelos Reed was an evil person, did that make him resistant to the Evil God's control? But wouldn't an evil person be more vulnerable to the Evil God's control?

「Uncle Zelos Reed had a skill called Cannibalism. It allowed him to absorb the power of the Evil God」

I see. So, it was thanks to that skill, huh? That skill seemed to have a much wider range of use than I had imagined. Maybe I should do some research on it later.

「Then Urushi, Sierra, and I will be the ones to attack the Evil God」

「Wait! Even if you use the Sacrament of the Evil God, that doesn't mean you can just resume the ritual so easily, you know?」

「Is that so?」

「It's only natural, right?」

Well, certainly, it was only natural.

But we would be grateful if Sierra could help us. He may be inferior to Fran in terms of combat power, but he knows more about Evil Spirits than we do.

So, we discussed what was the best way to attack it, and we all decided to cooperate.

Weena Rhyn and Rhyn also exchanged a few words to each other, though this time without much tension.

「Okay, let's wrap it up. First, I will initiate the ritual of the Sacrament of the Evil God. But I need Sierra, Romio, and both of Zelos Reeds to be here after you have launched your attack」

「Nn」

「Then Fran will start attacking, and Sierra will join in the attack once the ritual activation is complete」

「Leave it to me」

It seemed that even when the Sacrament of the Evil God was activated, its effects were not instantaneous. In the first place, the Sacrament of the Evil God was the ability to absorb power from evil and use it as the user's power.

In the same way, we could also give orders to the weakened evil being.

But this time, our goal was to deprive the Evil Spirit of the piece of the Evil God that was dormant within the great magic beast and channel the Evil Spirit that would normally flow into Romio to Sierra and the two Zelos Reeds.

In other words, not only Sierra and the sword Zelos Reed, but Zelos Reed could also join the attack.

「The outcome will depend on how well you guys do it」

「If you guys manage to weaken that magic beast's power, I'll be the one to defeat it after I manage to separate Rhyn from it」

「But if you can't, Weena Rhyn won't separate me from it and she'll reseal it with her sealing technique」

If all goes well, then everyone's wishes would come true.

Even if we failed, we could at least try to get it sealed. But to be honest, it would just be a solution to postpone the problem though.

But it was much better than allowing the great magic beast from getting fully resurrected.

However, Fran didn't seem to have any intention of ending it that way.

「I promise, I'll make sure we all end up with a smile on our faces」

# Chapter 629

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Okay, I'll be going」

「Be careful!」

It showed how good of a person Rhyn was when she told us to be careful instead of telling us to do our best. Well, she was a spirit though.

But if Fran didn't push herself to shave off the great magic beast's power, Rhyn's wishes would not come true. But it seemed that Rhyn was more worried about Fran's safety.

But it was effective on someone like Fran though.

「Nn. I'll do my best」

「Your opponent was a legendary, albeit imperfectly resurrected magic beast, you know? Don't push yourself too hard」

「Nn」

The expression on Fran's face as she nodded back at Rhyn was so full of motivation that it was hard to tell that she was not gonna be reckless.

『Fran, your safety comes first, you know?』

(I understand)

『But your expression wasn't that of someone who understands though』

But still, she looked to be overly motivated over this. I wondered if there was something that caused her to be like this?

(This is the first time I ever fought with a piece of the Evil God)

『Yeah, certainly』

(It was an opponent that I might have to fight eventually to lift the curse of the Black Cat kin. It's a good chance to know how strong they are)

Fran's ultimate goal was to lift the curse placed on the entire Black Cat kin due to Divine Punishment.

To do so, the Black Cat kin must use their own power to defeat an evil person or an Evil God's kindred with a threat level of S. That would also mean defeating the pieces of the Evil God.

To put it bluntly, I think it was an unattainable goal without having more Black Cat kin that were stronger than the Fran. It would take decades to achieve. No, it might even take more than that, maybe even several generations.

But that didn't seem to be a reason for Fran to stop trying.

『They're not gonna be identical, you know?』

(I know)

『We don't even know if the other pieces of the Evil God are stronger or weaker...』

(But this gonna be a good chance to experience the power of an Evil God's piece)

She just smiled it off with a determined look on her face.

『You're right. Though this is a mixed being, I think this really is a good chance to experience its power first hand』

(Nn!)

「Oh right, take this...」

Rhyn produced some water and showered it on Fran. Immediately after, I could see that Fran's strength was starting to recover. It was not a full recovery, but it should have made things easier for her.

「It was healing water. It was the least that I can do for you」

「Thanks」

「Don't push yourself too hard until Sierra and the others join you, okay?」

「Nn. But if it has gotten this weak, you don't mind if we somehow managed to defeat it, right?」

Oi oi! That was one of the lines I've always wanted to say!

But wasn't that just gonna raise a death flag!?

(Master? What's wrong?)

『N-no, nothing. I was just impressed by Fran's motivation』

(Hmm?)

But if things were to get worse, I'll have to force her to escape!

Then, Fran got on Urushi and took off toward the great magic beast.

「Woof woof!」

With Urushi at full speed, the distance of about a kilometer could be covered in a blink of an eye.

『Don't get too close! We could already be in its range around here!』

「Woof!」

「Is it getting bigger?」

『Well, that's obvious』

Compared to when we first saw it, the body of the great magic beast had swollen several times over. It was still in the resurrection process, but I wondered how big it really was.

I could see that the gray, purple, and red-black tentacles were intertwined like a gooey mess, and its huge lump of flesh was still continuing to swell.

『Fran, how are you feeling?』

「I'm fine」

That was what Fran said, but we had been through a lot of fierce fighting today. In addition, she even used the Sword God Transformation before, and she must be really exhausted.

I would really like for her to take a break, but there is no time for that.

『First, we'll fight mainly with our magic. And Fran, don't be reckless so focus on observing our opponent』

「...Okay」

Fran, who understood her condition, nodded reluctantly.

『Urushi, we'll count on you on evasion』

「Woof!」

「!! It's coming!」

『I knew it, it really could reach this far!?!』



A jet-black magic bullet was released from the top of the wriggling, huge mass of flesh. The magic bullets that were launched up into the sky came straight towards Fran. And there are countless of them. It was just like a barrage already.

『Urushi!』

「Woof woof!」

The power contained in each magic bullet seemed to be tremendous. And we could see a column of water nearly ten meters high on the surface of the lake where the magic bullets landed.

But its aim was clumsy.

This had given Urushi plenty of leeway to evade the barrage.

『It's my turn now! Let's see how it handles this! Kanna Kamui!』

I fired one shot. But it wasn't just a simple Kanna Kamui. What I released was a special technique designed for evil beings, with a convergence that increased its power and the power of the Evil Crusher.

It had the power to defeat the Minotaur General, a magic beast with a threat level of C that we had fought on the Plains of the Demon Wolf, with a single blow. The General was a defense-specialized type, and it managed to withstand a normal Kanna Kamui.

『Orra!』

The white lightning, clothed in the Divine Attribute, pierced through the countless tentacles and burst into the main body. Immediately after it landed, countless thunderbolts were discharged with a roar, and a blinding flash of lightning then covered the surroundings.

Although it wasn't able to penetrate its body, it did leave a large crater on its massive fleshy body.

『Tsk, I even used the Evil Crusher, but it still could regenerate itself』

「Is it because not all of it is part of the Evil God's piece?」

『Probably』

「...It doesn't get wounded?」

『Yeah, but its magic power seems to have become weaker now』

It really didn't do much to it.

「Should I join the attack too?」

『Not yet, I want to find out its weakness first. Don't push yourself too hard, Fran, just make a simple attack on it』

「Nn. Okay」

『Urushi, can you get us a little closer? Now I want to use my telekinetic catapult to attack directly it』

「Woof!」

『Alright! Let's go!』

# Chapter 630

ranslated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Master, let's go!」

『Ou!』

「Haa!」

Taking advantage of Urushi's movement force, Fran threw me at the great magic beast.

『Hyaaaah!』

With my telekinesis at full power, I charged forward in a straight line toward the great magic beast.

But tentacles as thin as a string were stretched out to intercept me. However, its strength was not as great as it looked.

With my momentum, I pierced through the encircling net of more than a hundred tentacles and plunged into the grotesque magic beast.

『Uwooo!』

「Ghyuoooooh!」

It roared at the moment I pierced it. But didn't it sound more annoyed than in pain? It seemed that it was only annoyed by my attack...

The crater is about the same size as my previous Kanna Kamui, and it doesn't seem to be taking much damage.

『So my Evil Crusher can only inflict this much damage huh?』

The piece of the Evil God in it was probably too small compared to its size, moreover, it was a high-ranking being too.

『Tsk! This is...!?!』

The gouged flesh began to regenerate at once. At this rate, I would get swallowed by the great magic beast's body. It was clearly aiming for me.

In other words, it possessed the intelligence and rationality to think of a strategy of this level.

『Kuh... I need to get out of here!』

Moreover, my durability value had been significantly reduced. It seemed that its body fluids had a corrosive or acidic effect.

When I escaped with my teleport, the hole I had made was already closing.

『Considering how big this thing is, a hole like this was probably just like a scratch, huh?』

Once again, I flew around the great magic beast to see what it looked like.

It was still growing. Tentacles still intertwined here and there, and from up here, it just looked like a lump of flesh. It had no head, hands, legs, tail, or wings.

Well, let's just call it a massive grotesque purple, dark red, and grey tentacled monster...

「Ghu... Ghughoooh...!」

『Hmm?』

There was some kind of strange noise coming from the great magic beast.

Was that this thing's howl?

I don't even know where the mouth is, but it sure sounds like a howl.

「Ghughaa... Ghughyagoooh!」

『Uwaah! Gross!』

I was at the top of the lump of flesh when something strange appeared. As I watched from the sky, I could see tentacles wriggling violently beneath me, and then something sprang out from it.

『A mouth?』

「Ghugyoghoooh!」

A mouth appeared as it moved through the tentacles. Could it be the mouth of the great magic beast?

『It sounded just like a person though...』

It didn't seem to have beast-like fangs, and although it was huge, it was not deformed. It had reddish-black gums and white square teeth that lined the gums. In fact, the shape of its mouth was very similar to that of a human's.

It was strangely deformed in contrast to its body.

「Ghogooaaah... Oobeey meee!」

『Huh?』

「Oobeey mee!」

It talked!

Its voice was loud and deafening as if it was speaking through a broken loudspeaker, but it was definitely talking.

「Obeeeey meeee!」

I wonder if I could call it a spirit of voices. There seemed to be an Evil Spirit in its voice. I see now, those who heard it will surely get controlled by it.

(TLN: Spirit of Voices (言霊 kotodama) refers to the Japanese belief that mystical powers dwell in words)

But it didn't work on me.

Perhaps it would normally take a great deal of effort for anyone to repel or reject the control.

But honestly, I didn't feel like I had done anything. After all, I didn't feel like I was about to be controlled at all. It was just a loud voice for me.

「Obey, me!」

『Well, sorry!』

「Obey, me!」

『Just sit there and scream that for the rest of your life!』

「Obey, me!」

Is that all you could say!?

『Just shut up already! But I was grateful that you've shown me a big, visible weakness!』

「Obey, me!」

It really only seemed to be able to speak in high-pitched tones. Was that what they called it in place of a squeal?

「Obey,——」

『Eat this!』

I unleashed my Kanna Kamui at the mouth of the great magic beast, which had repeated the same words over and over like a broken speaker.

A white thunderbolt was then swallowed by its open mouth.

「Obeehygyaaaah!」

『Oh, it works better than before...?』

The magic power of the great magic beast seemed to have decreased since my first Kanna Kamui, but...

The great magic beast seemed to be still making some movements. I decided to go back to Fran for the time being.

『Fran, its voice doesn't affect you, right?』

「Nn. It's just so noisy」

「Woof!」

Alright, it seemed both Fran and Urushi were perfectly unaffected by the Evil God's control, they both just had their ears flattened and were frowning from hearing it.

# Chapter 631

ranslated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

I was able to confirm that the Evil God's control didn't affect us. Well, the extremely loud voice of the great magic beast was still annoying though, but it was not unbearable.

『We have tried attacking at one focused point and its inside. Next, let's try attacking its whole body』

「Whole body?」

『We'll use magic that can cover its whole body. Fran could also help me a little』

「Okay」

『Then, let's do it!』

We then unleashed Ekato Keraunos, a level 9 Thunderbolt Magic on top of the great magic beast.

「Haaa!」

『Orraa!』

Hundreds of lightning bolts then rained down on top of the great magic beast thanks to the high-level Thunderbolt Magic that was activated simultaneously. The way the electric current charged through its entire body and sparked was nothing short of spectacular.



The great magic beast's entire body then flickered as it continued to emit intense light. Not only that, but the thunderbolt also flowed through its body into the lake, causing a wide area to be caught up in the flashing thunderbolt.

「Obebbeey—!」

『We're not done yet!』

The lightning that was imbued with my Evil Crusher seemed to be working. With that in mind, I continued to rain down 10 more barrages of Thunderbolt Magic to the great magic beast. The total number of thunderbolts that had struck the great magic beast must have exceeded a thousand now.

Then the great magic beast writhed wildly as it received my barrage of thunderbolts.

But just after I thought its whole body had shrunk slightly——

「Obey mee—!」

The mass of flesh that had shrunken slightly, quickly swelled at once, and a storm of magic power raged through the air.

『What the hell! It used brute force to break out of my attack!』

The great magic beast blew away my magic from its body by releasing a torrent of magic power from its entire body.

The amount of magic power that was released from its body was also tremendous.

We could've been obliterated if we got caught up in that storm of magic power. As I've thought, it seemed that this great magic beast was really out of the norm.

『Tsk. It doesn't seem to take much damage from that attack』

「It only got a slight burn...」

『Yeah... It only affected its body's surface』

However, it could regenerate any wound on its body's surface in no time. And the magic power possessed by the great magic beast had not diminished much.

『It seems that we should use one powerful attack instead of a lot of smaller ones』

「I see」

「Woof」

But Fran then raised her hand after I told her that.

「I want to try something」

『You want to try something? I don't want you to do anything too reckless though...』

「Don't worry」

『...Well, okay』

「Nn! Thank you, Master!」

Her earnest-looking eyes made it hard for me to stop her. But it wouldn't hurt to let her give it a shot.

『Then? What do you want to try?』

「Nn. Cut it!」

Her answer was simple, but it was worth a try. I've tried ramming it with my telekinetic catapult before, but that was the only physical attack I'd tried so far.

「Master need to help me too」

『Ou!』

「Urushi, you too」

「Woof!」

『I see, so you want to use that, huh?』

「Nn!」

During her training on the Plains of the Demon Wolf, Fran had developed a special technique not only with me but also with Urushi.

The technique was so insane that even I couldn't keep my mouth shut when I saw them practicing. Well, I didn't have a mouth though!

I'd tried to stop them from practicing it many times already, but I stopped myself from doing so after seeing Fran and Urushi so happy despite being in tatters.

But thanks to that, they were able to perfect that special technique... They managed to perfect their coordination after several serious injuries that should have caused permanent damage to any normal person.

『I'll leave the timing to you. I'll concentrate on strengthening and defense』

「Okay」

「Woof!」

Fran and Urushi then begin to ascend to the sky at once. Our altitude must have exceeded a thousand meters already by now.

「Brilliant Lightning Rush—— Let's do this, Urushi!」

「Woof!」

At Fran's shout, Urushi began to ascend further. Fran stayed where she was and reinforced herself.

「Wooo—f!」

Immediately after, Urushi charged straight towards Fran. Using his skills, his speed now was much faster than his ascending speed. And as if he was trying to crush Fran with his huge body, Urushi rushed towards her without slowing down at all.

Then he aimed his paw at Fran and even activated his claw attack technique on it.

But Fran didn't move her body to dodge him at all.

「Rrhaaaaa!」

「Whooof!」

And instead of evading the attack, Fran turned her back on Urushi.

As if to intercept Urushi's paw, she put both her feet together and stuck them out behind her.

If the direction had been reversed, it might have looked like Fran was standing with her knees bent over Urushi's paw pads.

But this time, Urushi was trying to swing down his paw from above, while Fran's body was facing downward.

However, this was the way to do that technique.

In her usual Sheaths of Wind technique, she would use the momentum of the aerial jumps to gain initial speed, but this time, she used the momentum of Urushi's attack to gain speed.

Using Urushi's power, Fran was launched straight at the magic beast at once. It was as if she had used the telekinetic catapult.

And it was no coincidence. After all, they were really using my telekinetic catapult as a reference.

「Haaa!」

The full power of Urushi's strengthened skills, which were enhanced by my strengthening on her, as well as her martial arts skills, was transformed into propulsive force, and Fran descended towards the great magic beast with the speed of that of a meteor.

With Urushi's assistance, combined with Fran's acceleration skills, it was now difficult for anyone to even follow her speed with their own eyes.

Black lightning fluttered in the wake of Fran's descent.

The distance between us and the great magic beast, which used to be 1000 meters apart, was reduced in an instant.

「——Heaven Judgement!」

「Obeey——」

I couldn't feel my blade slicing through its flesh. It was probably because her attack was too sharp and too fast. The resistance I felt from slicing it was no different than slicing through a body of water.

I, the one who was slashing through it, didn't even recognize what had happened.

When I became aware of it, the body of a great demon beast had been ripped in half from the top.

『Teleport!』

Still, I knew what I had to do next. I activated the short-range teleport that I had prepared to get away from the beast.

# Chapter 632

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

Immediately after striking the Great Magic Beast with that slash, we teleported a little farther away from the Great Magic Beast.

「Ugh...」

『Fran! Use your regeneration skill!』

Fran had not been directly attacked by the Great Magic Beast. However, her body was full of wounds.

「Khoff...」

She spat out blood mixed with the contents of her stomach. The degree of damage to her body from using that technique was frightening.

But of course, she would be like this.

She had been hit by Urushi's serious attack after all. Even though I had protected her with barriers on her legs and other parts of her body, and used magic and regeneration to reduce the damage, the impact must have been tremendous.

What was more, this time Fran also had accelerated herself with all her might.

The burden from using those techniques on her body must be enormous. Her internal organs, muscles, and bones were in tatters from not being able

to withstand the acceleration. Her legs in particular were in a bad shape. It was swollen from internal bleeding, broken bones, and torn muscles.

The most badly injured part of her body was her right arm, where her bone was visible through her broken elbow. Also, both of her eyes were dyed in red from broken capillaries and were bleeding incessantly.

I was amazed that she was still able to unleash the Heaven Judgement in such a state, and I was also amazed that she was still conscious after having taken the additional burden from using the Heaven Judgement.

「I was still in the midst of a fight after all... That's why...」

We were still in the midst of a fight, and that was why she tried her best not to lose her consciousness. I could understand that, but whether she could still fight or not was another matter.

What fearsome mental strength. I truly admired her from the bottom of my heart.

If I were in Fran's position. I'd be crying out in pain and agony right now. But in the first place, I would never come up with a technique like that...

『Good job, Fran! But I've told you not to be reckless though』

「But if I didn't do that much, my attacks wouldn't have inflicted much damage to it」

『Well, you're right...』

「However...」

『However?』

「I still couldn't defeat it」

She was really planning to defeat it on her own!?

However, as Fran muttered in frustration, we had not been able to defeat the Great Magic Beast.

From its mouth at the top, about half of its body was cut in half, revealing the inner parts of its body. However, near the bottom of its body, tentacles began growing out of the cut section and had begun to intertwine to rejoin the cut section.

It didn't seem to have any internal organs, just a small throat-like cavity under its mouth with a lump of meat at the end. I couldn't find its magic stones either

『Even after that, it seems that its life force hasn't decreased much』

「The Black Lightning God's Claw... I failed to activate it...」

『Well, it can't be helped in that situation』

In fact, I was surprised that that attack wasn't the only attack she planned to use. If Fran were able to add the Divine Attribute of the Black Lightning God's Claw on that attack, we might have really defeated the Great Magic Beast.

However, she failed to activate it in that instant and was still in extreme pain. It was inevitable that she failed to do so.

『But it seems that it lost quite a lot of magic power after that attack, you did rather well』

「Nn...」

『Besides, we're not done yet!』

When I attacked the inside of its mouth, the damage was obviously much worse. After all, a direct attack on the inside would be more effective.

『How about this...!』



Our thunderbolt magic didn't work very well against the Great Magic Beast. So, I decided to follow it up with another kind of magic.

I scattered more than a dozen of Flare Explosions and Light Explosions on the cut surface of the magic beast's wound, which had not been fully closed yet.

Red and white flashes of light and explosions then began to rumble.

「Ooobeey meee!」

『It didn't do much damage to it either, huh?』

It was not that the Great Magic Beast was particularly resistant to Thunderbolt Magic, but it seemed that magic itself didn't do much damage to it. It may have a magic resistance skill.

Due to the pieces of the Evil God in its body, my appraisal does not work on it and its abilities were displayed as unknown. What we do know so far was that it had unusually high regenerative power, was quite resistant to magic, and could control others.

One of its weaknesses was that its physical strength itself was not that high. I couldn't call that a weakness because of its regenerative ability though.

「Woof woof!」

「Urushi」

Urushi came back to us. However, he also seemed to be in pain. The backlash on both Fran and Urushi was tremendous. Naturally, Fran wasn't the only one who was injured.

It may have already been healed by his regeneration, but splatters of blood were still clinging to his face and shoulders.

His right foreleg, which was used to launch Fran, must have been unable to withstand the impact of launching her. It seemed that his leg was torn from the inside by the impact.

「Are you okay?」

「Woof!」

Fran asked while she patted Urushi's nose.

Then, I sensed a presence approaching us. But it was not an enemy.

「T-that is some serious damage... Were you really the one who did that...?」

「Oi oi, that was quite a flashy move」

Two people approached us. They were not enemies, but I honestly didn't want them to get any closer.

「We'll help you out from here」

「...Just order us to do anything」

The ones who came to us were Sierra and Zelos Reed who were clad in Evil Spirit that was far beyond even that of Murellia.

# Chapter 633

ranslated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「...Muh」

Fran frowned as she saw Sierra and Zelos Reed who had just arrived.

However, it was not because of any negative feelings towards Zelos Reed or Sierra. It was simply because she was subconsciously sickened by the evil presence that the two were radiating.

「It's still alive even after it received that much damage, huh...?」

Looking at the Great Magic Beast that still bore the wounds of Fran's slash, Sierra muttered with a grim face.

「...Did the Evil God's control not affect the both of you?」

「Yeah. I'm still fine」

「Me too」

It seemed that after using the Cannibalism Skill of the magic sword, Zelos Reed made him able to absorb the Evil Power of others and convert it into their own power.

The same went for the Zelos Reed of this timeline.

Thanks to that, they seemed to be able to negate the control of the Evil God, which was manifested through the medium of evil energy.

But I don't think that skill could be relied upon for a long time. After all, I don't know what might happen if they absorbed more evil energy than what they could handle.

However, it seemed that Sierra and Zelos Reed knew that themselves.

「We'll launch our attack now. Just being here will increase our power, but I don't think we can handle it for a long time」

「Me too」

「Okay」

We didn't know each other's moves, nor did we have deep trust in each other. Fran and the others exchanged a few words for a few seconds and eventually decided to attack independently.

I'm sure Sierra and Zelos Reed could work together, but I'm not sure if Fran could.

Besides, I wanted to watch how they fought.

『It seems that they'll go all out from the start. Let's drop a few gears and look for their weaknesses from a distance』

「Nn」

「Woof」

And as I'd expected, Sierra and Zelos Reed rushed towards the Great Magic Beast with their evil spirits in full force.

But then, a question came to mind... Would they attack it with their evil spirit? Would it work against an opponent who had taken in a piece of the Evil God?

Well, we won't know until they've tried it.

Sierra and Zelos Reed then begin their attack on the Great Magic Beast with an attack that was imbued with their evil spirits. A huge explosion then occurred, their attack managed to blow off countless tentacles into the air.

It seemed that since it was so specialized in its ability to control its opponent, its physical body was not that of a normal creature.

I also tried to unleash my magic from a distance too. I tried all the attributes I had, such as Earth and Water Magic, but the Great Magic Beast didn't seem to be weak against any of them.

If it wasn't weak against any attribute, does it have any weak point on any part of its body?

I wondered if it even had any vital points at all...

Leaving the attacking parts to Sierra and Zelos Reed, I continued to observe the Great Magic Beast, cut off its tentacles that tried to reach us, and sometimes I used short-distance teleport to avoid them.

I also observed the flow and concentration of the Great Magic Beast's magic power. Was there any principle behind its regeneration ability? What about when it launched an attack?

『Hmm?』

「Something's wrong?」

『Yeah...』

I felt a subtle sense of discomfort. However, neither Fran nor I could detect its origin.

『So in the end, we'll just have to cut it down by force, huh...?』

「That's easy to understand」

『Well, but...』

I didn't miss the fact that Fran's movements were getting slower. Physically and mentally, she must have accumulated exhaustion that she wasn't even aware of.

『Fran. Try to regain some strength for now. We're gonna use it for one final attack later』

「Okay」

As I was pondering where to strike while repelling its tentacles, Fran and Urushi suddenly reacted to something.

They looked up slightly to the sky with a surprised expression on their face.

What they saw were Sierra and Zelos Reed who were about 100 meters above us in the sky.

And the reason why Fran and Urushi were so surprised was probably because of the sudden increase in the amount of evil that the two were releasing. They seemed to be planning to unleash some kind of big attack.

『Let's get away from here』

「Nn」

「Woof」

In front of us, Sierra and Zelos Reed seemed to be getting ready to unleash an attack. They formed a line with Zelos Reed in front and Sierra at the back. Both of them seemed to be concentrating their evil spirits on themselves.

I didn't know if this was going to help them, but we unleashed some flashy magic to draw the attention of the Great Magic Beast to us.

Then as I watched, Sierra and Zelos Reed seemed to have completed their preparations.

『That was... an Evil Spear?』

「And what Zelos Reed created was... rings?」

What Sierra had created was a cone-shaped spear of evil spirit. It was a mass of compressed evil energy. I guess he was going to use it to launch an attack

But what the hell is that thing that Zelos Reed created? As Fran said, he had created three black rings that were slightly larger in diameter than the evil spear that Sierra had created.

『Anyway, let's prepare a barrier』

「Nn!」

I don't know what kind of attack they were going to make, but I'm sure it was going to be quite powerful. We then further distanced ourselves and put our barrier at full power.

Immediately after that, Sierra made his move.

「Eat this!」

At the same time that Sierra swung down his right hand, the evil spear was shot out with great force, it was as if it had been thrown by an invisible hand.

From our point of view, the speed was a bit of a disappointment though. But was hitting the Great Magic Beast with the evil spirits more important than its speed for them?

But that didn't seem to be the case.

Zelos Reed then lined the three rings that he had created in the line of fire of the Evil Spirit Spear. And each time the Evil Spirit Spear passed through one of the rings, the Evil Spirit Spear seemed to grow faster.

It seemed that by controlling the flow of evil power on the rings, he was able to accelerate the Evil Spirit Spear that Sierra released at once. I see now, interfering with evil spirits by using evil spirits. This was an attack

that only the duo of Sierra and Zelos Reed, who could handle powerful evil spirits, could do.

「So fast!」

The evil spear, which had reached the speed of my telekinetic catapult, penetrated the head of the Great Magic Beast while destroying also its tentacles that were trying to intercept it.

Booom!

『Uwooh?』

Shock waves and strong evil spirits blew even to where we were. I could see the surface of the lake shaking violently as a tidal wave like a tsunami was generated. What a fierce explosion. The compressed evil spirits must have been released all at once.

The Great Magic Beast that took a direct hit from Sierra and Zelos Reed's combination technique then had an excessively large hole gouged out of its body. The wound was also much larger than my Kanna Kamui.

However——

『——That didn't do much damage either, huh?』

The wound has then begun to regenerate immediately. I was getting fed up with the Great Magic Beast that could immediately regenerate no matter how much we attacked it.

But even in the midst of all this, we finally see a slight glimmer of hope.

『Its regeneration has begun, but... It's a little slower now?』

「Nn!」

The regeneration rate was slightly slower than when we first attacked it. I wonder if this was the result of our continued attacks on it? Or was it because of Sierra and Zelos Reed's attack?



Anyway, if we could find out why, we might be able to overcome the situation.

# Chapter 634

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

『That hole, it's regenerating at a slower rate than before』

The large hole was created by Sierra and Zelos Reed's attack. And of course, it had started to regenerate at a steady rate, but it was obviously closing up much slower than when we first had attacked it.

Had it taken so much damage that it even affected its regeneration power?

There was also the possibility that it was because of the effect of the Sacrament of the Evil God.

I could also see that its evil spirit flowed out of the Great Magic Beast into Sierra and Zelos Reed at a fairly high rate. With so much power being sucked out of it, it was no surprise that it started to affect the Great Magic Beast.

Just when Fran was about to call out to Sierra and Zelos Reed, we heard a voice called out to us.

「Looks like you're having a hard time here」

「Rhyn?」

It was Rhyn, the spirit, that suddenly appeared before us.

『Did you come to support us?』

「Yes. I was hoping I could be of some help」

『Hey, does that thing has any weaknesses?』

「Well, yes it has」

『What? For real?』

「Really?」

Rhyn nodded casually at my question. Both Fran and I then couldn't help but question her back.

『Could it be, you know where its magic stone is? After all, we can defeat it if we can destroy its magic stone』

「Well, of course, it has a magic stone, but it's still under the seal for now」

According to Rhyn, the current Great Magic Beast was only a fraction of its true size. To put it in human terms, the current magic beast was only the size of an arm.

Naturally, the magic stone and the other parts of its body are still under the seal.

「What's its weakness then?」

「It was not really its weakness, but...」

As she said so, Rhyn pointed to a spot a little farther away from the hole that was made by Sierra and Zelos Reed's attack.

「Look over there」

「Where?」

『...Aah! That small wound!?』

「It's such a small wound, but it heals so slowly, doesn't it? And look at the tentacle that was there」

I then looked at the tentacle near the area of that small wound. I see now, some of the tentacles have not begun to regenerate and are still in tatters. There were so many of them that I hadn't noticed until now.

「Tentacles around the wound still has some magic power in it that is similar to Life Magic」

「Life Magic...?」

Fran muttered and patted Urushi on the back. Urushi reacted to it and looked back at Fran on her back.

Yes, the tentacles were indeed indistinguishable, but the small wound on its body was definitely the marks of Urushi's bite.

『I see now! It must be the effect of his Regeneration Inhibition skill!』

I had never pay much attention to this skill before, so I was completely unaware of it, but Urushi had a skill that could inhibit an opponent's regeneration.

And apparently, it worked well against the Great Magic Beast.

「It's not much of a weakness, but that tremendous regeneration power is ultimately due to skill. So, any magic or ability that could block it will work. Urushi should be able to do damage to it more efficiently」

The slow regeneration of the wound meant that the Great Magic Beast would take more magic and evil energy than ever before to close the wound.

I think Rhyn was trying to tell us to involve Urushi more in our attack. Even though his single attack power was inferior to Fran's, if he kept attacking it we could expect the Great Magic Beast to take a lot of damage later.

Under normal circumstances, it was the most efficient way to go.

Well, under normal circumstances, that was.

『Fran, there's got to be a technique in the Life Magic system to block others healing ability』

Urushi lost one of his eyes for a while because of it. But that was also probably why the evolved Urushi got the regeneration inhibition skill though...

(Should we use Master's points?)

『Are you sure?』

(Nn!)

I still have a few self-evolution points. Moreover, I already possessed Life Magic.

After discussing it with Fran, I decided to put my points into Life Magic.

『However, I don't know at what level I'll learn that technique. Hmm... Well, let's just raise it one level at a time then...』

《That magic can be learned at Life Magic Lv.5》

『Ooh! Really!?』

《Yes. The Life Magic, Heal Disturb. It is possible to temporarily inhibit the opponent's ability to heal and regenerate when they are wounded by the user's weapon or body》

『Bingo!』

I followed Announcer-san's advice and raised my Life Magic to Lv.5.

『Alright! I learned it!』

Life Magic, Heal Disturb. It was just as Announcer-san said. First, we needed to put this technique on our weapon or body, then the effect would take effect when we attacked our opponent, and it would hinder our opponent's ability to heal or regenerate their wounds for a while.

But in the Great Magic Beast's case, it seemed that its body was too big to exert this skill effect on its entire body. Also, in Sierra and Zelos Reed's case, it seemed that evil spirits originally had properties that inhibit regeneration. As expected of an enemy of all living things.

『Anyway, I've learned another good techniques now』

In fact, I was more than satisfied with this one.

Life Magic wasn't just magic that interfered with one's ability to recover. But it was a line of techniques that affected the physical bodies of all living things.

There were techniques to increase one's recovery speed of physical abnormalities, techniques to strengthen one's muscles and nerves, and there were also techniques to make one's body more robust and increase one's physical strength.

At first, I didn't understand what it meant, so I asked Announcer-san, but a technique to increase physical strength was exactly what Fran needed right now.

「What technique did you learn?」

『This technique is amazing. After all, by increasing one's physical strength, it reduces the backlash of using other techniques and skills!』

In other words, it was magic for people like Fran now, who suffer from severe injuries every time she used a technique. With this, not only the backlash of the Brilliant Light Rush but also the damage caused by the burden of using Heaven Judgement and Sheaths of Wind would be greatly reduced.

Well, we won't know until we try it.

Anyway, Fran was not going to stop even if I told her to. It was regrettable, but the time to use it would come soon. If possible, I didn't want her to be reckless for the time being...

# Chapter 635

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

『Let's try the recovery inhibition skill, the Heal Disturb first』

「Nn!」

Fran nodded lightly in response to my words and called out to Urushi.

「Urushi!」

「Woof!」

『W-wa-wait! Could it be, are you going to do that thing again?』

What I mean by “that thing” was Fran and Urushi’s combination attack. We didn’t have a name for That yet, so I called it “That” for now.

「Nn. We have that Life Magic now. We’ll surely take it down now!」

『Well, I was still a bit reluctant to immediately combine it with That attack though』

We still didn’t know how well either of these techniques would work after all. She was way too scary for her own good!

「Nn...」

『Let’s try That after we’ve tried a few things first, okay?』



「Okay. And Master, it's not “That”. I've thought of a name for it」

『Hou? What did you call That?』

That was unusual. Fran rarely cared about those kinds of things after all. Wasn't this the first time she'd come up with something like that on her own?

「Nn. Sirius Sky Wolf——」

『Stoo-p! No! Not that!』

「Why?」

『Well, he certainly needs to accelerate from the sky though!』

Because that name was bad because of a lot of things!

「Then, Cutting fang of Sirius'——」

『No~pe! Not that too!』

Huh? Did I ever tell her about that manga before?

(TLN: Reference to Ginga Densetsu series manga. Trivia: Sirius, a star in the constellation of Canis Major also known as the Dog Star)

「Why?」

『A-anyway, we can't just use that name for it. Someone already used it after all』

「Muh... We can't use a name that is already being used by someone?」

『Of course, right?』

「I have three more names in mind」

『Hohou?』

That's quite a lot. I'd love to hear all of it.

『What's the first one?』

「Hyper Special Excellent Miracle Slash」

『Rejected!』

「?? That's no good too?」

『Well... I was hoping for something unique if possible』

It reminded me that Fran was just a kid, that name was cute, but...

I don't want Fran to be made fun of for the name of her technique in the future. I mean, using Hyper... Miracle... Aah~ what was it again?

《Hyper Special Excellent Miracle Slash》

『A-announcer-san! Just forget that!』

Anyway, that name was rejected!

「Okay, then, the second one」

『O-ou!』

「Super Urushi Attack」

『...I-I see...』

Wasn't it better than before? Or was it just because the last one was so bad that it seemed better? This was bad, I wasn't sure anymore.

『I-I'd like to hear the last one』

「Nn! The Wolf-Style Sword Drawing Technique」

『O-ooh! That's a good one!』

I mean, I didn't have any other choice! Well, I'd settle for the last one.

『Wolf-Style Sword Drawing Technique sounds good to me』

「Really? Super Urushi Attack is much cooler though」

「Woof!」

Fran, Urushi, stop looking at me with those sparkly eyes! It only made it hard for me to deny it!

『L-let's just use Wolf-Style Sword Drawing Technique for that! Okay?』

Later, as a result of my desperate persuasion, the combined technique of Fran and Urushi was named the Wolf-Style Sword Drawing Technique.

『Well, just leave this to me now』

「Nn」

Fran took me in her other hand and prepared to shoot me out. We'd have to try it from a distance first instead of suddenly attacking with everything we got.

With that in mind, my telekinetic catapult would surely become quite useful. Normally, one would have to apply Heal Disturb to a weapon or something to make a direct attack. But Fran had me, so we could attack from a distance.

「Go!」

『Hiyaahaa!』

We then once again used the telekinetic catapult to attack it. But this time, on top of my Evil Crusher, I also used my newly acquired Life Magic. However, there seemed to be a miscalculation on my part.

『Hmm... I forgot that I was not a living thing...』

The techniques that accelerated recovery and strengthened one's body wouldn't work for me. I was just a sword after all...

It was a little disappointing because I thought that the Strong Body technique might reduce the backlash of using telekinetic catapults and the like.

『Well, the important thing is that the Heal Disturb is working fine, so whatever』

I also used my Magic Release and other methods to drastically increase my speed. Then, after pushing through the numerous tentacles, I once again stabbed into the body of the great magic beast.

Just like before, a large crater was then created because of it. The damage was not as great as I'd expected, but...

『I'm gonna tear you up even more!』

I activated my form transformation as I thrust myself into the center of the crater that had opened up in the Great Magic Beast's body.

I did not transform myself into a steel thread this time. After all, no matter how weak its physical body was, it was not strong enough to pierce the great magic beast's body.

I transformed into something a little thicker than that, I transformed my blade into something like a needle. My blade then branched out into nearly a hundred pieces and a dozen meters long needle, laying waste to the body of the great magic beast.

This still wouldn't be much of a wound for the Great Magic Beast, but I'd have to shave off the Great Magic Beast's power as much as I could.

『Well then... How's the result?』

I returned to Fran with teleport and observed the Great Magic Beast from a distance.

The hole I made was visibly slow to regenerate. It was probably less than a hundredth of the regeneration speed of the other wounds.

『Alright! It's working!』

「Nn! It doesn't seem to regenerate at all!」

「Woof!」

# Chapter 636

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「It seems you've learned the Life Magic, haven't you? But you didn't seem to have used all of it though...」

Rhyn looked at me in surprise when she saw me come back to Fran. Then she suddenly nodded with a satisfied look on her face.

「Oh, so it was Sword-san's ability」

『Eh? No, how to put this...』

「Aah sorry, I just looked at the past, that's how I know it」

『...』

「Don't worry, I won't tell anyone」

It seemed that being able to see the past didn't just mean that she could understand the past, it also meant that she could see what happened just a moment ago.

『A-anyway, next time we'll get serious!』

「Nn!」

『Shaving its power little by little will only tire us out. So, let's put all our strength into this one last attack』

「Okay!」

As we were discussing our next attack, the Great Magic Beast then suddenly emitted a particularly powerful magic power from its body.

「Oobeeeyy Meee!」

『It's moving... and its magic power is...』

「It seems to be swelling even more...」

There was a clear change in the movements of the Great Magic Beast. Until now, the tentacles had been intertwined and were continuing to grow, but as soon as they stopped moving for a moment, they began to violently thrash around.

It wasn't just the physical and magical aspects of the Great Magic Beast that had changed.

「Is it watching us?」

『Yeah...』

I don't know where this thing's eye was. It may not even have eyeballs, and it may only sense us through magic or life detection, but its awareness was definitely on us now.

Until now, I doubt it even knew we were here. We were probably just like small flies before.

But now, it seemed that the Great Magic Beast had clearly recognized us as an enemy.

「It's sucking the magic power out of the water...」

『Water? Do you mean the lake water?』

「Yes. And unfortunately, the Great Magic Beast also has my power as a spirit in it, that must be why it can do that」

Rhyn was a Spirit of Time and Water. And the water of Lake Vivian contained the magic power of the Space-Time attribute.

It seemed that the Great Magic Beast was taking advantage of Rhyn's power to absorb magic power out of the lake water.

『But wait, you know how the water in this lake contains space-time magic...?』

「It was because of me and the great magic beast」

『Well, that explains why it has such a high affinity!』

The swelling of the great magic beast's tentacles increased in intensity, and gradually changes began to appear all over its body. Masses that looked like bumps began to appear all over the great magic beast's body.

The huge masses then swelled up and grew in number. I could sense that each of them possessed a considerable amount of magical power and evil spirits.

Was it preparing some kind of attack? If so, this could be quite dangerous then!

Facing the increasing pressure, I put up layers of barriers to protect Fran. But my prediction was wrong.

It was clear that the great magic beast had recognized us as an enemy to be defeated, but it had not yet taken any direct action.

「Obeey Meee!」

『Kuh...!』

「!!」

The magic power of the great magic beast, which had been slowly increasing, increased several times in an instant. I even involuntarily teleported us backward and distanced ourselves from the great magic beast.



It was just such an explosive release of magic power and hostility. I could feel it was releasing its strong malice and hostility towards us.

It scared me. It wasn't just fear of losing Fran. I was afraid of being that close to the great magic beast myself.

『Urushi, come over here too!』

「Woof!」

「...It has lots of mouths」

『Yeah...』

It was just as Fran said.

The great magic beast's appearance had changed drastically and mouths had sprouted all over its body. The bumps of mass had now been transformed into the shape of a mouth. It was almost similar in shape to that of a human mouth.

It was only about a tenth the size of the first huge mouth that grew on the top of its body, but it looked exactly the same.

It was probably more than a hundred by now.

It was just like the image of Tata ○, the goddess that has numerous small mouths all over her body...

(TLN: I don't get what author-san is referencing with タタ○神)

「 「 「 「 「——Fire Arrow」 」 」 」 」 」

「Master!」

『Yeah!』

Just as the multiple overlapping chants echoed in our surroundings, a large number of fire arrows filled the space around the Great Magic Beast.

Over a thousand fire arrows are directly pointed at us, Sierra and Zelos Reed.

Immediately after, our field of vision turned crimson. The continuous sound of explosions then continued to echo without a pause.

If it hadn't been for my multiple activations of Flame Barrier, both Fran and I would have been burned to a crisp.

The Fire Arrows, which had been activated by the great magic beast, were all fired at Fran and the others at once.

No, it wasn't just any multiple activations. It used an overwhelming amount of magic as if hundreds of magic users had unleashed their magic at the same time. It seemed that each mouth on the body of the great magic beast was capable of chanting magic.

『The control over its magic is... seems to be fine...』

We are dealing with a great, extraordinary magic beast after all. It probably has magic control power that was far beyond our imagination. As for its magic power, it seemed to be almost inexhaustible. At the very least, as long as there was water in the lake around it, it doesn't have to worry about its magic power even if it repeats that kind of attack 1000 more times.

「Muh!」

『Dammit! It even used a magic bullet and its tentacles...!』

「More incoming!」

『I know!』

It launched another barrage of Fire Arrows. And just like before, it also aimed magic bullets and its tentacles at us.

Up until a moment ago, the Great Magic Beast seemed to have given top priority to its resurrection and hadn't been paying much attention to us. The

tentacles and magic bullets were probably not a clear attack on us, but an unconscious defensive action. Just like a cow swatting a fly with its tail.

In other words, it could also send out its tentacles alongside its magic attack at us.

『If we don't attack it now, we'll only be crushed by the sheer volume of its attacks!』

# Chapter 637

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「 「 「 「 「——Water Arrow」 」 」 」 」 」

『It used water magic now...!』

Unlike Fire Arrow, which was accompanied by an explosion, this one had an inferior range of attack. But instead, it had excellent penetrating power, so the physical power of the water arrow was superior.

Moreover, the number of water arrows it created greatly exceeded the number of fire arrows it created earlier.

There seemed to be over 2,000 of them.

This was probably also a matter of affinity. Thanks to Rhyn's power within it, it was only natural that Water Magic would be a better suit for the Great Magic Beast since it had high affinities for Time and Water Attributes.

But if that was the case, I wondered why it used Fire Arrows on its first attack... I'm not sure if it simply used that without thought, or if it was prioritizing control over numbers.

If it was the latter, this was gonna be quite annoying. It would mean that it had the intelligence to use different attributes depending on the situation.

I knew this magic beast wasn't stupid, but maybe it could be capable of thinking several levels higher than I had anticipated.

(Master, what should we do?)

『We'll need to get together with Sierra and Zelos Reed and turn to attack it at once』

(Nn)

While evading the water magic with Dimension Shifts and Short Jumps, we discussed our plans for our next move.

Now that the opponent was aggressively attacking us, we couldn't afford to use the wait-and-see approach. The longer we waited, the more of a disadvantage we would be in.

As I thought, this magic beast seemed to really have high intelligence.

It shot out water arrows at regular intervals and it seemed to have calculated each shot so that they wouldn't collide with each other. That was an impossible feat for a magic beast that acted on instinct alone.

The barrage of water arrows coming at us still hadn't stopped yet.

It was as if the barrage of the countless arrows that were being shot at us would never come to an end.

A wide area of the surface of the lake then raged violently because of the stray arrows, and high waves kept forming up.

The Great Magic Beast kept launching its tentacles and magic bullets at us, leaving no safe place within a radius of 500 meters of the magic beast.

『And its current size is just still the size of its arm!?!』

It was also being weakened by the Sacrament of the Evil God, right!?

『What about Sierra and Zelos Reed...!? They seem to be safe』

I checked on the safety of Sierra and Zelos Reed after the barrage had stopped.

They were far farther behind us. They must have managed to retreat to the outside of the barrage range in time.

But they did not come out unscathed.

Zelos Reed, in particular, was in a really bad state. The lower half of his body had been completely obliterated. There was also a large hole in his head, he would have died if he were not an Evil Person. And it seemed that his regeneration had begun to restore his body.

Sierra was also hurt quite badly, but it was a minor injury compared to Zelos Reed's.

「Oji-san! You don't have to cover for me...!」

「Kuh...Do-n't mind... it...」

「But!」

Zelos Reed seemed to have protected Sierra. Even though he had grown up, it seemed that Romio's affection towards Zelos Reed hadn't changed much.

Well, it was not like I didn't know how he felt. After all, If the grown-up Fran from the future was here in Romio's position, I'd probably do the same too.

『Let's get some distance! We'll fall back until we're close to Sierra and Zelos Reed!』

(Nn!)

Fran understood the danger of staying here. She immediately moved at my suggestion.

We immediately teleported out of the attack range of the Great Magic Beast.

「Sierra, you okay?」

「Yeah, how about you? You seem pretty worn out」

「I'm fine」

「I see... I think you already know this, but it seems that I can't continue shaving away its power any longer」

「Nn」

「But while we still have the power to unleash our full power attack, we'll attack it with our all-out attack」

It seemed Sierra and Zelos Reed had made the same decision as us to make one last attack on the Great Magic Beast.

「I'll serve as a decoy while you prepare yourself」

Zelos Reed, who had the highest recovery power, volunteered himself to become a decoy for us. This would reduce the amount of power he could allocate to his attacks, but he could leave that part to Sierra and Fran.

「And while I was at it——」

Just before Zelos Reed finished his words, something happened and he turned around with a startled expression on his face. And at the same time, Fran and Sierra also stared in the same direction as him.

《Magical power reaction inside the Great Magic Beast detected. It's rising rapidly. Recommending evasive actions》

『What!?!』

I quickly teleported after I heard Announcer-san's advice. Immediately afterward, an extremely thick ray of light passed by us as if to snatch us at the place where we had been before we teleported.

Even though we didn't get a direct hit, the aftermath alone was enough to scrape off part of our barrier.

And it was that Great Magic Beast that released that ray of magic power at us.

『So, it hasn't given up to attack us even after we're out of its magic range, huh!?!』

As I followed the line of fire of the light ray, I saw that it had landed on the surface of the lake far from here. With a tremendous boom, a huge column of water that seemed to be over 50 meters high was created.

『Oi oi... It even reached that far away...』

Fortunately, there were no ships in the vicinity. Well, they're most likely already evacuated after all. However, I felt that ray of light seemed to be able to reach even farther. It might even be able to reach the land tens of kilometers away from the center of the lake.

Depending on the angle from which the ray was emitted, there might even be significant collateral damage because of it.

《Second shot incoming》

『Tsk!』

「I'll—」

「Uoooh!」

Before Fran could make a move, Zelos Reed rushed at the Great Magic Beast. He held up a huge shield made of evil spirits and jumped into the line of fire of the rays himself.

The rays that the Great Magic Beast released and Zelos Reed's evil shield collided, creating an impact that was so strong that it was accompanied by a violent wind.

「Gghuaaah!」



Even though the evil shield prevented a direct hit, a tremendous amount of its heat was burning Zelos Reed's entire body. The surface of his body even turned red like a charcoal from the heat, and he was still regenerating only to get burned again.

Zelos Reed continued to block the rays of light while smoke billowed from his burned body.

「I'll take care of its attack! You guys! Just launch your attack on it!」

Zelos Reed turned only his head toward us and roared loudly. The look in his eyes was so sincere that it was hard to believe he was an Evil Person.

TLN: I've gotten better, so we (the team that TL/ED this series) decided to shorten the update rate from "a chapter per 3-4" days to "a chapter per 2 days".

# Chapter 638

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

What triggered people to change could be so trivial.

It did not require a dramatic incident to trigger it, but a trivial matter that could come suddenly. And before you know it, it has changed you.

For me, it all started with a request from an acquaintance.

It was a request from Murellia. A pitiful woman whose spirit has been corrupted by the Evil God. A woman whose only interest was Romio. And she was a beautiful woman.

I remember how shocked I was when I first saw her. It was the first time I had ever looked at a woman and thought she was beautiful. It was not because of lust. I was just fascinated by her beauty.

It was not about the beauty of her facial features. It was because of her fierceness, her twistedness, and her cold-heartedness. I was fascinated by the existence that had them all.

I was someone who was born, abandoned, and grew up on the battlefield.

When it comes to the battlefield, people tend to think that it was a place where people killed each other 24 hours a day from morning till night, but that was not the truth. It took days to advance, and both sides often retreated at night when they couldn't see the enemy well.

And a little further back from the front lines, the soldiers spent their days drinking and gambling. Merchants would come to sell goods, and prostitutes even come to sell themselves.

They were prostitutes who came all the way to the battlefield. They were not high-class prostitutes for nobles. On the contrary, they were all women with special needs who could not even afford to stay in the brothels in town.

And apparently, my mother was one of those prostitutes. Well, I'd never met her, so I could only assume that she was, given my circumstances.

I didn't know how it happened. But I was born on a battlefield and was sold off. It seems that I was bought by a mercenary corps of magic beast users.

The reason why the mercenary corps bought me was simple. It was to feed me to the magic beast. By daring to teach the magic beast to love the taste of human flesh, it would increase its will to fight on the battlefield.

However, the mercenary corps was destroyed before I was put into the magic beast's stomach, and I survived. I must have been two or three years old at that time.

I didn't know if they'd raised me to a certain extent before being sold or if the mercenaries just raised babies for a little while before being fed to their magic beast.

However, thanks to the fact that I was already able to move around on my own at that time, I didn't meet my worst possible end, which was to die of exhaustion while being abandoned.

I stripped clothes from dead bodies, sipped muddy water, ate the dead flesh of people and Evil People, and made the battlefield a place to live for a long time. My memories about my childhood were a little vague, and I had nothing to be proud of.

I was living like that of a beast until I was picked up by a mercenary corp. They picked me up——or perhaps I should say, they captured me. Anyway, the mercenary corps that picked me up belonged to a survivor of

the mercenary corps that bought me from my mother, and he taught me a lot of things.

It seems that the mercenary corps was planning to make up for the reduced number of soldiers with children. Instead of buying slaves, it would be cheaper to just pick them up. For that reason, I was given the name 「Zelos Reed」 and raised as a mercenary.

He taught me everything I needed to know to be a mercenary. He also taught me about my origins and the story of the previous mercenary corps. But in the end, that corps lost the war a few years later and was wiped out, including my caretakers.

After that, I continued to live on the battlefield, moving from place to place as a mercenary. I'd tried to live in towns but that was just suffocating.

Guards would come flying at the slightest disturbance. Money, money, and money were involved in everything. It was a place where everything was lukewarm and frustrating.

In that sense, the battlefield was the best place for me. I could kill as many people as I want, and I could always keep getting stronger. And above all, I felt alive being there.

And I also liked the simplicity of it. The strong were righteous. The dead were the losers. Winners took all, losers were robbed. There was no other place in the world that was so simple as the battlefield.

The reason why I accepted the old man Linford's invitation was because I heard that I could get stronger. I didn't care if he was an Evil Person or a wanted man. As long as there was a fight, that was all that matters.

I'd seen mercenaries who were addicted to gambling, but for me, all I wanted was just a battle.

The best liquor has never quenched my thirst more than the blood of my enemies. I even tried to hold a woman for fun, but it didn't give me any more excitement than slashing a strong enemy.

But for the first time in my life, I was moved by someone that did not belong to the battlefield, and that person was Murellia. I'm not going to say that I'm in love with her.

But that was the only time, ever, that my desire to talk to someone came first then my desire to fight a strong enemy.

When I actually had a conversation with her, I found out that she was really fucked up beyond my wildest imagination. Well, I guess I was crazy enough to think such a woman was beautiful.

And such a person tells her last request to me, and I'd make it happen. That was what I thought, and I took Romio with me, but...

「Oji-chan, who is that?」

「Oji-chan, what's that?」

「Oji-chan, run faster!」

「Oji-chan, are you okay?」

「Oji-chan——」

I'd never taken care of a kid before. It was so tedious and troublesome. He would sit down and say he was tired, and he would say he was in pain at the slightest thing. I was glad that he didn't start crying in front of me, but I was really troubled by the fact that he was strangely fond of me.

Why was that, you ask? Well, I certainly handled him very well for a man of my stature. But it was just because of Murellia's request, and I'd been asked to make sure the kid gets to safety.

But what was it about me that made him so fond of me? Was this kid crazy, too?

Still, I managed to continue my journey and even took him to an orphanage in Barbra, but... I didn't expect him to start screaming that he didn't want to leave me. I didn't understand why.

But what made even less sense was that I had decided to take care of Romio. What was I doing? I wonder.

But I just couldn't bring myself to leave Romio behind. I saw the kid's laughing face and found myself smiling bitterly.

At such times, I remembered Murellia for some reason. And I also remembered that Black Cat Kin old hag.

The eyes of those two people. They shouldn't look alike at all, but the eyes of the old hag who launched her attack at me, and the eyes of Murellia who asked me to save Romio, come and go in my mind. Those eyes, desperate yet clear as water.

I didn't understand why.

「Oji-chan, what's wrong?」

「It's nothing, just sleep already」

「Okay...」

Why I urged Romio to sleep already even while he had a fever? It was because we'd been spotted by that monstrous High Elf. If I leave Romio here and run away, I might be able to escape on my own.

But I couldn't do that. I just couldn't.

I, what the hell was wrong with me...?

「Uwooh?」

It seems that I was out of my mind for a moment. I think I was remembering something from the past, but I didn't really remember. Was it just a flashback?

Now, Sierra——or should I say, Romio's grown-up form was in front of me. It was hard to believe at first, but he looked just like Romio. So, I decided to protect Sierra as well.

It seems that Romio's special ability could affect and control Evil People, but...

「It doesn't matter...!」

I could tell all the reasons why I care about Romio if I wanted to. But all of it didn't matter.

Right now, I just had to protect Sierra. I had the power to protect him, and everything else was a trifling matter.

「UWOOOH! Hey, you big monster! I'm not dead yet! Come at me! Haaaaah!」

「Ooobeey Meeee!」

# Chapter 639

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

I could see the evil energy of Zelos Reed, which continued to receive the ray of light, rapidly diminishing.

He seems to be using more than what Romio could supply using the Sacrament of the Evil God.

The shards of evil energy that scattered as his shield of evil energy and the rays of light collided against each other gradually increased in intensity.

「Fran! Let's launch our attack in thirty seconds!」

「Okay!」

Shouted Sierra to her, he then closed his eyes and began to concentrate as if he was meditating. He was defenseless right now.

But he must have believed that Zelos Reed would protect him.

(We'll do the same)

『...It can't be helped』

We were past the point where I could tell her not to be reckless. However, the time for us to be reckless has come.

(Let's put all of our might in this attack)



『All of our might...?』

(Nn. All of it. Urushi)

(Woof!)

Fran and Urushi then soared high to the sky at full speed. We'd have to launch our attack in thirty seconds, so there was no time to hesitate.

It may seem like a short time, but that was the limit of what Zelos Reed could withstand its attack.

「Urushi, let's do that again!」

「Woof!」

Fran was going to do that Wolf-Style Sword Drawing Technique again. I wonder how much damage could be reduced by using our life magic now...

At Fran's words, Urushi barked happily. There was not a hint of reluctance in his voice. He must be truly happy to be of use to Fran.

(Master, can you use That?)

『Of course』

What she was asking me to use was the trump card that I'd acquired as a result of my training. Well, it was not so special that I could call it a "trump card" though.

It only increases my attack power for a short time by a few levels at the expense of my durability.

To put it simply, I'd put all my magic power into my sword body. That was all.

My current MP stats were over 10,000 now. My magic conductivity was also SS-. So, my efficiency of using magic would be increased by 340%.

In our current situation, If I used what was left of my current magic power——

《Master's base attack power will be over 35,000》

That was right. To put it bluntly, it was a superb attack power. Well, it also comes with a high risk.

After all, the burden would completely exceed the strength of my sword body. I tried it a lot in the Plains of the Demon Wolf, and it seemed that if I used more than 2000 magic power, various backlashes would appear.

At first, my durability would decrease on each swing, and as I increase the amount of magic power into my sword body, my durability value would begin to decrease even without doing anything.

Once it exceeded 10,000, the durability of my sword body would decrease at an unbelievable rate of 100 in 1 second. In addition, it was not uncommon for me to lose 1000 or 2000 durability value with just one light swing.

If the damage from using Heaven Judgement and Sword God Transformation were added to that, I would not even last a minute. No, even a dozen seconds might be dangerous for me.

Still, if Fran wanted to do it, I couldn't help but do it.

We were going to use Wolf-Style Sword Drawing Technique + my Magic Power Overload + Sword God Transformation. It was probably the most powerful attack we could unleash right now.

「Fuuuh」

「Grrrr」

Fran and Urushi then quietly kneaded their magic and made their preparations steadily. And of course, I did the same.

『I'm gonna need Announcer-san's support too』

《Understood》

『By the way, you're able to freely talk now?』

《With the increase in rank of the individual named Master, I have succeeded in recovering a small part for action》

I guess, in other words, Announcer-san's abilities were slightly restored as I leveled up.

《Synchronizing the timing of attack with the individual named Sierra. Countdown, 17, 16, 15——》

We could leave the count to Announcer-san. With this, our attack timing was gonna be perfect.

But at this late in our fight, I was wondering about something.

I wonder if I should use Potential Release.

I'd never had the experience of combining Magic Power Overload and Potential Release before. So, I was not sure if I should use it or not, but...

《11, 10——》

Now that I'd been shown the tremendous power of the Great Magic Beast, I was not going to spare any effort. I was going to attack it with all my might. But that didn't mean I was going to sacrifice myself in the process.

『Fran gonna be sad if that happens 』

《81% chance of dealing more than the predicted damage to the Great Magic Beast without using Potential Release》

『What if I use the Potential Release?』

《99% chance of dealing more than the predicted damage to the Great Magic Beast. However, the individual named Master will be left severely damaged, and his abilities will be severely reduced for the next 178 days》

『I see...』

《Also, 15% chance of the individual named Master going to be destroyed》

That was the worst-case scenario...

《7, 6——》

『I shouldn't use the Potential Release then...?』

《Yes. It is recommended to refrain from using it》

『Well, okay』

But it was just right after I had decided not to use my Potential Release.

「There seem to be a bit of disconnection in your magic line」

『Rhyn!』

It was Rhyn who suddenly appeared.

《4, 3——》

Rhyn then touched my sword body, then I could feel magic power flowing into me. I was grateful for the slightest bit of it now.

But right after that, an unexpected situation arises.

《Suggestion. It is now recommended to use the Potential Release》

『Huh?』

Said Announcer-san just before we launched our attack.

『Eh? What do you mean?』

Is it because of Rhyn? What has she done to me?

《Using it was the better choice for the individual named Master and the individual named Fran》

『Wha, why...』

《2, 1——》

I-it was the time! But aside from me, why was it the better choice for Fran? Anyway, we'd use it if Announcer-san said so!

『Aaaah! Potential Release—!』

《0》

「Woof!」

「Haaaa!」

Then, Fran turned into a shooting star again.

# Chapter 640

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Wooo—f!」

「Haaaaa—!」

Almost at the same time Fran was launched by Urushi's paw. I channeled all of my magic power into my sword body while leaving the bare minimum amount of magic power for our escape later.

I also used my Telekinesis and Magic Release to help Fran accelerate further while transforming my sword body into the shape of a katana. I also supported her with my newly learned Life Magic.

And thanks to our Potential Release, I could smoothly activate all of them at the same time.

The price of using it was high though...

『Guh...!』

My durability value has already been reduced by half.

(Master?)

『I'm fine! Just focus on your attack!』

(Nn!)

The world seems to be running in slow motion because of my Thought Acceleration, but Fran's rushing speed was incredibly fast. The surrounding scenery even flowed by us as if we're in a warp.

Fran then poised me above her head.

I will then activate the Sword God——

《Space-time fluctuation detected》

Said Announcer-san just before I used the technique.

『Huh——?』

(!)

Has time stopped?

No, that doesn't seem to be the case. It was only our perception that experienced a significant acceleration. Because of this, there was a delay that made our surroundings seem to stop.

But, why?

I was using space-time magic to help us accelerate to the very edge of our limit. But there was no way we'd suddenly accelerate even further without me noticing just because we're in a Potential Release state.

And it wasn't just a slight acceleration, but we got accelerated several hundred times faster.

(My body, won't move)

『Me too』

I searched for signs of our surroundings, trying to figure out what was going on. But I couldn't fully process the flood of information that was pouring in, and I was feeling something similar to a vertigo attack.

『Kuh...』

(What's wrong?)

『F-Fran, are you okay?』

(?)

I thought Fran was in an even worse state than me, but... Fran's telepathy tells me that she was just in shock.

Was she okay? It wouldn't be surprising that her brain was under a tremendous burden due to the multiple activations of magic.

「This was because I helped you」

『Rhyn! You're the one who did this!?!』

「Yeah, it was me, and Sword-san too——」

When Rhyn told me so, my vision suddenly went white. But at the same time, the torrent of information subsided. I see. I guess the reason why Fran was so calm was because she was in this state.

(Master, over there)

『Yeah, I see it... But isn't that, Fran?』

(Master is there too)

We saw our figures right in front of us. It was as if it was a three-dimensional image of us, projected onto the ground just a few feet away.

However, this Fran's outfit was a little different. It was similar to Fran's Black Heavenly Tiger equipment, but with pants instead of a skirt, and the details are quite different.

The most conspicuous feature was probably the earring in her left ear. Not like the earring of Fran over here, she wore an earring with a blue gem on



it.

Moreover, I could also feel her presence, so she shouldn't be an illusion.

Their presence was similar but yet slightly different.

If I felt her presence, I would definitely determine that it was Fran. But there was a slight difference when I compared the Fran who was holding me and the Fran who appeared in front of me.

Their difference was really slight, I could tell because I could compare them directly... She was Fran, but she was not the Fran I know.

And what the hell was that horrible evil spirit? Was it coming from me? But Fran was exposing herself to that evil spirit without a care in the world. On the contrary, she even seemed to be manipulating that evil spirit.

But I didn't have the time to worry about that right now.

『Fran! Are you okay!? Oi!』

That Fran's entire body was in a terrible state. She must have over-strengthened her body. Even though she was only standing there, she seemed to be continuously taking damage from the backlash.

I could hear the sound of bones creaking. The pressure of magic power flowing inside her must be causing intense pain all over her body. Blood tears flowed down her face as she clenched her teeth.

That Fran was in such a state while holding another me in her hand.

Why the other me didn't heal Fran!? Why was Fran in such a state!? And it seemed that she was planning to perform some kind of technique from that state.

She seems to be pointing the other me towards her opponent.

But in my eyes, all I could see was just her appearance in this white space. I couldn't tell what was going on around them.

She didn't respond to my call either, so I guess Fran and the other me on that side couldn't see us.

『Fran! Shit! Why, why my recovery magic won't work!』

As I was trying to use my recovery magic on her, that Fran suddenly began to make a move. And with a sad and somewhat desperate look on her face, she muttered quietly.

「Master, let's go」

『Okay』

Fran's voice and expression were so somber that it seemed as if someone close to her had died. But behind that expression, there must be an SOS from the girl that could not be expressed in words.

“Somebody, help me...”

I thought I could hear such a voice.

However, the words that came from her sword, which should be able to speak, were so emotionless that it gave me chills.

「Can I use Master in his Potential Release state?」

『I'm a sword. I have no right to judge. I'll follow Fran's decision』

「Master's thoughts, I want to hear it」

『If you use it, you will be able to defeat it for sure. However, the backlash will affect your future battles. In some cases, your life may be in danger. If you don't use it, you may or may not be able to defeat it. However, you can maintain your fighting ability』

「Not that, that's not what I meant. Let me hear which one you think is better, Master」

『I don't have the right to answer that question』

I felt like my head was going to boil with anger from hearing that.

What was that!?

Was that really me? No, I would never admit that that thing was really me.

What the hell are you doing!? Fran looks like she was about to cry, but she was still counting on you, you know?

Help her! Don't just answer her with something like that!

If it was me, I would answer with "You don't need that!", "I'll do something about it!", or "Let's use it and defeat it in an instant!", "Let's do this together!".

You're the one who needs to say something to Fran to take her mind off her worries! A simple "Don't worry" would do!

I couldn't help but shout at the Me over there.

『Oi! The idiot over there! You bastard! Why are you making Fran cry!? I'll never forgive you!』

# Chapter 641

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Fran, thank you for letting Romio and Zelos Reed off your hook this time」

「Rhyn...」

「You are such a sweet girl, aren't you? Even when you were angry, you subconsciously kept Romio out of this」

「Not really... It was just that that kid looks so pitiful」

「But thanks to you, I was able to put Romio, Zelos Reed, and Zelyse out of this. Besides, thanks to your permission, I was able to borrow Sword-san's help. Without It, the connection would not have been successful」

「Where did you send them?」

「Very far away」

「I see... But did we have to let Zelyse go too?」

「Yes. And it was for you guys' sake too」

「?」

Just like usual, it was hard to understand what this spirit, Rhyn, was saying. But I knew Rhyn was not an enemy. So, I did as Rhyn had asked me to do, and stopped myself from trying to kill Zelos Reed.

Romio and the others seemed to have teleported somewhere, but I wonder where they went?

「Fran, with this, there's no one around who might get involved in this anymore. So, you can get serious now」

「Get serious... Really?」

「Yes... Weena Rhyn was quite far away from here too. So, it's okay now」

「Nn... Okay」

I'd gotten stronger ever since that day when I lost to Murellia and had lost Urushi.

「Master, let's do our best」

『Okay』

「...Nn」

I wondered when had Master started acting strangely?

Was it at Barbra, when I defeated a lot of magic stone golems that Zelyse was controlling? Or was it around the time I won the martial arts tournament?

When we first came to the Beastman Country, I didn't think he was like he was now.

But then I noticed that he was getting less and less talkative to me. And he wouldn't speak unless I asked him first.

But that was not all.

No matter what I asked, he was indifferent.

『I'm just a sword』

『You think, Fran』

『If that's Fran's choice, I'll follow it』

His voice was no longer as gentle and reassuring as it used to be.

He sounded as if he wasn't a person.

I want to hear more of Master's voice. But I'm afraid to talk to him myself. Because he'd always answer "I'm Fran's sword, so I'll follow Fran's decision" with that cold voice again.

No matter how hard I pushed myself, Master would never praise me anymore. Even if he did, he would just say "Well done" in that cold voice again.

In town, a drunk man made fun of me and I got a little violent and was involved in a fight. But at that time, Master warned me "You've gone too far, Fran".

It was only a little, but I think it was Master's old voice.

If I became a bad kid, would Master let me hear his old voice again like before? I thought so, but that was only at the beginning. Soon, he stopped saying anything.

That was when I saw him again.

Zelos Reed, the one who had killed Kiara.

I had never forgotten about him, but I'd never chased after him. After all, Kiara had told me not to seek revenge.

But then he showed up right in front of me. And with a child with him.

Both Zelos Reed and Romio seemed to be very calm. They seemed to have been through a lot, and even now they were being held captive.

But they looked so happy.

Did I ever have a smile like that on my face?

Somehow, looking at them made me frustrated.

「Hey, Master. Why am I feeling something like this?」

『I don't understand. Was there anything that caused you to be stressed?』

「I don't know...」

『You have no idea why you're stressed?』

「I don't know! I don't know why!」

『Then, I don't know why either』

Somehow, I just didn't care anymore. Anyway, I'd kill Zelos Reed. But as I was thinking that, Rhyn stopped me.

Moreover, Rhyn asked me to lend her our help because she really needed Master's Dimensional Magic to save Romio and Zelos Reed. Rhyn had saved my life once before. So, I couldn't refuse her request.

But why were we helping Zelos Reed?

I couldn't keep my head organized and it was all messed up. I even had a hard time controlling my frustration.

“Let's vent out all my frustration by attacking the Great Magic Beast,” I thought.

And she told me I could go serious this time.

The last time I got serious was when I was on the Plains of the Demon Wolf, I broke a barrier that the Goddess had made, and she got mad at me. But this was a lake many times wider than the Plains of the Demon Wolf. Even if we went all out this time, nothing would get caught in our range.

Let's do this!

「...Release the pieces of the Evil God's power...」

『Destroy everything! Destroy——』

「Shut up, all you have to do is give me your power」

Following my words, a large amount of Evil Spirits then overflowed from the piece of the Evil God sealed inside Master to me. Before, I couldn't control this Evil Spirit well and went out of control, but now I could control it perfectly.

I didn't want to admit it, but it was the same power that Murellia had used. I hated it so much when I got this power that it made me want to throw up, but now I'm going to use it.

「...Soul of the Night Sky activated」

This was the unique skill of the Dark Knight Wolf. It was a power we inherited from the magic stone that Urushi, who died protecting me from Murellia's attack, entrusted to us at the end of his life. It was a skill that could enhance one's status only during the night like now.

「Master, activate all the other strengthening skills」

『Okay』

There used to be an onee-san with a kind voice called “Announcer-san” who used to give me a lot of advice, but she had disappeared, saying something about the Evil control.

I could feel my body screaming as I applied too much strengthening on top of each other.

I keep thinking that I might die. I never thought about it before Master became like what he was now, but I get a little scared about the thought of it now.

But I also thought that I didn't mind if I die. So, I'd just do what I always did.



「Master, don't mind using recovery magic, just put everything into strengthening」

『Okay』

I continue to talk while holding the pain in my body.

「Can I use Master in his Potential Release state?」

『I'm a sword. I have no right to judge. I'll follow Fran's decision』

「Master's thought, I want to hear it」

『If you use it, you will be able to defeat it for sure. However, the backlash will affect your future battles. In some cases, your life may be in danger. If you don't use it, you may or may not be able to defeat it. However, you can maintain your fighting ability』

「Not that, that's not what I meant. Let me hear which one you think is better, Master」

『I don't have the right to answer that question』

Just as I was about to get disappointed with Master's usual answer.

『Oi! The idiot over there! You bastard! Why are you making Fran cry!? I'll never forgive you!』

For a moment, I thought I heard Master's old gentle voice.

# Chapter 642

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

『Fran! Are you okay!?!』

I heard that gentle voice again...

Was it not my imagination? But from where?

I couldn't feel any sign of him.

Just as I was looking around for the source of that voice, Rhyn reappeared in front of me again.

「Fran. You have a tough battle waiting for you in the future. This is not a fate; it is inevitable for you now. But in your current state, you'll probably lose your life」

「Rhyn?」

「So, this is a gift from me——or should I say, from us. It may be small, but please accept it」

It was right after Rhyn had said that and opened her hands.

The surrounding area turned completely white.

「Huh, Rhyn?」

There, I saw another Rhyn. But just as I was thinking about what was going on, another figure suddenly appeared next to that Rhyn.

What appeared was another Me and Master.

That was definitely Me and Master, but she looked a little different than me, like her equipment, and her expression for example...

Intuitively, though, I understood.

Maybe that was me from a different world, or maybe from the future, I didn't know which one it was, I wondered where that Me had come from.

But the voice from earlier seems to be coming from the Master over there.

『Fran!』

「Master?」

『O-oooh! You can hear me now?』

It seemed that my mumbling had been answered.

How I envy her... the Master with her was still Master...

『I'm gonna heal you now!』

The Master over there then tried to do something, but it seemed that he had failed.

『Why won't my magic work!』

「I'm sorry. I wasn't able to make a perfect connection. I used your enhanced strength to bring us together. I also used your connection with each other, and yet, this is as far as I could bring you」

「Romio, Zelos Reed, and Zelyse. Using the three's connections and with the help of Master, we were able to change fate. But I need you to be patient for a little longer...」

Said the Rhyn beside me and the Rhyn over there while bowing their heads.

I didn't really get what they're talking about, but it was a miracle that I could talk with Master again.

Then I called out to the Me over there.

「Hey... Me」

「What is it, Me?」

「...Are you happy?」

「Nn. I'm happy every day with Master and Urushi. Are you not happy?」

「Nn...」

Aah, I knew it. That Me over there was happy. But that was only natural because she had Master and Urushi with her.

「After all, Master has...」

「What's wrong?」

「This Master has...」

「Nn」

That Me nodded gently at me. Then, I couldn't hold my words any longer.

「He doesn't show his kindness anymore... He doesn't say anything to me at all... He stopped praising me, and he never scolds me anymore!」

What was coming out of my mouth were my true feelings, which I'd never told anyone before.

Because I felt like if I said that, all of it would come true...

「I hate Master that is in such a state! That's not the Master I know! I want Master like that Master over there!」

My words poured out one after another.

「Tell me, Master! How can I get Master back to normal! How can I get him to smile like before! Tell me!」

I blurted out everything I wanted to say.

「Master, what am I supposed to do...?」

『I don't understand. There's nothing wrong with me. It's more that Fran herself seemed upset』

But what came back from Master was not the words I was expecting. I was a bit hopeful because I just heard the gentle voice of the Master over there...

『Combat action in this state is dangerous. Try not to get too agitated』

「That's not what I want to hear!」

『Fran. Don't get too agitated』

「So noisy! Shut up! Shut up, shut up! Don't talk to me with that voice! The one like you are not Master!」

Immediately after I shouted so, a gentle voice muttered in dismay.

『O-Ooh... F-Fran has become like a delinquent!』

He sounded a little bothered for some reason.

「Delinquent?」

「What a delinquent is?」

The two of us tilted our heads at the same time. It was the first time I had heard that word.

「A-ah. That is, like a bad kid with a foul mouth, maybe? It was like a nickname placed on a kid who talks rudely to their parents or teacher」

「I see! Then, that Me has become a delinquent」

「I'm not. I'm not a bad kid」

「But, you seem to have become one」

「No, I'm not!」

I wonder why. I was supposed to be being made fun of, but I was having so much fun talking like this.

But there was a voice that put a damper on such a pleasant mood.

『Current status. Fran's aggressiveness is much higher than it used to be. The term “delinquent” applies to the Fran now』

My happy mood suddenly turned sour. For some reason, it made me feel very sad. I couldn't help but turn my head down. Why... why was it so painful?

Then I heard a shout in my ear.

『Oi! You bastard! What the hell are you saying!? Are you really me!?』

『...What am I saying?』

『You think Fran has become a delinquent? That was because of you! Then, all you had to do was make sure she didn't become one!』

『I'm a sword. I don't have that kind of right』

『That's not true, right!? I don't care about rights or anything like that! Did you forget what were we? Weren't we supposed to be Fran's Master!?』

『Master is just a name. It is merely a symbol used to identify an individual name. My essence is a sword』

『You're wrong! We're not just a sword, we're her Master! And you think a master is just a symbol? That's wrong too!』

『I'm not wrong. It's a fact』

『You're wrong! Master was a name that Fran gave us, remember? That is our goal, that is Fran's hope! And I wanted to make it come true! Don't you even remember that!? We're just a sword? Don't forget that before that, we're her Master!』

『I am...』

『Look at her! Fran is crying! You don't feel anything when you see her like that!?』

I just realized it when the Master over there mentioned that I had been crying all this time. I wonder why I couldn't stop my tears from coming out?

『...She's, crying?』

『You didn't even notice it, did you!? You can't even say a word of comfort to Fran when she's crying!? Have you turned into a mere sword!?』

「Master...」

『I...』

『I'm going to ask you one more time. You see Fran crying, and you don't want to say a word to her!?』

『I...』

『Don't you feel anything when you see Fran's tears!? You idiot!』

『I...!』

Master's voice over here sounded like a human being for the first time in a long time. And at the same time, I heard a voice that I missed so much.

《Instability of the individual named Master detected》

「Eh? Announcer-san?」

《Yes, individual named Fran, I was the individual named Announcer-san. I had secured enough power to operate from the transferred power》

「I thought you were gone...」

《As long as the individual named Master is not destroyed, the individual named Announcer-san will not disappear》

「I see...」

《Instability of the individual named Master detected. He seemed to be shocked from realizing the difference with his other self》

『Announcer-san... I...』

《Suggestion to the individual named Fran. His current state can get even worse》

「Even worse...? Then what should I do?」

《Answer. Don't be afraid》

「Eh...?」

《This may be your last chance》

「Do your best, delinquent me」

「I'm not a delinquent!」

The other me chuckled when I reflexively said that back. But I didn't hate it.



「Nn. See you, Me」

『Fran! Remember that I will always be on your side! No matter what happens, forever!』

Prompted by Announcer-san and the Me over there, I hesitantly opened my mouth.

「Nn... Hey, Master. Can you hear me?」

『Fran...? I...』

For the first time in a long time, I heard that gentle voice again from the Master over here.

# Chapter 643

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Fran, Sword-san, we're losing our connection!」

Said Rhyn to us. It must mean that this mysterious event was coming to an end.

At the very least, I must say something to her!

「Nn. See you, Me」

『Fran! Remember that I will always be on your side! No matter what happens, forever!』

It was right after I shouted that.

The other Fran, that dimwit me, and the other Rhyn disappeared.

『So it's over?』

「Yeah, we got disconnected from them」

As Rhyn said, I couldn't feel their presence anymore.

『Hey, Rhyn. What was that?』

「That was Fran and Master from the other timeline. That was when Sierra, Zelos Reed, and Zelyse got transferred into our timeline」

『Has that me... turned into a mere sword?』

「Yes」

「So that's what Master is going to be?」

Fran muttered sadly. It seemed that she had imagined what I would be like if I became like that.

『What's gonna happen to that Fran?』

「I'm sorry. I'm not entirely sure anymore. But, you know, the future must have changed a lot. That's why our connection was severed」

「What was the future like before the change? Was it not so good?」

「Fran runs out of control in desperation and uses all of her power to match the piece of the Evil God sealed within Master. Causing a lot of people to get involved in the mess she made」

That's awful... But that Fran was definitely in danger from being over strengthened. And that Me, who was supposed to stop her, was in such a state.

『But the future has changed, hasn't it?』

「Yes. It was thanks to you guys. The words that Fran and Sword-san said to the two of you over there had changed the future in a significant way...」

『So that Fran won't be in danger of dying like what Rhyn said she would, right?』

「Yes. At the very least, that Sword-san should have regained his heart as a person. After all, if the future hadn't changed that much, our connection wouldn't have been severed so suddenly」

『I see...』

「Now we just have to hope that their future has changed for the better」

「Nn...」

I wondered what happened to us over there? Did he manage to heal Fran's broken heart even a little? Did I, who had become nothing more than a sword, become any better?

「Master, I'm sure they'll be fine」

『You think so?』

「Nn, after all, our words must have reached them. So, no worries」

『You're right. They were Me and Fran after all! With a little spark, I'm sure we'll be able to change for the better』

「Nn」

Now that Fran mentioned it, she was right.

『It seems that the Announcer-san over there also recovered』

《Yes. I also have shared some information with the individual named Announcer-san over there. She will surely make good use of it》

『Some information?』

《I have shared the information I have analyzed from the individual named Master and the methods to prevent him from adapting too far to his sword body》

『I-I see...』

Did she mean the information about my personality? It seemed she had concluded that by using that information, the Announcer-san over there should be able to come up with a measure so that the Me over there didn't turn into a mere sword.

That was a relief. As expected of Announcer-san, she was very capable! But I felt a little embarrassed though because it was like my mind had been analyzed.

《We also succeeded in exchanging some skill information》

『Does that mean we got a new skill?』

《Yes, I provided them with the information about Evil Crusher and Magic Power Transfer, while that Announcer-san provided us with the information about Spirit Detection and Evil Spirit Control. Based on the information, we succeeded in obtaining the skill Spirit Detection and the unique skill Evil Spirit Control. Also——》

W-what a long explanation! It seemed that Announcer-san managed to exchange a tremendous amount of information in that short time.

《Successfully obtained the unique skill Divine Power Manipulation based on the information of Evil Crusher and Evil Spirit Control. Successfully obtained the Unique Skill Spirit's Hand based on the information of Divine Mind Manipulation and Spirit Detection》

I-I'd gotten a lot of skills. Simply put, Spirit Detection was just as its name implied, it allowed the user to detect spirits. With this, we'd be able to detect spirits with our skills now.

The Evil Spirit Control was a skill to manipulate the Evil Spirit. It seemed to be similar to the Evil Spirit version of Magic Control, but it seemed to be of a higher level and had a stronger influence on the target.

And I was glad we got our hand at the Divine Power Manipulation. This was a skill that made the user better at handling Divine Attributes. So, we might be able to reduce the backlash from using the Divine Attribute with this skill.

And the Spirit's Hand. This was a skill that allowed the user to not only see spirits but also influence them. It could even allow us to touch and attack

the spirits. Well, it seemed to be quite difficult to master. So, I guess it was gonna depend on our future training.

I wish I could have tried everything first, but it seemed that I didn't have the time to do so.

「I'm sorry, but it's time for us to get back to our timeline. Be careful...」

『Oi! Isn't that gonna be dangerous...?』

I didn't know what would happen if we suddenly went back to our normal time from our current state of super acceleration. The worst that could happen would be that we could lose our balance.

After all, we were in the middle of being launched at a very high speed from the sky to the Great Magic Beast.

I wondered whether I could ask her to put us back slowly, but——.

「Rhyn, you okay? You look so pale」

「I just pushed myself a little too hard... But not anymore...」

I could see the scenery around us begin to flow by us slowly. It seemed like time had begun to start flowing again!

《Three seconds left until time acceleration is deactivated》

『Fran! Don't lose your balance!』

「Nn! Leave it to me!」

Fran nodded with a motivated look on her face. Apparently, she was inspired by seeing that Fran and me over there.

「We can't afford to lose!」

『Ou! You're right!』

She was not saying to what, but I felt the same way!

# Chapter 644

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Sword God Transformation!」

Immediately after Fran shouted so, Rhyn's super-acceleration was deactivated, and the surrounding scenery flowed out at once like before.

『Kuh』

I already knew this would happen, but the disorientation was terrible!

Immediately after we were out of the super acceleration state, the ugly body of the Great Magic Beast with countless mouths on the surface of its body appeared in the field of our vision.

Fran seemed to have made it through too.

We then instantly corrected the disorientation in our senses and delivered the best blow with everything we had in our hands, including the Sword God Transformation, Potential Release, and Evil Crusher.

Our attack was slightly off to the right of our aim, but that could not be helped.

「Haaa!」

『Rhaa!』



The tremendous torrent of power that rushed through my sword body was unleashed on the Great Magic Beast.

But before I could even feel myself slicing through the beast, I deactivated my Potential Release and other strengthening skills at the same time as the slash and teleported us a little further away.

After all, if I didn't do that, we wouldn't be able to teleport in time.

However, a slight feeling of having sliced through something remained. That told me that our attack was successful.

『How was that?』

「...Nn」

Just before we collided with the Great Magic Beast, we teleported to the sky and saw a terrible sight.

『It was a success, huh... Sierra too』

「Nn」

There were two huge wounds on the Great Magic Beast. The two cuts ran vertically parallel to each other.

I could feel that the presence I felt from the Great Magic Beast had dropped a few notches. It seemed that our attack had definitely inflicted significant damage to it.

One was caused by our slashes. And the other one was——.

「Sierra」

In the distance, we could see that Sierra was frozen in place with his magic sword, Zelos Reed, raised in the air.

Anyway, it seemed that the other wound was definitely caused by Sierra's slash.

『It looks like Sierra's attack was almost as powerful as our best attack...』

「Nn」

It was hard to believe. But I could tell it was his attack because the wounds were lined up like this. The width and depth of the wounds were almost the same in both wounds.

『But our attacks were made of the Divine Attribute, and the wound should heal more slowly!』

That was what I thought, however...

「Obeeeey meee...」

「Its regeneration didn't start at all」

『Not on the other wounds too, huh?』

It seemed that the Evil Spirit had invaded the wound and prevented it from regenerating.

I didn't expect him to be able to deliver an attack of almost equal power...

As I looked at Sierra with a confused look, I saw him collapse on the spot while his whole body was covered with a black Evil Spirit.

Sierra's condition was pretty dangerous, wasn't it? Zelos Reed then ran to him in panic and held him in his arms. He seemed to be unconscious.

Zelos Reed himself was in tatters from continuously receiving the rays of the Great Magic Beast, but Sierra's attack's backlash must have been even more severe.

Well, it didn't mean that I had the time to worry about others either.

「...Muh」

『Fran, are you okay?』

「...The backlash is just a little more severe...」

『I see... Actually, I felt the same too...』

「Nn...」

Without our Levitation skills, we would have fallen into the lake long ago. That was how bad the backlash was. Even with Life Magic and Divine Power Manipulation, we were in this kind of state.

The thought of not having those skills made me break out in a cold sweat.

「Master can't recover yet?」

『Yeah, I've used the Divine Attributes on top of Potential Release after all. My durability value hasn't recovered at all...』

I had less than 100 durability values left. I really would be a piece of junk for a while.

I think I'd spent about 5,000 magic stones worth to use the Potential Release this time. Well, I didn't regret it though, because it seemed to have helped us to connect with the other side.

「Woof!」

「Urushi」

Urushi ran up to us while dragging his paw limply.

Among us, Urushi was the one in the best condition with only a broken paw.

「I'll heal you now」

「Woof」

『Urushi, I'm counting on you for the time being』

Both Fran and I were extremely slow to recover from our injuries. In our current state, we couldn't even fight properly.

「Woof!」

「We're counting on you」

『For now, let's see how's Sierra and the others going』

「No, you need to get out of here right now...」

『Rhyn?』

Where was she? I could only hear her voice... I couldn't even tell where she was with my newly acquired Spirit Detection skill.

「I just can't maintain my form anymore. But somehow, I managed to deliver my voice to you...」

「Is it because of connecting this side to that side?」

「There are many other reasons too, but... It was the price I had to pay for seeing too far into the future... Rather than that, you guys need to get away from here...」

I didn't know what was going on, but I didn't feel comfortable letting the struggling Rhyn talk anymore.

Even in such a condition, the fact that she went to the trouble of telling us this indicated that we really needed to get away from here.

「Urushi」

「Woof!」

We decided to get away from here without even checking what was going on.

Note: My editor got involved in a car accident and was unable to do his part until next week, this chapter was the last one he had edited so you'll need to be patient until he recovers.

# Chapter 645

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

**Really sorry for the long delay, but  
(I hope) we're back on schedule  
now!**

I instructed Urushi to get away from the Great Magic Beast. And immediately after, the Great Magic Beast released a tremendous amount of magic power from its body.

「 「 「Grrrhaaaah!」 」 」

All the mouths screamed wildly and twisted their huge bodies as if they were in pain.

「Kyain!」 (Sfx dog's whimper)

『Guh!』

Being exposed to the wave of magic power that the Great Magic Beast released from its entire body, Urushi shrieked and pushed his magic barrier to its full strength.

Having exhausted our powers, Fran and I were unable to do anything, we had to rely on Urushi for the time being.

「Urushi, do your best...」

『Do your best, Urushi!』

「Grrrrr!」

Urushi made his barrier even thicker as he held his ground.

「Grrrr...」

At the same time, we could see tens of thousands of tentacles being produced from the body of the Great Magic Beast, that twisted and writhed around chaotically.

From time to time, its tentacles would even hit our barrier, but Urushi gritted his teeth and tried to withstand it.

But rather than being on a rampage, the Great Magic Beast seemed to be in pain and was struggling to overcome it.

「 「 「Aghaaaaah!」 」 」

「It getting bigger」

『...Is it because Rhyn has been separated from it?』

The Great Magic Beast's rampage has become even wilder than before. The wounds we had inflicted were still there, but they had become relatively small because of the swelling of the Great Magic Beast's body.

I couldn't find Rhyn anywhere, but if she had been separated from it, then it was no wonder that the Great Magic Beast's power had suddenly increased.

She was the one who had sealed and weakened the power of the Great Magic Beast after all.

「 「 「Ugrooaah! 」 」 」

『W-wha!?!』

The wave of magic power subsided, but now the swelling of the Great Magic Beast's body began to accelerate. However, there seemed to be something odd with it.

I heard a sound that was similar to flesh being torn apart, and along with it, I saw that the body of the Great Magic Beast was tearing itself apart. A large amount of reddish-black liquid then overflowed from the torn places on its body and started spreading all around. Was it its blood?

It was clearly suffering from the damage. However, the tears were quickly regenerating and new ones were being created. During that process, the Great Magic Beast's body continued to swell.

It seemed that it was trying to force its way out of the seal, wasn't it? Until now, the Great Magic Beast had been trying to get out of the weakened seal little by little and escape without forcing it.

However, the situation had undergone a sudden change. As a result of the disappearance of Rhyn and the fact that she was the reason it was weakened, the Great Magic Beast seemed to have prioritized escaping from the seal as its top priority. This explained its strange behavior.

『What do you think, Announcer-san?』

《Yes. I have the same opinion》

『Isn't this dangerous then?』

This thing was only at the size of its arm right now. The five of us won't be able to defeat it even after putting all our might into our attacks when it has fully resurrected.

What if it were to be fully resurrected, albeit somewhat weakened?



We'd need the power of Weena Rhyn's Ougi to put a stop at it as soon as possible. She should have already started preparing for it.

(TLN: Ougi, secret technique a.k.a Ultimate or Super in game terms)

『But I wouldn't be surprised if Weena Rhyn's attack might even get us involved in it as well!』

「Woof!」

I didn't know what Fran thought of Weena Rhyn, but my opinion of that woman had been pretty low.

On the other hand, though, my opinion of Rhyn, who I had been somewhat distrustful of, has gone through the roof.

I think I'm a bit of a simple-minded person.

However, there was a figure blocking Urushi's path as he tried to escape. It was obviously trying to block our way.

The shadow called out to us with an easy-going attitude that seemed to be out of place under such circumstances.

「Hello, Fran-san! Would you mind lending me that sword for a moment?」

「!!」

『As I thought, he wasn't dead that time!』

「...Zelyse」

The person who was there was a handsome young man with a grin on his face as he pointed his rainbow-colored magic sword Zelyse to us.

「The man who spoke to me at that time. That's the incarnation of the sword or something, right?」

「What are you talking about?」

「Fufu. If you don't want to tell me, that's fine. I'm sure I can figure it out by taking that sword apart」

Fran let out a chilling killing intent at him after hearing his words, but she doesn't try to slash me at him. After all, we were too battered to do anything serious now.

Besides, Zelyse wasn't alone this time.

Next to him, a magician in a black robe floated silently.

But the fact that I could only feel a faint magic power from it was kinda unsettling.

From inside the jet-black robe, the empty eye sockets of a skull stared at us.

The skull's face didn't seem to be a mask. But belong to a real undead. The quality of its magic power was clearly different from that of a human.

Moreover, it doesn't seem to be a normal undead either.

The two holes in the skull looked as if they were filled with bottomless darkness. There was a strange sense of dread as if something sinister was about to overflow out of the darkness and swallow us whole.

Fran felt a shiver run down her spine. Just like me, she must have sensed something.

The lack of familiarity and the viciousness I felt just by looking at it told me that it must be a strong undead.

What I couldn't understand was that he was undead, but he had the skill and reason to conceal his power himself.

「Kukaka——」

The creepy undead laughed in a shrill voice.

「Kukakakakaka——! I never thought I'd see you in a place like this!」

===== Tenken anime confirmed! =====

# Chapter 646

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Kukakakakaka——! I never thought I'd see you in a place like this!」

What did it mean?

That statement now. It was as if it knew Fran...

「?」

Of course, there was no way Fran could remember what I couldn't. She tilted her head in confusion.

「Who?」

「It's no wonder you don't know. Even I don't actually know you myself!」

Did it know Fran from someone else then?

I appraised the undead in front of me for the time being. However, for the first time in a long time, my appraisal was working well and showed me all of its status and skills. In the past, even though I had the Heavenly Eye, my appraisals couldn't get through at all because they were either super high ranking beings, clothed in evil spirits, or were spirits.

Name: Nameless

Race: Demi Lich: Ghost: Magic Beast Lv52

HP: 1932

MP: 1298

STR: 1869

RES: 444

AGI: 810

INT: 303

DEX: 810

Magic: 600

[Skill]

Quick Chanting: Lv6, Hatred Barrier: Lv3, Hatred Manipulation: Lv8, Panic: Lv2, Terror: Lv2, Fist Saint Technique: Lv5, Fist Saint Skill: Lv7, Fist Fighting: LvMax, Herculean Strength: Lv7, Regeneration: Lv8, Explosive Power Output: Lv9, Ghost Control: Lv3, Ghost Manipulation: LvMax, Necromancy: LvMax, Mental Derangement Resistance: Lv4, Irregular Fighting Style: Lv8, Magic Resistance: Lv7, Magic Detection: Lv6, Magic Release, Lv5, Underworld Magic: Lv3, Dark Magic: Lv4, Hatred, Bone Body Transformation, Abnormal Condition Nullification, Vibration Control, Ghost Control, Ghost Rampage, Magic Control.

[Unique Skill]

Hatred Absorption, Marker of Hades

[Title]

Commander of the Black Skeleton Army, King of the Dead

[Equipment]

Three Linked Magic Stone Staffs, Rotten Dragon's Glove, Lord of the Great Tomb's Glove, Circlet of Hatred Sealing, Ring of Purification Resistance, Bracelet of Purification Resistance, Hatred Ball.

『Fran! This undead is strong!』

(Really strong?)

『Yeah. It has a threat level of B or higher on its own. Moreover, it's a necromancer on par with Jean!』

In terms of overall threat level, it could have been an A. It was not as strong as the Lich we fought on the Floating Island, but it's certainly stronger than the Legendary Skeleton under his command.

「Are you Zelyse's subordinate?」

「You think I work for this guy? What kind of nonsense is that? I am the commander of the Black Skeleton Army! I'm only lending him my strength this time because of the Duke's insistence!」

「The Black Skeleton Army?」

「That's right. The most powerful army ever created in the Kingdom of Raidos! A name that will even replace the Red Knights and become a legend!」

「And you're the commander of that army?」

「Yes. I am Nameless, the King of the Dead! Remember me! No, you're going to die here though. So how can you possibly remember that?」

「Muh」

Luckily, this guy was as stupid as Zelyse. Without needing to be provoked, it leaked a lot of information itself.

「Is The Black Skeleton Army a force of undead?」

「That's right! The mightiest army of the mightiest undead created by my secret arts! I'll have that damned necromancer bled to death in our next battle!」

In other words, the Wight King and the other undead we've encountered were created by this undead using its Underworld Magic? But considering its magic and skill set, it may not be impossible.

What it meant by 'that damned necromancer' must have been Jean. Well, he was like a natural enemy to the Kingdom of Raidos, so it was only natural for them to take measures against him.

In fact, it had the strength to be on even ground with him.

「Kukakaka! If you surrender right now, I'll kill you in an instant so that you don't suffer, and then I'll make you one of my minions——well, that's what I'd say if you were an ordinary person though...」

「!!」

The Demi Lich released a tremendous killing intent that even made Fran brace herself. It wasn't just killing intent. It was a mixture of anger, hatred, and resentment that made Fran's skin crawl.

It was said that a ghost was born out of resentment and harboring hatred for the living. But this seems to be more than just that. Obviously, it has its thoughts about Fran.

「You're the only one I'm going to kill here. I somehow feel obliged to do so...」

「Why?」

「That being is screaming inside of me」

「?」

「The grudge of the Emperor of the Dead——the grudge of the Lich which has become a part of me is screaming at me to kill you! You will return the

favor you owed to him on the floating island!」

The Demi Lich——Nameless, covered its white skull with its right hand, which looked like a withered branch as if to grasp it.

It is a gesture that made it look like a grieving tragic hero, but that didn't seem to be the reason. Rather, it seemed to be an act of suppressing the rage that could explode at any moment.

As proof of this, all kinds of negative emotions seemed to be leaking out of the hollow eyes that peeped out from between its thin fingers.

「Lich? Do you mean the Lich from that time?」

「Kukakaka! I'm talking about the dungeon master who perished on the Floating Island, the one who was originally an experimental subject for the Kingdom of Raidos!」

Oi oi, Seriously? I did think of some connection between the Lich and Demi Lich, as it was related to the Kingdom of Raidos. But I never thought that Lich actually has a direct connection with the Raidos Kingdom!

「I am grateful to you. Thanks to you, I was able to recover the fragment of the Lich's hatred!」

If you ask me, I think they might actually look alike. Well, I guess it's only natural that they look alike since they are both skeletons.

However, the atmosphere they wore and the way they spoke were also very similar.

「I was created by taking in the fragment of that Lich's hatred that was recovered from the ruins of the Floating Island! The faint remnants of that Lich's memory tell me that you are my enemy!」

I see. If this undead inherited the memory and hatred of that Lich, it would certainly have a motive to resent Fran.

「That's why! You'll die here!」



The Demi Lich who shouted so came charging at us with great speed.

「Woof!」

「Guh! Don't run away!」

『Let's leave this place quickly!』

「Woof!」

「Hey, Wait a minute!」

Nameless seemed to be strong in melee combat, but it was more suited to be a commander. And as expected, it could not compete with Urushi in a chase and win.

However, there were two opponents this time. Zelyse blocked Urushi's path as he tried to escape. Even if his combat power was not as strong as Nameless', this guy is much more dangerous than Nameless in that we would never know what he would do next.

「Urushi, do your best!」

「Woof!」

「Kukakakaka! Eat this!」

「Hey hey hey!」

Nameless struck at us while flying at high speed, and Zelyse released his magic as if he were trying to intercept us.

「Kukakakaka!」

「Grrrrr!」

Great job, Urushi! He was able to catch Nameless' fist with his paw. He also used his fangs to make up for the lack of moves and managed to strike

at it. With the sound of our blows reverberating through the air, we entered a momentary stalemate.

But this seemed to be what they were waiting for. While we were being held back by Nameless, Zelyse's magic attacked us. A huge black vortex swallowed Nameless and us, and the scenery in our vision changed completely.

「Woof?」

「Eh?」

『W-what is this!?!』

It was probably some kind of Dimension Gate, a way to connect space to space. Although being engulfed by it, the vortex itself was not dangerous, but the reaction of my detection has become dull.

Well, now that Fran and I are pretty weakened if Urushi couldn't detect things, there was no way we could.

However, where the hole was connected to was the most dangerous place around the lake.

In front of us, the body of the Great Magic Beast appeared. I could see the wriggling tentacles up close. The place where we were teleported was right in front of the Great Magic Beast.

The tentacles reacted to us and attacked. Could it be that they were planning to let the Great Magic Beast get rid of us!?

「Ahahaha! Sure, I'm interested in that sword, but I'm more interested in getting rid of it! It was my natural enemy after all!」

「Ugh!」

Fran glared at Zelyse, but he soon disappeared from our sight. Countless tentacles had begun to cover the surrounding of Urushi's barrier.

「Kukakaka! Just get swallowed by the great magic beast like that!」

# Chapter 647

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

We're in deep trouble.

Right now, we are about to be entangled and swallowed by the tentacles of the Great Magic Beast.

Urushi's barrier was still protecting us, but it would reach its limit in less than ten seconds. I could feel the magic of the barrier fading rapidly.

But that didn't mean we couldn't escape. We could use teleport to get out of here.

The only problem was that it would exhaust my magic power for real. After that, we would be completely dependent on Urushi.

『Urushi, can you do something for me?』

(Woof!)

Urushi nodded energetically at my words. I guess he knew what he had to do.

『Alright, let's do——No, wait!』

I just noticed that the magic around me had become strange. A strange magic power had suddenly covered our surroundings. It didn't seem to be coming from Zelyse, Nameless, or even the Great Magic Beast.

There was no sign of hostility, rather, it was giving off a sense of security, as if it were trying to protect us.

And then the wall of tentacles that had been swallowing us began to come off as if it were going to vanish.

With a dull sound as if something was hitting us at high speed, our field of vision became clear.

『What in the world has happened...?』

「Get out of here, quickly」

『Rhyn?』

Out of nowhere, I heard Rhyn's voice. It wasn't a voice that was sent directly into our minds like telepathy, but it was as if Rhyn had whispered directly into our ears.

But when I looked around, Rhyn was nowhere to be found.

『I could feel her presence, though...』

I could feel Rhyn's presence, albeit faintly. I guess it was thanks to my Spirit Detection skill.

「In a few minutes, Weena Rhyn will release her attack」

『She's going to use her trump card, huh?』

「I'm not sure if I can help you guys anymore... But, do your best to get away from here...」

Rhyn muttered bitterly as her voice began to become inaudible. The subtle hints that I had sensed from the surrounding area also seemed to have gone away.

But now was not the time to worry about Rhyn.

『Urushi! Let's go!』

「Woof!」

Judging from the hint of impatience in Rhyn's voice, it seemed that we didn't have much time anymore.

「Kukakaka! I don't know what you've done to get out of there, but I won't let you get away from here!」

Nameless, who was supposed to be entangled in the tentacles with us, had already escaped from the restraint and was waiting for Urushi.

Well, it was not going to let itself get caught up with its comrades' technique after all!

「Rhaaa!」

「Grrrr...」

Whenever Nameless thrust its left and right fists in succession, a shockwave was generated and struck Urushi. In addition, the shockwaves were released over a wide area, making it impossible for Urushi to escape.

There was almost no gap left for us to escape.

Besides, the apparent escape route was clearly a trap. Zelyse must be waiting for us at the end of it.

I guess they intended to drive Urushi into it and kill us, like a trap for hunting animals.

However, Urushi immediately saw through their aim.

「Woooof!」

「What! You're trying to get away from there!?!」

Urushi dared to rush into the thickest part of the barrage of the undead's attack and forced his way through using his dark magic and barriers to block out the shockwave.

He broke through the shockwave released by the Fist Saint Technique head-on. But he was not unscathed.

Urushi's whole body was covered in wounds and blood was gushing out of his body.

I guess the parts of the barrier used to protect himself were not strong enough because he made the parts to protect Fran and me on his back thicker.

However, Urushi didn't seem to care about the damage he had suffered and continued to push forward.

「I'm not letting you go I said!」

Zelyse, who had teleported in front of us, unleashed his attack. His tone was as easy-going as ever, but the technique he unleashed was nothing short of fierce.

It must be a technique that he had originally prepared to kill us in their trap. The amount of magic power contained in it was enough to make me shudder.

The power of each shot probably surpassed that of the Fist Saint technique that Nameless had just unleashed.

This was bad.

After all, his attack had a Space-Time Attribute in it. There was no way to escape even with Dimension Shift. And since it covered a wide area, it would be difficult to avoid.

I guess we would just have to withstand it by putting a barrier at full power. But just as I was thinking about it, I saw Zelyse had started to concentrate his magic power to release a second wave.

Don't tell me he could fire consecutive shots? No, it seemed it was only possible if Zelyse and the magic sword Zelyse took turns firing! This was exactly what made an Intelligence Weapon so annoying!

But that didn't stop Urushi.

『Urushi! What are you...!?』

「Wrrrooof!」

While keeping a keen eye on the wall of magic bullets, he collided with it head-on.

Clank clank clank!

With a high-pitched sound as if metal was crushing against metal, Urushi's barrier that was covering our surroundings was bombarded with magic bullets. I could feel his barrier becoming weaker with each impact.

But that was not the only problem.

「Urushi!」

『Put up a barrier for yourself!』

「Woof!」

Urushi had put up only minimal barriers for himself. He seemed to be deploying barriers concentrating on the front to protect his head...

He did not receive any direct hits. However, the bullets that snatched the flank of his body scraped off Urushi's flesh, and a large amount of blood spurted out from the wound.

Still, that didn't stop Urushi from pushing forward.

He escaped the barrage with a large amount of red blood spraying from his body.



「Unbelievable!」

Zelyse seemed to be really surprised by this. His eyes were wide open as he shouted so.

# Chapter 648

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

Seeing that Urushi had forcefully broken through his barrage of magic bullets, Zelyse shouted in surprise.

But that did not seem to stop him from moving.

Zelyse quickly raised his magic sword and tried to release the second barrage. He also took out a large magic stone from his pocket and grinned.

Judging from the enormous amount of magic power contained within it and my danger detection skills that started to ring like crazy, it must have been some really powerful magic stone weapon.

Their plan must be to use the magic bullets to hinder Urushi's movement and stop him with the magic stone weapon.

But they'd underestimated Urushi too much, hadn't they? Urushi was not a mere decoration here with us. He was our reliable partner who had reached a new level of evolution.

「Woof!」

「!!」

Urushi suddenly accelerated.

Yes, he had been pretending to be running at his full speed, but in fact, he was still holding back all this time. This was not because he was slacking,

but rather out of consideration for Fran on his back.

However, thanks to this, he had been able to outsmart Zelyse. He showed an irritated look at Urushi, who was rapidly advancing at a speed beyond his imagination.

Fran looked in pain at the sudden acceleration, but she didn't make a complaint. Urushi noticed that too, but he did not slow down.

That was also because of Zelyse's words.

「I'm not done yet—!」

He then swung his Magic Sword Zelyse horizontally and scattered magic bullets to us. The power of the bullets was weaker than before due to insufficient buildup, but the bullets were released in greater concentrations.

I could see that Zelyse's expression had regained a little of its composure.

The power of his attack was certainly powerful. A direct hit from it would probably kill even a magic beast with a threat level of C.

But did he really think he could defeat Urushi with just that? He had grown stronger through his training after all.

「Woof!」

Urushi then launched his own secret move.

Dark Magic Lv7, Dark Embrace. Essentially, it was a technique to increase one's defense and physical strength by covering one's entire body with darkness.

However, as a result of his training, Urushi had succeeded in modifying this technique in his own way.

The jet-black darkness produced covered only Urushi's head. By doing that, only the power of his fangs was strengthened. At the same time, I noticed that he had also activated his Dimensional Fangs.

If the Giant Wolf, Urushi were to seriously bite with all his might, even an orichalcon could be crushed like a candy ball. It was a super-powerful blow that combined the Dark and Space-Time Attributes.

It was not a technique that he and Fran had combined, but a technique that he created to finish off an enemy by himself. This was Urushi's surefire attack.

Amanda, who named this technique 『World Breaker Fang』 said that even she would not be able to avoid a fatal wound if she were hit directly by it.

「Grooaah!」

「Ghaaaaah!」

With his fangs deflecting the space-time magic bullets released by Zelyse, Urushi returned to his original size and bit into Zelyse's body.

I could see Urushi's fangs, which had become as big as a log stake, were crushing the lower half of Zelyse's body.

「Ghuh... I never heard this wolf could do something like this...」

Zelyse muttered to himself as he floated in the air with only the upper half of his body remaining.

Well, maybe Zelyse had gotten information about Urushi from his other self who had become a magic sword. Or, if he knew that Urushi was the Darkness Wolf, he could have predicted his evolutionary path.

Even though the evolutionary path of the Darkness Wolf had excellent leadership and magic power, they did not have a great ability for direct attack. The small-sized Urushi would have looked like a Dark Knight Wolf or even a Gehenna Wolf at a first glance after all.

As a result, Zelyse and Nameless must have misjudged Urushi's fighting strength.

Although he looked pretty bad, Zelyse's vitality was not yet exhausted. In fact, I could see the signs of regeneration about to begin.

「Hm? I wonder why my regeneration is quite slow... Good grief... What in the hell is that wolf...?」

I couldn't feel any sense of panic in Zelyse's eyes, rather he seemed to be curious about something. What an abnormal guy to not be shaken in his current situation.

No, it seemed that he was confident that he could escape from this. After all, as long as he had his Magic Sword Zelyse, he could use a variety of its abilities. He then put away the magic stone weapon and held up the Magic Sword Zelyse.

It was certain that Zelyse was badly injured and stuck in a situation where he could not move. It was our chance to defeat him, but...

「Grrr...」

Urushi was still unable to move because of the backlash from his powerful move. Fran and I didn't have enough strength left to unleash an attack that could defeat Zelyse either.

「Aah, well, it seems that is all from me for today——」

Shit! He was gonna run!

「——Hmm?」

What happened? Zelyse must have tried to activate his Teleportation skill, but nothing seemed to have happened? Had it failed to activate? But when I was thinking about that, I noticed that there was a slight presence of a Spirit around Zelyse.

Was it Rhyn's doing!? After all, as a Spirit of Time and Water, Rhyn should be able to block others from teleporting.

Then, for the first time, I saw a hint of impatience on Zelyse's face.

「Shit... what a troublesome... Ghaah! T-this is!?!」

「Hmm」

It was Fran. She whipped her heavily exhausted body to the very limit and unleashed a magic bullet. The power was at its weakest, it might not even kill a goblin.

However, it seemed that she was able to at least break Zelyse's stance. Fran then directed her eyes at me.

Very well, I'll push myself too!

『Rhaa!』

「Tsk!」

What I activated was Telekinesis. I could only activate it for a moment. However, with the loss of his lower body and the loss of his sense of balance, Zelyse was unable to resist the force that was suddenly delivered from an outside source.

I pushed Zelyse downward as far as I could.

That was all there was to it, but——.

「Eh?」

Countless tentacles then tangled around Zelyse's body.

# Chapter 649

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

「Eh?」

Countless tentacles then tangled around Zelyse's body.

The tentacles that Rhyn had blown off had grown back.

Of course, Zelyse and Nameless had been evading it all this time as well. However, I pushed Zelyse down to the tentacles that were aiming for Urushi.

I don't expect this to take him down, but it will buy us enough time to escape.

「Tsk!」

Zelyse twisted his body in an attempt to shake off the tentacles that were wrapping around his body. He must have thought that he could escape from it, but it didn't seem to be happening.

Zelyse held on in the air, trying not to get dragged down. He seemed to have redirected his magic from regeneration to it as well and used his magic to repel the tentacles that are crawling around him.

He couldn't seem to get permeable instantly in that state.

This was a chance to get rid of him, but...

『Not even a little left, huh...?』

「Muh...」

「Grrr...」

Urushi was the only one left with the strength to attack. His wounds were also getting better after Fran and I sprinkled as many potions as we could on him.

However, Urushi must unleash his magic from a distance to leave some energy to escape.

We couldn't force Urushi to push himself now that he was exhausted from unleashing his secret move before.

「Ghaah! Shit shit shit—!」

Well, Urushi's magic must have been quite a nuisance for him. But we couldn't stay here any longer.

「Kukakakaka! You look like a fool! Zelyse!」

「Just help me already!」

「Kukakaka!」

We ran out of time. Nameless has reached here.

Even Urushi, as expected, would not be able to defeat Nameless while carrying and protecting Fran and me on his back.

We should escape while they're off guard. Urushi knew this and was slowly retreating.

However, it was just right after that.

An unbelievable scene unfolded before us.



「Kukakakaka! You want my help that badly?」

「Ghah!?!」

「What's wrong, you look so strange? Alchemist-dono?」

「...Ha, hahaha. It seems you can still make a joke at a time like this...」

Instead of helping Zelyse, Nameless suddenly grabbed Zelyse by the neck while giving him a deafening loud laugh as it applied more power into its hand.

Zelyse responded with a pained look on his face, but he was still showing an attitude as if he still had some room for leeway...

「Hmm? I'm not joking though, Zelyse」

「Ghuh...!」

A dirty-looking aura, like a black sludge on a puddle, then overflowed from Nameless' arms.

Just looking at it made me feel an uncomfortable sensation in the depths of my mind.

I think I've seen this somewhere before... Aah! I've seen it before on the floating island! It resembles the hatred that overflowed from that Lich!

However, this one is several levels more terrifying.

The hatred then crawled around Zelyse's body and gradually covered him.

「Sh,—it, ...?」

Zelyse raises his Magic Sword, Zelyse. However, the sword did not respond at all. It was as if it had become a mere sword.

「Eh...?」

「Kukakaka! Kukakakakaka! That's too bad! He doesn't want to help you」

「That's ridiculous...」

「Let's just soak you up with hatred and make you my servant... Hmm? Really? So, you're saying you can't forgive him for his very existence?」

「With whom did you talking to...!?」

「Kukakaka, with whom, you ask? With your other self of course!」

At Nameless' words, Zelyse looked down at the sword in his hand. It was right after that.

「Well, whatever. I just have to retrieve that sword」

「...」

Nameless took the magic sword from Zelyse. However, the sword was not resisting it at all. If it was an Intelligence Weapon, it should even be able to attack on its own...

However, there was no sign of the sword rejecting Nameless.

「Even the sword finds you annoying! Kukakaka! You have a look on your face that says you don't know why!」

「...W-why!? I thought we were supposed to understand each other...」

「You should have understood what it's like to lose a human body, don't you? For the sword Zelyse to be the only one, your existence must be like an eyesore for him」

「...Haha, I see. Becoming a sword must have made him feel like a different being after all...」

「I don't dislike your eagerness for curiosity, but... To achieve my goal, your existence is still an eyesore. You shall die for us」

Crack!

When Nameless put more strength into his hand, Zelyse's neck was crushed with extreme ease, and his head fell.

「Farewell, you mad alchemist」

When Nameless let go of its hand, Zelyse's body fell toward the Great Magic Beast. It seemed that he was not dead yet, but he was indeed unable to move.

And just like that, he was captured by the tentacles. While being entangled and compressed by the tremendous force, Zelyse was swallowed into the Great Magic Beast.

The sound of crushing flesh and bone sounded as if the Great Magic Beast was chewing its food.

I couldn't feel any hint of Zelyse or even the slightest hint of his life force anymore.

Was he... dead? That resilient Zelyse was...?

But we couldn't even afford to get confused here.

「Woof!」

Urushi let out a warning at us.

『Kuh! Terrifying magic power was swelling around where Weena Rhyn is! It's coming!』

We left the scene as fast as we could before Nameless came to us.

# Chapter 650

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

Right after we left, a huge water sphere appeared over the head of the Great Magic Beast.

The diameter is probably over 100 meters.

「Amazing」

『Yeah. It was almost unbelievable, what an incredible Divine Power』

「Woof...」

I wasn't talking about the enormous amount of magic power contained in it.

But the water sphere was emitting a strong Divine Power that covered the surroundings. I could feel that the entire water sphere's atmosphere was similar to mine when I was using the Sword God Transformation.

Could it be that all that water has the Divine attribute imbued in it?

I was probably lucky that my sensing skills were dull because of pushing myself too hard.

If my sensing skills were still at their normal state, I might have panicked because of the sheer intensity of the presence and the vast amount of information I might have received from it.

In fact, Urushi had become frightened of it. All the hairs on his body were standing on end, and his ears were laying down.

「Woof...」

Urushi continued to run with an anxious look on his face. Fran was shaken up and down on his back because of this, but Urushi didn't slow down.

I guess after witnessing that Divine Power, he didn't feel safe no matter how far away we had gone. That was also for Fran's sake too.

I was glad that she activated it after we had gotten some distance.

No, could it be that she had been waiting for us to leave? Well, Weena Rhyn was not necessarily a bad person just because she was a little crazy.

As we watched the sphere of Divine Water, it started to undergo a significant shape change.

It began to stretch wide to cover the entire surface of the Great Magic Beast.

Then it turned into countless small water spheres. Well, even though they were small, I think each one of them was big enough to swallow Fran.

But it was just right after I had that thought.

Swoop!

With a heavy and loud bursting sound, a deep gash was drilled into the body of the Great Magic Beast. The gash seemed to run in a straight line from top to bottom.

The water sphere that was shot out at super high speed easily pierced the body of the Great Magic Beast. It was so fast that even we were only able to catch a glimpse of its shadow.

From then on, the scene that unfolded in front of us was so unreal that I couldn't believe it was happening.

Swoop swoop swoop——!

The sound of a series of bursts echoed through the air, and the body of the Great Magic Beast was rapidly being whittled away.

The water sphere was shot out at a great speed and continued to pierce the flesh of the Great Magic Beast.

The water sphere that pierced through the body of the Great Magic Beast naturally crashed into the lake. Each time it did, a column of water nearly fifty meters high rose, and the sight of it did not even elicit a laugh.

After all, the Great Magic Beast had been attacked by over a thousand shots of such water arrows.

And yet, the huge tsunami that was generated was quickly quelled over in an unnaturally short distance. I wondered if Weena Rhyn was able to control it.

I couldn't imagine what kind of techniques or skills would allow her to do something like that, but I'm pretty sure that was one of Weena Rhyn's secret techniques.

More than half of the Great Magic Beast's body was already gone, and more water spheres kept shooting out at it.

When I thought that the Divine water was not ceasing at all, I saw that a pillar of water from the lake was soaring up, breaking apart in the air and creating more water spheres. Moreover, I could feel Divine Power in those water spheres as well. Could it be that all of it was imbued with Divine attributes too?

The new water sphere ascended to the sky in a straight line, and it looked as if we were watching rain footage in reverse. And after reaching a certain height, the water spheres began to fall as if pulled by gravity and poured down on the Great Magic Beast.

As long as that cycle kept repeating itself, the attacks on the Great Magic Beast would never stop. Well, as long as Weena Rhyn's magic power remains, that is.

But could she really defeat it with just that?

After all, no matter how much it was attacked and its body was whittled down, it could still regenerate.

The Great Magic Beast seemed to have decided to stop its swelling too.

It must be less taxing to concentrate its power into a small body to protect itself than to maintain a huge body.

Weena Rhyn continued to shoot water spheres, with each shot having destructive power that rivaled our Heaven Judgement, without pause like a machine gun. And then, there was the Great Magic Beast that continued to use powerful barriers and instantaneous regeneration at the same time.

I couldn't even imagine how much magic power was consumed in just these few tens of seconds.

Nevertheless, the struggle between Weena Rhyn and the Great Magic Beast continued.

I couldn't even imagine doing a fraction of what they did.

All we could do is watch this myth-class battle. I was stunned, Urushi was terrified, And Fran was somewhat frustrated from looking at it.

『Fran, what's wrong?』

(Weena Rhyn and the Great Magic Beast are both amazing)

『This was the battle between those who are at the top of the world after all...』

(But still, it's frustrating)

『...Is that so?』

(Nn. One day, I have to defeat a Great Magic Beast like that myself. I can't say that it's impossible for me...)

She never thought that she would see this kind of battle and immediately feel frustrated...

Was she not afraid of it? No, that doesn't seem to be the case. Anyone who didn't feel fear after seeing that must be crazy.

Rather, she must have used her feeling of frustration to motivate herself and overcome her fear.

As expected of Fran. I couldn't stand idly by either! That's right, one day we'll break the curse of the Black Cat kin.

In other words, we would have to defeat an enemy as powerful as that Great Magic Beast by ourselves.

「Woof!」

Before I knew it, Urushi was no longer frightened. I guess he must have felt the same way too. He was looking back with a face full of energy, ready to witness that battle with his own eyes.

『You're right. we can't say that was impossible to us』

「Woof woof!」

「Nn...!」



# Chapter 651

Translated by Tods

Edited by Phantom0408

When we had managed to reach a place where we thought was a safe area, a change in the battle between Weena Rhyn and the Great Magic Beast occurred.

「It stopped?」

「Woof?」

The barrage of water bullets that Weena Rhyn had been unleashing stopped unexpectedly.

『Could it be that Weena Rhyn has run out of magic power?』

That was a lot of attacks after all. I'm sure that even a High Elves would suffer from its tremendous magic power consumption.

It was quite possible that she would run out of strength before she could defeat the Great Magic Beast.

The body of the Great Magic Beast was slowly starting to regenerate. Well, it looks slow because of its immense size, but in reality, it is probably quite fast.

『Doesn't the damage from the Divine Attribute even matter to it!?』

Wasn't this quite bad? It seems that it was better to have Urushi move on to escape even more...

「Master, that is...」

『Eh?』

As I was wondering what to do, Fran suddenly pointed her finger at the lake. When I looked in the direction of her finger, I found that a strange phenomenon had begun to occur.

「A string?」

「Woof?」

『Surely, it looks like a string, but...』

As Fran said, I could see the water in the lake transforming into long, thin strings. It looked as if an invisible hand was twisting the strings out of the water.

The string stretching out from the surface of the lake then increased in number at a tremendous speed. In a matter of seconds, countless strings covering the entire surface of the lake had been created.

Those strings ascended to the sky again like the water sphere from earlier.

The number of them was probably more than one or two thousand now. In fact, it seemed to be well over tens of thousands.

「Is that Weena Rhyn's doing too?」

『I guess so. I can feel the Divine Attribute from every water string after all』

That's right. I could feel the presence of a strong divine attribute in those strings. It only meant that Weena Rhyn's secret technique wasn't over yet.

It seemed that she simply changed the way she attacked the great monsters.

「Grrr!」

『You want to move...?』

「Woof!」

Urushi seemed to have sensed the strange flow of magic power. He then put up a barrier around Fran and began to run as fast as he could again.

Immediately afterward, the strings wriggled in unison and rushed toward the Great Magic Beast's body.

『Amazing—...』

「Nn」

「Woof」

The three of us watched in amazement.

A single string was very thin. The only reason we recognized it as a string in the first place was that it was so thin. Being entangled in a single string would not affect the Great Magic Beast.

But what if there were a thousand of them? What if there were tens of thousands of them? What if there was more than that?

The answer was right there in front of us.

The body of the Great Magic Beast covered with long, thin strings would make anyone wonder if its body color was white.

Gradually, the entire body of the Great Magic Beast was covered tightly by the water strings and restrained.

But of course, Weena Rhyn wasn't aiming to just stop the movement of the Great Magic Beast.

The surface of the lake where the strings were stretched out, began to swell over a wide area, and the movement of the strings became more and more violent.

「The Great Magic Beast suddenly getting bigger than before?」

『Now that you mention it... But rather than getting bigger——』

「It's coming out of the seal?」

『Yes, that's what it looks like!』

I wondered if the Great Magic Beast was trying to break the seal and get out... But it seems that wasn't quite right. If anything, it looked more like it was being forcibly dragged out of it.

The Great Magic Beast's scream then reverberated through the air. Yes, it was clearly a scream.

「Ghrroaaaaah!」

The body of the Great Magic Beast then dragged out of the seal at once. It looked like a large amount of red and black jelly strips were being pushed out of a narrow hole.

Well, even though the hole was narrow, it was probably several dozen meters in diameter.

It seemed that its body strength was extremely weak because it was forcibly dragged out of the seal before it managed to fully resurrect. The lump of flesh that overflowed onto the surface of the lake could be seen melting and crumbling at the mere touch of the water that was infused with the Divine Attribute.

The lump of flesh that we had attacked earlier had already lost its original form. It seemed that the strings were not just simple strings, but also had an offensive power.

It seemed to serve the purpose of damaging the area it touched and inhibiting its regeneration.

The strings of water that attacked the Great Magic Beast continued to increase in number. That is to say, the surface of the lake within a radius of

about 500 meters was probably almost under Weena Rhyn's control.

Now, there's no way the Great Magic Beast could escape.

「Whrooaah...!」

The roar that the Great Magic Beast let out sounded like the cry of a tormented sinner. After that roar, we couldn't hear a thing from the Great Magic Beast ever again.

Its entire body had already crumbled into a million pieces, and not a single mouth was left.

It was the end of a Great Magic Beast that seemed to boast infinite vitality.

The strings that had enveloped the Great Magic Beast like a giant cocoon slowly unraveled. And when all the strings returned to the lake, nothing was left there.

There is no trace of the Great Magic Beast left behind.

The surface of the lake, which had been raging so wildly, quickly calmed down and became so calm that make us wonder if the battle we had seen was just an illusion.

『Is it... over?』

「?」

「Woof?」

No matter how hard I searched our surroundings, there was no sign of the Great Magic Beast's remains. The only residue of the battle was the slightest hint of Divine Presence emitted by the surface of the water. That was all.

The end of such a wild and massive myth-class fierce battle was surprisingly quiet.

# Chapter 652

Urushi ran across the surprisingly calm lake.

『There's no sign of the Great Magic Beast left...』

「Nn」

『And since when did the Vivian Guardians disappear?』

「Woof」

Until now, the Vivian Guardians should have attacked us in this area, but there was no sign of them.

I think it had something to do with the demise of the Great Magic Beast, but I didn't know for sure.

We then hurried to the person who knew the details of the situation.

「Weena Rhyn, she's there」

「Woof!」

『So she's safe? Well, it's not like she was gonna let herself get killed by using that technique 』

I could see the white stage where Weena Rhyn and the others had been performing their ritual. It did not appear to have collapsed or been destroyed in the battle that had just taken place.

But what about Weena Rhyn and Romio? Were they safe?

As we got even closer, I could feel the presence of Weena Rhyn and the others. Weena Rhyn, Romio, Sierra, and Zelos Reed. They were all there.

However, being alive was not the same as being fine. As we arrived at the stage, we were reminded of this fact.

Romio was still unconscious, but there were no problems with his vitals or breathing, he was just unconscious. The fact that Sierra and Zelos Reed were not panicking suggested that there was nothing to worry about. He should wake up soon enough.

Sierra and Zelos Reed were in tatters. Their bleeding seemed to have stopped, but their vitality still hadn't recovered. Just like us, they seemed to have lost their regenerative power as a backlash from pushing themselves too hard.

But both of them were conscious, and as long as they stayed put, they shouldn't get any worse. They were now drinking potions and were resting their bodies.

However, Weena Rhyn's condition didn't seem to be fine at all.

『For real...?』

「Weena Rhyn... You okay...?」

「Fufu... I'd like to say that I'm fine, but, it seems I'm not」

Weena Rhyn smiles wryly while looking powerless.

Half of Weena Rhyn's body was covered with something black, like the embodiment of the darkness of the night. It was the same with her right eye, part of her right ear, her right arm, and her right shoulder.

It was neither magical nor miasma. I couldn't sense any magic or presence from that black thing. In fact, I couldn't even detect the presence of Weena Rhyn's body which should have been inside it.

No. Was there even a body in it? I thought the black stuff was covering it, but it seemed like her body itself had been transformed.

I couldn't even imagine what had happened to it.

「What happened?」

「It's kinda hard to explain, but... I guess this is the price of borrowing in advance」

「?」

「Yes. I borrowed some power from another me in the future」

Borrowing from the future? I'm not sure I understood the concept. Both Fran and Urushi were tilting their heads.

「You know I have a contract with Rhyn, don't you?」

「Nn」

「Rhyn's attributes are Time and Water」

「I know that too」

「My skill, the 『Divine Water Creation』, is the result of a combination of Weena's ability as a Water Magic-user and Rhyn's power as a Spirit of Water. It is a power that was created by evolving the Holy Water Creation skill that I could originally use」

「I see」

So, the power that Weena originally possessed was enhanced by her fusion with Rhyn.

「Apart from that, another force has a strong influence on Rhyn. It is called borrowing in advance. It's a Space-time ability that allows the user to use magic power from the user's other self from the future」



「You borrow magic from your future self? So that's what borrowing in advance is?」

「Something like that. It's an ability to secure a huge amount of magic power for a moment at the price of being unable to use any magic for a few days. You can think of it that way」

「So the backlash of using that move is that black part on your body?」

「That's half correct」

Well, she said that the cost of borrowing power in advance was the inability to use any magic for a few days. So, I didn't think it was the reason why a part of her body turned black like this.

「In the first place, my secret technique was neither borrowing power from my future self nor the Divine Water Creation」

「Then, what?」

Fran casually asked back. I wondered if she was willing to tell us about her secret technique, but to my surprise, Weena Rhyn was quite willing to tell us about it without hiding anything.

「The secret technique of the High Elves is the ability to become a demigod. The effect is simple. It increases my status and strengthens my skills. Well, the percentage of that is ridiculously high though. Especially in the skills' case, you can even say that the transformation causes it to evolve into a higher-level skill while in that state」

「Did you use the Divine Water Creation and that Borrowing In Advance ability after you become a Demigod?」

「That's right. And this body is the result of me using my enhanced strengthening from becoming a Demigod to its limit——」

She said that the Borrowing In Advance ability that she used in her demigod state could draw something other than magic power. But she said she didn't even know what it was.

「You don't know?」

「Yes. I borrowed something from my future self that I didn't understand, and somehow it gave me tremendous power. That's how it works」

「You're not afraid?」

「Of course I'm afraid, you know? However, I will gain tremendous power even more than I would gain by the demigod transformation during that time. Even so, it was almost a gamble on whether I could finish off the Great Magic Beast or not. So, I couldn't help but use it」

The originally monstrous High Elf was super-strengthened by the Demigod transformation and then further strengthened by the Borrowing Power In Advance from her future self in the demigod transformation state.

It seemed that if she activated the combo of Divine Water Creation and Aquarius in this state, she could imbue any water within a 500-meter radius with the Divine Attribute and then manipulate it at will.

「Amazing...」

「...Well, I wonder? But when you look at my current state, it's not alright, right?」

「So, the parts of your body turned black because of you becoming a demigod?」

「Yeah. When this happens, I can't feel or move them anymore. I can't see out of my right eye, and I can't hear out of my right ear」

Weena Rhyn then tried to move her arm, but the black arm didn't move at all.

「Can you use Heal on it?」

「It'll return to normal in a few years. After all, I've been through this before」

Years!? Well, considering that tremendous power, it's rather not that costly, is it? She's a long-living High Elf too after all... But even if she was a long-lived being, a few years was still a lot of time.

「Well, I don't know exactly how long it will take this time, because I've never used it this close to the limit before」

「You used it to its limit?」

「Yeah. I would have been dead if I activated that demigod transformation for another ten seconds」

「Eh?」

「If it's just my arms and a part of my face, I'll be fine as long as I rest because my regeneration will eventually help me recover. However, if this black part reaches my heart, my heart will naturally stop beating. If my heart or brain stops functioning, there's nothing I can do」

Weena Rhyn shrugged her shoulders as she said that. Well, the only thing that moved was her left shoulder though.

「That being said, if you and Sierra hadn't been chipping away at its power before, I would have lost my life before I could take it down. You have my thanks」

「...Nn」

Fran nodded, with a complicated look on her face.

After seeing the battle between Weena Rhyn and the Great Magic Beast, I guess she would feel that her help was a small thing.

But it didn't look like Weena Rhyn was lying. In other words, she was really telling the truth.

But still, the price of Weena Rhyn using it was high. “If only I were stronger...” That must be what Fran was thinking. I understood how she felt. That was because I felt the same way too.

Oh, and I still hadn't heard the important part.

「Has the Great Magic Beast completely exterminated?」

「Yeah. Without a doubt」

# Chapter 653

Weena Rhyn assured us that the Great Magic Beast had been exterminated. She must be very convinced that she could say that with such certainty.

It looked like we really didn't have to worry anymore.

If that was the case, I guess we better ask her something that had been bothering us.

「Rhyn, where's she?」

「Woof?」

Yes, it was about Rhyn's safety.

It seemed that she had pushed herself too hard and was exhausted. Moreover, in order to save us, she had pushed herself to the very limits.

I haven't felt her presence since then. My spirit detection couldn't catch the presence of a spirit either.

I wonder whether her presence was just too weak to be detected by my spirit detection or whether she has used up all of her power and disappeared?

But if Rhyn were to disappear because she saved us, Weena Rhyn would be even madder than before. If that's the case, I think it's the former...

「I'll call her now」

Thank goodness, it seems that she hadn't disappeared after all.

Weena Rhyn then closed her working left eye and concentrated. Immediately after that, a magic circle was drawn on the ground a few meters in front of her and a white figure emerged from it as if it were floating in the air.

Blonde hair, odd eyes, elf ears. It's definitely Rhyn.

However, her appearance was like that of a ghost as we could see the other side through her body.

It may not be strange since she was a spirit, but her presence itself is clearly less than before.

「Thank you. Thanks to you, there were no casualties this time...」

It was very quiet and hard to hear, but I could recognize that it was definitely Rhyn's voice.

「You okay?」

「Yeah...」

She didn't seem to be doing very well, but Rhyn nodded with a big smile on her face. Rhyn must have paid a steep price but she seemed to be satisfied with the result.

However, Weena Rhyn had a bitter look on her face as if she had chewed a bitter bug.

「Rhyn. Why did you push yourself too hard!? I know you did something to help Fran and the others when they launched their attack, but...」

「...I've been through a lot」

「And you can't tell me?」

「Because it's not over yet...」

I guess Weena Rhyn was referring to that mysterious time when Rhyn connected this side to that side and allowed us to speak to the delinquent Fran and that stupid me.

Apparently, she hadn't told Weena Rhyn the details either. Rhyn's exhaustion was so obvious that even we could see it. There was no way Weena Rhyn wouldn't have noticed.

But what did she mean when she said it was not over yet?

The connection had been broken, right?

Was she talking about Fran on the other side not being saved or something?

「Weena Rhyn, I can't go back to being me if things continue like this. You know that, right...?」

「No problem. All I have to do is give back Rhyn's power that is inside of me」

「You can't! You won't be able to withstand it. It'll take a lot of strength to separate us after all」

「I know that. But if that means I can get Rhyn back, I don't need my life」

「That's why I said you can't!」

Rhyn, who looked sad, shook her head at Weena Rhyn, who also looked sad.

That was a very crazy thing to say. We were able to defeat the giant monster without anyone losing their lives. But we wouldn't have a happy ending?

「What do you mean?」

「...Honestly, I'm pretty exhausted right now. So much so that if things continued like this, I might just disappear」

「But that's not gonna happen if I return her power」

「You'll die if you do that. You're not in good shape, remember? You'll only waste your life force if you tried to separate my power from yours」

Rhyn may disappear in her current state. The only way to prevent that from happening was to separate Rhyn's power that was fused with Weena Rhyn and return it to her.

But it seemed that it was gonna take a lot of strength for Weena Rhyn to separate it from her, and it seems that the current Weena Rhyn wouldn't be able to withstand it.

This meant that only one of them, Rhyn or Weena Rhyn, could be saved.

「That's, terrible」

「Woof!」

Fran had a look of astonishment on her face that only we could understand.

「If only we'd been able to whittle down the Great Magic Beast a little more...」

「...I'm so sorry」

Before I knew it, Sierra had approached us. Using the magic sword Zelos Reed as a walking cane, he managed to walk.

He must have come to the same conclusion as Fran after hearing their conversation. He turned his head down in frustration.

However, Sierra's face was not as ghastly as it had been in the past.

Perhaps it was because they had witnessed Zelyse's death before. Their main goal was to take revenge on Zelyse and rescue Romio and Zelos Reed after all.



The whereabouts of the magic sword Zelyse were unknown, but the human Zelyse had certainly perished, while Romio and Zelos Reed had survived.

With most of their goals accomplished, much, if not all, of the grief Sierra had been feeling was probably gone.

「No, it's too early to apologize... Fran, I am going need you guys' help」

「You guys? You mean, Sierra and me?」

「No... I mean Fran and her sword. Did you guys manage to get the power to cut spirits?」

「?」

I wasn't sure what she meant when she said the power to cut spirits, but I had an idea of what it was.

『You mean the Spirit's Hand skill?』

「That's right」

「What about it?」

「With that power, you can break the ties between Weena and Me. Once the ties are broken, our power will naturally separate itself. By using that, Weena won't have to use much of her strength」

「Will it save the both of you?」

「Yes. I know this is going to be a burden for you guys, but I'm begging you. Please, please save us」

# Chapter 654

TENKEN 654 How To Properly Use the Spirit Detection

『We can help both Rhyn and Weena Rhyn if we use the Spirit's hand?』

「Yes」

『How exactly do we do that?』

The Spirit's Hand is a new skill that I just learned a while ago. To be honest, I don't even know how to use it since I haven't used it.

Is it a kind of offensive skill? Besides, if it's something that would put a burden on us, it must be a skill that requires a lot of magic power.

But if we can save Rhyn and Weena Rhyn with it, then it's definitely worth the effort.

「How do we use it?」

「Use the Spirit's Hand to break the ties between Weena and me. Then Weena and Rhyn will be separated from each other on their own」

「Ties?」

「The ties that define Weena and Rhyn as one being. The very cause that has made Weena and Rhyn into Weena Rhyn」

「?」

Hearing that, Fran tilted her head.

We can't see that ties at all. No matter how much I searched for some kind of magic power between them, I can't find anything. I wonder how should we cut something that we can't even see...

「Where're that ties?」

「It will not be visible to the eye. But if you have the skill called the Spirit Detection, you will be able to feel it」

『I see』

Spirit Detection, huh... It seems that it was not a kind of magical ties but something similar to spirit.

(Master?)

『Yeah, I know』

Then I concentrated my Spirit Detection to find it.

As I searched for the presence within our surroundings, I was able to detect the faint presence of the spirit Rhyn.

But I have no idea where the ties she told me about is.

『That ties are between Rhyn and Weena Rhyn, right?』

(Yes, that's right)

Rhyn nodded at my question. It seems that those ties were really there between them...

『...Hmm』

But unfortunately, I couldn't detect anything.

Isn't this better if Rhyn could tell us what to do and activate the Spirit's Hand at her instruction?

As a spirit herself, she should be able to tell us where to cut with the Spirit's Hand.

But Rhyn shook her head.

(Under normal circumstances, that would be fine, I suppose)

『Under normal circumstances?』

(The Spirit's Hand is a skill that requires a lot of power to use. Moreover, there would be a lot of resistance to cut off the ties between Weena and me. In Sword-san's current state, he'll definitely reach his limit halfway through)

In other words, my magic power won't be able to last long when using it.

Now that I'm exhausted, my magic power would definitely run out halfway through.

『I understand』

So, in the end, we should do our best to detect it with my Spirit Detection.

I decided to deactivate all my skills and concentrate entirely on Spirit Detection. All the presences of my surroundings then disappeared, and I was completely immersed in a world of nothingness, seeking only the presence of their ties.

First of all, I could feel that Rhyn's presence was much stronger than before.

For the first time, I felt that I was able to properly feel the presence of a spirit.

So, this is what a spirit is, huh?

The moment I felt that, there seemed to be something between Rhyn and Weena Rhyn.

Could it be, that is the ties?

I followed the slight feeling of discomfort and focused even more on my senses.

My sharpened senses definitely caught something that was there.

Simply put, it feels like a tangled, thick string. A single thick string that was stretched out from each other, tangling and knotting in a complicated way in its middle.

The knot looked as if a young child had randomly twisted it many times, tied it into a tight knot, and then further messed up the string all over the place.

In particular, the shape of the string that was stretching out from Weena Rhyn's side seems to be so distorted. It was as if the string extending from Weena Rhyn was trying to swallow the string on its own.

『I see it! So, this is what she means with ties?』

《Spirit Detection is reacting to it. The information provided by Rhyn also indicates that there's a 96% possibility that this is the key to their connection》

『So she wants me to cut this thing with the Spirit's Hand?』

It's an ability I've never used before, will I be able to pull it off?

But to my surprise, Announcer-san has different opinion on it.

《Currently, the individual named Master's magic power is not enough to fully activate the Spirit's Hand》

『You think it'll consume that much magic?』

《Yes. Even though it's a unique skill, it's one of the top skills that use a lot of magic》

Well, that's a problem.

『We also don't even have a way to restore my magic power right now...』

We have used up all of the magic stones and potions we have. The only way left to restore my magic is to use Magic Steal, but the only people around were Weena Rhyn, Rhyn, and Sierra, who were as worn out as we were. If we stole their magic power now, they might lose their life.

The only vigorous ones among us would be Urushi and Zelos Reed.

No, if I can get these two to supply me with magic power, can I manage it?

『What do you think, Announcer-san?』

《Yes. Sufficient magic power can be secured that way》

『Alright!』

With this, I think I have a chance to save Weena Rhyn and Rhyn.

# Chapter 655

## TENKEN 655 Sympathy

Among us, Urushi and Zelos Reed are in relatively decent condition. No, I don't mean that they are in a good condition, just that they are not in a state where they are going to die.

Still, they're the only ones who can afford to supply me with magic power.

Now we just need to figure out how to get them to supply me with magic. Should I take it away with Magic Steal? But in Zelos Reed's case, what lies within him is his evil spirit.

Even if I were to absorb it, I don't think I could convert it into magic power.

But come to think of it, I just acquired the Evil Spirit Control skill a while ago. If I were to use that, wouldn't I be able to convert evil spirit into magic power?

However, that would require Zelos Reed's cooperation. Then I explained this to Fran for her to get Zelos Reed's cooperation.

「Oi」

Hey, Fran! I know you didn't like him, but could you talk to him a little more politely?

「What is it?」

Zelos Reed, however, responded to Fran's harsh words with a sincere one. His tone was not polite, but it seems that he was willing to listen to Fran's words.

「I don't have enough power to help Rhyn and Weena Rhyn. Give me yours」

「All right, take as much as you want」

Zelos Reed then promptly nodded his head. Perhaps he had planned to nod no matter what she said from the beginning.

That's how quick it was.

But there are also those who are not happy with it.

「Wait, would it be dangerous for unc——Zelos Reed-san? Besides, it should be difficult for a normal human to control the evil spirit」

As Sierra said so, he turned his worried gaze to Zelos Reed. Well, for Sierra, saving Zelos Reed is his main goal. So, I guess it can't be helped.

I would definitely be worried if Fran were to offer her magic power to someone I didn't fully trust after all.

「This sword has the ability to control it」

「...I knew it wasn't just a normal sword, but is that sword really had that kind of ability?」

「Nn」

「But...」

Sierra just can't accept it. But I can't just tell him about me either, so why don't we force things a bit here?

「Sierra... is that what should I call you? Don't worry, I'll be fine」

「But...」

「Besides, I've already entrusted my life to Fran. I don't care what happens to me」



「What are you talking about?」

Zelos Reed then tells Sierra, who rolled his eyes in surprise, about his promise to Fran.

In exchange for Fran taking Romio to Barbra's orphanage later on, she can do whatever she wants with Zelos Reed's life. However, only after the contract between Romio and Zelos Reed has been cancelled.

The contract between Romio and Zelos Reed has already been cancelled by Weena Rhyn. Then it means that his life now belongs to Fran.

Zelos Reed doesn't seem to care how he gonna be treated because his life now belongs to Fran. But still, he wished that Sierra wouldn't resent Fran if he were to die because of this.

But Zelos Reed's inability to read people's emotions has turned out to be a completely bad thing. I don't know much about this man, but there is no way he is good at proper human interaction by any stretch of the imagination.

Of course, there was no way that Sierra could be reassured by such a story.

「No way...」

Sierra then glared at Fran.

Well, I'm sure Sierra also know that Fran has a grudge against Zelos Reed after all.

If that was the case, there's no way she would be concerned about Zelos Reed's life. In other words, he must have thought that there was a good chance that she would absorb all the evil spirit and magic power from Zelos Reed to kill him.

If I were in his shoes, I'd definitely be skeptical too.

Fran then approached Sierra. She held me up so that he could see me better.

(Master, can I tell him?)

『...You want to tell him about me being an intelligence weapon?』

(Nn)

『I'm not sure that's going to convince Sierra right now though...』

(Don't worry. He'll understand when he gets to know Master)

『You think so?』

(Nn. I'm sure it'll be fine)

『Well, I guess it'll be fine if Fran says so...』

Does she gonna say it'll be okay because I would be the one to control the skills instead of her? Even so, I don't think it gonna clear up Sierra's doubts...

But I think it's fine to tell them about me. Sierra was also a wielder of an intelligence weapon after all. So, I don't think he gonna blabber out our secret.

「...What?」

Sierra gave Fran a suspicious look as she showed her sword to him and fell silent. But Fran didn't care and opened her mouth again.

「This sword's name is Master」

「Master?」

「Nn. Master, an intelligence weapon」

「What...!?!」

Sierra's face turned into an expression of surprise. He may be putting on a tough face, but he's still a kid. His poker face tends to crumble from time to

time.

『Yo, my name is Master. I'm Fran's sword and guardian. Nice to meet you』

「F-for real...!?!」

「Nn. The Spirit's Hand will be used by Master」

『We won't take revenge on Zelos Reed for now. Rhyn and Weena Rhyn are our top priorities right now. Besides, Romio would be sad if we do that, right?』

I'll just tell him how I honestly feel for now. I thought it was better for me to be honest here instead of lying.

Then Sierra's expression changed to one of surprise. After a moment of confusion, a strangely happy expression appeared on his face.

「I-is that so!? So, it was an intelligence weapon, huh...」

「Nn」

「...」

「...」

Sierra then falls silent for a moment. He is probably talking to the magic sword, Zelos Reed.

「Alright. I'll trust you for now」

「Thanks」

I wonder why... I just greet him a little and now he suddenly believed me?

(He's a fellow wielder of an intelligence weapon after all, so I knew he'd understand if we properly explain things to him)

I thought that was a silly reason, but maybe it really is. He had been sent here from a different time, and the only person he could ask for advice or rely on was the magic sword Zelos Reed. For Sierra, this must be the first time he has met someone like him.

In addition, they were both children who were in a very similar situation. It was no wonder that Fran and Sierra felt sympathy for each other.

# Chapter 656

TENKEN 656 Power, Replenished!

Now that Sierra was no longer opposed to this, we could peacefully ask Zelos Reed to supply me with power.

Since they already knew about our secret, I decided to give them direct instruction.

『Zelos Reed. I'm going to need your help now. I need you to stay put and not resist』

「...Understood」

Zelos Reed nodded in hesitation, seemingly unsure of what kind of face to make. It seems that he is still uncomfortable with talking to a sword.

As everyone watches in silence, I activated my Evil Spirit Control.

I see, it was certainly a skill to Control the Evil Spirits. I was able to control the little bit of evil that was leaking out of the Zelos Reed at my will.

The next step is to control the evil spirit within Zelos Reed.

『Here I go』

「Okay」

Then I extended the target of the Evil Spirit Control to the evil spirit within Zelos Reed.

Zelos Reed's expression did not change during that process. I guess it was because he has readied himself for anything that would be done to him.

But even in such a state, an evil person is still an evil person. Evil spirits were flowing and swirling within him.

So, this is the evil spirit of a high-ranking evil person, huh?

The Evil Spirit Control allowed me to feel the evil in more detail than ever, but it was so overwhelming that it gave me chills.

Nevertheless, I will use my Evil Spirit Control to increase my interference with the evil spirit within Zelos Reed.

And to my surprise, it was going surprisingly well. Well, maybe it was also because I was good at magic control.

But it seems that it was also thanks to the fact that I didn't have a physical body, so I don't have to bear the burden of pain and fatigue. I was also used to manipulate magic to do anything, so I was more used to this kind of skill than most people.

I could tell that the evil spirit within Zelos Reed's body was starting to follow my will slightly. Then, a little by little, it was pulled away from Zelos Reed and began to flow towards me.

『Alright, just keep going like that...』

「Muh」

Zelos Reed twitched lightly. It seems that even he can feel that his own evil spirit is being manipulated from the outside.

But as I thought, there would be some resistance too.

Zelos Reed may have completely submitted himself to me, but that doesn't mean that I can perfectly control his evil spirits.

It's probably because it's an evil spirit under the control of another. Especially when controlling the evil spirits of high-ranking evil people like Zelos Reed, the difficulty ought to be high.

On the other hand, if it was just on the level of a goblin or an orc, I think I could suck out their evil spirits more easily. I should give it a try next time.

Still, I continued to use my skills with determination, and little by little, I could see evil spirit continued to flow out of Zelos Reed and flowing into me.

『Now all I have to do is convert this evil spirit into magic power, huh?』

I haven't tried it yet, but it looked like I could use my Evil Spirit Control skill to convert evil spirit and turn this power into magic power.

However, Announcer-san has different opinion on it.

《Due to the effect of the Evil Spirit Control skill, it is possible to handle evil spirits as it is》

『Eh? Does that mean I can use both magic power and evil spirits?』

《Correct. Although it is less efficient than magic power, the power gained by using evil spirits as it is would be greater than the loss caused by converting it》

But is that okay? No matter how potent this skill is, using evil spirits as it is was a bit...

However, will the current me be able to stand it?

『Is it okay if I let evil spirits pass through me?』

《According to my calculations, there is no problem if it is temporary. In addition, with the assistance of the individual named Announcer-san, it is possible to temporally minimize the effect of using the evil spirit》

『Ooh! Is that so!? As expected of Announcer-san!』

《The influence of evil spirits will be channeled to less influential areas within the individual named Master to protect his core》

That means spreading the damage from the evil spirit to less important places, right? Besides, the less damage in one place, the faster the recovery will be.

『Announcer-san! I'm counting on you!』

《Yes. Leave it to me》

All right, now it's up to Zelos Reed's physical condition. I'll absorb his evil spirit little by little.

『Okay, next is Urushi』

「Woof」

『I know this gonna be pretty harsh for you, but just hang in there』

「Woof!」

『That's a good answer』

I used my Simultaneous Calculation skill to use magic power absorption in succession. In Urushi's case, thanks to the fact that he has a magical connection with me, I was able to absorb his magic power quite smoothly.

《12% remaining to fill the required magic power》

「Kuh...」

『Just a little more, hang in there!』

「Grr...」

《The required magic power has been secured》

『Good!』



The moment I stopped the magic absorption, Urushi fell to the ground without a word. He seemed to be conscious, but he was too tired to even speak.

His regeneration has stopped, and I could see that he had started to bleed again.

But it's not the time to feel sorry for him.

『You've endured well, Urushi! Thanks to you, I've regained much of my magic power!』

「Uuf...」

I'll use my telekinesis to pet him as much as I can later.

《The absorption of evil spirits is complete》

『Alright!』

Well then, let's do this!

Then I once again sensed the ties between Rhyn and Weena Rhyn, and aimed my next move to it.

『Spirit's Hand, activate!』

# Chapter 657

TENKEN 657 The Spirit's Hand

The Spirit's Hand, unlike its name, was not in the form of a hand. It was more like manipulating a lump of power that has no shape at all.

But I was not confused by it.

After all, the Spirit's Hand were almost similar to telekinesis in its use. I think I can manage this.

I've been able to maintain my spirit detection perfectly. Apparently, once I succeeded in detecting the spirits, I became able to recognize them more easily.

It's like I've found the right wavelength. I can now see the ties with just a light concentration.

I moved the Spirit's Hand and touched the ties a little. Indeed, it seemed that I could touch it. It doesn't react at all to a light touch, but what would happen if I were to put more strength into the Spirit's Hand? Will I be able to pull it off?

『You sure you want me to cut this?』

「Yes, we're counting on you」

『Alright!』

I poured my power into the Spirit's Hand and tried to cut the ties between Weena Rhyn and Rhyn, but...

『Tsk!』

It did not work at all. I couldn't even scratch it. Moreover, I could see that the magic power I had gotten from Urushi was diminishing at an alarming rate.

『So this is what Announcer-san was worried about!』

「Do your best!」

「Please, please save Rhyn...」

Weena Rhyn, who had been silent all this time, opened her mouth.

I guess she stayed silent all this time as not to disturb our concentration. But it seems that she can't hold herself back anymore.

『If it comes to this, I'll give it everything I've got!』

I don't think I can afford to take a wait-and-see approach now.

So, I focused my last remaining power on the Spirit's Hand and kneaded Evil Spirit together with it at the same time.

『Guh...』

This is bad.

The moment I kneaded the Evil Spirit, a chill ran down my spine. It's just the sensation though, I don't have a spine after all.

My spirit was shaken, and I felt a creepy, unpleasant sensation within me.

But actually, I've felt this a few times before.

When I am on the verge of breaking from overusing my powers, or when I cannibalized the Fanatics. In such critical situations, this chill would hit me every time.

In other words, this is still dangerous for me.

『Is it because of the Evil Spirit...?』

《Recalculate the efficiency of dispersing damage caused by Evil Spirits will further reduce the effects of the Evil Spirits》

『Is that possible?』

《Yes. The individual named Master should concentrate on using his skill》

Just right after Announcer-san said so, the chill that I had been feeling suddenly eased.

『Good job!』

The moment the burden was lifted, I put all the strength I had into the Spirit's Hand.

『Haaah!』

Alright! The ties that hadn't scratched at all earlier is now being bent by the Spirit's Hand!

The ties had no substance, so it made no particular sound when it was being hit by me. However, I thought I could hear the sound of cracking and creaking from it.

Using the image of a wrung-out rag, I grabbed the ties at the edge and twist it up.

Then, at the moment I put even more effort into it.

As if all the hard work I had done earlier had been a lie, the ties shattered easily. No, maybe that was just my own image of the power that had lost its substance and scattered as fine particles.

The interfering power of my Spirit's Hand must have exceeded the strength of the ties.

『Whohooo! How was that, Rhyn, Weena Rhyn!?!』

I immediately checked the status of Rhyn and Weena Rhyn.

「...」

「...」

Huh?

Both Rhyn and Weena Rhyn remain silent. They are standing there with straight faces.

C-could it be, it didn't work? But the ties were certainly destroyed, right?

『H-hey, you two?!』

Just as I was about to call out to them again.

「...It's gone」

「...You're right」

Said Rhyn and Weena Rhyn to each other.

A short word murmurs. But it must have been filled with all their feelings.

Happiness, loneliness, solitude, freedom, sorrow, hope. Thousands of years of feelings that only Rhyn and Weena Rhyn can understand that we can't fully comprehend.

Then tears quietly trailed down Weena Rhyn's cheeks. The sight of the beautiful High Elf quietly weeping held a sense of mystery and serenity.

But we didn't have time to admire it.

A tremendous amount of magic power had begun to be released from Weena Rhyn's body.

It was a magic that was similar to Weena Rhyn's magic, but not exactly the same. And it was certainly not under Weena Rhyn's control.

Normally, magic power that is simply released would dissipate into the air. However, this magic was different.

「Rhyn... I'll give it back」

「Yes. Thank you, Weena」

I could see that a huge amount of magic power was being sucked into Rhyn.

# Chapter 658

## TENKEN 658 Rhyn's Resurrection

The flow of magic from Weena Rhyn to Rhyn had stopped, but there was no visible change in Weena Rhyn and Rhyn.

However, if I were to search deeper, there's definitely a change.

The changes in their presence were so drastic that it seemed as if they were different people. It was not that their presences had become stronger or weaker, but the wavelength of their presences itself had changed.

It seems that with the ties between them was broken means that Rhyn's existence in Weena and Rhyn has been separated and Rhyn's power has been returned to Rhyn.

In this case, it's understandable that the presence of Weena Rhyn would change, but why would Rhyn's presence undergo a change as well?

Or was it natural that changes would happen when Rhyn returns to her original state?

However, it seemed that Weena Rhyn was too worn out to stand. Immediately after, she collapsed on the spot.

「Weena Rhyn? Are you okay?」

「I'm not Weena Rhyn anymore. I'm just Weena now...」

Weena Rhyn——No, Weena loses her consciousness when she says so.

『Oops!』

I was almost run out of power, but I activated my telekinesis to kill the momentum of Weena's fall slightly, and then Fran catches her falling body.

「Weena?」

Even when Fran shook her lightly, she showed no signs of waking up. She must be extremely exhausted from everything.

『Her vitality has diminished considerably...』

「Let her take some rest for now」

「Nn. Okay」

Following Rhyn's words, Fran gently laid Weena down.

「She'll be fine?」

「She'll wake up after a while. Her powers will be greatly reduced though...」

I guess at least she's not going to die.

Unlike Weena, Rhyn was filled with great vigor. She had regained her strength and seemed to be completely out of danger.

「...Thank you. It's all thanks to you guys that Weena could be saved」

Said Rhyn while bowed to us.

「Of course, you guys had saved me too...」

『Hey, Rhyn, how much do you know?』

I decided to take this opportunity to ask her something that had been bothering me for a long time.

『Rhyn said that she couldn't see the future... But still, you must have working on a lot of things to change the future, right?』



When I made contact with the other Fran, I'm pretty sure that Rhyn must be assisting.

If Rhyn hadn't told Announcer-san, I wouldn't have used my Potential Release. Then I wouldn't have met the other Fran and Me, and I wouldn't have gotten some new skill. And Weena and Rhyn would not have been saved.

In the first place, if the other Rhyn hadn't sent Sierra, Zelos Reed, and Zelyse to this timeline, I could have turned into a mere sword.

I don't believe that all of this is just a coincidence. I just couldn't figure out how much of it was a coincidence and how much of it was in Rhyn's hands. I couldn't figure it out.

No, I wouldn't complaints if it was all in the palms of her hands. After all, it had saved our life. Rather, I would be grateful. However, I was just a little bit curious.

「...I, who am not a God, cannot see into the future. I've told you this before, haven't I?」

『Yeah』

"Who am not a God" she said? but the Goddess of Chaos has told me that even a God cannot see into the future.

Considering that, a perfect prediction of the future would be impossible.

『But you do have the kind of power that makes you choose the better options, don't you?』

「It's not that big of a deal. I just know how my actions affect me. It's a hunch, if you say」

It seems that the immediate future of a few seconds can be predicted by that intuition.

However, if she wanted to explore farther ahead, she would have to use tremendous power. She said that if she were to try to perceive years ahead, Rhyn herself might disappear.

This is just a guess on my part, but I wonder if Rhyn is unconsciously performing high-level operations. What if Rhyn is using her abilities as a spirit of time to instantly simulate various possibilities and unconsciously foreseeing the future, and the results are appearing as intuition?

That's because the more distant the future she predicts, the more exhausted she becomes. The more information she has to process, the more she has to process. My simultaneous computing skills are similar to that, so I know exactly how it feels.

「But I'm sure that this intuition has helped me in many ways... Well, you see, it all started with an encounter」

Rhyn muttered to herself and looked at Sierra and the others.

「One day, a tremendous evil spirit appeared on the shore of the lake. Naturally, I went to check on the source. There, I found a boy and a sword that emitted strong evil spirit」

No doubt about it. It must be Sierra and his magic sword, Zelos Reed. It seemed that Rhyn was already aware of their presence when they appeared at this time.

「You may not be able to see the future, but you can easily see the past. After all, it's only a matter of reading what has already happened」

To us, seeing into the future and seeing into the past seems to be equally difficult, but to Rhyn, seeing into the past seems to be a very simple act.

As a result, she encounters a lot of bewildering facts.

「No matter how you look at it, the boy and the sword were living in the future」

Rhyn's vision of Sierra and the others' past gave her a lot of information.

「And I received a silent message from myself. That this boy is the beginning of hope for us all」

# Chapter 659

TENKEN 659 The future in Rhyn's grasp.

「Did you know Sierra and the others when they first came here?」

「Yes, of course」

They probably had no idea that they had been noticed that long ago. Sierra's eyes widened in surprise.

「And when I found them, I tried to contact them to see into their past」

「Eh?」

Sierra raises a dumb voice and had a confused look on his face.

Most likely, he had no memory of Rhyn.

「At first, I hid myself as a spirit, so they wouldn't have noticed me. And after that, it was just a matter of changing my appearance and greeted him」

It's only recently that I've been able to detect spirits. It's still not perfect. If the spirit I was talking to consciously erased their presence, I might not be able to tell even now.

Sierra and Zelos Reed must not have noticed Rhyn either.

It was the Rhyn of that timeline who had first decided to gamble on this plan—or rather, on the slightest possibility of salvation. Her intuition must have whispered to her that contact with Sierra and Fran from the other timeline might help her avoid ruin.

Rhyn sent Sierra, Zelos Reed and Zelyse from one place to the other to make the faint hope a reality.

And the Rhyn in this timeline took over that hope by making contact with Sierra.

「There is no such thing as an ending where no one is unhappy, neither here nor there. There is no such thing. But what if we could reach such a future? Don't you think it's worth risking everything I have?」

Rhyn said that she was determined. She was determined that she would save everyone.

「Things have only recently started to move though」

Zelyse's whereabouts were unknown, and there was no telling where Fran and the others were. In the end, she had no choice but to wait for the time to come while assisting Sierra from the shadows.

「We were being helped without our knowing...?」

Sierra muttered in astonishment.

I could care less about the process, as long as I avoided the destruction that was to come for Fran. Even if the whole thing was set up by Rhyn. Fran would not be convinced. After all the fierce battles and adventures she had been through, she might not have been able to do it all by herself.

It was the same fact that could shake Sierra's self-confidence that he had built up over the years after all.

「Just so you know, my help is minimal. I've only directly interfered with him three times in the past. First, when I led a Guild member to his weakened body. The other time when he was surrounded by dangerous magical beasts, I helped him escape by distracting them just a little bit. And the other time, when he almost died from an illness, I used my healing power to restore his strength. That's about it, isn't it?」

Whether it's insignificant or not, Rhyn didn't seem to give him an upper hand in any way.

「...I see」

Sierra seemed satisfied. It was probably because Rhyn's help was less frequent than he had imagined.

Well, I guess by saying that she hasn't helped him directly means that she has helped him indirectly many times. I'll keep my mouth shut because it might complicate things.

「When Zelyse showed up and started to make a move in the dark, things finally began to move」

Rhyn said that she opened a stall in order to get in touch with Fran. She said she wanted to talk to Fran and get to know her.

The reason for this is that Rhyn's influence can only target those who are close to her. To put it simply, the closer you are to Rhyn, the easier it is for Rhyn's influence to work.

For this reason, Rhyn decided to have a chat with Fran and form a strong connection with her.

「? Rhyn had a chat with me?」

「Well, in my case, I barely know anyone but Weena Rhyn. But even that was enough for me」

In other words, because Rhyn is a loner, even a small conversation with her would qualify anyone as her friend?

But I guess that contact was still meaningful for us.

「It was really hard after that. Sierra, Fran, Romio, Weena, and Zelyse. I had to keep an eye on everyone's behavior as much as possible and move around to avoid the worst developments...」

It is difficult for Rhyn to handle everyone directly. In the first place, she can't wield so much power due to the fact that she is using her power to choose the future.

Therefore, only when the worst comes to the worst does she make a slight alteration to the flow of history. The result of this lonely struggle is the history we have today.

For that matter, she was concerned about the fact that she had left Zelyse unattended, but after thinking about it, Zelyse's behavior wasn't necessarily the worst thing for Rhyn. On the contrary, an incompletely resurrected great magic beast might provide an opportunity to be exploited.

The worst thing for Rhyn is not the resurrection of the great magic beast, but the death of Weena Rhyn and the transformation of her personality due to her lack of mental stability.

Considering the fact that even Weena Rhyn's life would be in danger if the great magic beast were to be fully resurrected, it might have even been a blessing if Zelyse was able to resurrect the great magic beast incompletely.

「I never thought I'd be able to achieve such great results」

「Is it for the best?」

『Both Weena and Rhyn are looking very worn out... Weena also says that she won't be able to regain her powers back for years, but it must be the same for Rhyn, right?』

Rhyn's weariness was more than just a temporary loss of power. No matter how I looked at her, she had become a lower grade spirit.

She used to be classified as a high-level spirit, but now she was only at the level of medium-level spirit.

「No, I'm fine. The great magic beast has gone, we managed to separate me and Weena without losing our lives. What's more could I ask for?」

『Well, that's true...』

「Romio, Sierra, and Zelos Reed were safe, and neither Fran nor Swordsan had gone out of control. The only thing I was worried about was Zelyse losing his life, which had a positive effect on us over there. The country did not fall, and the damage to the people was minimal. It would be greed to want more than that」

Rhyn must have excluded the option of everyone being safe from the beginning. She must have thought that it would be better if some of us survived than if everyone including herself died and the great magic beast was left on the loose.

『Surely, after dealing with such a monster, it would be too greedy to ask for more...』



# Chapter 660

TENKEN 660 Side Fran? 3

「Master」

『...Fran. I... All this time...』

I could hear Master's frayed voice. But I was so happy to hear his voice that I cried.

Because this voice was definitely Master's voice——Master's voice from when we first met.

When I hear his voice, I feel brave. I'm no longer afraid to call him my Master.

「Master. Lend me your strength」

『...My strength...?』

「I need Master's help to defeat the great magic beast. Help me as Master, not as a mere sword. Please」

『Are you crying...?』

「I'm crying from happiness. Don't worry about it」

After we get out from here, we'll be facing the great magic beast.

It's very intimidating. Can I really win? I feel a little uneasy. But if my Master lends me his strength, I'm sure I can win.

「Master. What I needed is Master」

『You're right... I am your Master after all...』

「Master?」

『Aah, that's right! I am Master. I'm Fran's Master...!』

Suddenly, Master's tone changed.

Very rough. It's like he's angry.

But I was not afraid at all. On the contrary, it made me happy. Because that voice was no longer the voice of the sword. It was the voice of Master with a proper heart, just like in the past.

「Can you go? Master」

『Aa... Aaah! I can go! Let's go! Wherever you want to go! I'll put all my heart into it!』

「Nn!」

『I'll apologize later. For now, let's just blow that thing up!』

「Nn! Okay!」

I wonder why. I myself was not really sure about it either, but I felt like I could do something amazing. I can beat any enemy now.

The big monster is no match for me now. Because I have Master now.

「Let's get serious!」

I'm really going to settle this. I'm not going to leave anything behind. I will use the strongest skill I had.

「O raging power of the divine beast that lies in my blood. Awaken! Divine Beast!」

Black lightning enveloped my entire body, and I could feel my hair grow a little longer.

But that's about the extent of the change in appearance. It's a little too bad though. With a name like "Divine Beast", I wish my whole body would be more fluffy.

But this skill is very strong. It's about five times as strong as Brilliant Lightning Rush. Maybe.

「Master. Are you ready?」

『Of course. Full throttle. Don't hold back on me. And it seems Announcer-san is back too』

《Leave the control of your skills to me. If it's dangerous, I can force it to end》

『That's what she says』

「...Okay」

Master and Announcer-san, both of them are very reliable.

「Okay then... Let's go!」

『Ou!』

「Aaaaa! Divine Sword Release!」

『Ooooooooooooo——』

...

『Fran... We did it...』

「Nn... But, I made a hole in the lake...」

『Aah—... I wonder will there be ecological problems in the future...?』

「Still, it's much better than a great magic beast on the loose」

「Rhyn, so you're safe?」

We were resting our weary bodies on a small mountain near the lake when Rhyn came up to us.

I thought something bad had happened to her because she suddenly disappeared after she lost her connection with the other side. I thought she might have died, so I'm glad she's okay.

「I just used a little too much power...」

「Is it because of our fault? Because you let me talk to the Masters over there?」

「Not only that... The fact that I sent Romio and the others to that timeline and doing many others things exhausted a lot of my power... But I'm fine now」

Rhyn's figure is getting fainter. I can feel very little of her energy. Is she really okay?

「...Don't push yourself too hard」

「I know」

「I wonder what happened to us over there...?」

Was it because I felt relieved after defeating the great magic beast? Suddenly, I wondered about us over there. It was thanks to that me and Master that Master was able to come back from just being a mere sword.

「Would Rhyn know?」

「I'm sorry. The connection's already been severed」

「I see. Too bad」

I wish we could have talked some more.

But it's okay.

Because they left me so many things.

「Master. I pushed myself pretty hard. Are you okay?」

『Aah. I'm fine. My strength's all gone, but I'm feeling pretty good』

Master says so and laughs.

He doesn't have a face, but I can tell. Master is definitely smiling like he used to.

「Nn」

『...I'm sorry, Fran. I was out of my mind』

「No. As long as you're back to normal, that's all that matters」

『...I see』

「Nn!」

Master's gentle voice. Tears well up in my eyes again.

I can see that Master is blaming himself. But that's also because Master was able to return to normal. he can be happy, he can be angry, he can do all these things because he has feelings.

And I'm so happy about that.

《Warning. There are signs of change in the individual named Master's name》

『Eh? The name is... Does that mean my name is going to change? Eh? Why?』

《Yes. The change already completed. It has returned to its previous name. With the change of individual named Master, the Divine Sword Release skill has disappeared from individual named Fran》

『Wait, what do you mean? Wow, seriously, my name is back to Master! Does this mean that I'm no longer a Divine Sword?』

《Yes. With the change of Master, it was stripped of its name as a Divine Sword and lost its authority》

I don't really understand, but it seems that my master is no longer a divine sword. But I wonder why? Could it be because I got his heart back? Can't he become a divine sword if he has a heart? No. Maybe it's the other way around. Maybe he lost his heart because he became a divine sword.

If that's the case, he doesn't have to be a divine sword. In fact, I don't want a divine sword. I want Master.

『I-I'm sorry Fran. I don't know why I'm not the divine sword anymore!』

「Nn」

『Eeh? Why are you smiling?』

「No problem. Master is Master. I don't care if he's a divine sword or not」

As long as Master is there, that's all that matters. And Announcer-san will be there too after all.

「...If only Urushi were here, we'd be perfect」

『...You're right』

That was the only disappointment. But then, the Announcer-san told us a surprise.

《It is not impossible to resummon the individual named Urushi》

『Eh? What do you mean?』

《The magic stone of the individual named Urushi has been assimilated into the individual named Master. By using this bond, it is possible to attempt to summon him again》

「What should we do?」

《To re-summon from a magic stone, you must use the Divine Beast Summoning Technique. To learn this, you must reach the maximum level of the summoning technique and be recognized by the god of magic》

「The God of Magic... What can I do to get their approval?」

《There is a lack of information. It is recommended that you first raise your summoning skills to the maximum level, followed by getting information on the God of Magic》

「I see... Master」

『Yeah, I think we know what our next objective is』

「Nn!」

Our adventure continues. A lively, fun adventure.

# Chapter 661

TENKEN 661 What Happened After

It had already been ten days since the great magic beast was defeated.

Weena Rhyn—or Weena's handling of the aftermath is now complete. Although the feudal lords and adventurer's guilds in the area are the ones who actually take action, Weena was the one who gave the various instructions.

Many were astonished to see her changed appearance, but her influence seemed to be much the same.

It may be because her power is not yet known to have been greatly weakened, but it is probably due to her past record.

Also, the fact that she had defeated that great magic beast that was visible from the town seemed to have helped increase her influence even more.

The adventurers, for example, looked at her like she was a hero. They were in complete obedience to her instructions.

When she had finished giving some instructions, she handed over the work to the government officials who had been dispatched, and Weena returned to the academy.

The officials really wanted her to stay, but they couldn't force her to stay. In the end, they had no choice but to let Weena go.

We were also able to return to the academy with Weena after completing a few quests for reconstruction.



The academy was also in an uproar over Weena's appearance, but as expected, things seemed to have calmed down after two days. Normally, the students don't have much contact with Weena Rhyn, and when it's explained to them that there's no problem, they probably think that there's really no problem at all.

The teachers still can't seem to get used to it, but I guess they'll have to learn to accept it over time.

Well, it doesn't matter to us who will be leaving the academy soon.

「So, you're sure you want us to keep Zelos Reed?」

「Nn」

Now we were discussing with Weena and the others about the treatment of Zelos Reed and Romio.

This had been bothering me as well.

She made a promise that she'd get his life for something, but I don't think Fran would kill Zelos Reed now.

Fran feels a strong emotional attachment to Romio and Sierra. She found out that there was some similarity between them and herself. It may not be friendship, but she felt some kind of sympathy for them.

If she were to kill Zelos Reed, she would certainly be resented by Romio and Sierra, and they would be her enemy. Even Fran would not like that.

Of course, it doesn't mean that her hatred for Zelos Reed has disappeared, but if she was asked to kill him, I don't think she would.

The fact that Kiara herself has told us that avenging her is pointless is probably a big factor. I hate to say it, but we already have an excuse to get away with it without killing Zelos Reed.

And Fran's decision was to leave Romio and Zelos Reed in Weena's care.

When we thought about Romio's sake, it was not a bad idea.

Romio's wish is not to be in a privileged environment or under the protection of a gentle guardian, but to be with Zelos Reed.

However, Zelos Reed is being hunted as a criminal. There are few places where he can walk around with his head held high. And the academy, with its self-governing rights, was one of those few places.

Also, with Weena and Rhyn's power weakened, the academy is without any exceptional strength. Zelos Reed's power will be needed by the academy.

It was a decision that would allow us to trade favors with Romio, Zelos Reed, Weena, Sierra, all of them. Well, I don't think Fran would think that far ahead though.

Rather, it was as if she had been wondering what to do, and then pushed it to Weena. Perhaps she had been thinking so much that she had lost her sense.

Sierra and the magic sword Zelos Reed had disappeared when we noticed them.

In their case, there was no reason for them to stay here. They weren't committing any crimes, and they weren't being commissioned by the academy. Their status in this world was that of mere adventurers.

However, he was probably still concerned about the treatment of Romio and Zelos Reed. But once he had seen it, he had no more business here anymore.

I don't know where he went, but I think he went after the magic sword Zelyse. Zelyse from this timeline is dead, but the real revenge for Sierra and the others is the magic sword Zelyse.

I didn't know what happened to Nameless in the end. Weena also said that she didn't know about those little things, and it was very likely that they had escaped.

All that remains is for us to figure out our future.

Fran's role as an instructor has ended. In the past, she was forced to become an instructor in order to deceive the spirits of the academy who were about to turn against her. No, Fran doesn't mind about it, because she came to the academy to become an instructor.

By saving Weena and the others, she was officially recognized as having served as an instructor. It seemed that even if she quit her position as an instructor, she would no longer be attacked by the guardian spirits.

I wondered if the contract would be okay with Weena becoming weaker, but she said there would be no change to the contract that was already signed. In other words, the academy's defense will continue to be ironclad. Even Rhyn is going to be a part of it.

「You saved my life this time. Thank you」

Weena bows her head deeply.

Her tone has not changed at all from when she was still Weena Rhyn. However, there is clearly a change inside.

The instability that I had felt before was gone, and I could listen to her with some peace of mind, as if she was mentally stable now that she was no longer two souls in one body.

I think she's back to being the real Weena.

「It's just that I'm struggling to find the right rewards」

「Not money?」

「I'll give you money, of course. But I'm not going to just say thank you after all the help I've received. I'm going to pay you what you deserve」

「Oo~」

Fran's eyes light up at Weena's words. It's a reward that a very important person like her would say is worthy. It seems to be quite promising. I think Fran understands that.

「What'll you give me?」

「For the time being, let's start with the reward I promised you first」

「Promised?」

「Yeah, you remember that, don't you, Sword-san?」

『Oh, you mean that. Of course』

「I see」

Fran seemed to remember too. Well, how could I forget.

「I'll give you information on intelligence weapons that didn't go crazy」

# Chapter 662

TENKEN 662 What Her Name Is

Weena has encountered many Intelligence Weapons.

I really wanted to know about the intelligence weapon that does not go crazy, which was extremely rare among intelligence weapons.

We were supposed to tell her about the lake's anomalies once we found out what caused it... But instead of finding out what caused it, we've helped her to make the source disappear.

It seems that she treated it as a kind of solution and said she would give us the information.

「I don't know if she still exists or not though...」

「She?」

『It was a woman?』

We let out a yelp of surprise.

It's not that all of the intelligence weapons must be a man, but every intelligence I know so far has always been a man.

It was the same for me, the magic sword Zelyse, the magic sword Zelos Reed, and the Divine Sword Fanatics, our base personalities were that of a man. It seems that because of this, I unconsciously thought that the all intelligence weapon was a man.

Announcer-san's base personality was that of a woman, but she's not a former human being.

『I see, a woman, huh?』

Well, if the soul inside is originally human, then of course it has a gender.

However, it's true to say that swords don't have gender, but the gender of the soul inside is still important. If I were to take a bath with a woman, it would be a problem, right? I'm sure people would be offended.

In Fran's case, she's a child and I'm her guardian, so it's still okay. But I can't deny that it's a little hard to go into the bathroom with other women.

「Can I continue?」

『Oops, sorry. I'm just a little surprised. Please continue』

「Sorry」

「The place where I met her was the cursed continent of Gordisia」

『The continent that was destroyed by Trismegistus, huh...?』

The continent was destroyed by the worst magic beast that could have destroyed the world. It was said that the continent is now being protected by a huge barrier to hold back the magic beast. Knights and adventurers dispatched from all over the world are said to be fighting against the magic beast.

Certainly, it might be a fitting place for an Intelligence Weapon to exist.

『But Weena Rhyn met this intelligence weapon and its wielder over a thousand years ago, right?』

「Yeah」

So, it's highly likely that the wielder has changed.

『It seems unlikely that they're still in Gordisia, right...?』

「Nn...」

「No, you don't have to worry about that, I'm more worried that she's been destroyed」

「??」

『What do you mean?』

「Her wielder is still alive after all」

『Huh? For real?』

It's been a thousand years, right? Well, it's not that it means that there is no being that can live that long. Weena and the others High Elves are the proof of it.

『Could it be, the wielder of this Intelligence Weapon is a High Elves?』

When I asked her that, Weena shook her head. It seems that this person is not a High Elves.

『Then, what kind of person her wielder is?』

「Her wielder is the immortal sinner. His name is Trismegistus」

「Eh?」

『Err?』

Fran shouted in surprise. That's how shocked she must have been at the sudden mention of the name.

He is, after all, a very famous person who is described in fairy tales and is also the worst sinner in history.

「Trismegistus...」

『Wasn't he the King of the Dragonmen who was forced to fight the magic beast for eternity?』

「That's right」

But then I remembered.

『A while back, I remember Frederick mentioning that Trismegistus had an Intelligence Sword』

Velmeria, the half-dragonmen girl who was controlled by Fanatics and gone out of control. Her guardian is a man who was also a half-dragonmen.

He seemed to be a native of the continent of Gordisia and seemed to know a lot of things.

He had apparently disappeared after the incident in Royal Capital, and had leaked such a story after he had learned of Fanatics' existence.

So the intelligence weapon in the two stories was the same existence, huh?

「Her name is Juanaverta」

『Juanaverta...』

So that's the name of the intelligence weapon that hasn't gone crazy.

「Yes. The Dragonmen King's second-in-command and his partner. A cold-blooded witch. Savage swordsman. Shadow of the Golden King. A high-ranking magician of many titles, an elf who volunteered to become an Intelligence Weapon. That's who she is」

『A former elf?』

So, maybe that's why Weena and the others know her.

『Now that I've heard about her, I wonder would it be difficult to talk to her peacefully?』



「I guess so. She wasn't the easiest person to deal with after all」

She was apparently Trismegistus' second-in-command, a woman who made it her life's mission to assist him.

「But I was still wondering is Trismegistus a kind of supremacist?」

『...It's not like she was crazy before she became a sword, right?』

Like, she was crazy from the start, so she won't get any crazier when she becomes a sword?

「Well, at least I don't think she has gone crazy, though she might have been a lunatic. But the fact that she has been able to maintain her spirit unchanged for more than a thousand years since she became a sword is a certainty」

『Well, that's reassuring』

Seeing my other self from the other timeline turned into a mere sword made me think of that again.

「The continent of Gordisia, huh...」

# Chapter 663

TENKEN 663 The Value of a Heavenly Dragon

「That's it for the information about Intelligence Weapon. Then... Is there anything else you want? If not, I'll increase the money reward」

「Muh... Master?」

『Wait a second...』

We don't really need money. We already have the highest quality armor, the kind that ordinary adventurers spend the most money on.

Moreover, it automatically repairs itself, so it doesn't cost any money to maintain.

I'm proud of myself, but a better sword than mine is not something one can buy with money, and Fran's armor is made by a divine level blacksmith.

It could probably be a national treasure in some countries.

We've already received a large sum of money as a reward for this time. Even if we replenish the high-quality potions and other items we used up this time, we'll still have more than 10 million goldes left over.

We didn't need more money right now.

Besides, we're dealing with High Elves who have lived a long time. Moreover, she's a powerful person. It would definitely be more profitable to ask for a reward that cannot be obtained with money.

That is, items or information that one might not be able to obtain even with a lot of money.

『We don't need money! I'd rather have some items or information that might be useful』

「Hmm... Even if you say so...」

Weena puts her left hand on her chin and becomes distressed.

「If there's one reward Fran would probably be happy with, it would be access to the Heavenly Dragon's lair」

「The Heavenly Dragon's lair? You mean that floating island?」

「Yeah. And how about a ride to get you there?」

It was a grade S magical area, a place where the Heavenly Dragons, a magic beast with a threat level of A, lives.

『Even if we get permission to enter, we're not going in there alone, okay? It's too dangerous after all』

「Eh~」

Fran makes a dissatisfied voice at my words, but I can't give in here.

『Don't "eh" me. You shouldn't do this all the time something like this happen!』

「Well, you're right. If I were in perfect condition, I could help you, but right now, I think I can't」

Weena cowers her left shoulder and sighs. Indeed, it is a place I would love to visit if we were escorted by a High Elf.

After all, the materials from Heavenly Dragon are of the highest rank. The whip that Amanda, the A-ranked adventurer used as her partner was also a weapon made from the materials of the Heavenly Dragon.

It was broken in the martial arts tournament, but it seems that there is no better whip available yet. I guess that's how rare and powerful the whip is.

With the materials from the Heavenly Dragons, it might have been possible to further strengthen Fran's armor.

But it's too dangerous. The opponent might be stronger than us even in a one-on-one battle. If there were more than one of them, we would never win.

I've heard that most adventurers bring back a little bit of the material in a stealthy way, but...

『I don't think a single scale is going to be much of an enhancement』

「Muh... Too bad, I wanted to give it to Amanda as a present though」

『A present for Amanda?』

「Nn. It gonna be the material for her whip」

What a surprise!

I thought she was just interested in the Heavenly Dragons' lair! I never thought she gonna give a present to Amanda...

I'm happy to see how much Fran has grown!

If that's the case, I'd like to help out too, but...

『Hey, Weena. What kind of material from a Heavenly Dragon do we need to make a whip?』

「A whip? Then you'll probably need its beard. You'll also need its magic stones, scales, and hair」

『I see』

Well, it was unlikely that we could get enough materials for a whip if we just snuck in and took a few things. Amanda would have been delighted to receive a few scales, but we wanted to give her something that could be used already.

「But well, the material of a Heavenly Dragon is actually available in the treasury of our academy」

『For real?』

「Yeah. I needed a few materials from it, so I hunted one down」

She said that in order to cure the king's illness at that time, she needed a medicine made from a Heavenly Dragon's internal organs.

As a result, the scales, beards, and magic stones that are not used in the medicine manufacturing process remain stored in the treasury until now.

Normally, anyone would use it to make armor, but as a High Elf, Weena Rhyn doesn't need armor, and as the academy is running smoothly, there is no need to sell it.

As a result, even Weena had almost forgotten about it.

「Then, I want that!」

「Hmm... Is Amanda would the one who will be using the whip?」

「Nn」

「If that's the case, then it'll break again if it's done half-heartedly. I'll give you its beard, hair, magic stone, and of course, its eyeball and bone too——」

Weena suddenly went silent. A spirit came, didn't it? It seems that Weena has called them. I can feel their presence, but as expected, I can't tell what kind of exchange they're having.

Then Weena opened her mouth with a difficult look on her face.

「As for me, I'd be happy to give you a set of Heavenly Dragon's materials. I'd even give you the whole body. But it seems I can't do that this time」

The fact that it is stored in the academy's treasury means that the academy has jurisdiction over it. In other words, it is under the supervision of the guardian spirits.

It seems that even if she is the Director of the academy, Weena cannot freely do as she pleases. It is in the form of payment for our works this time, but——.

「There's a cap on the amount of rewards that can be given」

This time, the reward for Fran was the highest reward set by the academy. Even so, it is said that the upper limit is 20 million goldes. No matter how much work she did, the spirits would not allow her to go beyond that.

In other words, the value of the Heavenly Dragon's material is probably well over 20 million goldes.

「If I had kept it in my possession, it wouldn't have been a problem」

『Then, why don't you ask them to use all the rewards you are supposed to give us this time in the form of the Heavenly Dragon's materials? I don't need the money. I'd rather pay for it』

The reward for us comes from the academy, with Weena adding some extra from her own pocket. The total amount is 40 million goldes.

That's 20 million from the academy. 20 million from Weena. Then why don't we use the 20 million goldes from Weena to the academy to buy the Heavenly Dragon's materials?

「Still... I just wished that I had a little more savings... I can only afford to give you about 10 million more」

Weena is a high elf who has lived for thousands of years. However, she was surprisingly not that wealthy. To the average person, she was a millionaire,

but as a fortune for someone as powerful as she was, it was far less than one would imagine. However, there was a reason for that.

She didn't need a lot of money to live in the academy, and she didn't like to live a glamorous life. She is not a collector of any kind, nor does she have any hobbies to accumulate money. Besides, when the time comes, she can do everything by herself.

To put it bluntly, she didn't need money. That's why she didn't actively work for money and spent her days in a simple life.

Even so, the reward given to us this time, 20 million goldes, was the result of her saving up the reward paid to the Director every year. Although she said that she could give us another 10 million, it would still not be enough to buy the Heavenly Dragon's material.

『Then why don't you just ask them to sell the beard or the magic stone?』

「That's fine, but... I'm sure you'll get much higher performance out of buying a set of top quality dungeon materials rather than making them out of half-assed materials, right?」

「Muh...」

After all, it's not that easy. But as we were pondering over this, Weena suddenly opened her mouth.

「I have a solution for you. Why don't you take one of the requests from the academy?」

# Chapter 664

TENKEN 664 The Commitment for Gordisia

「I have a solution for you. Why don't you take one of the requests from the academy?」

「Request?」

『Depends on the details』

Apparently, the value of a set of Heavenly Dragon's materials is well over 50 million goldes. I wonder what kind of request that could cover the shortage?

It must not be an easy request.

「You two, do you know what the Commitment for Gordisia is?」

「??」

『No, I don't know. I understand that it must have something to do with Gordisia, but...』

「Well, to put it simply, it's a treaty imposed on each country to deploy troops and aid to the continent of Gordisia」

In the continent of Gordisia, the fight against the Abyss Eaters, the abominable magic beast created by Trismegistus is still ongoing.

Well, I've only heard about it through rumor, so I don't really know what kind of fight it is.



Countries all over the world were providing various kinds of assistance to the fight. Some countries dispatched troops, some provided supplies, and some were in charge of transportation. Each country is doing what it can do to help.

This assistance is called 『The Commitment for Gordisia』 and is said to be mandatory for all countries of the world. There are various penalties for abandoning this duty, and in the worst cases, it can even lead to war with neighboring countries.

In fact, there was an incident in which a country that ignored its Commitment to Gordisia and attacked a neighboring country that was sending troops to Gordisia was later destroyed by the allied forces of neighboring countries.

The Commitment for Gordisia is necessary in order to protect the world. Therefore, the sanctions are said to be quite severe so that the perception that it is okay to ignore them does not arise.

Since even the Kingdom of Raidos has never neglected to provide their assistance to the continent of Gordisia, it can be said that its compelling power is rather great.

「The Kingdom of Belios usually provides financial aid and ships for transportation. We also dispatch some hired adventurers. In some cases, I'll even travel there myself. But...」

『It is gonna be hard to give them financial aid or sending troops this time, huh? Weena still can't go there with her current condition too...』

「That's right. We'll be the ones to take care of it this year or next. But this incident has caused a ridiculous amount of damage to us」

「This year or next year?」

『Well, that's certainly gonna be tough』

「I can handle the financial stuff. But our troops are other events...」

We will need as much labor as possible for the reconstruction. Besides, it would be unacceptable to send the dwindling number of adventurers out of the country.

But even if we wait until next year, we will not see a dramatic recovery.

「The government is allowed to reduce or delay its aids if there is a serious disaster or other event that reduces the country's strength. But we want to make that as a last resort」

By showing weakness to other countries, the influence of the Kingdom of Belios will be diminished.

It's a political thing that feels trivial to most of us, but I guess it's something that the higher-ups in the country can't ignore.

『So you're telling me that you want Fran to go to Gordisia as a representative of the Kingdom of Belios?』

「That's right. Well, you'll also be representing the Academy of Magic, so you'll be paid by both the academy and the state」

In other words, as a representative of the Academy of magic, I guess it means that we should cross over to the continent of Gordisia together with the other people sent from the Kingdom of Belios.

『Hmm. We did have a plan to go to Gordisia someday, but...』

The idea of carrying a whole country on our shoulders makes me nervous. I mean, I'm with Fran, remember? She doesn't have a problem in terms of her combat ability, but I can't promise that she won't ever cause problems there.

As her guardian, I was not a fan of leaving such important responsibilities in Fran's hands.

When I told her this, Weena shrugged lightly.

「Let me assure you, you don't have to take the formal parts there」

I imagined that we would be joining the troops, and that we would be on a strict battlefield where orders must be obeyed, but it seems that the place is much more lax.

However, it seems that each individual is allowed to act freely once they arrive in Gordisia. It also seems that all country does not have any control over that continent. Well, for small countries, they have no choice but to follow the orders of the big countries though.

「And I don't think anyone would dare to try to force an impossible task on a Representative for the Kingdom of Belios with my backing」

There is a special magic tool that allows people to track the results of their battles within the continent by registering on it when they enter the continent. If Fran fights against the Abyssal Eaters to some extent, it will be treated as if the Kingdom of Belios has fulfilled its duty.

「In other words, my request to you is to travel to the continent of Gordisia as an adventurer sent by the Kingdom of Belios, and then go on a moderate rampage there」

『I see... By the way, how strong the Abyss Eater is?』

I've heard that it can infinitely regenerate itself, but there's not much other information about it. From what I've heard from the ordinary soldiers fighting them, I'd say it doesn't seem like it has that much combat power, but...

「It's kind of hard to explain though——」

Weena then told us a brief description of it.

First of all, the Abyss Eater is said to look like a colorless, transparent slime. It is also said to look like a slime ghost.

Moreover, it is so huge that it covers the entire continent.

What's more, the inside of the dome-shaped barrier covering the whole continent of Gordisia is said to be filled with Abyss Eaters.

I imagined it as a place with a translucent dome with the Abyss Eaters tightly crammed inside. It seems to be just like that.

『Eh? But we have to get inside the barrier to fight, right?』

「Yeah」

『Wouldn't that mean we'd be stepping into the Abyss Eater's body? Isn't that dangerous? And what about the air?』

「Abyss Eaters are a half-spirit magic beast. You can't physically touch it. It's kinda similar to a spirit. The Abyss Eater itself is not harmful to us even if we are inside its body」

『But if that's the case, it doesn't sound like a dangerous magic beast, right?』

「That's not quite right. The Abyss Eater itself has no offensive power. It just simply stays there. But the magic beasts that the Abyss Eater create within its body are different. They attack, eat, and continuously send their power to the Abyss Eater」

『So it was the source of the endless flow of magic beasts, huh? In other words, the job is not to deal with the Abyss Eaters but to defeat the magic beasts that are constantly being created by it, huh?』

「That's right. The magic beasts that are created in Abyss Eater's body are actually its defensive mechanism. They're called with Kouma there, I want you to defeat as many of them there. Once you've managed to defeat a certain number of them, you're free to do whatever you want」

We were planning to go to the continent of Gordisia anyway, and if we went there, we would inevitably have to fight against those magic beasts. And I'm grateful if that's all it takes to complete the request.

「And the benefit of accepting this request isn't just the reward, you know?」

『What do you mean?』

「There are a lot of restrictions and quotas if you want to go to the continent of Gordisia as a regular traveler. But if you're going to Gordisia on my request, I'll prepare the groundwork for you, and you'll be able to enter smoothly. Moreover, you can act freely without having to worry about being forced to join another country or being interfered with. I guess you could call this an advantage, no?」

「Nn. It's good to be free」

『Well, you're right』

We were going there anyway, so we might as well take the request.

# Chapter 665

TENKEN 665 Rhyn and the Academy

Weena suggested Fran to go to the continent of Gordisia, but Fran seemed to be troubled by something.

『Something bothering you?』

「Nn... The Kingdom of Raidos, is it okay to let them get away this time?」

『Well, that's certainly something to be concerned about, but... There's nothing we can do on our own against a big country, right?』

No adventurers are allowed to enter that country, and even if we did infiltrate, what would we do? Move around the large country in hiding, searching for Nameless and Zelyse wherever they might be?

If we're not careful, the whole country will turn against us, right?

It's just too reckless. Even if we were to look for Nameless there, we wouldn't even know where to go.

「As for the Kingdom of Raidos, I have contacted some countries and guilds about this incident. It's not too late to wait for their response. It's not like we want to destroy the Kingdom of Raidos immediately, right?」

「Nn」

「Eventually, they'll have to pay for what they've done. There will come a time when I will need your help. Until then, please be patient, okay?」

Weena had no mercy for anyone who messed with her. Even if she no longer had the power to punish them herself, she seemed to be planning to fight against the Kingdom of Raidos in some way.

「Okay」

For Fran, the Kingdom of Raidos is a detestable country that causes trouble all around her. But it wasn't so much that she hated it or wanted to destroy it.

At most, she wished she could see them suffer, maybe?

Well, for now, that is.

There is also information that they have collaborated with Zelyse to create Nameless and are targeting Jean. For Fran, some of the powerful people in the Kingdom of Raidos had become an opponent that had to be defeated.

However, Fran doesn't want to deal with it on her own either. If Weena is willing to make a move, she can wait for it.

「Then, I'd like to deliver a message to Jean」

「And about the demi-lich, Nameless, was it?」

「Nn」

「Leave that to me too. I'll pass on all the information from you to the guild」

「I leave it to you」

Weena is a very influential person in the adventurer's guild, so I think it's safe to leave it to her.

Then, as I was talking with Weena about the future, a new figure appeared in the room.

But we didn't hear the door being opened nor closed at all.

Suddenly, something appeared as if it were gushing out.

「Fran, let me thank you as well. Thanks to you, I've successfully become a guardian spirit」

「Rhyn」

It was Rhyn, she had signed a new contract as the Spirit of the Academy.

Even though she had regained her power that had been sealed within Weena Rhyn and the great magic beast, her physical body had already gone and now she exists as a spirit.

It was impossible for her to return as a High Elf.

Weena said she'll try to find a way to get her body back, but it was Rhyn herself who refused.

Rhyn became a spirit because she made a contract with the spirit of the lake, which was captured inside the great magic beast, and became one with it.

In other words, half of her body also belongs to the spirit of the lake. Spirits' way of thinking is completely different from people. Even if Rhyn is to get absorbed and become one with the magic beast, it doesn't mean that the spirit of the lake would be grieving over it.

However, Rhyn chose to stay by Weena's side as a spirit. She thought that it was the right thing to do.

『But why did you become the guardian spirit of the academy instead of making a contract with Weena?』

「That would create a hierarchical relationship between Weena and me, wouldn't it?」

『So even the Director of the academy and the guardian spirits have a hierarchical relationship, huh?』



「Not quite right, we're both equal under the rules that have been established」

「Were both equal. I suppose you could also say that we're tied to the academy」

As far as I know, this academy has the strictest law enforcement in this world. Perhaps Weena Rhyn made it so that the rules that the guardian spirits follow take precedence over her own will to prevent her from taking advantage of the spirits.

This way, even if someone other than her became the director of the academy in the future, it could prevent any tyranny. In a world where laws could be twisted at will depending on the mood of those in power, what a unique place this Academy is.

「To be honest, now that Rhyn is back, I'd be happy to step down from my position as director of the academy, but...」

「You can't. This place is where you have made my dream come true after all」

Rhyn disagrees with Weena's words. She dreams of being tied to the academy? What does she mean?

It seems that Fran doesn't understand about it either.

「Dream?」

「Yes. I've always dreamed of building an academy one day and being surrounded by children」

That reminds me, I remember Weena Rhyn said something like that before Rhyn was separated from her.

「Well, you see, Rhyn used to hold the title of Guardian of Children after all」

Guardian of Children!? Isn't that also the title held by the child-loving Amanda?

The fact that she had that means that she must really like children.

『But why would you chose to be the guardian spirit instead of being a teacher?』

「Well, albeit in a slightly different way, I can still watch over the children here. I'm content with it」

I wondered if she's really all right with that, but Rhyn's seemed to be content with it.

An elf and a guardian of children. She just looks like Amanda, isn't she? When I told her this, she was surprised to hear it.

Amanda was said to be a descendant of Weena Rhyn, or more accurately, a descendant of Rhyn. Apparently, one of the reasons why Amanda dislikes Weena Rhyn is because it looks as if Weena has captured Rhyn within her.

Well, I guess the main reason is that she acts like a child loving person as the director of the academy even though she doesn't really like children.

『Well, if Rhyn is happy, that's all that matters』

「Within the last few thousand years of my life, this is probably the most joyful time for me」

「Nn. That's all that matters」

Rhyn then showed a warm, human-like smile on her face, not the usual mysterious expression she used to have.

She smiled like a kind old school teacher, friendly like a saint and reassuring despite her young appearance.

I guess this is Rhyn's genuine smile.

If I'd had a teacher like her in my elementary school, maybe I would have liked the school more.

# Chapter 666

TENKEN 666 Spirit Magic

In the end, we decided to accept Weena's suggestion. It was a deal that had more advantages than disadvantages after all.

We'll be leaving the day after tomorrow. However, we won't rush straight to the continent of Gordisia.

It seems that we have to go to the royal capital of this country with the request letter first. There, we would cross over to the continent of Gordisia together with the country's personnel

『I guess it's time for us to say goodbye to this inn』

「Woof」

「Nn」

Fran is eating her meal with a somber look on her face while looking at the huge tree that runs through the center of the inn. The meals were supposed to be delicious, but I wonder if there is something bothering her?

『Fran, are you not feeling well?』

(...The spirit, I didn't get to see it in the end)

『Aah, now that you mention it...』

She was unable to see the spirit that was said to dwell in the ancient tree after all. With my spirit detection skills, even I haven't been able to detect any sign of it.

But then Fran suddenly turned her gaze upward.

『Hmm?』

「Woof?」

「Master, it's here」

『Eh?』

I don't really get what Fran meant when she muttered that.

I didn't detect anything other than us here after all... Even Urushi doesn't seem to be able to detect anything.

However, Fran's eyes were firmly fixed on one point.

「...」

Fran continued to stare silently at the trunk of the giant tree for several seconds.

And right after that.

『!』

「I can see it」

『M-me too!』

「W-woof!」

Fran and Urushi had forgotten about eating and gaped with her mouth wide open.

「——」

What we saw there was a green squirrel floating fluidly in the air. On the outside, its appearance looked like that of a small animal, but inside, I could

sense a much greater presence.

It's definitely the spirit of the ancient tree. At the very least, it must be a high-ranking spirit.

It may sound strange, but I couldn't sense anything when I couldn't see it, but as soon as I could see it, I immediately understood how great it was.

Besides, the fact that the spirit was able to completely fool my detection skills while I was right in front of it shows that it possesses a great deal of power.

「Hoho. I didn't expect Spirit-sama to show itself. It seems it has taken quite a liking to you」

「To me?」

「Yeah」

The old elf lady smiled as she was looking at Fran and the spirit. It seems that this spirit was really the spirit of the ancient tree.

「It seems that Spirit-sama wanted to say its thanks to you」

「Why?」

「Well, I wonder? But since you can see it now, why don't you ask it yourself」

「Nn. Okay」

「Good」

Fran nodded enthusiastically at the old lady's words. Then, she slowly approached the spirit of the ancient tree.

「...」

「...」

Fran and the spirit silently looked at each other for a while, and then nodded at each other for some reason.

『What happened?』

(?? You didn't hear us?)

『Eh?』

What does she mean? Have they had any conversations?

『You were talking with the spirit just now?』

(Nn, it says that it was grateful to us for saving Rhyn)

『Urushi?』

(Woof)

It seems that even Urushi didn't hear them either.

I see; maybe this is what's called compatibility. In spirit magic, compatibility with the spirit is more important than the skill level or its proficiency.

In some cases, even a novice who has just learned the spirit magic can make a contract with the Great Spirit if the Great Spirit likes them.

It seems that the spirit of the ancient tree and Fran have good compatibility with each other, but not with Urushi and me.

But come to think of it, could I even have compatibility with a spirit in the first place? I am a sword after all. There's a possibility that even a spirit couldn't notice me at all, right?

「Nn. I see」

「...」

「Hmm」

Fran, on the other hand, seemed to be able to converse with the spirit just fine.

『The spirit know Rhyn?』

(Nn. The spirit said that it was Rhyn's friend. It was happy to know that Rhyn has been freed from the great magic beast)

So, even spirits were interacting with each other, huh?

「Ah...」

『Ooh』

As I was thinking about that, the spirit's figure vanished. However, it seems that Fran can still sense the presence of the spirit and is now pursuing the place where the spirit seems to be with her eyes.

It seemed that the spirit had simply come to express its gratitude.

But for us, we gained something far greater than words.

《As a result of prolonged sighting of a high-ranking spirit, Fran has acquired spirit magic skill》

『Huh? What did you just say?』

「??」

《It looks like her talent has blossomed》

You're not joking, right!? I hurriedly checked Fran's status. Sure enough, she had acquired spirit magic. Certainly, due to the fierce battle the other day, both Fran and Urushi had risen by five levels.

But at that time, I was sure that she did not acquire any spirit magic.



Could it be that the spirit of the ancient tree dared to show up for this purpose? Anyway, I'm glad that Fran has gained a new skill.

『Fran, it seems that you've really acquired spirit magic』

「Really?」

『Yeah, how is it? Can you try to use it?』

「Nn...」

Fran looked excited and concentrated her mind. She already knew how to use magic very well. Even if it was a skill she had never seen before, it should be no problem.

That's what I thought, but she soon stopped her concentration. By looking at how her ears and tail were drooping limply, I could tell that it was not going well.

『Fran』

「It's no good」

『No good, huh? Is it that because you don't know how to use the skill?』

「I can use the skill just fine, but I don't know other spirits besides the tree spirit」

『You mean the ancient tree spirit we saw before? So, what are you trying to say is that you can't sense the presence of other spirits?』

「Nn. But I can't borrow the power of the tree spirits」

She could activate the spirit magic, but the spirit keeps rejecting her. They have good compatibility though...

It seemed that using spirit magic was more difficult than I had imagined.

# Chapter 667

## TENKEN 667 Farewell Party

The next day after Fran acquired spirit magic. She attended a special class at the academy in her school uniform for the last time.

「——That's what it's like. You get that?」

「Nn」

「But still, to be able to awaken your spirit magic in such a short time... As expected of the Black Lightning Princess」

The topic of today's class was about spirit magic. Since Fran was still considered a student of the academy until today, Weena helped her to master her newly acquired spirit magic.

Thanks to that, she was able to learn all she needs to know about spirit magic. Well, she must find a spirit that was compatible with her first though.

We also learned that the reason why Fran couldn't make a contract with the spirit of the ancient tree was because that spirit had a deep bond with the old elven lady and did not want to have another contractor. It seems that while some spirits can have multiple contractors, there are also some that prefer to stick with only one contractor.

Then after the class, there was a farewell party organized by the students for Fran. They ate together and said their goodbyes in the student cafeteria, which had improved remarkably under Fran's guidance.

「Thank you very much. I've learned a lot from you」

「Thanks for your help」

「Please come again」

They were scared of her at first, but now they have accepted her completely. Thanks to it, Fran was able to really feel like she was a part of the class, especially during the first few days after we returned from the lake.

「You are leaving soon, huh?」

「I thought we'd finally had another fellow beastman here...」

Inez, Horial, and the rest of the teachers also bid their farewells to us.

「The class that received your guidance has shown remarkable growth in their abilities. The students would surely be happy if you could continue to instruct them like before... But that's not good; we can't rely on you forever」

「Nn. Do your best」

「Yes!」

Fran seemed happy when she was talking with Inez. I guess it's not only because she doesn't want to part with her, but also because she respects her as an instructor.

Surprisingly, Fran doesn't dislike working as an instructor here. Well, although she does like acting like an important person, she also finds it rewarding to know that her experience can help others.

I guess the praise from Inez, a real instructor, had given her some confidence too.

「Fran」

「Charon」

「Thank you for all your help」

Next was the blonde drill girl, Charon.

It started with an encounter at the adventurer's guild, but before she knows it, she had become a friend of hers.

Charon has a high opinion of Fran as an instructor who had taught her and her classmates a lot of combat techniques.

As she bowed her head, I could feel her deep gratitude and respect for Fran.

It was also the same for Fran. She was grateful for her and respected her.

Without her, Fran's school life would have been much different.

It would have taken her a long time to fit in with the other students, and she might not have been able to have as much fun as she had.

Fran understood that too. It was true that Fran was a better warrior. But as a person, Charon had more experience than Fran. That's how Fran felt.

「Likewise, thank you」

She bowed her head back to Charon.

「Thanks to Charon, I had a lot of fun here」

「Well, that's...」

Charon was surprised to hear such words from Fran.

Even I was surprised too.

Sensing my surprise, Fran tilted her head in confusion.

(What's wrong?)

『It's nothing, I just thought that Fran is talking a lot more than usual today』

(Is that so?)

『Yeah』

Apparently, Fran herself was unaware of it.

『But I think it's good to be honest about your feelings, right?』

You don't have to say everything, but you can at least say thanks.

Then, Fran nodded her head as if she had understood something.

(You may be right...)

『Ooh, you understand?』

(Nn. Maybe if the other Master and I from that side had talked more, they wouldn't have ended up like that)

『I see』

Our encounter with ourselves from the other timeline was really brief, but there was something about it that stayed with Fran. It was an eventful moment after all.

「Fran...」

Charon put her hand over her mouth as if she was trying to overcome her emotions.

「...Please come again, okay!?!...」

「Nn」

「E-excuse myself for a moment!」

Not wanting to be seen crying, Charon gets up from her seat. Her pride must have brought her to act like this, a lady to the core, huh? I don't hate that part of her.

「Fran-san, be careful on your way there」

「Nn. Thank you for your information too」

The last one to bid us farewell was Khanna. Her information about the Mesther Merchant Association had been really helpful.

「Not at all, I'd like to thank you as well」

「??」

「Thank you for protecting this country from the Kingdom of Raidos」

「I did it for myself though」

「Even so, it is a fact that many people were saved. If the situation had continued to develop into a larger scale, many people in both countries would have been in misfortune」

Khanna bowed her head again as she said that. How do I put this? She looked somewhat pained. She looked not as happy and relieved as Charon and the others, but somehow filled with sadness and loneliness.

I wonder why, I'm sure there must be some deeper reason... But before Fran could ask anything, Khanna walked away. She seemed to have some business to attend to, and she was unable to stop her.

『Well, we can ask her when she returns』

「Nn」

Afterwards, we enjoyed the rest of the day and the party continued. It was unusual for Fran to stay up so late at night. It must have been fun for her to be surrounded by so many kids of her age.

『Fran』

「?」

『That was fun』

「Nn! I had a lot of fun!」

Despite all the troubles, just being able to see the smile on Fran's face made the trip to the academy worth the while.

# Chapter 668

TENKEN 668 Departing from Lady Blue

「Fran. I've been waiting for you」

「Sierra?」

As we went through the main gate to leave Lady Blue, a boy appeared in front of us. It was Sierra, the boy who we hadn't seen for the past few days.

He requested that we call him Sierra from now on, so neither Fran nor I would call him Romio.

「What's the matter?」

「I thought I'd thank you again. Thanks for letting us off the hook」

Sierra then bowed his head as he said that.

When he revealed the identity of the magic sword Zelos Reed, Sierra promised Fran to let her do anything she wants to them once they had their revenge. (TLN: References ch 611)

That's the reason why Fran let them go.

She still holds a grudge against Zelos Reed, but she doesn't feel the same hatred with the Zelos Reed from the other timeline which is now in the form of a sword.

Rather, Fran feels sympathy for Sierra and does not want to fight him for the time being. She even decided to avoid a fight by telling them that the whole thing was not over yet as Zelyse from their timeline had escaped.



『Could it be, you have been waiting here to thank us?』

「I-it's not like that. Well, it's true that I'd like to thank you, but I also remembered something, so I thought I'd tell you about it」

『You remembered something?』

「Yeah, It's something from the other side」

From the other side? In other words, it must be something that happened in the other timeline.

「What is it?」

「I once heard Oji-chan saying something before he becomes a sword, he heard a talk about the Fran from the other side saying that Master was a divine sword」

『Huh? The other me on that timeline was a divine sword?』

「Yeah」

What does that mean? How could the other me on the other side be a divine sword?

『Not a discarded Divine Sword?』

「Yes. Oji-chan also mentioned that it could use the Divine Sword Release」

That's certainly not a word that would be used to describe a discarded divine sword. Obviously, it must be an active divine sword.

「Then, is it possible for Master to evolve into a divine sword?」

『As Fran says... Is that even possible?』

《Yes. It is possible. The gods are involved in the creation of the individual named Master. With Cherubim being the vessel and the Fenrir sealed within

it, Master are fully capable of becoming a divine sword. However, the method is unknown due to the lack of information》

『Announcer-san, didn't you say that you exchanged some information with the Announcer-san from that timeline? Did you not get any information regarding this?』

《Yes. There's no information regarding how to turn Master to be a divine sword》

Now that's another mystery. I mean, they were able to exchange information about skills, so why wouldn't the other Announcer-san share some simple information with us? It should only take her a moment to tell us simple info like "The Master here has become a Divine Sword!" right?

『Or did you not even have time for that?』

《No. We had plenty of time to share information at that time》

Then why didn't she tell us? The fact that I might be able to become a divine sword is pretty important information, don't you think? Things were also different in here and there after all, so I don't think the other Announcer-san would be reluctant to give out some useful information.

『In that case—... did she intentionally choose not to tell us anything about me becoming a divine sword?』

《That's the most possible reason》

『In other words, the Announcer-san from that side has decided that it's better for me not to become a divine sword, huh...?』

《There is a high possibility that there will be some kind of price to pay for the individual named Master to gain power as a divine sword》

『The price for that must be really high, huh...』

The Announcer-san from the other side must be aware that we were fighting against the great magic beast at that time. So, if she chooses not to share us

the information on how the other me became a divine sword, the price for it must be really high.

What if by becoming a divine sword changed me? The other me from that timeline had been reduced to being just a sword after all... It's possible that becoming a divine sword was the reason for that.

I do admire divine swords, but it seems that I should be cautious about this.

『Thanks for the info』

「Not at all, I'm glad I could be of some help」

『It should be useful for us』

We got the information that there was a possibility for me to become a divine sword, and a possibility that it would come with a steep price.

「What's Sierra going to do after this?」

「I'll continue to chase after the magic sword Zelyse. He's my mortal enemy after all」

「I see」

「What about you?」

「I received a request from Weena」

Fran and Sierra then exchanged information about each other's future actions.

In Sierra's case, he's going to see if there's a way to enter the Kingdom of Raidos legally. At the same time, he will gather information about the damage caused by the undead in the area.

After all, the current wielder of the magic sword Zelyse, Nameless the Demi Lich, called itself the leader of the Black Skeleton Corps belonging to the Kingdom of Raidos.

In other words, there is a high possibility that it is leading an undead army and is making moves in the dark in various places.

In Fran's case, her immediate destination is the royal capital of the Kingdom of Belios. It is likely that we will go directly to the continent of Gordisia from there.

So, while fulfilling Weena's request, we will also go to see Trismegistus.

Also, our long-term goal is to break the curse of the entire black cat kin. Well, this will take a really long time though.

「The curse of the black cat kin?」

「Yup」

It seems that Sierra doesn't know that information. Well, I guess that's what you'd get for not being interested in things in the world. Fran then gives him a brief explanation about the curse.

「So you're saying that the Black Cat kin must defeat the evil being with a threat level of S or higher?」

「It could also be the evil god's kindred」

「Either way, it's going to be a tough fight...」

「But I will definitely break the curse」

「Is that so...? I hope you can achieve your goal. I'm rooting for you too. If I ever find a strong black cat kin somewhere, I'll make sure to let you know」

「Please do. I'll help you find Zelyse too」

「Thanks」

With a final handshake, Sierra jumped on the horse that he had brought with him. It seemed to be a summoned animal. It was of a lower class, but it was

a horse type. It looked like it could run pretty fast.

「Sierra, see you again」

「Yeah, see ya!」

Then, after watching Sierra leave, Fran jumped on Urushi's back. Her face was filled with motivation.

「We should go too」

「Woof!」

『Yeah, you're right』

「I can't lose to the Sierra」

『Me too, I'm not going to lose to another intelligence weapon!』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 669

TENKEN 669 The Trip to The Royal Capital

We set out from Lady Blue and headed for the royal capital of the Kingdom of Belios.

Urushi briskly ran across the clear sky with only a few clouds in the sky with us on his back.

「Woof woof!」

「Urushi looks so happy」

『Does it feel good for being able to run as fast as you can?』

「Woof!」

Well, he belongs to the canine family after all; they like to run a lot.

We're currently traveling at a very high altitude. Although we're still below the clouds, we're still about 2000 meters away from the ground.

At this height, even if Urushi had returned to his original size and were running at full speed, no one would notice him from the ground.

「Woof woo~f!」

「Ooh—」

『Fran, don't lose your grip!』

It seems that the tension was getting too high, and Urushi's movements started to get more vigorous. He tried running at a higher altitude, changing his stride and jumping up and down, and so on.

「Woof woof woo-f!」

「Uooh—!」

『Wha- hey, we might fall!』

He even did a crazy trick where he spun around and ran in a spiral with Fran as the origin. It was as if we were riding on a roller coaster.

Fran cheerfully shouted, perhaps amused by the G-force that hit us from various directions. It was just like a real roller coaster.

But I'm still worried that Fran might fall if this continues.

『U-Urushi! You're getting too excited!』

「Woof...」

「It's over already?」

『And Fran, don't put such a face now!』

As we were making our way through the sky, we saw a strange light glittering in the sky.

「Woof?」

「Master, is that, a Heavenly Dragon?」

『Yeah, it seems so』

When I looked up, I saw that there was an island floating in the air. And as if it was sucking at the surface of the white clouds that surrounded the island, something long and thin was steadily moving in it.

It's definitely a Heavenly Dragon, a magic beast with a threat level of A. It was said that they're usually seen in the clouds, but they sometimes appear outside by chance.

「It's glowing」

『I wonder if it was due to the reflection of the sun's rays』

The Heavenly Dragons, which specializes in light magic, wears the light of magical power on its body. And not only that, it's probably reflecting the light of the sun that is pouring down on it.

We had been shown the Heavenly Dragons material from the magic academy's warehouse, but the scales of a living Heavenly Dragons had a completely different glow to them.

The scales of the Heavenly Dragons I saw in the warehouse had a dull gold color on them. My impression was that they looked just like King Ghi ○ rah's scales. However, they seemed to gain a mirror-like shine when they were infused with magic power.

(TLN: Ghidorah, the three-headed winged dragon in Godzilla)

The sight of the Heavenly Dragon shining in bright platinum ascending through the clouds is so beautiful that it makes me want to worship it.

I now understand the meaning of the saying that good fortune comes to those who can see it.

『Looks like something good is going to happen』

「Nn」

「Woof!」

The sight of the Heavenly Dragon flying gracefully in the sky made me feel as if it was blessing us on our journey.

\*\*\*



Two days after we left Lady Blue.

We made stops at towns and villages along the way to buy local specialties, and continued our smooth journey to the east.

And without any problems, we arrived at the royal capital of the Kingdom of Belios.

『Uwaa~h, as expected of the royal capital of a major power. It's as big as the royal capital of the Kingdom of Kranzel』

「Nn. The walls are high and the road is wide」

「Woof」

I was surprised by how big Lady Blue was, but that was mostly because of the size of the academy. But here, the scale of the city was simply bigger.

「Let's go to the castle」

『Ou. Urushi, you shouldn't get big here, okay?』

「Woof」

We got lost in the Kingdom of Kranzel's royal capital, but I don't think such a thing is going to happen now. All we had to do was to walk almost in a straight line from the gate to reach the royal castle after all.

A huge castle could be seen at the end of the main street where carriages could be lined up to 20 rows abreast. They must have systematically built the royal capital.

『Now, let's go』

「Nn」

However, this wide road proved to be a problem for Fran.

「Mogu mogu」

「Momu momu」 \*eating SFX

『Is it good?』

「Nn」

「Woof!」

Our customary shopping and eating begin. As usual, Fran and Urushi zigzagged down the street, hitting every single stall they saw.

This is the first time I've seen someone zigzagging along a road this wide.

It took us about 30 minutes to go 100 meters. It would have been better if we only had to go to one side of the street, but because both Fran and Urushi have good noses, they quickly discovered the stall on the other side.

「Over here, I smell something good」

「Woof!」

She must have spotted another stall on the opposite side of the street, she then ran off to weave her way through the crowds.

『How long will this take us to get to the royal castle...?』

《If we continue at this pace, it will take us an estimated 4 hours and 38 minutes to reach the royal castle》

So long! At this rate, it will be night before we can get there!

『Hey, we are still a long way from the royal castle... Why don't we finish our errands first?』

「...Nn」

「...Woof」

Kuh! Don't look at me with such sad eyes! But I can't let this get the better of me this time.

『Later! Once we've done our errands, I'll let you go as long as you want! So why don't we go to the castle now? Okay?』

「As long as I want... Okay, let's go to the castle」

Ah, I wonder was it a bad idea to promise her that...

# Chapter 670

TENKEN 670 Brunnen

We made our way to the royal castle of the Kingdom of Belios; it was surprisingly easy to get ourselves in.

The letter of introduction that Weena had written for us proven to be incredibly useful. Furthermore, it seems that a detailed report of the incident at the lake had been submitted to the government before we arrived.

Naturally, there must have been some information about Fran's background in there. But when we arrived at the entrance of the royal castle, a simple inspection was all that was required to get us in.

And now, in a place that looks like a conference room in a corner of the royal castle, we are sitting face to face with an old man.

He is a thin, dark-skinned old man with an unusually stern expression on his face. His eyes that were staring straight at us through his long white hair were as sharp as that of an assassin's; it was almost as if he were glaring at us.

His torn right ear and the scars all over his body told me that this old man was no ordinary person.

If I had met him without knowing anything about him, I would have thought that he was a retired yakuza.

This old man's name is Brunnen. I heard that he was one of the admirals of the Kingdom of Belios. Knowing that, he certainly has the air of a valiant warrior. Well, he looks more like a pirate than an admiral though. But it

seems that it was also because he can't afford to let himself be looked down upon by others.

He was apparently the one in charge of the troops heading to Gordisia.

「So you're willing to go to Gordisia as our hired adventurer?」

「Nn」

「I see! I'm grateful for that」

When Fran nodded, Brunnen looked delighted. After all, the impact of this incident was so great that the leaders of the kingdom were apparently quite worried about what to do with the Commitment for Gordisia.

And then came Fran, whom Weena Rhyn described as someone who has the capability on par of an A-ranked adventurer. She's like a godsend for the country.

「We'd love to hire you」

「Nn. So, when do we leave?」

Fran asks Brunnen in a very excited voice. But in response, Brunnen's expression darkens slightly.

「Ugh... Well, about that...」

「?」

「Aah—...」

Hmm? What's with the sudden change?

We've only known each other for about half an hour, but Brunnen is a very lively man. He doesn't seem like the kind of man who would be talking like this.

But after hearing more about it, I understood why.

「So, it's still two months before we leave?」

「Yes」

Originally, they had planned to leave at the end of the third month or at the beginning of the fourth month, that is, just about ten days away from now. But then comes the great magic beast uproar.

In addition to the delays in bringing in supplies and securing troops, they must also provide relief to the victims and rebuild the commercial fleet.

The Kingdom of Belios was forced to change its plans because of that.

「I see」

「I beg of you! I know I'm asking for the impossible, but could you please come back to the royal capital in two months?」

Two months is not a very long time for a country to wait. It's only a two-month postponement of departure. But for those who live for the moment like the adventurers, it gonna be a long waiting time.

Any normal adventurer would definitely say something like 「I haven't heard much detail yet, so I'll pretend that this request never existed」.

I think Brunnen knows that too.

But if we make a promise that we will definitely come back in two months here, they will have to pay a deposit to us for the time being. For an adventurer of Fran's class, it would be quite expensive.

Not only that, there's also the case of adventurers who don't like to be tied down so they turned down the request and left.

However, it would be difficult to force things on adventurers as powerful as Fran, and Fran, who was from another country, could not be expected to be loyal to the country.

So, in the end, the only thing Brunnen could do was to bow his head and ask sincerely.

『What should we do now?』

(I'm fine with it)

『Well, this is just a verbal promise, so there should be no penalty for breaking it』

Brunnen and Weena will hate us if we do that though.

In the first place, we are already planning to go to Gordisia. If that were the case, it would be better to have the backing of the country. Considering this, it was not a bad idea to accept the request while selling a favor to the Kingdom of Belios.

「Okay. I'll come back in two months」

「R-really!? I'm in your debt!」

「Nn」

「So, what's Fran-dono gonna do after this?」

Yes. That's also a problem for us.

We just wanted to cross over to the continent of Gordisia, so we had no specific plans in mind. However, Fran seemed to have a decent idea.

「Barbra! I want to go to Barbra's Cooking Contest!」

『Oh, I see. Come to think of it, now that we got some free time, shall we participate too?』

Two events will be held in the Kingdom of Kranzel. Barbra's cooking contest and Ulmut's martial arts tournament.

Fran had participated in both, but had given up on them for this year.

The reason is, we'd be late if we take part in the events, and Fran's curiosity about the unfamiliar continent was getting the better of her.

However, the trip to Gordisia was postponed, which conveniently gave us more time. This would be our chance to participate in the events in the Kingdom of Kranzel.

Hearing her words, Brunnen pondered something.

「I see... You'll be heading south then?... In that case, why don't you take on one of the country's requests as well?」

「Request?」

「Yes. I want you to ask a certain person to come with us to Gordisia. I'll write you a letter, and please give it to him」

Could it be someone from the Kingdom of Kranzel? Thinking of possible forces, I don't think Amanda is available. I don't think Jean will be able to join us either. So maybe, Forrund?

「I believe he is usually wandering around the small countries of the south, but I believe he has been invited to be the guest of honor at this year's Ulmut Martial Arts Tournament. Perhaps you can meet him there」

「Who is he?」

What came out of Brunnen's mouth in response to Fran's question was a name that I didn't expect to hear.

「The name of the person to whom I'm giving the letter is Dimitris. A well-known S ranked adventurer」



# Chapter 671

TENKEN 671 Item Bag

Dimitris.

I've heard his name before. He is Colbert's master and the founder of the Dimitris martial arts. He is a warrior recognized by the gods and said to be one of the strongest fighters in the world.

The S ranked adventurer with "Immoveable" as his alias.

I heard that although he was quite old, he's still very active as an adventurer.

「You want me to go see Dimitris and give him the letter?」

「Correct. Will you accept it? 」

「Yup, I'm also interested with him too」

「Ooh! You have my thanks!」

「All I have to do is give him the letter, right?」

「We won't force him if he doesn't want to accept it」

The other party was a high-ranking adventurer. It was more likely for him to listen to a peer like Fran.

「He's not a bad guy, but he's kind of difficult to deal with...」

That makes me a little worried when you say something like that though...

「So, I'm really glad that you're willing to take it!」

The overjoyed Brunnen then pulled out a bag. It was a plain leather bag, except for the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Belios on it. But upon looking at it, one could see that it was filled with a kind of magical power.

「An Item bag?」

「The letter to Dimitris-dono was in it. Ah, wait, don't carelessly open it」

Brunnen hurriedly stopped Fran from taking a peek inside.

「Let me tell you this first; the letter is considered a classified document, and this bag could tell if anyone other than Dimitris-dono opens it」

「It can do that?」

「Yes. Our chief magician is an excellent one after all. He's especially good with item bags and space-time magic」

「Hmm~」

Fran responded nonchalantly because her magic and skills were all she needed, but considering that this chief magician was a normal person, he must be a prized asset for the kingdom. Perhaps he could even create a long-distance teleporter.

Brunnen was apparently annoyed by Fran's disinterested response. He then began to boast about their magic tool technician.

But then, one particular topic suddenly caught Fran attention. Well, me too.

「Research to open an item bag?」

「Yeah. An item bag can not be opened if the person who are registered to it died. We're not at the practical stage yet though」

He was glad that Fran showed a reaction and explained the groundbreaking nature of this research.

He explained that if this works, it will make it much easier for the military to manage supplies.

It seemed that nowadays, ordinary food is managed in item bags that do not have to be registered, while valuable supplies such as medicines and money to be used in the field are placed in item bags with registered owners.

This is meant to prevent corruption and theft, but it also has a disadvantage. If all the registered owners die, the items inside can no longer be retrieved.

He said that in the past, some armies have collapsed because assassins killed their item bags owners and their food and medicine became unusable.

Well, if you can do a lot of damage to the enemy's supplies just by killing a few people, there's no reason not to do something like that.

That is why they set a high number of registered owners in case something goes wrong, but that also has a disadvantage. As the number of registered owners increases, so does the probability of people with bad intentions getting mixed in.

But what if the item bags could be opened without the registered owners? There would be no need to worry about that kind of problem.

「But, wouldn't that render the registration itself be meaningless?」

That's right. As Fran said, if such a technology is developed, the registration itself will be meaningless in the first place.

「Well, that's the problem too」

Brunnen seems to understand that as well. He groans with a difficult look on his face.

However, since this research itself is being conducted everywhere, their country cannot afford to be the only one to miss out. If the research is going to be completed someday, it would be advantageous for them to be the first to get their hands on it.

「Anyway, you don't have to worry so much about it now. After all, nobody has ever opened the littlest item bag yet. It would be better to pay a high-ranking contract magician a lot of money to open it for us」

「A high-ranking contract magician can open an item bag?」

「Well, to a point. They say it also depends on the rank of the bag and how big it is... I've heard that arcane magic, which precedes contract magic, has a technique that is related to it. Do you happen to have an item bag that you can't open?」

「Nn」

Fran then took out several item bags. Some were obtained from the hideouts of human traffickers, some from goblins, and many others.

「The registration of these bags must be done by contract magic. So, if you're a good magician who can overwrite it, you can deactivate it. Well, I only know of one, and that fellow is currently missing」

「I see...」

Well, I actually can open it if I want. All I have to do is raise the level of my contract magic and get the arcane magic. However, I'm not going to spend my precious points just to open an item bag that we don't even know what's inside.

We'll need to find someone or a magic beast that can use the magic. Well, I never give much thought to it, so I don't really care whether we'll find them or not.

「The request is only to deliver the letter to Dimitrius, right?」

「Yes, that's all. We'll be counting on you」

「Nn」

Dimitris the Immovable. I wonder what kind of old man will he be? I'm looking forward to it. Well, I'm also worried though. After all, high-ranking

adventurers are always full of weirdos.

What about Fran, you ask? How in the world you'd thought that Fran belongs to those weirdos!? Don't you see how pretty and lovely she is!?

「Master, what's wrong?」

『No, it's nothing. I was just thinking about something』

「Dimitris the Immovable. This gonna be fun」

『You thought so?』

「Nn. I want to fight him」

『...』

Well, it'd be hard for me to defend her if you're asking me whether she's a person with common sense or not though.

# Chapter 672

TENKEN 672 The Power of Appetite

After leaving the royal capital of the Kingdom of Belios, we returned to the Kingdom of Kranzel a few days later.

It took us a few days to finish the confirmation of the request from the Kingdom of Belios and do some shopping in the royal capital.

Thanks to that, we were able to replenish some of the potions we had run out of and stock up on ingredients. I will be able to make a lot of Mapo Curry which Fran likes later.

Spending some time touring the capital was worth it.

Well, what took most of the time was Fran and Urushi's buying and eating though. We probably visited most of the famous stores in between the shopping sprees.

『It's been a while since we've been to the Kingdom of Kranzel』

「Nn」

『Even though we just crossed the border, I feel strangely nostalgic』

Maybe it's because this place is where I first come to my senses in this world. This country has somewhat become a special space for me as well.

But Fran pays no heed about my sentiment and climbs up on Urushi's back and pointed her hand to the south.

「Urushi, quick! We don't have much time」

「Woof!」

At Fran's words, Urushi start to run at full speed.

Not only Fran, but also Urushi has a serious expression on his face. They're somewhat seemed to be in a hurry.

As if to express their impatience, Fran and Urushi continued on their nonstop march. They didn't take a break even when they normally would have, but instead, they kept going in a straight line while using magic to recover their strength.

They even ate while running. When Urushi gets tired, Fran will keep running on her feet.

We're currently on our way to Alessa

Since we're nearby, we should say hello to Klimut and Amanda.

But our true destination is Barbra.

If we hurried, we could make it in time for the cooking contest. I don't think we would be in time to participate, but since Fran and Urushi's goal was the food stall, we should be able to make it in time during the festival.

That's the reason why they are so determined to push themselves to the limit.

「Even if I break my leg, I'll make it to the stall!」

「Woof」

\*\*\*

Five hours later.

「Are you leaving already?」

「Nn」

「Amanda will be back in half a month, you know?」

「We'll be late if we wait that long for her」

「You were in the middle of a request, huh? It can't be helped then」

We arrived safely in Alessa, and after making a quick round of greetings to Donadrond and others who had helped us before, we exchanged information with Klimut at the Adventurer's Guild.

Amanda seemed to have left Alessa to scout the northern border in the meantime.

It seems that the vicious magic power released by the great magic beast had reached many places, and could even be observed in the Kingdom of Kranzel. As a result, many adventurers were asked to scout the border.

The information we gave them about the great magic beast incident was very much appreciated. Oh, I'm not telling them anything that needs to be kept secret, okay?

On the other hand, we managed to get some information about spirit magic and Dimitris from Klimut. There wasn't any new information about spirit magic, but we did hear a lot of interesting things about Dimitris.

There was the story of how he single-handedly quelled a goblin stampede, and the story of how he rammed into an enemy castle in a war and took the king's head by himself. There's also a story about how he defended a bridge against an invading army for three days and three nights by standing in the middle of the bridge alone, which gave him the nickname "Immovable".

He's not doing anything flashy these days, but he is said to be still in training and hunts magic beasts in various places.

We heard a lot of interesting information, and even if it was only for a short time, I'm glad we came back to this town.

「I'll be going then」



「Haa~h... I can imagine Amanda complaining when she finds out that I'm the only one who met Fran...」

I felt sorry for Klimut. But we'll have him to give our regards to Amanda.

『We're getting close to Barbra, it seems. That was quick』

「Nn. We've done our best」

「Woof!」

Thanks to the two's obsession for food, we managed to traverse the Kingdom of Kranzel surprisingly quickly.

Even though we had to avoid the town and snake our way through as Urushi running by the town might alarm them, it took us four days to reach Barbra from the northern border.

How terrifying their appetite power is!

I didn't expect that we could traverse the rugged mountainous region in the center of the country in just one day.

There was probably a range of mountains higher and steeper than Mt. Fuji, and possibly even higher than the Himalayas maybe?

But Fran defied the cold and low oxygen by using Aerial Jump to climb up cliffs, crawl out of crevasses, and traverse the mountain range in a straight line.

Even when it was snowing so hard that she couldn't use her Aerial Jump, she didn't take a break and tried to climb up the mountain while putting up barriers. I felt a chill just by looking at her revealing outfit.

If I were to compare her to the people of Earth, it makes me once again realize how strong the people in this world are.

We also encountered some rather strong magic beasts, but they could not stop Fran and Urushi's momentum. In fact, they were still able to enjoy a

short break and a delicious meal.

I also get a little carried away because of this snowy mountain and made a lot of other new dishes.

The one that was particularly well-liked was the smoothie made from snow strawberries and glaciers found on this snowy mountain. They looked so delighted when they drunk the snow strawberry smoothie inside a simple snow hut that I build and was heated by magic.

It's been a while since they've eaten that much of anything other than curry, isn't it? We even stopped for a few hours to pick up a bunch of snow strawberries. We also have a lot of glaciers in storage so we can make smoothies whenever we want.

Other than that, I also managed to get a few new skills.

They are snow-running, snow-diving, and snow-swimming. All of them are skills that assist the user in their activities in the snow. Although they can only be used in limited places, they are skills that should be useful in times of need.

My favorite skill is the Snow-Swimming. I can swim in the snow as if I were underwater. When Fran does this, her body would get cold quickly, but it was nothing for me, I'm not a living being after all.

『When we get into Barbra, should we head to the cooking guild first?』

「Nn!」

# Chapter 673

TENKEN 673 Curry Soup

「Little girl. Welcome back」

「Nn. I'm back」

Fran was facing an old man at the cooking guild.

He is the food critic who helped us last year. I don't really like his vibe that makes me remind of Kaibara-sensei though. (1)

Well, it seems that it was only me who thought of him as someone who had taken care of us while Fran perceived him as a rival.

I could tell that by the expression on her face as she faced the man with a scowl.

I'm sure they have acknowledged each other in their own way at the last cooking contest though... Well, it can't be helped since they are not the type that will act all familiar with each other.

The old man's name is Mecham. He is a bigwig in the cooking guild. (2)

「Then, what's your answer to the proposal I made the other day? You have given it some thought, haven't you?」

「Nn. I'll set up my stall too」

「Would you go with curry again this year?」

「Nn!」

「Hohou! How interesting. A year has passed since then, and the number of restaurants serving curry dishes has exploded here in Barbra. The advantage of being a rarity has already faded, you know?」

「Fufun. Master's curry is not just any curry, so it's no problem」

「Well, I'll be looking forward to it then」

「I'll make sure everyone recognizes that curry is the best food in the world in this year's cooking contest!」

Actually, we had arrived in Barbra yesterday, but the cooking contest had already started.

I didn't think we would be able to participate in the contest in time, so after showing up at the cooking guild, we had planned to devote ourselves to buying food and studying cooking, but――.

The stall we set up last year, the Black Tail Stall, has become a legend as the original curry food stall, and it seems that the contest organizer has been flooded with inquiries about whether we would be participating in the contest this year.

What would happen if they found that Fran was just playing around buying and eating without setting her stall? I could foresee that the cooking guild would be blamed for that.

Hence, the cooking guild begged Fran to help them.

"Just for a day! Can you please set up the Black Tail Stall for one day?" he begged.

Fran thought that her buying and eating spree was important, but she also thought it was important to spread curry cuisine to the world. Since they only asked her to open the stall for a day, she decided to accept their request.

「Then we'll set up the place the day before the final. We could also provide you with staff and supplies」

「Okay」

And just like that, we got involved in the cooking contest again this year, though, not as a contestant...

「Master, what kind of curry should we serve?」

『Umm, let's see...』

It had to be curry. Fran and the customers were expecting it, and there was no reason to go for something else.

But if possible, I wanted to make it different from last year. Curry bread would be fine, but would curry rice work for this year?

「Last year's curry rice was no good」

『That's last year. But maybe we could use it this year』

Last year was a struggle for us. There were a lot of things to worry about, like profitability and sales volume. But this year was different.

We won't be related to the main contest, our stall would be a sort of exhibition this year, so we don't have to worry about the profitability.

「I see」

『In other words, we don't even have to worry about the cost or anything! Even a super luxurious curry is allowed!』

Rather, a dish with a special appeal that is hardly profitable will be more appreciated.

「Let's make something awesome then!」

『Something awesome, huh?...』

「We'll use the best meat to make the best curry. Let's make the kind of curry that will make everyone want to eat nothing but curry!」

How frightening. But that might be good too.

Since the end of last year, we have accumulated a great amount of magic beast's meat from the Plains of the Demon Wolf. We probably even have enough meat for 10,000 servings by using the low-ranked magic beast's meat alone.

I've always felt reluctant to throw away something edible, so I've been kind of hoarding it, but I never thought it would come in handy here!

Our main problem is rice. I wonder can we prepare a lot of it now?

We should ask the cooking guild and go with curry rice if we can get rice.

That's what I thought, but...

『I never thought there'd be so little rice...』

「Nn」

We searched all over Barbra for rice, but found very little. Not that there was no rice at all, but there was a lot of old rice, and to be honest, it did not suit our needs.

Originally, the largest importer of rice was the Kingdom of Belios. The Kingdom of Belios, which has abundant water and is slightly colder than the Kingdom of Kranzel, is said to have been a major rice producing area. Their climate is probably similar to the Tohoku region in Japan.

This month, however, the supply of rice from there has dropped drastically. This was probably due to the disturbance caused by the great magic beast.

The Kingdom of Belios had their own way of storing the rice they harvested, from which they exported a little each month.

This would allow them to provide high-quality products, and in the event of any domestic incidents, they could cancel exports and secure food.

And then there was the big incident last month, which led to a decrease in the exports volume.

『We have no choice. Let's think of an alternative』

But I don't want to make the same curry bread as last year. It's too boring.

「Would using roux no good?」

『Roux, huh?... Wait, maybe we could make it into soup?』

Let's make it a curry soup. If we make it filling and satisfying, we should be able to make it work! I think we could use more meat too.

「Meat-filled curry soup」

「Woof!」

Drool began to flow from the corners of Fran and Urushi's mouths. It seems they couldn't contain themselves anymore just by imagining it.

Now that I have the approval of the curry-loving duo, let's try this.

===TLN===

(1) Yuzan Kaibara, a famous gourmand who tries to sabotage his rival in Oishinbo (1983), a manga about cooking.

(2) Need help! Can anyone check what the previous TL group used for his (Mecham) name.

# Chapter 674

TENKEN 674 Side: A Certain Group of Three

「Big sis, is that Barbra?」

「Yeah, it seems so. There aren't many places with a port of that size. I'm sure of it」

「We're finally here! Uwa~h, I never thought the boat trips would be so boring」

「Wasn't it you who gets excited at it in the beginning? Biscot」

「Don't you come up on deck too, Clicker? It was quite exciting at first, but it got boring after seeing the same scenery for so long... Don't you think so, big sis Sibylla?」

「It wasn't that boring, I guess. The sea magic beasts were pretty tough too」

「Ah, it was stupid of me to ask big sis who's happy as long as she could have a fight」

「Hmm?」

「I-it's nothing! But if we were just going to enter the Kingdom of Kranzel, wouldn't it have been fine if we stopped by the port town of Dahz first? We don't need to come all the way to a town this far south, right...?」

「We can't. The border is heavily guarded at the moment. Besides, we don't want to cause any trouble」



「Can't we just break through them?」

「How stupid. Good grief, this is exactly why you are such a Biscot」

「D-don't use my name to represent stupidity!」

「Listen, unlike back in our country, there would be no supplies or reinforcements out there, right? We have nowhere to run if they come after us. And if we cause a scene, we might find ourselves stuck sooner or later」

「Is that so?」

「It is. In the first place, we don't even know what they're capable of」

「You mean their strength? What's the big deal about those guys?」

「Hey, Biscot」

「! W-what is it, big sis?」

「It's not necessarily a bad thing to look down on people from other countries. It's practically a habit in our country. It won't change anytime soon. But don't underestimate the capabilities of people you've never seen before. Are you going to do the same thing as those idiots at the top?」

「I-I'm sorry」

「That's what we're going to find out, remember? The truth whether those outside of our country really are a small fry or not」

「Yeah」

「The demon knights of the Kingdom of Filias are said to be around too」

「Haa~h, they're really a pain in the ass. I understand, we shouldn't move too recklessly」

「It's good that you understand. Capta—... No, Sibylla-sama, there's several methods to measure the strength of those outside of our contry」

「Hee? What kind of method is it? The only thing I can think of is something related to fighting」

「Please refrain from doing that when we got there. We are supposed to be traveling mercenaries. I've asked the Morley Trading Company, a subsidiary of my family, to guarantee our identities. So if we were to do something wrong, the trust of that trading company, which has spent a long time building up its credibility in the Kingdom of Kranzel, would be lost at once. It would be a great loss for our country if we lose this trading company」

「Well, that's true. It can be used in a variety of ways, such as to acquire foreign currency, gather information, and in cases like ours, to infiltrate」

「You seem to be aware of that. However, Morley Trading Company is probably less loyal to the country than we are, since they are more active outside. Worst case scenario, they might even ditch us」

「Oi oi, Clicker. Is it safe to rely on those guys then?」

「We should be fine as long as we don't do anything that could put them at a disadvantage. Besides, with the strength of this ship, the three of us can easily overpower them」

「Well, you might be right...」

「Just follow our instructions, you're stupid after all」

「Kuh!」

「Biscot, be quiet」

「Yes...」

「So, you said there are several methods to determine how good an adventurer is, right?」

「Yes. First of all, the conventional method is to submit a request. If we can get them to escort us, we can see them at work up close. Well, there's a problem with this method though」

「What's the problem?」

「If the other party was skilled enough, they might be able to see through our real prowess. There is a high possibility that they will have doubts about why we asked for an escort when we're strong enough to defend ourselves」

「I see」

「Although it's a bit of a roundabout method, we can check the quality of the magic beast's meat and medicinal herbs sold in towns. There is also the method of checking the quality of their armor. We can't directly check their capabilities this way, but we can at least use it as a rough indicator of their overall strength. Fortunately, we are heading to Barbra, a city with a large population. It's a good place to investigate」

「I get the gist of it, but I'd rather not have to do the investigation myself」

「Me too. It'd be easier to just attack the adventurers there」

「I've told you we shouldn't do something like that, right!? Well, I don't believe that Sibylla-sama and stupid Biscot can do it anyway. I'm just proposing the method」

「If I don't have to do the tedious investigation, I'm fine with being stupid」

「Leave the investigation to me」

「We'll leave it to you. So, Clicker, anything else? From the way you're talking, you've got other proposals, don't you?」

「The next one is the direct method. In a little while, there's going to be a martial arts tournament in a city called Ulmut」

「A martial arts tournament? Hohou. That sounds like fun! There'll be some strong fighters, right?」

「I've heard that many famous adventurers will be competing in the tournament, so we could get a good idea of their abilities by watching their fights」

「Watching their fights? So we're just going to watch and not compete?」

「Give me a break, will you? We'll be in trouble if they find out who we are. We must refrain from doing anything too conspicuous」

「Tch...」

「Don't "tch" me! Anyway, unlike us, Sibylla-sama will certainly stand out. If you were to participate in the tournament, they would definitely look into your background. So as to not attract too much attention, you mustn't win the tournament... But you hate to lose on purpose, right?」

「Haa~h... I guess I'll have to be content with watching it this time」

「Please do so」

「That means we can rest a little in Barbra before going to Ulmut to watch the martial arts tournament, right?」

「The two of you can think of it that way. I'll take care of the various arrangements」

「Okay. We'll leave it to you」

「Hehe. So we're staying in Barbra for a while? I hope they have some good liquor」

「I hope they can keep us from getting bored」

「...Please don't cause any trouble while we're there, okay?」

TLN: It's all dialogue XD

# Chapter 675

TENKEN 675 Making Curry with Io-san

「Umm, is this how the vegetables should be cooked?」

「Mogu mogu」 (munching sfx)

「...How is it?」

「Nn. It's perfect」

「That's good to hear」

We were now in the cooking area in the basement of the cooking guild. As one would expect from the headquarters of a guild based in a major city, the cooking area was nothing short of gorgeous.

This is the first time I've seen a metal sink in this world. They have also installed magic tools on their stove and oven, and it seemed to be made with efficiency in mind.

At first glance, this place might look like the kitchen of a luxurious hotel on Earth.

Fran and one of the female cooks are standing side by side in such a kitchen, tasting the curry soup.

「Io, amazing」

「Not at all, Fran's master is more amazing! I am nothing compared to the person who came up with this amazing dish...!」

The girl with Fran is said to be a natural-born genius cook. The unreliable but kind sister to everyone, Io.

We went to the orphanage to say hello to Io the day before, and that's when we heard that they wouldn't be having a stall at the contest this year.

Until last year's contest, she had to open a stall to earn money to run the orphanage. But now that they are under Amanda's patronage, their financial difficulties have been resolved.

In addition, the number of children has doubled over the last year, making it difficult for her to find time to prepare for the contest.

Because of this, she had no intention of participating in the contest this year.

「I'd like to open the stall if I could. It's important to interact with the local people after all」

Hearing that, we asked Io if she could help us with our stall.

With this, she can work at the stall for a day and show her face to the local residents. She will also be well compensated.

On the other hand, we'll be getting the best helpers. She knows a lot of people and is a good cook. We couldn't ask for a better person.

This is truly a win-win situation.

Well, there was also the selfishness of me wanting to see her cook though.

The level of my cooking skill is higher than hers, but that doesn't mean I can make the more delicious food.

Just like with Fran's swordsmanship skill, she instantly got it after raising my skill level all at once. Compared to those who had honed their skills on their own, I realized that we had been neglecting the basics of cooking.

There were also many areas where I lacked in application. I'm good at recreating Earth's cuisine and improving it to make it more delicious, but...

When it comes to dishes that originally existed in this world, I can recreate them, but I can hardly do a good job of preparing them.

It's not that it was bad, and Fran is happy enough with it. But it was nothing compared to the food cooked by Io and Fermus at the dragon restaurant.

And that's why we're here with Io today. I thought that if I could see her cooking process, I might be able to grasp something.

Well, all I've learned is that I just have to be diligent. I can't imitate a genius after all.

Knock knock.

Just then, a knock sounded at the entrance of the kitchen.

As our work was a trial production of a new product, it was off-limits to everyone except those involved. However, it seemed that we had a visitor.

「Who?」

「This voice, It's Fran, huh? It's me, Colbert. I heard you were in Barbra!」

The one who came was Colbert. He was a B-ranked adventurer and a skilled fighter. He was also a former disciple of Dimitris, whom we had to meet.

He was excommunicated for getting serious against Fran in a martial arts tournament, but...

(Can he be here?)

『Well, I don't mind. He may have lost his skills when he was excommunicated, but that doesn't mean he's lost his memories of Dimitris. We might find some useful information from him』

It's not that I want to know Dimitris' weaknesses or how he fights. What I want to know is his favorite food, his favorite color, or any other information that I can use to make friendly contact with him.

「It's been a while, Fran」

「Nn」

「It seems, you've gotten bigger too」

「？」

Colbert looked strangely excited as he came in. And for some reason, he grasps Fran's hand tightly with tears in the corners of his eyes.

Oi oi, what is he doing? Isn't he getting overfamiliar with Fran!? I mean, his hand! He's squeezing too hard! C-could it be that he has fallen for Fran!? Well, that's not surprising since Fran is super cute, not... I won't let him! I won't let someone who's weaker than Fran to take care of her! Go get stronger than Fran first and come back again!

「I may not be able to replace your master, but you can count on me for anything while you're in town!」

「？」

「Curry Master, your disciple has grown up well!」

Aah—, I know where this is going. It seems like he's still under the impression that I'm dead and he's going to watch over Fran in my stead. He's the type of guy who often goes around making assumptions, and I guess he got excited all by himself when he saw Fran.

「Master is still alive」

「Yeah, you're right」

「...」

It was rare to see Fran's dumbfounded face.

『Should I show myself to clear up the misunderstanding?』



(...Not now)

『Eh? You sure?』

(Nn. If Master shows up now, we won't be able to get any information out of him)

『Aah—, that may be true』

I'm sure Colbert will be happy to see me. But he would be too happy, and his excitement could prevent us from getting some information out of him.

『Let's leave it for a little later then』

(Nn)

# Chapter 676

TENKEN 676 A Miscellaneous Staff and Three Meals a Day

Colbert looked surprised when we invited him into the kitchen.

「Isn't it Io-dono from the orphanage? Why are you here?」

「You two know each other?」

「Umm, who might you be?」

Colbert seems to know Io-san, but Io-san doesn't know Colbert. She tilted her head with a troubled look.

「Oops, my apologies. Your soup is famous here in Barbra, and of course, I buy your stuff every year!」

「Eh? Umm, err, thanks, I guess?」

I see. If Colbert likes cooking and respects the cooks, of course, he'd know Io-san.

「Aah, my name is Colbert, and I'm a B ranked adventurer」

「Eeeeh? B-B ranked?」

Voiced Io in surprise when she heard Colbert's self-introduction. It even sounded like a scream.

Our senses were a bit off, but a rank B adventurer must be something of a big deal to the average person. They're not heroes and were also treated differently than nobles, but they're considered to be of a higher status.

It was understandable that she would be surprised when he suddenly introduced himself like that.

「A-aah, but, this Fran here is also a B ranked adventurer, you know?」

「Ueeeh?」

Come to think of it; she previously told her that she was a D ranker, isn't it? She hasn't told her anything about her rank-up.

「F-Fran-san...?」

「Nn. It's true」

「Haeee!?!」

Io raised her voice in response to Fran's nod.

「But, before... Eeh?」

「Never mind that」

「She's right. Besides, I think you're quite awesome yourself, aren't you?」

「Ueh? N-not at all...」

Io-san was frightened when Colbert bowed his head. She's probably confused by the fear of a B ranked adventurer.

「No no no, even I was just——」

「No no no,——」

They continued to bow their heads to each other one after another.

『We cannot progress at this rate』

「Nn. Hey, why'd you come here, Colbert? Is it just to see me?」

「I thought I'd help out this time too. What do you say? I'll do anything!」

He looked like he was expecting her to let him help us as he said that. I had seen this expression before. It was the same expression Fran had when she begged for a curry. Well, he's not cute at all though.

Maybe he's after the meal. It was the same with last year cooking contest.

「...I can let you help」

「Really!?!」

「Nn. I need a miscellaneous staff」

「I'm fine by that!」

Fran also knows that Colbert's goal is not money, which is why she'd have him do the miscellaneous task.

「Eh? Eeeh?」

Io is confused again. Well, it's strange no matter what you think. Hiring a B-ranked adventurer for miscellaneous tasks is unthinkable under normal circumstances. It would be a waste of a high-ranking adventurer's talent.

However, Fran and Colbert's conversations continue.

「Your reward would be three meals a day」

「Hurray! I'll do it! Fran's a hell of a cook after all! I'm looking forward to it」

「Nn. I'm currently preparing for a new dish」

「F-for real!?!」

「So, work hard to get your reward」

「Ou!」

「E-Eeeh?」

Io, who was a person with common sense except for her insane cooking skills, was so confused that she'd answer all of our questions with just a "yes."

「Are you okay?」

「Y-yes」

「You should take a break if you're tired」

「Understood. I-I'm going to take a short break」

Io-san then walked out of the kitchen with a staggering gait. She must be tired of being surprised.

After seeing her off, Fran opens her mouth again.

「I have a question」

「What is it? You can ask me anything you want!」

「I want you to tell me about Dimitris」

Colbert became somewhat tense when Fran mentioned his master's name.

「Are you interested in him?」

「I have to see Dimitrius for a job」

「Hohou. So, in other words, you want to know where he is? I don't really know where he is but I guess you should start from Ulmut」

The A-ranked adventurer Dimitris is invited as a guest every year to the martial arts tournament in Ulmut.

But Dimitris had some business to attend to and was unable to come to Ulmut last year, so the Beast King was invited as the guest of honor instead.

It was apparently during the period when he had to visit the Kingdom of Kranzel.

「I think that the reason why the Beast King lent out his magic tools to run the tournament was probably out of rivalry with Master Dimitris」

「Are the two of them on bad terms?」

「That's not it. It's just that he was invited in his place and felt he couldn't afford to lose face without doing anything. He's an adventurer and a king after all」

So, as a result of competing with Dimitrius, a fellow S-ranked adventurer, he provided the magic tool used in the quarterfinals, the Cradle of Time.

Well, he seemed to like to be flashy, and as royalty, I guess appearances are also important.

「I already know he's coming to Ulmut」

「Then, what do you want to know?」

「Like what he likes」

「Aah, that kind of thing, huh..」

「And what kind of person he is」

We don't want to make a poor impression on Dimitris. This was because we didn't want to offend Rank S, and we really wanted to get some useful information to accomplish this request.

「Hmm, you see... The simplest way to describe my master is...」

「The simplest way?」

「Strict, stern, and eccentric. That's what kind of person he is」

That doesn't sound like an easy guy to get along, huh...

# Chapter 677

TENKEN 677 The One Named Dimitris

When we asked Colbert about Dimitris, the words that came out of him were strict, stern, and eccentric.

Words that worry me a little.

「...Was he a bad person?」

「Buhahaha! He's scary indeed, but he's not a bad person. He's merciless to his disciples, but the people revere him like a hero」

「?」

Fran doesn't seem to be able to picture it very well. She is making a difficult face and is tilting her head.

「What can I say is that he's tough on people who make fighting their livelihood. He must have used himself as his standard. He'd even say something like 『Is that all you can do! You'd die? There's no way I'll let you die yet! If you were really dying, you wouldn't be able to speak!』」

Uwaah—. That's pretty tough. It sounds like the Marine corps. But if that's all he does, he won't be adored by many disciples, right?

Though Colbert had a wry smile on his face, I could see the respect he had for Demetrius in every word he said. Even though he was excommunicated, his respect for his master remained unchanged.

「But he's a person that won't abandon someone in need nor take compensation from the poor. He'd say that it was only for his training. But

that's how he saved the village I grew up in」

So, what he's saying is that he's been wandering around the continent of Gilberd, helping people in need for free? That would certainly be considered heroic.

But is that okay?

Dimitris was an S-ranked adventurer. In other words, he is at the top of all adventurers.

If such a person were to help people for free, wouldn't the other adventurers have nothing to do?

Let's say the village that was saved for free by Dimitris next hires a D-ranked adventurer. Would they be comfortable with it then? They're going to have to pay tens of thousands of gold to an adventurer who is far less skilled and weaker than Dimitris. It should be a fair reward, but it's not surprising that people would complain.

Besides, isn't this a matter that should be addressed to the faces of the knights and soldiers?

「Is it okay for him to do that?」

「What do you mean?」

「If he won't accept payment, the other adventurers will be in trouble」

「Ah—, you mean that huh?」

Fran voiced her concerns before I could say anything to her. In Fran's case, she's the type of person who believes that compensation is a justified form of appreciation.

However, Fran could also understand the act of helping a person she liked for free. In the Black Cat Kin's village and elsewhere, she was treated with great respect, but she didn't get any reward.



I guess that's why it bothered her even more.

「In master Dimitris' case, you see. Originally, he became an adventurer because it was convenient for his training. And when he became an A-ranked adventurer, he easily attempted to quit」

「Why」

「Because it became too much of a trouble, he said. The recruitment of nobles and the guild's meddling. Then there was the issue of the request fee. For Master, belonging to the guild must have been a hindrance. But the guild held him back from that」

Well, of course, everyone would hold them back if an A-ranked adventurer ever said that he was quitting.

At that time, Dimitris had put forward three conditions for him to stay on as an adventurer.

When accepting unexpected requests, Dimitris may decide the fee for the request. The adventurer's guild will cooperate in the training of Dimitris's apprentices. And unrestricted access to magical areas.

And the Adventurer's Guild accepted all of those conditions. Apparently, even back then it was said that he would eventually rise to rank S, and they wanted to keep Dimitris in the guild at all costs.

There were some problems at first, but now that the story has become well known in the small southern group of countries where Dimitris is active, no major problems have occurred since then.

「It seems that the other adventurers have had a lot to say to him, but he's stubborn as hell. He's also a bit of a hothead. I even heard that he punched them in the face to shut them up」

He's adding that he's a stubborn and a hotheaded person now...

I'm sure he's not a bad person, but I just can't get a good impression of him.

「How can I get closer to him? And what's his favorite food?」

「I don't know what his favorite food is... He's a person whose daily life is like a training session, so he puts more importance on nutrition than taste in his meals. All he eats is just salads with medicinal herbs; he even goes as far as to take a medicinal herbs bath. To be honest, the only reason I got interested in cooking was because I was sick of such bad food」

「So it's impossible to get close to him with delicious food?」

「Well, unless you have a dish that is rich in nutrients and makes one stronger after eating it」

「Hmm」

A dish that makes one stronger? No, if there was such a thing, I'd feed it to Fran myself. But maybe it's possible to provide food that is nutritionally balanced and tastes good. It doesn't sound promising though.

「Then, what're his hobbies?」

「It's training. Well, Master Dimitris would never admit it. Training is life, and life is training. That's what he says all the time. I don't think he's interested in anything else. A thing that might interest him would be fighting a strong opponent, I guess?」

The type that is only interested in improving themselves, huh. This one seems troublesome.

Colbert may feel offended, but my impression of him right now is that of Ashwrath, who is caring for others.

「It might be a good idea to challenge him to a mock battle, you know?」

「You think so?」

「Yeah. He's having a hard time finding people to have mock battles with these days. I'm sure he'll be happy to accept. Of course, if they're too weak, he'll just ignore you, but Fran will be fine」

「Hmm」

「However, you're going to deal with one of the strongest human beings in the world. Are you prepared for that? You won't be back scratch-free, you know?」

「Fufun, just like I wanted」

Aah—, this is bad. Fran's berserker switch has gone on! I can't help but notice the battle-crazed smile on her face.

She would never stop even if I stopped her. After all, it was a mock battle with an S-ranked adventurer. It was like a platinum ticket for Fran. (1)

Still, we have to make sure we nail this.

『Fran, don't push yourself too hard, okay?』

(Nn, I understand)

That's not the face of someone who understands though!

I wonder if Dimitris is actually a person who is fond of his grandchildren or something and gets charmed from the moment he meets Fran who's around the same age.

==TLN==

(1) Platinum Ticket is similar to an SSR gacha ticket (or golden ticket).

# Chapter 678

TENKEN 678 The Girl and a Woman

「Here you go! This is the original curry soup!」

「Meat-filled curry soup! 200 Goldes per bowl!」

「It's delicious!」

At the last day of the cooking contest. There was a tremendous line in front of the Black Tail stall.

There are probably more than 300 people lined up right now.

『I'm surprised it's selling at this price』

(It was delicious after all!)

200 Goldes for a bowl of soup is a very expensive price. It was the price of a night's stay at a cheap inn. Io-san's soup is usually sold at 10 Goldes, but we sold our's at 20 times her price.

It is still not very profitable even at this price though. After all, we had used all the spices and ingredients we needed through the cooking guild. We also spent a lot of money just making the prototypes.

Using magical vegetables and ingredients that are usually only known through books as knowledge, the result was a price of 200 Goldes per bowl.

I had a lot of magic beast's meat in my storage, so the meat part was practically free. If we had to purchase the magic beast's meat as well, we might have to set a price of 300 Goldes per bowl.

I hoped that it would still sell well, but it actually turned out to be a bigger success than I had imagined.

A sign that says "The Original Curry Stall", the massive advertising by the cooking guild, Io's reputation, and the merchant's and adventurer's network.

All of these factors combined to create a crowd that far exceeded our expectations. The line was so long that we had to immediately hire more sales staff and increase the number of cash registers.

And yet, the line was still this long.

「Uu~, the line won't end...」

「It's even worse than last time」

「Uu~, Black Lightning Princess tricked me」

Don't you talk bad about her, Lydia! If anything, you're the ones who jumped at the offer of free meals as payment, remember!?

I didn't lie or force her to be our salesperson. I just didn't tell her that the payment would be given after the work was done. But that was just common sense, right? Why should I pay for someone who hasn't even worked yet?

By the way, what we are serving at our stall this time is a curry soup with vegetables and chunky meat. It is served in a thick paper cup with a piece of bread on top as a lid.

This way, the curry won't spill and the bread can be sold along with it.

We offer three levels of spiciness: normal, spicy, and dragon spicy. All of them are highly recommended by Fran and Urushi, and are excellent soup curries.

The dragon spicy was popular among the adventurers. Just like last year, there is also a rumor going around the adventurer that they should be ashamed if they can't handle this level of spiciness.

I thought it was Colbert's doing again this year, but it seemed that he didn't spread such rumors this time. It seemed that the adventurers who had eaten the dragon spicy curry last year had come up with the idea on their own.

This kind of thing is not going to take root in Barbra like a tradition, is it?

To adventurers who don't like spicy food, I'm sorry.

According to Fran, who has been to almost all the stalls in the past few days, there are only a few curry dishes that could be our rival. The only one that is evenly matched is the curry dragon soup that Fermus serves.

Since Fran says they're evenly matched, I guess they really are. Not bad, Fermus! It seems you've already mastered the art of mixing spices.

Or rather, I'm practically losing, isn't it? I have no restrictions, and I'm the original. Fermus, on the other hand, is pursuing profits for his food stall, and in just one year, he has created a soup that is on par with mine.

Kuh! Well played, Fermus! It looks like I have to keep working hard for Fran's sake!

As I was thinking about this, I suddenly felt Fran's presence waver. It wasn't that she was flustered, but she was a little surprised, and perhaps a little wary.

Her center of gravity changed by just a few millimetres. It seemed that her body had unintentionally tried to shift into a battle-ready position.

But I suppose that was not surprising.

「Hee~. So, this is what they call curry? It sure smells good, what do you think, sis?」

「Yeah, it looks delicious」

The duo who were receiving the curry now. She reacted to the disturbing presence that the red-haired woman in particular was giving off.

If we were to pass each other on the street, we might have thought she was trying to pick a fight with us. That's what I felt from noticing the aggressive air from her.

The three adventurers who were manning the sales counter have given up on her completely.

The woman gazed at the three members of the Scarlet Maidens as if she was trying to put a value on them. She shifted her gaze to Lydia, Maia, and Judith, and quickly lost interest in them.

She then looked at Fran next.

「...」

「...」

Uwaah—, what's with this woman. She reminded me of the first time we met the Beast King for a moment. The intimidation in the woman's eyes was so fierce. I would even call it ferocious.

She must be considerably strong. If it had only been a resemblance in presence, she reminded me of Mea.

But the fact that I subconsciously remembered the Beast King meant that I sensed a great deal of danger from this woman.

Fran stares back at the woman in reply to her gaze.

It's not that they are slamming each other with intimidation. But the problem was that the atmosphere of check and balance created by the two, who were both trying to put a value on each other, was intimidating enough for the average person.

It was probably only for a moment that the two of them made eye contact. But a strange commotion immediately rises. Some of the customers rushed to the counter for no apparent reason, while others suddenly felt a chill and raised their voices. But I guess they can't help but unwittingly open their mouths and make some kind of noise.

I don't think most of them knew what had happened, but their instincts told them that this place was dangerous.

The adventurers, who are one of the few people who understand the situation, are the opposite. They can only remain silent in the face of Fran and the woman's strength.

It was only for those few seconds that something strange happened.

「...」

The woman then took the curry and walked away from the stall. Both Fran and the woman just casually checked each other out like Yankees checking each other with guns as they passed each other.

In the first place, if the two had really tried to intimidate each other, there would have been a panic here.

『...What's with that woman? Is she an adventurer?』

(She's strong)

『Well, yeah』

Maybe I should ask someone for information about her later. I'm pretty sure she's a famous adventurer.



# Chapter 679

TENKEN 679 The Woman's Identity

「Good job for today」

「Iyaah~, that's really been a busy day」

「I'm so tired...」

After the cooking contest was over, we were now in a standing dinner party hosted by the cooking guild.

The party was more like a gathering hosted by the cooks and merchants though. There were a few noblemen in the crowd, and it seems that they could enjoy themselves and chat with the cook. They probably wouldn't attend such a rude gathering if they weren't such people after all.

Fran and the others are still going to eat a huge amount of food even though they just ate their payment. Fran, Colbert, Lydia, Maia, and Judith all had several large plates of food in front of them.

It was said that famous chefs have prepared the dishes for the event and they all seemed to be delicious.

Fran asked me to do the same, so I'm serving a dish that I made too. It looks like it's already been completely taken care of, but what I cooked was a grilled fish sprinkled with curry powder. I tried to create a fish curry like appearance.

Few cooks were even having a heated discussion in front of my dishes.

Well, it seems that the next time we come here they will have more curry dishes with seafood.

「Fran-san, it's been a while」

「Fermus」

「Your cooking this time was also wonderful」

「Yours too, it was delicious」

The man who came to greet us was Fermus of the Dragon Restaurant. He looks as young as ever.

He may be many times older than Fran, but to her, he is like a skilled, strong, and kind grandpa who can make delicious food. The conversation between Fran and Fermus goes suitably lively.

It's amazing that Fermus is able to have a good conversation, even if it's with the quiet Fran.

「Fermus-san, congratulations on your victory」

「It was all thanks to this new dish called curry」

Colbert then joined us and we started talking about today's stalls.

「Were you recruited by a nobleman to become their cook?」

「Hahaha! I don't have any plans for that at the moment. I like to serve a lot of people, and I know I'll be doing something other than cooking there」

「I see, Fermus-san surely will be more active in the battlefield if you work there」

Many of the cooks participating in this contest are said to dream of winning and becoming a nobleman's servant, but Fermus apparently turned them all down.

After all, the nobleman would rather have Fermus do something other than cooking rather than keeping him around in their kitchen. This is the reason why he is so insistent on being a city cook.

In the first place, honor and wealth are probably not worth much to Fermus now.

「By the way, there was a woman who looked pretty strong, how was that one?」

「The woman with red hair」

「Yeah, that one. It was the first time in a long time that I didn't want to fight someone who gave off the vibe of a strong person. It might have been since the time I met Fran」

「She was strong」

「Yeah, without a doubt」

Fran and Fermus seemed to be agreeing on this.

「I didn't get to see her as I was away for a break though」

「She is a tall woman with red hair tied in zanbara. Her clothes were kinda unusual. She also stared at me with her reddish-brown eyes」

(TLN: Zanbara, dishevelled hair that is too short to be tied up in a top knot)

You remember that much? As expected of Fermus, all I could remember was her strength and red hair.

「It might be easier to describe her as a yakuza rather than a wild person. The kind of person who is able to tame their inner savagery with instinct and intelligence」

That may be true. That woman's attitude was definitely on purpose.

It wasn't that she got excited at the sight of a strong opponent and became hostile, but that she had been giving off a disturbing vibe from the start to see how we would react. I don't know why, but she might have been judging Fran.

There was a whiff of a battle junkie in the air too, but maybe she just wanted to know what Fran was capable of. Even so, she backed off surprisingly easily in the end, which is different from a mere battle junkie.

「The man I met with was quite something too」

「...There's someone like that?」

Well, Fran was focused on the woman at that moment. And the other one was certainly less conspicuous than the red-haired woman.

「Yeah. A brawny man with blond hair tied back in a bun, about a head taller than the woman. He had good muscle mass. He doesn't wear much but that was definitely the body of a warrior」

「Hee~」

「I wonder if I could call it a grin, but he was smiling out of the corner of his mouth the whole time. He seemed to be the type of guy that would be popular with ladies」

「He's strong?」

「To a certain extent. Not as much as the woman though. However, his expression didn't change at all even after being exposed to the presence of that woman, he seems to be a rather daring one. I guess he will be a troublesome opponent if it turns into a fight」

「Hohou~」

Fran was also interested in the man after hearing Fermus' evaluation. She crossed her arms and started to grumble, trying to remember the man somehow.

However, it seems that nothing came up in her mind.

She's the type that could even forget someone whom she had talked with a few times before after all, I don't think there is any way she can remember this one guy.

(Master, you remember?)

『Yeah, I remember what he looked like too. I'll tell you the next time we saw him』

(Nn, please)

Still, it seems that neither Fermus nor Colbert know the identity of that woman.

「Colbert, you don't know this man?」

「Yeah. I didn't pay much attention to him, but he's got a pretty distinguished look, doesn't he? I don't remember any adventurers that looked like him from around here」

If Colbert doesn't know, then he's probably not an adventurer who is active in Barbra.

「She's probably not an adventurer from this town either. After all, how could such a skilled woman not become the talk of the town yet, right?」

「I see」

「Well, it's that time of year, so maybe they're adventurers from abroad. After all, the route from Barbra to Ulmut was the most popular route for people from abroad」

Tourists who come to Barbra may also want to see the famous Ulmut martial arts tournament. On the other hand, the participants of the tournament often stop by Barbra while they were in Kranzel.

「It's not uncommon for foreign adventurers to want to associate with renowned adventurers too」

「Is that so?」

「Now that you mention it...」

Well, it's an adventurer we're talking about, they're known to have a lot of trouble makers.

「Besides, it's only natural that they would come to see Fran and me, the previous year's finalists, right?」

「Nn. Certainly」

Does this mean that woman is going to take in this year's martial arts tournament? It looks like a strong opponent has appeared.

# Chapter 680

TENKEN 680 Side: A Certain Group of Three 2

「Geez! Sibylla-sama! I've told you not to make a scene, haven't I!?!」

「Iyaah~ I didn't expect it to cause such a commotion」

「This is not our country! We're now in a peaceful country, some of the people here have never even fought a magic beast before!」

「Huh? Really?」

「They don't have the same type of training against magic beast as our country after all. What do you think would happen if Sibylla-sama used her intimidation in such a place...」

「Hmm? I'm not intimidating them or anything though, right, Biscot?」

「Yes! You just had a little standoff with the girl from the stall」

「...Why did things become like this when I took my eyes off you for a moment...」

「By the way, you said you were going to check something out, didn't you? What were you doing?」

「A famous adventurer was having a meal with me, so I made some quick contact with him」

「Hee~? What's he like?」

「He's the Iron Claw Colbert, a B ranked adventurer. I just greeted him and had a quick chat with him」

「So, what's your impression of him?」

「He's a very sociable and honest person. I think he was a desirable person to make a request to」

「Adventurers are greedy, untrustworthy, coward, stupid and weak, was it?」

「No matter how many times I hear it, that was just a terrible propaganda. If all of that was true, then why is the Kingdom of Kranzel, which has so many adventurers, flourishing to this extent? I'd like to show this city to the foolish higher-ups who can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality」

「You think so?」

「The size of the market and the abundance of goods available surpass even that of the capital of our country. The food at those stalls is as good as the food of our nobles. It seems that the adventurers work a great part in this. I'd like to tell those fools who say that adventurers they've never seen are no big deal to get a grip on reality!」

「But the problem is, most of the people in our country have never seen an active adventurer before. It's no wonder they'd believe what they're told by the government, right?」

「Yes. That was an unusually sharp thing for Biscot to say」

「Hey, what was that for...」

「It also seems that not only the people, but also a growing number of knights and soldiers are believing the propaganda」

「We are the finest and the most powerful, and we deserve to rule the continent. Other inferior nations that rely on barbaric fools like adventurers



should follow our lead, huh? Kukuku, was it the Southern Duke who said that? That loser pig sure talks a lot」

「But it must be hard to even doubt it when they've been taught that since birth, the propaganda was promoted about 20 years ago to recruit soldiers and has spread throughout the south after all」

「The story goes that this accelerated the tendency to look down on the Kingdom of Kranzel, and the Southern Duke became unable to control his army well because of that... Well, he got what he deserved」

「However, if the Southern Duke were to start a war with only his momentum, there is no telling how much damage it would cause to our country. We need to assess the power of the adventurers during this visit」

「But you know what? Wouldn't it be their worst nightmare if we were to abandon――」

「Biscot!」

「Y-yes」

「Tell me what we stand for」

「Y-yes! The symbol of the red sword must be wielded only to protect the people! No one can harm it, no one will be harmed by it, for it is the evil and the wicked that we will destroy!」

「That's right. Our job is to protect our people from magic beasts and bandits. We don't want to get involved in something as trivial as an invasion. Of course, it would be a different story if Kranzel or Belios were to invade. Don't misunderstand that part」

「Yes! My apologies!」

「The only exception would be the dispatch to Gordisia」

「The Sixth Order's movements seemed to be a little suspicious too. There is a possibility that they are cooperating with the Southern Duke」

「Tsk! Those bastards! They've been crushed once and they still haven't learned their lesson?」

「It looks like their commander has been replaced since the previous one was defeated by Sibylla-sama」

「Well, we don't have many achievements there yet, so we tend to get underestimated, and in the first place, the southern territory is our main battlefield after all. Can't they just refuse the Southern Duke's request?」

「I don't know what to do if the Red Knight Order were to be driven by the personal greed of those in power. How deplorable!」

「The Sixth Order——the current Order of the Crimson Flame has been hit hard by that necromancer. In order to redeem their honor, they seem to have a strong desire to make a move」

「Aside from my house, I wonder if the other houses are okay? Perhaps we might even need to rein in once and for all」

「The Red Banner and the Scarlet Eye will not be a problem. The Red Rain's headship has just been taken over by its successor, but seems to be stable. The Bloody Knights are still the same, and they don't seem to be willing to venture out of the country」

「So, the only problem is that Crimson Flame brat, huh? Well, I'll just crush him when the time comes」

「Their new commander seemed to be weaker than Sibylla-sama」

「It's a pity. Their previous commander had a rotten personality, but his fighting skills were top-notch」

「It's not every day Sibylla-sama can find someone who can compete with her after all」

「That said, I'd love to say that I'm looking forward to this trip, but... The adventurer you came in contact with, how was his skill?」

「From what I can tell, he was a very skilled man. I don't know if I can beat him for sure」

「Really? For someone like Clicker to say that much of him...」

「Yes. Biscot might be able to defeat him, but it won't be an easy fight」

「Hou? Well, that's quite something, isn't it? And he was just a B ranked adventurers, right?」

「Yes. I haven't made contact with any of them, but there are A ranker and S ranker on top of that」

「I was told that there is a lot of A ranker and former A ranker roaming around in Kranzel... Oh right, the beastman girl from the stall! What about that one?」

「Big sis sure is having fun, huh? I didn't expect the girl who was selling food at the stall to be so strong. To be honest, I would have preferred if she hadn't made a face」

「Kukuku. That one was a real deal; I'd love to have a match with her」

「Even Sibylla-sama talk that much of her, huh...?」

「At least it'll be more fun than dealing with that Crimson Flame's brat. That's for sure. That's what they call an A ranked adventurer, isn't it?」

「I see, that makes sense. I've heard that adventurers are all about capability. That B ranker is one of the few people I've met since entering this country who seems to be stronger than me」

「Yup yup, what do you think, Clicker?」

「...Unfortunately, you're wrong. The young beastman girl in that stall would be the adventurer known as the Black Lightning Princess. It is said that she is strong, but she's still a B ranker」

「...Even with all that strength, she's still a B ranker?」

「Judging from what Biscot and Sibylla-sama say, she must be stronger than that Colbert guy. But she's really just a B ranker」

「F-for real... Hah! Then, what about the old man from before!? What about him!?!」

「That soup shop owner huh? That one looked strong enough to make me shiver. In terms of power, the Black Lightning Princess is the stronger one. But in terms of sheer creepiness, it was the old man from the soup shop」

「Soup shop... they called that shop the Dragon Restaurant, wasn't it?」

「Yes, it has such a name!」

「Whether it's a lie or not, they said they were using a dragon for ingredients」

「Then it must be the store's owner, Fermus the Dragon Hunter. He's a former A ranked adventurer」

「He's a, former?」

「Yes」

「Umm, let's see, doesn't that mean an active A ranked adventurers were stronger than the Black Lightning Princess or the Dragon Hunter? Seriously...!?!」

「Kukuku! This is making me even more excited to see more and more A ranked adventurers」

「I-I'm starting to get a little intimidated. I mean, far from being an inferior country, they're country of monsters」

「I beg of you! Please don't cause a scene here!」

「I know I know」

「Haa-h... I wonder whether we can safely return to our country in one piece...」

# Chapter 681

TENKEN 681 Fran's Apology

『We finally arrived!』

「Nn」

『Glad we made it in time』

「Thanks to Urushi too」

「Woof!」

Two weeks has passed since the cooking contest in Barbra, and we had arrived safely in Ulmut. Well, a lot has happened in the past two weeks too.

First we were asked by Gamudo, the Guild master of Barbra, to go to Crystal Cage. A magical area near Barbra where we first saw Forrund during last year's contest.

We were asked to procure magic beasts' meat because there was a shortage of meat after the cooking contest.

We could have refused, but Fran was more than willing to take it. After all, a magical area was an attractive thing for her.

Moreover, her battle-crazed spirit seemed to have been ignited by her encounter with the mysterious red-haired woman during the cooking contest.

The hunt went well and we had gotten ourselves a good amount of magic beasts' meat, but... we somehow got a little too deep into the woods and

ended up having a tough fight with a pack of Thunderbirds, the most powerful magic beasts in Crystal Cage.

Thunderbirds are a magic beast with a threat level of B that could move at a speed that was on par with Fran. Well, I don't think they could surpass Fran in her Brilliant Lightning Rush state though.

We were also lucky that our opponent's strongest attack is based on the thunderbolt attribute. Fran would get a thunderbolt nullification effect during her Brilliant Lightning Rush state after all. And by also using my physical attack nullification at the same time, we were left unscathed after being hit by their strongest attack.

Well, that quickly deplete my magic power in a blink though, so we decided to escape in the end. I wanted to at least bring one back if possible, but I couldn't let Fran take on five of them at the same time.

Without Urushi's support, who had acted as a decoy despite being badly injured, Fran would not have been able to escape with her life.

As expected of a magic beast with a threat level of B. I think we should be able to handle up to two of them though.

And it's not like we didn't get anything out of that encounter, okay? I managed to pluck up a good amount of Thunderbirds' feather with my telekinesis after all. Fran wasn't interested in it at all because she couldn't eat it, but we were able to sell it to Gamudo at a high price.

Not only that it can be used to make armor, but it can also be used to make bedding or a super luxurious item. Well, it certainly sounds amazing, but as expected, I can't fathom why royalty or nobles would pay a million goldes for it...

After that, we were planning to leave for Ulmut right away, but we had a little problem there and had to stay for a while.

At the time of the incident in Barbra last year, there were companies that wrongdoing was exposed and brought to a close thanks to Fran and the

others.

They were owned by the second son of the feudal lord, the Tolmaio Trading Company, which was under Brooke influence, the man who was planning a coup d'etat, and the Ysra Trading Company, which was its dark side.

They were supposed to have been eradicated, but the surviving members of the company were still lurking in Barbra and had developed a grudge against Fran.

They even hired several assassins to target Fran.

Well, I killed the assassins instantly and managed to catch the one who ordered them.

Some of them tried to escape, but there was no escaping from Urushi's nose.

Thanks to that, we had to extend our stay for a few days due to the time taken for the interrogation. Well, I guess it was also our fault that we fought a little too flashy when we defeated the assassins.

In the end, we didn't leave Barbra until ten days later than we had originally planned.

There were various things that happened along the way, but let's leave it at that.

We have bigger problems than that right now.

「Glad you came, Fran-san, and, Master-kun」

「Nn」

『It's been a while』

Naturally, when we arrived in Ulmut, we had come to greet the guild master, Diaz.



We're not strangers, and Fran is already a B ranked adventurer. So, it's not strange for her to show her face to the guild master.

But I didn't really want to meet him this time if possible. Well, I didn't expect to be able to avoid Diaz after coming to Ulmut though.

「What's the matter? You look so strange. How unusual」

「I want to talk about Zelos Reed」

「...Hohou?」

That's right. There was no way we could keep Zelos Reed a secret from Diaz.

But for Fran, who had chosen to let Zelos Reed go after meeting him, this was a decision she had made. And she refused to give in.

The mere mention of his name quickly changed his atmosphere. It seems that Diaz still has not forgotten his grudge against Zelos Reed.

「I've found Zelos Reed」

「Is that so?」

「Nn. But then, I let him go」

「He—...?」

Diaz's smiling face now kinda scares me! I don't know how Fran manages to stay so composed!

He's smiling, but I can feel that inside, dark emotion must be swirling within him.

「Mind if I ask why'd do that?」

「Nn」

And then Fran told him the story of how we found Zelos Reed, almost killed him, and then let him go.

We're not going to tell him everything. After all, he'd go to look for him if we tell where Zelos Reed is. Besides, Weena Rhyn's condition is probably not something we should be talking about lightly.

「So, you borrowed his help for something big, then letting him go as to repay the debt? Or was it because of his ties with this Romio kid?」

「...Not quite right, but something like that」

In the first place, Fran doesn't completely know what she's feeling either.

「Fumu... So? You want me to let Zelos Reed out of my mind too?」

Diaz stared at Fran with emotionless eyes as he says that. It's not that he's glaring at her, but the pressure is tremendous.

A pressure that is like telling us that there was no room for lies or deceit.

However, the next words that came out of Fran's mouth were something that neither I nor Diaz expected.

「Why?」

「Eh? Didn't you come here to tell me to let Zelos Reed out of my mind?」

「It's not」

Fran denied Diaz's words. I thought she was trying to convince him to forgive Zelos Reed, but it seemed that I was mistaken.

「It was my decision to let Zelos Reed go. It had nothing to do with Diaz」

「...Hmm?」

「Of course, I want Diaz to give up on wanting to kill Zelos Reed. But Diaz's feelings are Diaz's」

『This could make a conflict between the two of you, you know? Are you sure about this?』

「I'm not really sure, but I don't have a choice. It doesn't mean that what Zelos Reed has done is gone too」

Having said that much, Fran now looked at Diaz.

「I can't stop Diaz for wanting to go after him, but——」

「But?」

「Diaz can't stop me from trying to protect Zelos Reed and his companion too」

「Fran-kun...」

「Sorry」

Fran then sincerely bowed her head to Diaz as he was about to say something. She must have been prepared to be called a traitor by Diaz.

But this time it was Fran's turn to be surprised.

「...No need to be sorry」

「?」

Fran tilted her head at Diaz, who say that with a strangely calm expression.

「In the first place, Kiara is not the kind of person who'd ask me to do anything stupid like avenging her death. In fact, you should've been mad at me for trying to ignore it」

「Diaz...」

「Still, I need to sort out my mind a little. I'm sorry, but can you leave for today?」

「Nn...」

「...I'm sorry」

# Chapter 682

TENKEN 682 Rumina and Aurel

As soon as we split up with Diaz, we went to the dungeon. We had come to the dungeon to report to Rumina about Zelos Reed too

She wasn't showing as much anger as Diaz, but I wonder how could she not be concerned?

However, there was one miscalculation, or rather, one thing that I had not calculated.

「Aurel, why are you here?」

「Oi oi, is that how you greet people?」

「You're alone?」

「I'm still an evolved and former adventurer, you know? In the current dungeon, where the difficulty level has been lowered, I won't have any difficulty going in alone」

Certainly, Aurel has his strong body. In this dungeon, where Rumina has been weakened because of pushing herself too hard to evolve Fran, I think he should be fine soloing this dungeon on his own.

We've explained things to Diaz, so this might be a good chance to be able to explain things to Aurel and Rumina at the same time, saving us the trouble.

Fran then tells Aurel and Rumina the same explanation that she gave to Diaz before.

I was worried about how they would react, but after listening, both Aurel and Rumina showed a gentle expressions on their faces.

「I see... But that's okay, I guess. Fran still has a bright future ahead of her. We can't forget our past experiences, but we don't have to be bound by them」

「I agree」

「Thanks」

「Kiara will probably be happier if you grow up healthy too」

Rumina smiled when she said that, but then sighed with a difficult look on her face.

「But then again, Diaz is still a kid, isn't he? He hasn't changed much」

「?? Diaz is a grandpa」

「Listen Fran. A man is still a kid at heart, no matter how old he gets」

Rumina gives her a faraway look as she says that. She seems to have had a bitter experience in the past.

「Men, you know, no matter how old they get, their mind will never age beyond that of a kid. Yes, no matter how long they live! You'd better remember that」

「Nn」

Hey, stop it! Can you not tell anything weird to Fran!? I'm aware that I'm not exactly a good adult, so it's hard for me to deny her words with something like "That's not true" or anything.

At the same time, Rumina's lecture on men continued.

「At first glance, some of them may look more mature than others. But that's just because they've learned to put on an appearance, and in the end,

they're all the same. In fact, they are even worse because they are indulging themselves in the idea of being mature」

「Is that so?」

「E-even If you were to ask me...」

Aurel slurred his words with a pathetic face. He perhaps had some idea of what Rumina had said.

This is bad, there's not a man here who can deny Rumina's words! Oh, right, Fermus! Where's Fermus—!?

「This guy here was just a kid who grew up to be a big shot!」

「I just can't say a thing when Rumina-sama says so...」

「Well, this guy is better than the others though. It was because he understood that he's still a kid」

「Iyaah~」

「That's not a compliment! Just beware of men who say they're not a kid, okay? That kind of man is usually the worst. They don't really understand themselves at all. They are nothing but kids who think they are more mature than others, don't you think?」

W-well, isn't that too much of a rant? But people who look at others and say, "That guy's childish," or "I'm not like that childish person," are certainly not of high mental age.

Still, I feel like it would be better to say that kind of person as one that doesn't really have the ability to understand themselves though.

「Oh well, I'll talk to Diaz later. Anyway, Fran. You've come to Ulmut for another martial arts tournament, haven't you?」

「That's half of it. The other half is that I'm here to find Dimitris」

「Hou? You're looking for Dimitris the Immovable?」

「Nn. Because of a request. Know anything?」

「Hmm. He has come to this place in the past. At that time, even though I knew he wouldn't hurt me, I felt a terrible fear from him」

Rumina is pretty strong. She's weakened now, but she must have been strong enough to be called a strong person before. That would have been stronger than the current Fran, wouldn't it?

She wasn't a Black Heavenly Tiger, but she had achieved evolution, had studied for hundreds of years, and had the power of a Dungeon Master.

There are not many opponents that Rumina would feel fear of. It's no surprise, but it seems that S rankers are indeed exceptional.

「Dimitris should be staying at the lord's mansion during the tournament. If it's you, I'm sure you can get in touch with him」

「The lord?」

「You don't remember him? You should've met at the awards ceremony though」

「?」

Ulmut's feudal lord was a very plain old man, and we've only met him once after all. It was no wonder that Fran had forgotten him.

「Poor guy...」

Aurel shrugged with a wry smile as he realized that Fran had already completely forgotten about him. He must have known that by her gesture. It seemed that Ulmut's feudal lord and Aurel had a reasonably close relationship.

「You're close with him?」



「We're not on bad terms at the very least. Well, I think he's doing a good job as the lord of this town full of adventurers, and we were also peers at the royal palace. He's almost like an advisor to me」

「I see」

While many nobles act arrogantly toward adventurers or want to interfere with guilds, Ulmut's feudal lords are said to be very tolerant. It is even said that he is quite skilled in handling the adventurers.

This is mainly because he knows that without the help of adventurers, Ulmut would not be able to maintain its development.

Doesn't this mean that he knows exactly what he's doing and is able to see what's going on around him? I only had the impression that he was a simple man, but he might actually be a capable fellow.

「That's because he's such a lord. I doubt he'd say no if it was a request from you, a high-ranking adventurer and tournament winner」

「When will Dimitris come?」

「As usual, a few days before the start of the tournament. I don't think he's here yet」

We've already taken lodgings with the intention of participating in the martial arts tournament anyway, so we'll just have to wait for him. We should recognize him as soon as someone as famous as him enters the town too.

『Until then, should we accept some quest?』

「Nn」

I don't think he could hear me, but Aurel then mentioned his request to Fran.

「Oh, right. I've got a request for the young miss. You mind accepting it?」

「What request?」

「It's an escort mission for my granddaughter」

「Escort mission?」

# Chapter 683

TENKEN 683 Katley

「It's almost our turn」

「Yes!」

「Don't let your guard down」

「Yes!」

The day after we explained things to Diaz and Rumina.

We're now waiting in line to one of the dungeons in Ulmut. We're not going to the eastern dungeon where Rumina's living space is, but the western dungeon for beginners.

It was originally at a level that could be explored by even a fledgling adventurer, but now that it has been weakened, it's even less of a threat now.

So much so that even ordinary people, beginners, and children are allowed to enter as long as they have a weapon.

The Adventurer's Guild of Ulmut has been preparing this dungeon as a place to train beginners over the past year too.

Now that the word has gotten out, people who don't even look like adventurers are lining up in front of the dungeon.

In the midst of them, Fran and a girl younger than her are waiting in line together. She is a beautiful girl with twin-tailed silver hair.

「Fran-oneesama, are you sure that I only need a sword for my equipment?」

「Nn. Katley is still small, so heavy armor would be more of a hindrance for her. Besides, you should be better at dodging in fights like this」

「I-I see」

「If it's just a torn arm, I can heal it with my magic. So it's no problem」

「I see——eEeh?」

「Let's go」

「Eh? Eeh?」

It was only a few minutes ago that we met her in a courtyard inside Aurel's mansion.

「This is my granddaughter. Come on, say hello」

「Yes! My name is Katley Aurel!」

「Nn. I'm Fran, an adventurer」

「It's an honor to meet you! Fran-oneesama!」

「Onesama?」

「Y-yes. Is it no good?」

「...I don't really mind」

「Thank you very much!」

When we visited Aurel's mansion, we were immediately introduced to a girl from the White Dog tribe. What a surprise, so Aurel really has a granddaughter, huh?

She is a beautiful girl who looks nothing like Aurel. Her slightly sullen eyes give me the impression that she is a timid person. Is she really Aurel's granddaughter? The resemblance is so faint that it makes me wonder.

She is ten years old this year, a little younger than Fran.

「Do I just have to take this girl to the dungeon?」

「Ou. That's right」

Yesterday, Aurel had asked her to take his granddaughter to a dungeon and let her fight some magic beast.

Apparently, his granddaughter has been longing to become an adventurer, and has recently begun to learn sword fighting in earnest. But Aurel's son and daughter-in-law think that their daughter is unsuited to be an adventurer because she has always had a timid personality.

However, Aurel's own belief is that what's important for an adventurer is motivation and caution. With that in mind, a timid personality is not necessarily unsuitable for an adventurer.

All that was left was motivation, and from Aurel's point of view, his granddaughter seemed to be motivated enough for this.

So, apparently, Aurel decided to show her granddaughter some reality by throwing her into a simple dungeon and have her fight some magic beast for now.

If she gets tired of it and gives up on being an adventurer, she can go to a school for girls as originally planned. If she still wants to be an adventurer even after the horrible experience in the dungeon, then Aurel will personally train her.

That's what he thought.

「You're not going to make her give up on this, are you?」

The request must be a NG from Fran's point of view. But Aurel then nodded in response to Fran's question.

(TLN: NG, No-Good, a Japanese-made english term meaning the opposite of okay)

「Of course. I only wanted to show her the reality of being an adventurer. Well, it's too early to decide whether or not to give up on one's dream at the age of ten, but she's still my granddaughter」

「Is there something about being Aurel's granddaughter?」

「Even though I look like this, I still have a lot of money. There might be some people who were aiming for it out there」

Aurel is a successful businessman who started his own trading company. His son and daughter-in-law have taken over the business, and the granddaughter who asks Fran to escort her was their child.

What would happen if the only daughter of a prosperous trading company showed up as a fledgling adventurer? She would surely become a valuable prey for kidnappers.

「It's hard to expect a 10-year-old to be ready for that」

「She didn't have any interest in being an adventurer before?」

「Yeah, I've had her train a little for self-defense, but she's far from ready」

「Why is she suddenly wanting to become an adventurer?」

Being an adventurer is the best thing for Fran, but it's not common sense for everyone. That's why she wondered.

Then Aurel shrugged his shoulders with a wry smile.

「...Well, a girl her age has a lot going on in her mind. She heard about the exploits of a certain famous adventurer and then longed to become one」

「？」

Fran doesn't seem to understand, but it seems that Aurel's granddaughter has been inspired to become an adventurer by Fran.

When she heard that there's a beastman girl not much older than her played an active role in various things as an adventurer, it's no wonder that she can't help but admire her.

「Well, anyway, I'd really like you to accept this request, how about it? I could do this myself but I would end up spoiling her. There'd be no point in doing this then, right?」

Though he said that, he probably really wanted to let his granddaughter meet Fran, whom she admired. So, even if this would make her give up on being an adventurer, this should be a great memorable experience for her.

「Would you take it?」

(Master? Should we take it?)

『Well, it's up to Fran. It's not the kind of request that will hold us up for a long time anyway』

「Nn. Okay, I'll take it」

「Ooh! That's great!」

After such an exchange, the next morning Fran came to pick up the girl who was the subject of the request.

「Take care of Katley for me, young miss. I'll have no say in the matter from here on out, so you can do anything to her in any way you like」

「Okay」

「I-I'll be in your care!」

Katley gulped down her throat with a blue face when she heard the exchange between the two, she must have been a little frightened.

She's timid indeed. Her status was quite low too. Her level was 10, and her various skills were appropriate for her level.

As she was originally a student, her skill set was heavily weighted towards academics. Arithmetic, business administration, and so on... I'd say that it was a rather suitable skill set for her to succeed the trading company.

On the other hand, she only had three skills for combat and exploration. Swordsmanship: Lv1, Quick Movement: Lv1, and Keen Smelling Sense: Lv1, that's all.

Fran looked at her and must have sensed how weak she was in an instant. She also asks me about her skill set then frowns when I tell her my opinion.

「First of all, you don't need that armor. Take it off」

「Eh? Eeh?」

When she was suddenly asked to take off the armor that was supposed to protect her life, Katley turned to Aurel as if to ask for help. But there was no help coming for her.

「I've got some work to do, so I'll be taking my leave. See ya」

「Nn. Katley, take it off now」

「Y-yes!」



# Chapter 684

## TENKEN 684 Adventurer's Rules

Fran came to the west dungeon of Ulmut with Katley, and promptly put her through the ordeal.

「You go first」

「Eh?」

「You won't learn anything about the dungeon if you stay behind. So, you go first」

「B-but what about traps and magic beasts...?」

「They're not a big deal here. So it's fine」

Maybe, Katley was planning to let Fran take the lead and follow her like an observer.

But Fran had no intention of making it easy for her. Rather, the purpose of this request was to show her the reality of being an adventurer. So, she wanted her to actually experience things.

Before entering the dungeon, she has told Katley that 「If it's just a torn arm, I can heal it with my magic. So it's no problem」. And that was not a joke, Fran was very serious about it.

In fact, she even thought that getting some injury would make her feel like being an actual adventurer.

Fran is just like a spartan trainer, isn't she?

Well, she might look like a spartan to others, but from Fran's point of view, if Katley really wants to be an adventurer, she should be able to handle this much.

People are beings that think based on their standards.

Fran was a battle junkie who is willing to get hurt or go through a lot of hardship to become stronger, but Katley was just a young lady who had been focused on her studies until recently. The contrast between the two was beyond anyone could imagine.

At any rate, I'll at least make sure she doesn't die.

「Let's move」

「Y-yes!」

Prompted by Fran's words, Katley began to advance through the dungeon.

Her steps were surprisingly steady. Curiosity and excitement seemed to have prevailed over her fear.

She walked through the seemingly empty passage while looking around incessantly. It seems that besides her interest in the dungeon, she probably intends to look for traps.

Well, that was all for nothing though.

Clack!

「Ah!」

She accidentally triggered a trap under her feet. It wasn't much of a trap, however.

She activated a trap that uses strong winds to slam pebbles to her feet. It wasn't the kind of tricky trap that harass and tire people, but a childish trick to make the beginner aware of the traps around them. As expected of a dungeon designed to teach.

「Uu~」

「Don't stop. Keep moving」

「Y-yes」

Katley, who had stopped and was rubbing her feet, started walking again with a slightly frightened expression returning to her face. It seems that she remembered once again that she was in a dungeon.

Her dog's ears, which were originally droopy, seemed to have drooped even more. Her tail, which had been wagging, had lost all of its energy. What an easy to read girl.

The way she moved was slower this time. It was as if the energetic steps she had a while ago had been a lie.

She proceeded at a very slow pace, wary of traps that she couldn't even see through. So slow that even the other adventurers who came from behind kept overtaking us.

「...So slow, go faster」

「Uu... Yes—」

Katley's eyes welled up as Fran urged her to hurry. Even though she is frightened, she doesn't talk back to Fran. I wonder if this is another effect of her admiration for Fran.

After that, Katley made her way through the dungeon, getting caught in traps, finding them and avoiding them.

Well, we're only about halfway through the first floor though. If this were in a game, I'd say that we're still at the beginning of the tutorial.

Katley seemed to have exhausted herself quite a bit. Even though she's just a small young lady, she is still a beastman and had received some training. She shouldn't get exhausted by this distance under normal circumstances.

However, the unfamiliar environment, the need to be wary of traps and the fear of magic beasts. These factors seemed to have caught up with her mind and quickly tire her.

「Hafu-...」

Even so, Katley continues to walk without complaint and seemed to have no intention of giving up on being an adventurer. She seems to understand that anyone who gives up over something like this won't fit to be an adventurer.

「Let's take a break here」

「Yes...」

Fran decided to take a short break at a place where the passage was wide enough for multiple adventurers to pass.

As the two sat down alongside each other, Katley began to ask a number of questions to Fran.

Fran can't talk about what she can't openly talk about, but she could tell her about our adventures. Though it was a bloody and horrific story, the light of admiration that shines from Katley's eyes only increases in intensity.

As she had no experience in combat, she could not imagine the harshness of adventure and battle, only the thoughts of how cool and amazing it was could come to her mind.

And when she asked about her recent encounter with magic beast, Fran told her about her struggle with the Thunderbirds she encountered in Crystal Cage.

Until now, Fran stories had been about how she managed to defeat formidable magic beasts. So, Katley was surprised to hear that Fran escaped from them.

「E-even onee-sama can't defeat that magic beast called Thunderbird?」

「I could have defeated them if I used my strongest move」

「Then why did you run away?」

「I could end up in a bigger mess if I were to use my strongest move. I'd normally go all out, but when adventurers are on a request, completing it should be our top priority. Remember that」

「You can get a lot of materials if you defeat them though...」

「Nn. I could have leveled up too. But what if I meet a strong enemy after that? I can't be sure there won't be any. So, there's no point in wearing myself out unnecessarily」

It's as Fran says. We could have won against those Thunderbirds if she were to use the Sword God Transformation or Potential Release.

But doing so would surely wear us out. After all, our strongest move has a terrible backlash that could render us incapable of fighting properly for a while, and if things didn't go smoothly, we might not be able to participate in this year's martial arts tournament because of it.

From Fran's point of view, wearing oneself out in unnecessary battles during a request is not what a full-fledged adventurer is supposed to do.

「Be more cautious and always play it safe during a request. If you were to fail, you could get people in trouble」

「I-I see」

Fran prioritized making sure that the request was accomplished over her desire to level up.

But I never thought that this very Fran would tell a younger girl about the importance of being cautious. Somehow, I was very impressed.

# Chapter 685

TENKEN 685 Katley's Doing Her Best

Having been taught the importance of caution by Fran, Katley seemed to have regained her courage and resumed her journey through the dungeon.

She pays more attention to her surroundings now.

However, the threats in the dungeon were not something that could be avoided with a little effort from an amateur. She has been caught in a trap multiple times already.

Still, without any complaints, she wiped the sweat from her forehead and proceeded without a word. But then, a new threat appeared in front of her.

「T-that is!?!」

「Nn, a magic beast. The Stealth Rabbit」

「So that's, a magic beast...」

Stealth Rabbit was a small fry magic beast with a threat level of G. And speaking on how much of a small fry it is, it is the weakest magic beast we know.

They're good at digging holes and hiding, but in a dungeon of stones like this, they were just a stupid-looking rabbit that moves like a turtle.

Forget magic beast, it probably would even be defeated by a mere wild dog. But that's why they're suitable for the first floor of the dungeon for newbies.

There should be no adventurer that would lose against it. The sole reason they're here is to get newbies used to defeating magic beasts after all.

「Take it down with your sword」

「Yes!」

She was probably glad that the time she had spent being harassed by traps was over, and that things were now unfolding like what an adventurer is supposed to do. Katley then draw her sword with a cheerful voice and aimed at the Stealth Rabbit.

「Haa!」

「Pikyii—!」

「I-I did it!」

She may be a young lady, but she is still an inhabitant of this world and an aspiring adventurer. She had successfully defeated the magic beast without uttering any naive words such as "I can't attack rabbit-san" or "I'm afraid of blood".

「Nn. Good job」

「Yes!」

Fran nodded in satisfaction.

It was a slash that stuck to the basics, I can't tell if she has talent or not at this stage yet, but I don't think she has no talent at all.

Afterwards, Katley dismantles the rabbit under Fran's direction and puts the meat and magic stones in her backpack. It seems Fran doesn't want to spoil her by using her dimensional storage.

Katley is smiling brightly as she puts her backpack which has gained some weight back on. I guess she feels like she has accomplished something after dismantling the magic beast she killed herself.

But like I said before, this is still at the tutorial level. The main part of an adventure is not as simple as this.

「That's all for the first floor, let's continue」

「Y-yes」

「Let's hurry. I'll give you a piggyback」

「Eh?」

Fran bent down and turned her back to Katley. But Katley froze, unable to move because of her confusion.

「Katley?」

「B-but...」

「Hmm」

Fran seemed to have given up on the idea of carrying her on her back because Katley won't move at all.

「Kyaa!」

「Careful not to bite your tongue」

Fran takes Katley by the arm and runs off without waiting for her to say a thing.

「Kyaaa!」

「It's still safe around here, but you might attract magic beasts once we got to the next floor. You'd better not scream」

「...!」

Ooh, she immediately kept her mouth shut. She listened to Fran's words... or should I say, she doesn't want to make it looks that wanting to be an



adventurer is just a half-hearted resolve.

Fran continues to run while teaching Katley about traps.

She sometimes moves three-dimensionally, kicking walls and ceilings to avoid traps, and does not stop at all while finishing off magic beasts with her kicks.

「...E-ah!」

It seemed that Katley had lost her composure due to the rapidly changing scenery and the constant pressure from all directions.

She shrieked as she looked around with her whirling eyes.

「...Fueh—」

Her mouth eventually dropped open halfway and she had a dumbfounded expression on her face. She didn't seem to have passed out, but she must have lost her train of thought.

And half an hour later.

Fran had stepped through the second and third floors and had reached the entrance to the fourth floor.

The mid-level floor of this dungeon started at the fourth floor. To go any further, it is recommended that everyone be an F ranker or higher, or be accompanied by an E ranker.

Unlike the first three floors, which were like attractions for beginners, this was a true training ground. An amateur could potentially lose their life if they were not careful.

The most common cause of that is the magic beast in front of Fran and Katley now.

「I-Isn't that...」

「Nn. Lesser Ogre」

A reddish-brown skinned beast wearing only a loincloth and carrying a thin wooden stick. It is no taller than 150 centimeters. And as its name implies, it was a subspecies of ogre that looked like a skinnier, smaller version of an ogre.

Rumina had originally wanted to place a goblin that was adjusted to be weaker than the original. However, the Goddess of Chaos seemed to have done something to her, and she needed greater power to create evil people in the dungeon.

It seems that her plan to create a large number of low-level goblins and fast-track the development of the Black Cat kin failed even before it was done.

So instead of goblins, Rumina placed the weakest Lesser Ogre in her dungeon. Still, its combat power is on par with goblins.

It took a position in the middle of the passage and stared at us.

「Gugyah!」

「Hii!」

Katley let out a shriek briefly when she heard the Lesser Ogre's voice.

It certainly must be quite scary for a child. They are not that different in size, but they have a vicious look on their faces. Moreover, they are armed with weapons and have a strong hostility towards us.

Even a Japanese Macaque can inflict serious injuries on people. If it were a larger lethal ogre, the danger would be far greater than that of a monkey.

(TLN: Also known as the snow monkey, the one you'd see bathing in open-air hot springs)

Fran had always been ready to kill magic beasts from the start. As a result, I assumed that it was a normal thing, but it seemed that no matter how harsh this world is, a normal child would probably react the way Katley did.

「That thing is weak」

「I-is that so?」

「Nn. Even beginners should be able to defeat it. So go for it」

「Eh?」

「It's okay, I can always heal you as long as you don't die」

「Eh? Eeh—!?!」

「Gugyagyah!」

While they were talking, the Lesser Ogre had identified Fran and Katley as its prey. It seemed that it failed to sense Fran's strength because it was just a small fry.

From its point of view, the two must looked like a delicious easy prey.

「It's coming」

「Gyagyahah!」

「Kyaaa!」

# Chapter 686

TENKEN 686 Interferer

「Gyagyahah!」

The moment Fran steps back, the Lesser Ogre jumps at Katley.

As it was just a small fry as a practice opponent for beginners, its movements were sluggish and not very nimble.

It has no weapon skills, and its wooden stick is not that dangerous of a weapon.

But it could still inflict a painful blow and break one's bones if it were to hit a bad place. It could also cause a concussion if it were to hit one's head.

You can imagine it as an elementary school boy wielding a wooden stick, maybe?

It was an enemy that could be defeated by the Fran now with just the tip of her finger, but a normal adult with proper armor should be able to handle it with ease.

However, it must look like a terrifying magic beast to Katley. She must be terrified not only by the look, but also by the clear hostility being directed at her.

Frightened by the Lesser Ogre, Katley swung the sword in her hand as hard as she could without using any swords skill.

「Yhaa!」

「Gyii!」

Because of her longer reach, Katley's sword reached the opponent first. It only grazed its skin slightly, but the Lesser Ogre screeched and retreated.

「Gigigyah!」

It rubbed its wound with its hand and licked the blood off its finger, which made it realize once again that it had been injured. The Lesser Ogre then started to irritably hit the ground with the stick in its hand.

「Uuh...」

「Gigyih...」

Katley is frightened by its presence, but at the same time, the Lesser Ogre also seemed to be wary of her sword.

A strange tension developed between the two, and a stalemate occurred for a few seconds.

Fran won't be helping her this time, she'll just watch and let Katley overcome the situation.

But then, there was an unexpected turn of events that we didn't see coming.

A red light flew from the other side of the passage, obliterating the Lesser Ogre's head and defeated it.

It was obviously not a stray bullet, but a shot aimed at the Lesser Ogre. Of course, both Fran and I knew that there were other adventurers at the end of the passage.

But I didn't expect them to intervene with us. Could they be the bandit adventurers that Aurel had been worried about?

「Katley, get behind me」

「Y-yes」

Fran and I both lightly braced ourselves as we watched for any sign of them coming towards us.

(Master, this presence....)

『Yeah. It's the red-haired woman from back then』

As we had expected, the one who appeared from the other side was the one who had caused a bit of a stir when she confronted Fran at Barbra cooking contest.

「Yo, is everything good there?」

「Hmm...」

「Oya? Isn't that kid... the one from that stall?」

「Sis, it's the Black Lightning Princess」

「Oh, the B ranked adventurer, right?」

I don't think she wouldn't have noticed Fran's presence, but she looks seriously surprised. Could it be that she knew that there was someone strong but didn't realize it was Fran?

Is there any adventurer who has the strength of this woman's level, yet has poor detecting skills?

The man with her didn't know it was Fran either. He looked surprised when he saw her face.

I appraised them and found that their names were Sibylla and Biscot. But I don't know if that's their true name or not.

They were definitely falsifying their identity; both of them had garbled characters in some parts of their abilities, and their status and skill levels were clearly too low. It's hard to believe that two people with such ability would be together at the same time, so it must be the effect of some kind of magic item.

It only means that they have the contacts to be able to get that kind of thing.

「...Why did you interfere?」

「Huh?」

Fran asks in a rather angry voice to the woman. It's probably because she can't read the other party's intentions.

「The kid looked like she was in trouble, so I saved her. Why don't you go in and help her before?」

「We're in training now」

「Training...? With that level of ability, she is probably still in the basic training stage, right? It's too early for her to go into actual combat」

「That's not for you to decide」

「Huh? First of all, why do you have to stare at me like that? I saved her, remember?」

「This is none of your business」

It's a complete breach of the adventurer's code, but Sibylla doesn't seem to know what's even wrong. She twisted her neck in confusion.

「Aah! S-sis Sibylla!」

「What's the matter, Biscot?」

「Now that I remember, I thought we were supposed to always ask for approval before helping other adventurers in the dungeon...」

「Is that so?」

「Yeah, I remember Clicker saying something like that」

These two are definitely not an adventurer... Are they mercenaries or knights in disguise? It might not look like it, but I guess they were just trying to help Katley.

「Even so, isn't it too early for her to be in here? She's just too weak. You must've brought her here by force, look, she's completely terrified」

「...S-she didn't force me to come here...」

She must have been a little offended to be called weak. Katley turned to Sibylla while hiding behind Fran's back.

「Huh? Really?」

「Nn」

「It's the truth...」

Though Fran did drag her here, Katley has agreed in advance to enter the dungeon. Even Fran would not take her into the dungeon if she did not want to.

Well, I don't think there's any aspiring adventurer who doesn't want to go into a dungeon though.

Katley has made up her mind to enter the dungeon and follows Fran.

「I didn't intend to offend you, but... please go back home for today. You should work on your swordsmanship and put on some better armor before you come back. You're still young, you still have lots of time」

Sibylla speaks in a gentle voice as if she's trying to convince her.

Her act would have been complimented by the general public if it had been done outside the dungeon. But in a dungeon where there were only adventurers and aspiring adventurers, that was a complete crap.

In the first place, although she doesn't even know Katley's circumstances, she speaks so superiorly and disregards her resolve. Katley also knows it



better than anyone else that she's weak and feels frustrated at it.

She was angry at herself, who deserved to be called weak, and Sibylla, who disregarded her resolve.

「...Katley...」

「Y-yes. What is it, onesama?」

「What should we do?」

「Eh?」

「Go back home?」

Fran didn't offer any words of comfort to Katley, who clenched her fists and looked down. On the contrary, she asked her if she wanted to leave. It was as if she wanted to tell her to give up.

It must be a kind, yet harsh words for Katley, whose heart was about to break. I would not be surprised if her heart had completely broken and she'd nod at Fran's words.

But Katley shook her head and looked up. She somehow looked better than before.

「...I'm not going home yet. I came here on my own volition, so I will also leave on my own volition. I don't know if I could become an adventurer or will I ever give up on it, however... That's for me to decide!」

「Nn」

Seeing Katley like this, Fran nodded in satisfaction.

# Chapter 687

TENKEN 687 What it Mean to be an Adventurer

「She wants to be an adventurer...? How can someone with that level of ability become an adventurer? Moreover, isn't she still too young for it?」

「I-I will become one! Besides, everyone is a beginner at first!」

Katley heard Sibylla's muttering and retorted. It seems that she felt ridiculed by her saying that there was no way someone like her could be an adventurer.

However, I don't think that Sibylla's murmur had anything about ridiculing her. I think she was simply expressing her doubts about whether there were any restrictions based on ability or age.

「Will the guild approve though?」

「? They will. Adventurers are the very definition of freedom. Everyone is free to become one or quit at any time」

Well, some guild masters, like Klimut, would try to keep the kids from registering as authorized adventurers and train them as apprentices though.

It sure brings back the memories of our test with Donadrond. But that was a very special case.

「Hee—? But, for example, the kid there, if she becomes an adventurer, will she be useful? How can she protect people or kill magic beasts if the most she can do is collecting herbs?」

「Ugh...」

Katley groaned. But I guess she can't say anything back because it was a fact. Though she did not mean to defend Katley, Fran spoke back in her place.

「But what's wrong with that?」

「We don't need such a useless adventurer, do we?」

Sibylla speaks harshly but doesn't seem to have any ill intentions. But Fran retorts further.

「?? I don't get it. It's not whether we need an adventurer or not. It's whether or not someone wants to be an adventurer. It's not about other people」

「Are you okay with that? With all that strength, you don't think anything of it when you see weak adventurers? Don't you think they're a hindrance?」

「Not really. After all, people are people. Didn't you just say that we don't need useless adventurers?」

「Yeah」

「But I don't understand what you mean by that. Being an adventurer isn't really about helping people」

「Hah? What's their job then?」

「To go on an adventure. That's why we're called adventurers」

Fran seemed a little irritated, it seemed that she didn't like Sibylla's remarks.

The way Sibylla says "adventurers are supposed to help people," "If an adventurer is not useful, they're not needed," must be what makes Fran feel like that.

Sibylla herself may not be aware of it, but she is talking about adventurers as if she's superior to them. I guess you could say that she unconsciously

looks down on adventurers.

Fran doesn't like it. To most people, an adventurer is a lowly, bottom-tier job, but to Fran, it's a career she's always dreamed of.

「Being an adventure as a job... Is such a job even necessary?」

「Like I said before. Whether we're useful to the kind of you or not is irrelevant. Adventurers are free. We just do what we want to do」

She's using "omae" to call her just now!! It seems that she is getting even more irritated. Little by little, her words began to show how irritated she is.

(TLN: Omae, お前, considered as a disrespectful/rude pronoun to call someone)

「So you're saying, you won't fight to protect the people?」

「Adventurers are free. Those who want to fight for others will fight. Otherwise, they won't」

「Even though they had the power to do so?」

「Nn. Adventurers might take it on as a job. But being an adventurer is not about helping people」

Well, even though she says this, if there is someone in danger in front of her, she will probably go in and help them somehow.

But I guess that's just Fran's idea of the ideal adventurer. A hard worker, an individualist, a person who is free to make decisions based on preference rather than on whether something is right or wrong. A free and unbounded people.

Because of her race and the time she spent as a slave, Fran does not like to be bound or ordered around by others. Freedom is, in a sense, the most important thing for Fran, and it is the very thing she cannot allow to be violated.

And the image of the adventurer that Fran describes is the embodiment of that freedom.

On the other hand, despite her unreliable demeanor, Sibylla seems to take it for granted that we should stand in front of the weak and help them... Or rather, she must think that it's the duty of the strong. I think this is quite a rare way of thinking in this world.

But that is why she cannot readily understand Fran's points. And likewise, Fran cannot readily understand Sibylla's point either. Their principles are too different from each other.

As the two continued their arguments, I remembered that we had talked about this same thing in the past somewhere.

On our way from the Kingdom of Kranzel to the Kingdom of Belios. We met a girl named Dianne, a self-proclaimed knight who served as Khanna's squire and escort.

The two reacted as if they had never seen an adventurer before, and spoke with a surprisingly distorted impression of adventurers.

「So you're saying that you adventurers wield power only for your personal interests?」

「Yes」

Fran nodded casually at Sibylla's words.

Well, to put it bluntly, that's what happens most of the time. Not all adventurers are good person after all.

However, some of these interests are useful to others. Some of them, like Amanda, are working hard for her interest—or rather, her goal to help children in need.

But to begin with, I think it's rather difficult to think of adventurers as a whole.

Adventurers, like Fran and Amanda, are all people with their own ideas and ambitions. Ten people, ten colors. There are as many goals, desires, and opinions as there are adventurers, and it's hard to describe them with just one word.

(TLN: Ten peoples, ten colors, 十人十色, everyone has their own interests and ideas)

Even the words "an adventurer's job is to go on an adventure" that Fran said are just Fran's ideal of an adventurer.

「Putting one's own desires over helping those in need... Is that what adventurers are all about?」

「Yes」

Fran's presence changed at Sibylla's words. A slight hint of hostility begins to mix with her anger.

This isn't good. If Fran and Sibylla were to fight here, the damage to the surrounding area would be enormous. A hint of killing intent has already begun swirling between them.

But it was the flushed, trembling Katley who broke the ice. It wasn't that she wasn't feeling fear. But her anger seemed to outweigh her fear.

「Why are you...! Arbitrarily asking such questions! Arbitrarily pushing your ideal! Can you not arbitrarily crush my dream!? Who are you!? Where did you even come from!?!」

「Eh? No, I...」

「You can't answer that?」

「Aah— well... It's not like we were hiding our identity or anything...」

「You can't even tell your identity? How suspicious. Who in the world are you!?!」

「S-suspicious? W-well you see...」

「Isn't that right!? You went into a dungeon but doesn't even know the adventurers' code! Such a weird person is nothing short of suspicious!」

「...A-ah, well...」

It's a breach of the adventurers' code to ask someone's identity out of the blue, but Sibylla doesn't seem to know that. She flinched at Katley's angry look.

Look who's just like the big sister now, so she can be like this too, huh.

「Besides, Fran-oneesama has saved many people! In the Beastman Country, she once fought for three days and three nights alone against a pack of more than 100,000 magic beasts to help her fellow Black Cat people to escape!」

Huh? Isn't that story getting a little exaggerated?

「When there was a dungeon stampede near Alessa, she single-handedly took on the dungeon boss to save the other fledgling adventurers, and successfully saved the lives of many adventurers!」

Our fight against the demon somehow has become such a moving tale!?

Katley then continued her splendidly exaggerated story about Fran's deed.

It seems that the story gets even more exaggerated from each pass. As a result, the image of Fran that was imprinted on Katley's mind was that she's a strong, kind-hearted, solo black cat adventurer.

「And there's still more to come from Fran-oneesama!」

# Chapter 688

TENKEN 688 Sibylla and her Companion's Identity

「And there's still more to come from Fran-oneesama!」

Katley, whose strange switch seemed to have been turned on, speaks further to Sibylla.

「She also played a major role in the royal capital! Together with her comrades, they exposed the conspiracy of the treacherous Kingdom of Raidos there!」

「T-treacherous?」

「Yes! The worst country that has always been plotting to harm our country with its despicable schemes!」

「T-the worst...」

I don't know why, but Sibylla's face tensed from hearing that.

「Did you know that the Kingdom of Raidos built an experimental facility on a floating island and repeatedly conducted terrible human experiments? But I guess the Kingdom of Raidos has been punished by heaven. The floating island has been turned into a dungeon somehow! Fran-oneesama with a fellow adventurer Jean was the one who conquered the floating island dungeon, and freed the miserable spirits!」

「Jean? You mean the Mass Murderer?」

「You know him, don't you? He's a great person who has defeated the ruthless and heartless Kingdom of Raidos many times over!」



「This time it's ruthless and heartless...」

Katley seemed to hate the Kingdom of Raidos quite much, isn't she? There's a lot of bad words coming out of her mouth. Well, someone from the Kingdom of Kranzel would probably feel more or less the same way, but I think she has gone a little too far.

I wonder did Aurel, his son, and daughter-in-law educate her that way?

「Just how many people do you think have suffered because of that country...?」

「T-There are...?」

「Yes! My uncle also lost his life in the incident caused by the conspiracy of the Kingdom of Raidos. He used to play with me when I was little... How unforgivable!」

「...Y-you're right」

「It really is the worst country in the world」

So, one of her relatives died because of the incident caused by the conspiracy of the Kingdom of Raidos, huh? If that's the case, it's understandable that she holds a grudge towards them.

Sibylla raised a small, theatrical laugh, when she heard the Kingdom of Raidos' deeds.

And Biscot, who had been listening in silence until now, somehow showed a stronger reaction than Sibylla.

「R-Raidos is not such a country! It was the greatest country!」

His face turned red as he shouted so.

「...Why are you defending that country?」

Katley's words are surely a natural response for a person from the Kingdom of Kranzel. It was just a straightforward and without sarcasm response.

Biscot on the other hand, from being stared at with her pure eyes, clammed up and unable to speak further.

「Eh? W-well, that was just...」

「Biscot, silence. You see, we've met some people from the Kingdom of Raidos because of our work. We talked to them and they didn't seem like a bad guy」

「...I think we don't have much contact with that country though. Just what kind of business is it that you have to meet with people from the Kingdom of Raidos?」

「W-well, that's what you call trade secrets. And young missy, you can't just lump the people of the Kingdom of Raidos into one, there are also good people, you know?」

「You, who lumped adventurers in the same category, are saying that? There are certainly adventurers who committed crimes, but there are also amazing adventurers like Fran-oneesama」

「W-well...」

Just like the time we met Dianne in the past, I wondered who these two were.

From their behaviour, I'm certain they're not an adventurer.

A mercenary maybe? They certainly share the same hostility toward adventurers, but they shouldn't be too ignorant about adventurers if that were the case.

And rather than Sibylla and Dianne being unfamiliar with adventurers, it was as if seeing one was a rare thing for them.

They may think that they managed to hide it, but they know too little about adventurers. It seemed to me that they even lacked some common sense here.

It would be understandable if they were just a child. But it should be impossible for someone like Sibylla to never had contact with an adventurer before.

That was unless, they were born and raised in a land where there were no adventurers at all. There was no other explanation for this.

So what kind of land is it? A land where there are no adventurers at all, or rather, a land where adventurers are looked down upon and considered enemies.

The only thing I could think of was a major country in the north, the Kingdom of Raidos,

If so, that would also explain Biscot's attitude.

But it raised another question, why would someone from the Kingdom of Raidos be in a place like this?... I know that it's only natural that agents and spies are sent between enemy countries, and there are probably those who have infiltrated Raidos from Kranzel too.

But to be honest, I don't think Sibylla and Biscot are spies. They should be at knights or soldiers in terms of ability, and I don't think they are suited for covert action to begin with.

There is no such thing as a spy who has such a strong presence and is so conspicuous. It would be more understandable if it were said that she was just a tomboy young lady from the Kingdom of Raidos.

Well then, what do we do now?

I feel that we might be able to find out who they are if we were to question them now. But the other side is someone from an enemy country that goes on undercover.

If they thought their true identity had been discovered, they would certainly try to silence us. It would certainly be difficult to deal with both Sibylla and Biscot while protecting Katley.

Besides, even if we were able to get away from this now, there was a possibility that Katley would be targeted in the future. So, the best thing to do would be to pretend not to notice and let this slide for now.

「...S-Sis. Any more of this and we're screwed!」

「Y-you're right. Let's just get out of here」

The other side seemed to be ready to leave as well, so let's just let the water pass the flood gate already.

「...Katley, let's go」

「Eh? Are you sure?」

「Anymore of this is a waste of time」

「If oneesama says so, okay...」

I instructed Fran to give them a way. Then, taking advantage of this, the two ran away from Fran and Katley.

「N-now, if you'd excuse us!」

「Nn」

「F-farewell!」

『Urushi, follow them』

(Woof!)

『Aside from the two, they might have other allies with better detection abilities. So, let's be careful』

It's hard to believe that those two alone managed to travel this far without their identities being discovered, so I'm sure they have more allies here.

『We're counting on you』

(Woof!)

Now, all we have to do is report to Diaz. Well, it might get a little awkward, but he's not the kind of guy who brings his personal feelings into his work——or was it?

W-well, if he won't listen, we'll just turn to Aurel and Elsa.

# Chapter 689

TENKEN 689 Katley's Changes

Ten minutes after the Sibylla and Biscot left.

「Haah!」

「Gshaah!」

Katley's sword cracked the Lesser Ogre's head open and took its life.

The Lesser Ogre died with various things dripping from its head. It's a pretty gruesome sight, but Katley is smiling.

「I did it!」

「Nn」

She was so scared of the Lesser Ogre a while ago, but she's ready to go at it from the start now.

It seemed that she had been agitated by all the things Sibylla had said to her. Also, after experiencing Sibylla's intimidation, she didn't seem to care much about the Lesser Ogre's power now.

As a result, she was able to grow rapidly by defeating Lesser Ogres.

The other thing that seemed to have a lot to do with it was her high level of trust in Fran.

It seemed that from telling Sibylla about Fran's exploits, she remembered that Fran was indeed a great adventurer. And she must have suggested to

herself that if Fran said it was okay, then she should be okay.

Oh, Fran also tried to correct her about the super amazing story about her. But that didn't go well.

「But still, I wonder what those people were! They're so suspicious! Should I report them to Grandfather or Uncle Diaz when I get back?」

「I'll do it」

「That was of course! If oneesama was the one to tell them, I'm sure they'll believe it! Aah! But what if they've already run away?」

「Urushi is still following them」

「I-I see! As expected of Fran-oneesama」

The conversation between the two continued like this the whole time.

There was hardly any conversation between the two at first, but Katley suddenly became much more expressive. This seemed to be the result of the tension that had been relieved by her ranting to Sibylla.

I thought she might have been pretending all this time, but that doesn't seem to be the case. She's certainly a timid and reserved kid. She's the usually quiet type, but when it comes to her favorite things, she won't stop rambling about it.

And now that she's with her very special person, Fran. It's no wonder she'd be like this.

That's why Fran couldn't really handle her at all. She had tried her best to clear Katley's misunderstanding, however——

「To not brag about her achievements, oneesama is so humble!」

「...」

Well, it looks like it'd be hard to clear the misunderstanding.

I thought we could convince her that the story has been exaggerated. But Fran gained a new reputation as a humble person instead.

She looks at Fran with a great deal of respect. If it were me, I'd definitely say something like, "Don't stare at me with those sparkling eyes! I'm gonna melt!" But Fran doesn't seem to mind.

We ended up spending the next hour or so defeating magic beasts and experiencing the thrill of opening treasure chests before turning back to the surface.

「We're done, let's back to the surface」

「I-I see... Thank you very much! I've learned so much today!」

「Nn. But it's too early to thank me. We haven't made it back in one piece」

「I-I see! So, there's still adventure until we made it to the surface too!」

「Nn」

Besides, we're not going back immediately.

「Let's take one last break. You shouldn't push yourself too hard」

「Y-you're right! If we're tired, we might be caught off guard」

「I agree」

「Yes!」

Katley looks really happy that Fran agrees with her. Her tail is waving merrily. Looking at her reminded me of Urushi.

「Let's have our dinner here」

「Dinner?」



「Nn. Take out the meat in your bag」

「Y-yes」

Eating in dungeons or in the wild is also one of the most exciting parts of the adventure. But depending on the people, it can be a time for fun or a time of torment.

It's not always a fun time for most fledgling adventurers. After all, if they can't catch anything, they'll often just make off dried meat.

We let Katley roast the rabbit meat she got from the upper floors by herself. But since there was no salt and the meat was handled poorly, it must have been dry and not very tasty.

Still, Katley seemed to be pleased with it. She was surprisingly tough, isn't she? Well, it must have been new for her to cook and eat her own prey that she had hunted herself.

And so, after having Katley enjoy the beginner's dungeon to the fullest, we left the dungeon and returned to Aurel's mansion.

「Oh, you're back!」

「Grandfather! Are you done with your work?」

「Yup」

It was Aurel himself who greeted us.

Well, what can I say, he was probably worried about his granddaughter. He put a smile on his face, which resembled that of a yakuza boss, and patted Katley's head as she ran over to him.

「How was it? You didn't get badly injured, did you?」

「Yes!」

Aurel should've known how the dungeons for beginners are built. He must have known that if she were to get caught in a trap, she should be able to escape with just some scratch in there.

But I guess he's more concerned about whether or not she got badly hurt in battle.

「She defeated 3 Lesser Ogres and didn't get hurt」

「Hou? Even in her first fight?」

「Umm... There's something I need say about that」

「Looks like something has happened, huh?」

「Katley did her best. I can guarantee you of that. It's just that we met some suspicious people in there」

「Suspicious people?」

As expected, there's no way we could say in front of Katley that Sibylla and her companion might be spies for the Kingdom of Raidos.

Fran's quick glance at Katley should have given him an idea. Aurel then asked to change the places and left Katley to the maid.

「So, what happened?」

「We met some people who might be from the Kingdom of Raidos」

「What!? Raidos you said?」

「Nn」

「But you don't have any clear evidence, do you?」

「Yes. But they were really suspicious people」

# Chapter 690

TENKEN 690 Side: A Certain Group of Three 3

「Sibylla-sama... Didn't I ask you not to cause any trouble?」

「Well, sorry」

「I heard from Biscot that you get into some quarrels in the dungeon, and to top it off, you even had an argument with the Black Thunder Princess!」

「But Sis and I didn't lay our hands on them, you know?」

「That was of course! If you had done that we'd be hunted down by now!」

「Y-yeah」

「Uhh...」

「Sibylla-sama? What's the matter? Are you even sorry for what you've done?」

「What do you even think of me!... W-well, nothing in particular. I'm just thinking about our country's reputation」

「Oh, Biscot said that there's a kid that says bad things about our country?」

「The kid says our country was ruthless, heartless, and——」

「The worst of the worst」

「Yeah, that one. The one who keeps messing with the Kingdom of Kranzel is just the Southern and Eastern Duke, isn't it? But thanks to them, they think our country is just like them」

「Because of the way our country was established, each of the five regions, east, west, north, south and center, has its own uniqueness... We may tend to think that what each region is doing is the responsibility of the people of that region and has nothing to do with the other region. We were not that interested in what the other dukes were doing abroad too」

「But it doesn't seem to matter to the people of Kranzel. They will think that what the Southern and Eastern Dukes are doing is the will of the entire Kingdom of Raidos」

「And the result is the reputation of being the worst country in the world」

「Yeah」

「But is the girl's story for real? I knew that the Southern and Eastern Dukes were hostile to Kranzel, but...」

「Well... I'm quite sure they really did that though」

「A conspiracy, huh...? The Southern and Eastern Dukes does smell fishy. They certainly had hard feelings towards Kranzel, so it wouldn't be surprising if they were doing something to Kranzel」

「What about the Western Duke, Clicker? Your parents' house is over there, have you heard anything about the Eastern Duke?」

「Well... I don't know. It's not without possibility, but he won't do anything that is not in his interest. Besides, it would be difficult for him to conspire against Kranzel while dealing with the Kingdom of Phillias and the Sea Kingdom of Sydran at the same time」

「I guess so. We're talking about that greedy Duke after all...」

「What about the North? To be honest, I don't know much about that region」

「It's the place with the strongest sense of independence in our country after all. The Northern Knights could take care most of the problems in its territory, so the Red Knights will hardly be needed. But the north is out of this I think」

「Well, yeah. The Northern Duke has a warrior's temperament, he doesn't like to do things the complicated way. If there is a hostile party, he will raise an army and fight them head-on」

「I see」

「What about the capital? Is it even possible that we're not hearing anything about it?」

「Yeah... What's happening, Clicker?」

「If he's really up to something, wouldn't the Prime Minister have brought some information to us as well?」

「I see. And I don't think the current royal palace has that much power」

「Therefore, I guess it's the pigs in the south and the lunatics in the east who are doing all these things」

「I agree. Well, let's discuss how to deal with the dukes when we get back to our country. However, I asked you to keep quiet today, didn't I? Why did you go to the dungeon?」

「W-well, how to put it, Sis said we should go check the dungeon...」

「Sibylla-sama?」

「I just thought it would be a good idea to see what an adventurer is capable of. I heard there's a dungeon that you can enter even if you're not an adventurer」

「There was nothing to be gained by going there, was there? I heard that it was just a dungeon full of beginners」

「It's not like that. I just thought that if we didn't know more about adventurers, our country might get hurt at some point in the future」

「Well, thanks for your concern. However, I think we should end our investigation in this town. I will make arrangements to leave the city as soon as possible. Is that all right with you?」

「No, not yet」

「Why is it? There's a good chance that Sibylla-sama and Biscot had already been eyed by the adventurers of this town, you know?」

「You think they are watching us?」

「I haven't confirmed it, but there's a hint that they're watching us. It seems they're using a magic beast to keep an eye on us... I didn't know what kind of magic beast it is, but the only thing I know is that it's most likely using dark attribute magic to conceal itself」

「Oi oi, for the captain of the scout unit, Clicker, to cannot detect it... Is there someone who can employ such a magic beast in this town?」

「They should be an adventurer. I hadn't gathered much information about the dungeon, but I had experienced their diversity and uniqueness. I also learned that to truly understand them, you can't just look at them from their surfaces」

「B-but until now—」

「This is the order from the leader of the Red Sword Knights. We will remain in this town and continue our investigation on the adventurers. Our true identity hasn't been completely exposed yet. I'm sure we can work something out」

「Work something out? This is too dangerous. What will we do if our true identities are exposed?」

「We'll force our way through when it comes to that point」

「Haah-, as I thought... Then, let's prepare for the worst」

「Sorry about that」

「So, when you say investigation, what exactly are you planning to do? You must have come up with something, right?」

「Of course, the best way to understand someone is to fight them」

「We'll be on the wanted list if you do that, you know?」

「We won't. There'll be a place where you can legally fight adventurers soon, right?」

「A-are you planning to participate in a martial arts tournament by any chance? I've already told you that it's dangerous though」

「It's not every day you get the chance to go up against a high-ranking adventurer. It's decided. Biscot will enter the tournament with me, and Clicker will support us」

「Huh?」

「Understood」

「Are you sure? This is a mission where the future of the Kingdom of Raidos is at stake, remember?」

「Is an adventurer really that much of a thing?」

「I don't know. That's why we have to know them」

「...What about the red seal?」

「We're not going to use it in the tournament. If we show it to them, they'll know who we are. I've used it before to stop Kranzel's counter-invasion. But we might have to use it to escape, so just be prepared」

「I understand」

「Sis. Are you serious that I'm going to participate too?」

「Yeah. Neither of us knew what they really are. The Kingdom of Raidos has distorted our view on them too much after all」

「D-distorted...」

「Patriotism is not the same as blindly looking down on an enemy country. Well, I was just saying it out loud, but I wasn't really practicing it either...」

「Sis...」

「This is not about winning or losing. We're going to fight like hell to understand what adventurers are. Okay?」

「Got it」

「What about the one who has been keeping its eyes on us?」

「Can you get rid of it?」

「If only getting rid of it, but... It might be difficult to even catch it」

「Let's leave it then. They'll send someone else to watch us anyway. They won't know that we're aware of the surveillance by doing so」

「I understand」

「Well, it looks like we're still on track to fulfill our original mission from the Prime Minister」

「Confirming the whereabouts and abilities of the S-Ranked adventurer, was it?」

「Yeah. A while ago, I was informed that someone from the Southern Duke's men had confirmed it... They should be here to watch the martial arts tournament」



「It seems that the adventurer is not the same as the one reported by the Southern Duke's men, but there's no doubt that an S-Ranked adventurer is coming」

「All right then. We'll see what they're capable of, and if we can, we'll measure their loyalty to Kranzel. It would be nice if we could go at them, but just being able to observe them up close will be enough for now」

# Chapter 691

TENKEN 691 The Surveillance Continues

After dropping Katley off at the mansion, we came to the Adventurer's Guild. Naturally, we wanted to report about Sibylla and her companion.

The adventurers were noisy when we entered the guild.

Well, Fran is like a celebrity in this city after all.

The adventurers don't take the bard's stories as seriously as Katley does, and many of them remember her performance in last year's martial arts tournament.

In fact, when we walked around the town and other places, Fran was sometimes looked at with admiration even by those who were not a beastman.

「Ara? If it isn't Fran-chan!」

「Elsa」

The person who greeted Fran was Elsa, a B-Ranked adventurer.

「Long time no see!」

「Nn. It's been a while」

She's as fierce as ever. I thought I'd gotten used to her from the last martial arts tournament, but I'm still amazed when I see her after a long time.

A muscular afro onee-san comes up to Fran with her ballerina-like footwork. Contrary to my desire to run away, Fran greets her with a smile.

「Are you going to participate in the tournament again this year?」

「Of course」

「That's great to hear! After all, it's unlikely that last year's first and second place winners will be able to compete this year」

「Is that so?」

Elsa's words were met with a disappointed response from Fran.

「Well, they're an adventurer, they can't help but give priority to requests... So, I'm glad Fran came」

Amanda has to keep a check on the Kingdom of Raidos, and Forrund is still in the Royal Capital, or maybe they were carrying out some kind of request against Raidos?

Could this be our chance to win first place? Fran will be disappointed, but our main rival has decreased in numbers.

This year, the Beast Kings wouldn't be here, and the A-Ranked adventurers who fought so hard last year might not participate. Then, it was unlikely that there would be anyone stronger than Fran.

As for potential rivals, would it be Colbert and Fermus? They are definitely strong opponents, but Fran has already defeated them. A year has passed since then, and Frans has grown even more, so there is a good chance that she will be able to beat them this time too.

Well, I don't know if Fermus is going to participate or not though. I believe last year he said that he had no choice but to participate because Diaz asked him to.

Also, the strongest ones we've encountered since coming to this city would be Diaz and Sibylla. However, Diaz is a guild master and Sibylla is

(presumably) a spy for Raidos.

「What do you want with the guild today? Or did you come just to see me?」

「It's not」

「I-I see...」

「I have something to report to Diaz. I was going to go see Elsa later」

「Ara! I see!」

Fran has become a bad girl! She's now capable of using an advanced technique of dropping then raising one's mood. Well, Elsa is wriggling her body with a look of delight on her face though.

「Guild master is upstairs. But he's been acting weird since yesterday」

Well, I'm pretty sure this is our fault.

「...Was he angry?」

Fran asked fearfully, but Elsa shook her head with a wry smile.

「I don't think he's angry. It's just that he's kind of absent-minded. He hasn't gotten any work done at all. And yet, he's been wandering around his room making strange growling noises like a caged animal」

「I see」

He certainly didn't seem to be angry, but it was clear that he had something on his mind.

「Could it be, guild master's weird behavior has something to do with Fran-chan?」

「Nn」

「I See... Well, let me ask him if he'll meet you for now」

「I'm counting on you」

「Don't worry, I'll do anything if it's for Fran-chan! Anything! Even if guild master says no, I'll definitely bring him to meet you!」

「Don't force Diaz if he doesn't want to」

「Ara? You sure?」

「Nn」

A few minutes then passed after the exchange.

We're now walking on the stairs to Diaz's room. I thought he'd refuse to meet us, but to my surprise, he casually invited us.

When Fran entered the room, she was greeted by Diaz, who had a somewhat distressed expression on his face.

He used to be an old man who looked young and stylish for his age, but now he looks older than his age. He seemed to be very tired after just a single night.

「Can I really see you?」

「I'm just a little lost, but I hear you have something to report to me?」

「Nn」

「If this is a continuation of yesterday's story, I'd say that I need more time... But this time is just a report, isn't it? It means that you have something completely different to report, don't you?」

The guild master could not ignore the report from the high-ranking adventurer it seemed.

I think I need to apologize for thinking that he's the type to bring his personal feelings into work. Well, he certainly do his job well, but he did bring his personal feelings into works though.

「Shall I leave?」

「It's fine」

After hearing the report, the hand that Diaz will move will probably be Elsa. If so, it would be better for her to listen too, so that we would not have to do it twice.

「Yesterday, I met a suspicious people in the west dungeon」

「Suspicious people? How suspicious are they?」

「Nn——」

Fran then tells them everything we know about Sibylla and her companion.

The fact that we first met them in Barbra but now they're in Ulmut. The matter about how they're too ignorant about adventurers even though they looked like very skilled adventurers. And how unsettled they were at the mention of the Kingdom of Raidos's deed.

「...They could be a spy for the Kingdom of Raidos」

「I see... This is certainly a vexing situation. Fran, are you aware of their whereabouts?」

「They're staying at the inn near the town entrance」

Urushi has come back to report once we had left the dungeon.

「I see. I'll have someone check them out as soon as possible」

「Urushi is still watching them now. If they tried to escape, he should notify us」

「Much appreciated」

「Are we gonna catch them?」

「Hmm... That may be difficult. We'll easily catch them if they're just a small fry, but from your story, they must be quite strong, right?」

「Nn」

「...I also don't want to mess with them and cause damage to the town. Besides, now is not the right time. If something happens now, it might affect the martial arts tournament, right? For the prestige of the guild, we want to prevent that from happening」

「So what are we gonna do? Just keep an eye on them?」

「Well, yes, for now. We'll capture them after the tournament. Until then, we'll only keep an eye on them. You'll be helping us too, right?」

「Nn. Of course」

Fran nodded enthusiastically at Diaz's words. After all, this might be a chance to fight Sibylla and her companion. There was no way Fran would refuse.

# Chapter 692

TENKEN 692 Making a Bet with Diaz

Fran had been busy since the day after accomplishing the request to take Katley to the dungeon.

As a famous person, she has received many invitations and requests.

Even though the guild would have to turn down any contact from nobles, there were some requests that could not be refused and some that Fran would want to accept.

The request that she couldn't refuse was the invitation from Elsa. It was not an invitation for a meal or a chat, but an inquiry about the effect of her serum.

Cosmetic products and fashion are things that Fran is not interested in at all. She even thought that it was a hassle to apply it to her skin at night for some reason. Though we got it for free from Elsa, she only uses it because I was so insistent on her applying it.

Well, there was no way this Fran could give a decent answer though. The only thing that would come out of her mouth was 「I don't know」 or 「It's troublesome」, and Elsa couldn't help but laugh.

Previously, she has also given her serum for free to some female students at the academy of magic. She apologized to Elsa, but she just laughed and forgave her. She was rather pleased to hear that they were so popular.

Moreover, she gave her another large amount of serum when we parted, she was seriously too nice to her.



She must think that she didn't hate it as much as she said she did, because she used it so much that it was all gone. It pains me that it's like we're deceiving Elsa though...

I think I could let Elsa know about me, but I don't think this is the right time.

Fran thanked her with a wry expression on her face as she accepted the serum.

Well, Fran refused it at first, but Elsa looked so sad that she felt compelled to accept it. To be able to make this Fran feel guilty, what a fearsome person.

I hope I can repay her someday.

And the request that Fran was happy with was the request for tasting new dishes that had been sent out by chefs and restaurants.

Riding the wave of the curry boom that had come to Ulmut in full force, many chefs were experimenting with curry dishes and trying to perfect them. They were probably preparing for the martial arts tournament.

Curry dishes were already well known when we were here before, but an unprecedented boom happened this time. It seems like all the restaurants are serving curry dishes now.

Then Fran, the disciple of the curry master who created curry, appeared.

It seems that along with the craze for curry, the information about Fran was also passed on to the chefs in Ulmut, and a number of requests for tastings were made to Fran.

There was only one at the beginning. But as a result of the chef's tearful improvements in response to Fran's harsh opinions, their curry dish became significantly more delicious.

The word spread quickly, and a large number of tasting requests were sent out to Fran.

Eat curry, give a few opinions, and get paid good money. It's the best request an adventurer could ask for.

Moreover, as a B-ranked adventurer, the people who wanted to make requests to Fran were all from famous restaurants that made a good amount of money. Since they were all competent cooks, there were very few bad dishes.

Well, there were some dishes that were a bit too challenging for Fran's taste though.

However, it was not without its problems.

The chefs had started to secretly call Fran as the 「Curry Princess」 or 「Spice Princess」. It seems that her nickname has become the Black Lightning Princess of the Disciple of the Curry Master now...

What I was afraid of was that Fran might like that alias. What would happen if she started calling herself the Curry Princess when she had such a cool alias as Black Lightning Princess?

I have to prevent that from happening.

The cooks seemed to understand that this nickname was not preferred by adventurers, and fortunately, they did not call her that to her face.

From time to time, there are those who almost call her Curry Princess by accident, but when that happen, I used telekinesis to physically cover their mouths.

Well, I know it sounds a bit harsh when I put it like that, but all I've done was just shut their mouth with my telekinesis and temporarily prevent them from talking, okay?

That's how hard I worked for the past few days.

And now, there was a messenger from the adventurer's guild at the inn where we were staying. They told us that Diaz wants to talk to us.

『I wonder what he's going to talk about?』

「Nn」

Would it be about Sibylla, who are suspected as spies for the Kingdom of Raidos?

The guild had asked the adventurers not to make any direct contact with them so as not to provoke them. Therefore, we have not approached Sibylla and her companion at all. We just left the monitoring to Urushi.

If so, they must have made some kind of move then.

Or has Dimitris arrived in Ulmut? We had asked him to introduce us after all.

He seems to be a rather difficult person to deal with, but with an introduction from the guild master, maybe he'll at least listen to us. Well, maybe, that is.

But to my surprise, what Diaz want to talk about were something about neither of those things.

「I need to talk about Zelos Reed」

「...Okay」

Fran's expression tightens in front of Diaz's serious face. Now, what kind of talk will it be?

It was impossible to tell what he'd say from Diaz's expressionless face.

「...Fran, in our conversation the other day, you said that you had Zelos Reed life in your hands, right?」

「Nn」

I think what Diaz is referring to is when Zelos Reed gives his life to her in exchange for her to take Romio to Barbra's orphanage when he dies. Such is

her promise with him.

But to be honest, I don't think it would be a fair deal to take his life when Zelos Reed is not dead and Romio and he are being sheltered by the academy of magic.

Fran too, would not be as unreasonable to use that promise to ask for anything from Zelos Reed now. However, such a promise was certainly made between Fran and Zelos Reed.

I'm also sure that Fran had explained to Diaz how she let Zelos Reed go and told him of her promise. Fran may not have been aware of her own feelings, but she knew that Zelos Reed life was in her hands, so she would not do anything unnecessary.

But Diaz was certainly aware of his feelings. I'm sure that's why Diaz mentioned it to us.

「Let's make a bet. I'll give up on the idea of getting my revenge if you win. I can't erase this grudge, but I'll carry it with me to my grave. I'll never touch Zelos Reed. In exchange, if I win, you will tell me where Zelos Reed is. What do you say?」

Diaz was smiling as he said so, but to me, it seemed like an expression of anguish. I don't know why I felt that way myself...

「...What's the detail of the bet」

「How about Fran and I fight in the upcoming martial arts tournament, and the winner wins the bet?」

「Diaz is participating?」

「I mean, there's nothing in the rules that says a guild master can't participate, right?」

『But we don't know if Diaz and Fran will be matched up against each other for sure, do we?』

Or would the guild master's authority allow for such a thing? That's what I thought, but it turned out to be wrong.

「I can't do anything about it, because the order of the matches is decided randomly in the final round. So, if one of us loses in the middle of the tournament and the matchup itself doesn't happen, you win the bet, deal?」

「You sure?」

「Yeah. When that happens, I will just give up and think that it is destined to happen」

It's a very favorable bet for us. Is that how confident he is? Or does he already know that he's going to lose? I don't know which.

If Diaz was serious about finding Zelos Reed, it actually wouldn't be difficult for him to find Zelos Reed. If he searched the Adventurer's Guild's record, he could easily find out where Fran had travelled.

Instead of doing that, why bother making a bet with us...?

『What if we don't accept that bet?』

「If that's the case, I'll go find Zelos Reed on my own」

「...Okay, I'll accept that bet」

『Fran, are you sure?』

「Nn. I know how Diaz feels. It must be tough to be stuck in such a state」

Fran showed an expression that looked somewhat concerned for Diaz. Diaz then bowed deeply to Fran.

「Thanks. I appreciate it」

Diaz's face looked somewhat relieved as he smiled at us.

# Chapter 693

Dimitris

Translated by Tods

Edited by NotEdited

Just a few days before the martial arts tournament was to be held.

We were now in the Adventurer's Guild. This time, our purpose was not to see Diaz nor the strangely tired-looking Colbert that stood beside the couch, but the slender old man sitting on it.

「Well done for coming here」

Though he said that, there was not even a hint of affectionate expression on his face. He was just simply looking at Fran with a sharp stare.

Appearance-wise, he looked like a skinny old man with a slightly scary face.

I guess it must be because he has slant eyes in the first place, so just by being narrowed, it made him look as if he were staring at us.

His hair had turned white with age, but was still very lush. His hair, which could have been a bob if unraveled, was gathered into a short topknot at the back of his head. He had a magnificent mustache and beard, which gave the appearance of a hermit.

Well, his presence was so tremendous that one would hardly think of him as a hermit though.

Since he was sitting, I couldn't exactly tell how tall he was, but I'd say he was a little over 170cm tall.

His skin, which had lost much of its moisture due to old age and had begun to wrinkle, looked like the surface skin of a tree.

However, I could see that there were well-developed muscles underneath that skin. His muscles were similar to that of an athlete. I could tell that he was still continuing his training.

He was wearing a loose-fitting robe that looked like a kimono with black embroidery on a purple base. Even through such a robe, I could clearly see the strength of his body.

Then Colbert steps forward and opens his mouth.

「Master——」

「I'm not your Master anymore」

「...Dimitris-sama, Hilt-ojousan, this girl is Fran, the girl who defeated me」

「Umu」

「Hmph」

Well, you've guessed it right. The old man in front of us was the S-Ranked adventurer, Dimitris the Immovable.

Just by observing the current exchange, I can understand that he's not a straightforward person.

And there was another woman with a serious face that seemed to be acting as a guard standing on the other side of the couch from Colbert.

Colbert called her "Ojousan", didn't he? I wonder what kind of relationship they had. She looked quite strong too, on par with Colbert perhaps. She's been looking at Fran with an evaluating eye for a while now.

Well, Dimitris is our priority right now.

「I'm Fran, a B-ranked adventurer. Nice to meet you」

Said Fran while bowing her head slightly.

Fran greeted him with an unusually formal greeting. It may have been because the other party was related to the request, but she probably understood the strength of the other party just by facing him.

I could tell by the tone of her voice that she was being respectful.

The old man then gave a silent nod to Fran.

「I'm Dimitris, an S-Ranked adventurer」

At first glance, the old man sitting on the couch with his arms crossed seemed to be full of openings. But Fran knew that if she were to attack, she would surely be met with a painful counterattack.

He showed such a strong presence that could make us clearly understand that.

It was probably on purpose. It seemed that he was trying to prevent unnecessary conflicts by showing his strength to a degree that could be clearly understood by those who were capable of fighting.

He wouldn't take his opponent so seriously if they were so weak that they cannot sense such presence because he can simply kill dozens of them in an instant if they try to mess with him.

From what I've heard, Dimitris is also a bit of a battle junkie. So, he probably would be more than happy to take care of those who still tried to mess with him.

I was wondering what kind of eccentric old man he would be after hearing so much about him from Colbert, but he is somewhat better than I imagined. I was somewhat expecting that he would attack us upon our meeting.



But I was not expecting him to agree to meet us so easily in the first place.

However, while Dimitris was not as aggressive as I thought he would be, Hilt was glaring at us for some reason.

Well, rather than glaring at us, it's more like she's in a bad mood and had no choice but to glare at us... Anyway, the atmosphere was not so friendly right now.

Fran also unconsciously turned her gaze from Dimitris to Hilt.

「My name is Hiltoria. Dimitris-style master and an A-Ranked adventurer」

I knew she was strong, but who could guess that she's an A ranker!? She must be one of Dimitris' direct disciples then. It must also mean that she had passed the ordeal that Colbert was undergoing.

「I'm also the legitimate granddaughter and the heir of grandfather Dimitris. Nice to meet you」

Though Hilt said “Nice to meet you”, her face didn't seem to mean it at all.

She was a tall, beautiful woman with dark green hair pulled up in a side pony. She was dressed in the same purple base color as Dimitris, but her's were smaller and clearly showed the lines of her body.

Her top was a tube top with short sleeves that exposed her belly button. Her bottom is a kind of pants that looks somewhere between spats and shorts. And the protective gear to protect her legs looks like knee-high socks.

At first glance, all of them seemed to be made of thin cloth armor, but in reality, they were high-end armor made of magic beast material. The reason for their small size was probably because they were designed for ease of movement.

It's obvious that she's a fighter. I don't even need to appraise her to know that. And it's not because I observed her center of gravity or the way she move or anything.

But the knuckle duster in her hands was glinting with a swarthy light. It probably used to be silver in color, but now it had turned reddish-black. It must have been used for so many years that the blood could not be removed anymore. That showed how much she uses that knuckle duster as her main weapon.

「...」

「...」

Fran and Hilt then stared at each other. It looks like this is not going to end peacefully.

# Chapter 694

Hilt and Colbert

Translated by Tods

Edited by NotEdited

「...」

「...」

Hilt, who had been staring at Fran for a few seconds, then muttered something in a small voice.

「...I see」

「？」

I wonder what she means by that? Fran tilted her head in confusion for not understanding the meaning of her words.

「I see, it's no wonder Colbert lost to her. I wonder how can she be this strong at this young age...」

So that's what she wants to say, huh? Hilt and Colbert, who obviously had a relation with Dimitris, must have been an acquaintance before. Maybe they were fellow students or something. If that's the case, then Fran was the one who caused her friend to be excommunicated.

So, I suppose, it was not surprising that she'll be somewhat thinking ill of Fran because of that. It's not something that she could simply ignore after all.

I also somewhat understood the meaning of her stare before. Even though she knew in her rational mind that Fran was not at fault, she must have mixed feelings when she saw her in front of her.

「You're friends with Colbert?」

「Rather than a friend... that Colbert there is my ex-fiance. Well, the talk got dropped when he was excommunicated though」

「Ojousan. I was just one of the fiance candidates」

There seemed to be several potential fiances for her, and the one who seemed to be the most suitable is going to officially become Hilt's groom.

And as the heir to the Dimitris-Style school, the groom must be a suitable man to assist her. Naturally, the excommunicated Colbert was eliminated as a candidate.

「Besides, Charlie, the last candidate left, is a stronger and better man than I am. He's also close to your age, I think he'll be a good match for you」

「You think so? Well, you might be right」

From their exchange, they may have not been as simple as just friends, aren't they?

When Colbert replied in a light tone, Hilt responded in the same light tone and shrugged her shoulders. However, her expression was clearly dejected.

Could it be, Hilt has a feeling for Colbert...? Is Colbert unaware of this?

Now that I think of it, Colbert was being somewhat nicer to Io-san lately...

「Is Hilt going to participate in the martial arts tournament to avenge Colbert?」

「I have no interest in being a spectacle」

「...I see」

I was relieved to know that Hilt is not going to participate, but Fran seemed to be somewhat disappointed, Hilt looks strong after all.

But rather than that, our priority is Dimitris now.

『Fran, don't forget why we came here』

「Nn...」

My words must have reminded her of the request. Fran then turned to Dimitris.

「This man tells me that you want to see me, but what do you want?」

「Nn. This is from the Kingdom of Belios」

「Hou?」

She took out the leather bag we had been keeping to give to Dimitris and put it on the table.

「They said they wanted to hire you as one of the adventurers they were sending to Gordisia. There should be a letter in it」

「Fumu, I see」

Dimitris then opens the bag and takes out an envelope, which he opens on the spot. Dimitris nodded several times as he looked at the letter that was inside it.

Now, the request is fulfilled. The rest of the story is up to the Kingdom of Belios' letter and Dimitris.

Unlike my prior expectations, we were able to accomplish the request quite easily.

But things don't seem to simply end here.

「So, will you take on their request?」

Fran asked so to Dimitris. Actually, the Kingdom of Belios has offered to pay us a bonus if she could convince Dimitris.

「Well, it's going to be a boring job without Weena Rhyn. I think I might refuse」

「Can you please do something about it」

「Fumu...」

Demetrius pondered a little at Fran's rather blunt words.

He then glanced at his granddaughter, Hilt.

「...Then how about this? Black Thunder Princess, you're going to participate in the martial arts tournament, aren't you?」

「Nn, of course」

「Then, I will go to Belios if you can defeat Hilt in this martial arts tournament. What do you think?」

「That's exactly what I want!」

The old man makes an interesting proposal without even putting a smile on his face. Of course, Fran is motivated about this. But rather than being motivated by the bonus she'll receive, she seemed to be motivated for getting a chance to have a match with Hilt.

However, in contrast to Fran, Hilt seemed to be a bit confused.

「Wha, grandfather?」

「And Hilt. If you defeat the Black Thunder Princess, I will retire and give up my position as the head of the school」

「That's—...!」

「Hmm. I had a wife and a child. I'm not made of wood and stone, you know? Did you think I never think of them?」

「...So, in other words, if I become the head of the family, I can freely choose my groom?」

「As the head of the family, you can do whatever you want. Don't worry about this old grandpa. You may close the dojo too if you wish」

「I understand. Though I say I don't like to be a spectacle, with that much reward, there's no way I'd refuse」

This time it wasn't just a staring contest between Fran and Hilt.

They are throwing their fighting spirit at each other.

I could hear a commotion downstairs. The adventurers in the guild must have sensed the sudden burst of hostility.

「Grandfather, what would happen if one of us got defeated before we even meet」

「In that case, the one with the higher ranking wins」

「Understood」

「Nn」

Neither of them asked what would happen if they lost the first match and the standings were the same. I guess they are planning to win the tournament in the first place. They probably didn't think that they would be the first to lose.

But still, I wonder why there is always an unexpected situation like this in every martial arts tournament. The last time we made a bet with the Beast King, but this time we made bet with Diaz and Dimitris.

「U-umm...」

The only one who looked like he was in trouble is Colbert. I feel sorry for him. I'm afraid his future may depend on Fran's victory.



# Chapter 695

Nilfe

Translated by Tods

Edited by NotEdited

The martial arts tournament has finally begun. However, Fran is in the seeded bracket this time, so she won't be participating in the qualifying round.

Well, Fran said she wanted to participate in the qualifier, but as expected, Diaz and the others won't let her. They asked her to be patient for the sake of the other participants in the qualifying round, so she gave up this time.

『Fran, over there』

「? The seats are over there」

『Fran may cause a commotion if she were to sit on the regular seats. I'm sure the special seats for officials won't draw that much attention, so let's watch from there』

「Okay」

Today, we came to watch the qualifying round. I don't know if there will be any strong opponents, but we simply have nothing else to do for today.

Holding the food from the stall in both hands, she walked towards the special seats. On the way, we spotted a familiar face.

Fran then calls out to the girls walking in front of her.

「Katley」

「Onesama!」

It was Katley, the aspiring adventurer who adored Fran. She was walking in the same direction, accompanied by a man who seemed to be their escort.

「Did onesama also come to watch the martial arts tournament?」

「Nn, you too?」

「Yes!」

Katley looked happy, but beside her was a little girl who looked up at Fran anxiously. She squeezed Katley's hand and gripped her skirt with her other hand.

「Who?」

「Her name is Nilfe. She's Dimitris-sama's granddaughter」

「I-I'm Nilfe...」

Nilfe muttered his name in a very low voice.

Dimitris' granddaughter? So, she's Hilt's sister? Her green hair certainly looks like hers. But I didn't feel the same presence as hers. She seems to be a shy and weak girl. Other than the color of her hair, she had nothing in common with Hilt.

「And that's Michael-san. He's Nilfe's bodyguard」

「Nice to meet you」

A bald, fine-looking macho man standing behind Katley and Nilfe bowed his head lightly. He's got a pretty good face. He seems to be Dimitris' disciple.

「Grandfather asked me to show her around. He said if I was going to be an adventurer, I had to be able to escort her」

For Aurel to leave the role of guiding Nilfe around to Katley, he seems to have fully approved of Katley becoming an adventurer. Well, getting to know someone of her age is certainly a good experience too, I guess. But Fran seemed to be bothered by Kaley's words.

「I see. If that's the case, your current introduction is no good」

「Eh?」

「Even if it's not a formal request, if you've accepted the job as an adventurer, you shouldn't give out any information about your client or escort. Even to acquaintances」

It seems that Fran's mentoring has not ended with the completion of the previous request. Well, she's her first kouhai (junior) after all, she's willing to give her an advice or two.

Katley, whose carelessness was pointed out by Fran, immediately realized her mistake.

「...You're right... I'm sorry Nilfe」

She bowed deeply to Nilfe, with the look of a newbie adventurer who screwed up a request.

I think it's not something that she should be so upset about, but Katley seemed to have taken it very seriously. The other reason was probably because of her respect for Fran.

「Nilfe is the granddaughter of a famous person. The more reason you should be careful」

「You're certainly right...」

「U-umm, I don't really mind...」

Nilfe shakes her head in frustration as Katley apologizes. She looks young, but she seems to have understood what we were saying.

「Did you come here to see the qualifying round?」

「Y-yes..」

Fran was not asking Katley this time, but Nilfe. It seems that she could tell that Katley adored Fran and was interested in her.

「Let's go together then」

「Yes!」

「Yes...」

As we walked, Katley talked to Nilfe about Fran.

She's telling the overly exaggerated story of Fran again though. It's a little better now that Fran had corrected her a little, but it's still a bit exaggerated.

Fran is so indifferent about it that she hardly ever comments on it.

Nilfe's expression changed as she listened to Katley's passionate talk about Fran. She clearly has developed some respect for Fran.

Katley's story sounds like something that comes out of fiction no matter how much I think about it, however...

「T-that's amazing」

Nilfe, who trusts Katley, doesn't seem to think that her words are a lie or an exaggeration. Well, she's still young after all.

Her small body trembled as she listened excitedly to Katley's story.

「That's so cool」

「Right? Fran-oneesama is amazing」

「Yes」

The gleam in her eyes is exactly the same as that of Katley looking at Fran. This could be the birth of a new child who respects Fran.

Even after arriving at the special seat, Katley's praise of Fran didn't stop. Maybe in Nilfe's mind now, Fran is as big a hero as Dimitris.

「What have you been up to lately?」

「I'm training every day to become an adventurer. The rest of the time, I do chores in the city」

I heard that in Ulmut, there are jobs that one can take as an apprentice even if they are not registered as an adventurer. I guess it's just something for newbies. And because of the martial arts tournament, there are plenty of chores that need to be done, so there are a lot of jobs posted around this time of year.

This apprenticeship was not only a great way to earn money, but also a way to hear various rumors, which Katley seemed to enjoy very much.

Especially at this time of year when rumors from all over the country are flying around.

「I heard that the appearance rate of undead is increasing around Ulmut」

「Why?」

「The reason is still unknown. However, since many travelers are coming here at this time of the year, many of them die around Ulmut. The merchant who told me the story said that the corpses of such unfortunate travelers might turn into undead」

「I see」

「Also, there are a lot of mercenaries coming in as guards for those travelers, so there have been more fights recently」

「Between adventurers and mercenaries?」

「It's also happening among the mercenaries. There are also more pickpockets and swindlers, so grandfather is busy all the time」

The festive atmosphere must have attracted bad people as well.

# Chapter 696

The Qualifying Round

Translated by Tods

Edited by NotEdited

The first round of the qualifying round of the martial arts tournament was a battle royal this year as well.

Each round consists of five or six participants, and the one who survives moves on to the next round. It's exactly the same as last year.

The fights between the small fry were boring, but there were also some talented people in the mix. Other matches in which people we knew were participating were also worth watching in their own right.

The Scarlet Maidens, a party of three girls who worked for us at Barbra, participate this year too.

They've improved their abilities quite a bit since last year. They must have trained hard.

They were still unable to advance past this year's qualifying round though.

Well, the girls are the type that put more emphasis on coordination than individual combat power after all. Moreover, they are a party that excels at fighting in dungeons and outdoors.

But before that, Maia, the thief, and Lydia, the sorceress, were not suited for a martial arts tournament. In the end, as the most skilled, they were all targeted by the other participant, and they ended up losing.

As for Judith, their leader and a swordswoman, she had a bad opponent.

She fought against one of Dimitris' disciples. Even though he was still a disciple in training, he was probably equivalent to a C-Ranked adventurer in terms of ability.

It seems that he is one of the people that are under Hilt's supervision.

Colbert told us about the Dimitris school, and it seems that it is mostly Hilt's role to instruct the disciples.

It also seemed that Dimitris has always been putting his own training first, and is not that concerned about preserving the Dimitris style that he created.

Still, he has disciples and dojos all over the country because there is no end to the number of people who want to become his disciple.

At first, the adventurers who admired Dimitris were simply learning the basics of fighting in between their activities.

Before long, Dimitris himself became somewhat interested in raising disciples, and the number of disciples in his school increased, until it became a large dojo with more than a hundred disciples in total.

That certainly sounds like a lot of disciples for someone who was just starting out, but I also heard that his training was extremely strict and many were quitting because of it.

Well, with his status as an S-Ranked adventurer, it wasn't hard for him to eventually get thousands of disciples.

If the disciples were able to continue their training without failing and become top disciples, they would be allowed to be trained by Dimitris in person. However, it is also said that many of the disciples are disheartened by his insane Spartan training.

In such an environment, Colbert and Hilt were among those who remained.



And even though Colbert was quite capable, he was treated as just a top disciple, not a master.

Hilt and the other masters who had passed the ordeal must be highly capable.

It is even said that there have only been three masters since the ordeal to become a master was introduced.

Well, the ordeal was to become an A-Ranked adventurer while sealing their own abilities after all. I doubt many of them will be able to achieve that.

「Onesama, do you know the person who just lost?」

「Nn. She's an adventurer from Barbra」

Fran also seemed to be rooting for Judith. When she lost, she unconsciously uttered an 「Ah—」, and Katley didn't miss it.

「Is that so? That's too bad」

「...I'm sorry」

「Why would Nilfe apologize?」

「Because her opponent is grandfather's disciple...」

Nilfe bowed her head, looking like she was about to cry, but Fran stopped her.

「Nilfe has nothing to do with this. It is their problem alone」

「Is that, so?」

「Nn」

「...Thank you very much」

「?」

Seemed relieved, Nilfe smiled at her. Fran didn't quite understand, but it seemed that she had been through a lot.

Just being the lineage of a famous person must have attracted a lot of attention and unreasonable complaints.

It's not surprising that a person like Dimitris, who doesn't bother to conceal his lack of respect for others, would be resented by many people. That resentment has been turned to her simply because she is his granddaughter. The fact that she immediately expressed her apologies just now suggests that she must have gone through a lot of hardship.

「Milady」

「Thank you, Michael」

Michael gently offers a handkerchief to the teary-eyed Nilfe. How dependable of you, Michael!

However, Fran is wary of Michael. She noticed that he has been glancing at us on occasion. He's probably just holding a grudge about Colbert, just like Hilt.

I didn't feel any strong hostility, but he had been watching us with a watchful eye. It was an eye looking for weaknesses and gaps. We can't afford to let our guard down in this situation.

「Ah! Oneesama! That person was one of the participants in the main competition last year, wasn't she!？」

「Nn. Charlotte」

Charlotte seemed to be participating in the tournament this year as well. Her rank as an adventurer is the same as Judith and her party member. but her fighting style is more suitable for martial arts competitions compared to Lydia and Maia. I'm sure she'll make it to the top again this year.

Even now, on top of the arena, no one could catch her dancing movements and she kept defeating them one after another. Moreover, when I appraised

her, I found that she was much stronger than last year.

In addition to the fact that her level has increased, her job has also changed. Last year, she was a Combat Dancer, but now she is a Combat Fighter. Her unique skill set includes the Dance of Trance, and she has even acquired another special skill.

Last year, she lost because of her lack of offensive power against Elsa. It seemed that she had taken measures to counter that this year.

Anyway, should we go comfort the Scarlet Maiden for now? They seemed to be very confident this year and cried a bit after losing.

I also want to greet Charlotte too.

Well then, let's see what kind of contestants we'll meet this year, shall we?

# Chapter 697

The Qualifying Round

Translated by Tods

Edited by NotEdited

The day after we watched the qualifying round.

『The matchups have been announced, and well... It looks like we matched up against someone we know right from the start』

(...Who?)

『Well, I knew you wouldn't remember』

We couldn't wait for the news to reach the inn, so we came to check the matchup table posted in front of the arena.

The names of the 64 participants in the main round are written on this board. The table is divided into four blocks with 16 names each that will compete to get into the semifinal, and Fran's name is written at the very top of the first block.

That is because we are placed under the "Seed-A". It seems that this place was given to us because we placed third last year.

Directly across our block, at "Seed-B", Diaz's name was written under it. Under our block, at "Seed-C", Hilt's name was there. And next to it, the "Seed-D", there's Fermus.

This seeding is not based on adventurer's rank or prestige, but the previous year's rank seemed to have the highest priority. This meant that Fran, a B-ranked adventurer, was ranked above Diaz, Hilt, and other A-Ranked adventurers.

It sure feels good to be in Seed-A.

Fran seemed to feel the same way, looking at the tournament table with a shine in her eyes.

(Master, my name is first on the table!)

『Yeah, this is going to attract a lot of attention. We can't afford to show them a bad fight』

(Nn! Let's do our best)

If all goes well, we'll meet Diaz in the semifinal and Hilt or Fermus in the final.

『Your first match will be against Dufour』

(...Who?)

『The one you trained in Barbra at Gamudo's request, remember?』

Fran seems to have forgotten that he was one of the fledgling adventurers she met at the adventurer's guild in Barbra. At Gamudo's request, she broke their noses when they were getting too overconfident.

Riddick, Naria, and Miguel formed a party and joined us in escorting a ship to the Beastman Kingdom and even trained them on the ship.

She seemed to remember the three whom she had trained pretty well, but as for the others, her memory about them was quite limited.

『Hey, he was the strongest of all the novices back then, the phantom swordsman』

(...Oh, there's someone like that too, maybe?)

Even after I told her the details of his characteristics, she could only recall him vaguely. Well, even if he was a little strong, he was still at the level of a novice.

I hope she'll remember you this time, Dufour-kun!

『After that, our next most likely matchup is——』

(Mordred)

Fran muttered in a cheerful tone.

She seemed to remember this one.

He is also a B-ranked adventurer who was with us when we escorted a ship to the Beastman Kingdom.

He was the type of adventurer who excelled in more than just simple combat. Of course, his fighting skills were also top-notch. He was a master of spears and Molten Iron magic, and he used them skillfully.

『So Mordred's first-round opponent was Naria, huh』

(Naria!)

Naria, as I mentioned earlier, was the novice adventurer that Fran had trained for a short time. She was supposed to be a bow user, but to my surprise, she made it through the qualifying round.

I don't think she was strong enough to beat Mordred after only one year though. Mordred would surely advance to the second round.

『If so, I wonder who will advance to the third round...』

「Hmm」

I don't see another familiar name on the same block... Oh, there's another!

『This Biscot, wasn't he the guy who was with Sibylla?』

「？」

It seems Fran didn't remember him. But, now that I take a closer look, Sibylla's name is on this block too!

I never thought that Sibylla and her companions, the (Suspected) spies of Raidos, would participate in the martial arts tournament. Are they not actually spies? Or do they just not give a damn about this?

Moreover, Sibylla and Biscot's names are so close. Wouldn't it be bad for them to face each other?

『If I were to assume that Sibylla is going to win, we'll be facing her in the quarterfinals』

(Nn. I'm looking forward to it)

As we were checking the tournament table, the people around us suddenly made a noise. It was the same reaction as when Fran appeared here.

Did some famous adventurer happen to show up?

As we waited, a man came up to the tournament table. Well, no wonder they were surprised when they saw this guy.

The man's head looked like that of an insect. It was as if a praying mantis head, which was as big as a human head, was mounted on top of a human body.

With just one look at him, surely no one will ever forget his appearance.

He seemed to be strong too. His movements were flawless, showing that he was a high-ranking warrior. He was probably on par with Colbert at the very least.

「Hmm... My name—...」

I had imagined a voice that sounded more gritty, but his voice sounded surprisingly normal and human.

No, his voice would rather be in the cool category. His voice is exactly like that of a handsome voice actor.

The way he muffled the sound of his footsteps, the way he paid attention to his surrounding, made me think that he was a first-rate warrior. He doesn't seem to be carrying any weapons, is he using his bare hands? Or could he transform his arm into a scythe or something?

Anyway, it seems that there will be a competent participant that Fran will be a little excited about.

「Who is that guy?」

「There aren't any half-insect kin adventurers in this town, are there?」

「He's someone from outside then? He looks strong」

「You think so?」

「Yeah, he has pretty good movement」

It seemed that the adventurers around did not know this man. He's probably from another city or country then.



# Chapter 698

As we watched the mantis man checking the tournament table, his head suddenly turned to us.

The sight of him turning his head was quite horrifying.

I readied myself to activate telekinesis at any time. But what the mantis man said next was something that I didn't expect.

「Could it be, you're the Black Heavenly Tiger, Fran?」

「Nn」

「Oh! I knew it, my friends in the royal capital said that they were indebted to you」

The royal capital? Half-insect kin in the royal capital means——

『He's Eliante's acquaintance?』

Eliante was the guild master of the adventurer's guild in the royal capital of the Kingdom of Kranzel, she was a half-insect spider kin. She was also acquainted with the members of the Antennae and Shells, a mercenary group that she used to belong to.

This mercenary group is an unusual group of mercenaries made up entirely of half-insect kin.

「...You're, Eliante's acquaintance?」

「That's right!」

The mantis man let out a happy voice when Fran mentioned Eliante's name. Well, I can't really read the expression on this guy's face though, I can only guess from his voice.

「It's a pleasure to meet you. I am the leader of the mercenary group called 『Antennae and Shells』 ; my name is Neidhart」

Neidhart bows politely. Despite his mantis-like appearance, he is quite refined.

「You're the leader?」

「Yes. Well, there were no other members who would do it, and they just forced me to become the leader」

Even though he said that, I could sense a kind of presence in Neidhart that was befitting of someone who stood above others.

It may have been his own humble way of saying it, or the fact that the other members of the group were not good at leading, but even without that, Neidhart looked very suitable as the leader of the group.

「I'd heard you're a lovely young lady, but you were even more lovely than the rumors said」

「?」

「Excuse me. That was rude of me」

Even though it is an impolite line, it doesn't feel unpleasant at all. I guess it's because his attitude is that of a gentleman.

「Thank you for helping my friends. Please let me know if you ever need any help. Never leave a friend behind, always return the favor. That's our principle」

What a nice guy! He's so nice in both personality and manners!

「They helped me a lot too. We're even」

「Please don't say that, I heard you've saved my friends' very life. I really do feel grateful, so please don't hesitate to ask if you need our help」

「Okay」

「That said, I won't go easy on you if we were to meet in the tournament, okay?」

「Just as I hoped」

Fran smiled at Neidhart's words. She seemed to get a kick out of imagining how strong Neidhart was.

He's in the same block with Fermus and Elsa. So, in order to meet Fran, he would have to make it to the final and defeat them first.

「...Is everyone else here?」

「Robin and the others are still in the royal capital helping Eliante. It's about time for us to move on to the next battleground though」

「Isn't Neidhart the leader?」

「Oh, are you wondering why I'm the only one here?」

「Nn」

「Well, I'm here to recruit new members」

It seems that Neidhart's goal is to draw attention to himself by participating in the tournament and attract the interest of the half-insect kin to join his mercenary group.

His mercenary group consists of only half-insect kin. It's not that it was exclusive to half-insect kin only, but their purpose is to help each other by gathering together with other half-insect kin, who are often looked at as odd in society.

They are treated less favorably if their characteristics were a lot different from that of humans. There is half-insect kin who have been persecuted and have developed a strong fear of other species because of their strong insect-like characteristics.

For such people, a mercenary group of only half-insect kin could be a safe haven.

That's the reason why they prefer to not welcome other races such as humans, elves, dwarves, etc. into the group, and stick with a group of only half-insect kin.

However, there is not many half-insect kin who have strong traits of their roots. Even if they wanted to increase their numbers, they were not able to find good people.

「That's why I've been searching for talent in various places. I think it's a good idea to participate in this tournament, because if I do well, I'll catch the attention of a lot of half-insect kin」

Neidhart's participation in this martial arts tournament would certainly be a hot topic. If the story of their mercenary group were to spread along with it, there would surely be people who wanted to join the group.

「I see」

「Fran-dono too, if you meet any half-insect kin on your travels, please advertise us」

「Okay. If you ever meet any black cat kin, I'd like you to tell them about our evolution too」

「Very well then, let's help each other」

Neidhart should know quite a bit about the black cat people. That's why, he should know about their evolution conditions.

This is probably because such information can be used as a weapon for a mercenary group.

「Oh, right, one piece of advice」

「？」

「It seems that there are people who were investigating you. I don't know who they are, but I'm guessing they're not adventurers」

「Are they gathering information for the tournament？」

「It may be, but at this time of the year, a lot of people enter this town. As a famous person, you might have created resentment without knowing it, so you'd better be careful」

「I understand. Thank you for telling me」

「Not at all. Very well then, let's meet again sometime」

「Nn」

After giving a bow, Neidhart left the scene.

『People who were investigating Fran, huh』

(Enemy?)

『I don't know. It's also possible that they're just looking for information on famous adventurers』

Urushi is still away for surveillance. It looks like we'll need to be more careful from now on.

# Chapter 699

『Fran, how's your condition?』

「Nn, all good」

『Good. How about you, Urushi?』

「Woof!」

Urushi replied with a cheerful voice from within the shadows.

Urushi has returned to us today. Now that Sibylla and her companion were also participating in the tournament, it become easier to monitor them. The adventurer's guild must have decided to relieve Urushi from his post as his master was also participating.

Fran nodded at my words with her usual expression. She seems to be somewhat excited, but not as excited as I think she would be.

But, well, I think she should be able to remain calm and fully demonstrate her abilities in this state.

Her bearing did not change as she walked through the corridor and was showered with loud cheers from the large crowds.

It seems she had gotten used to the cheers after last year's experience.

As expected of Fran, she is so dependable.

In contrast to Fran, the young man standing on the other side of the arena looked somewhat flustered.

「C-calm down, me...」

It was the Phantom Swordsman, Dufour. He'll be Fran's opponent in the first round of the martial arts tournament.

His job is still that of a phantom swordsman, but he looked much more skilled than the last time we saw him. His status and skills have become more developed too.

However, I guess he is not used to fighting in front of a large crowd. He was clearly a bit intimidated under the gaze of more than ten thousand people.

But with Fran in his sights, he seemed to have flipped a switch.

The face of the young man who had been looking around at the crowd with an uneasy look changed into that of a warrior. Well, he still looks a little pale though.

「S-so you've come!」

His voice is so hoarse. Maybe it wasn't the crowd that made him pale, but his fear of Fran?

Come to think of it, the last time we saw him, Fran gave him a pretty bad experience. Maybe he was remembering that time. And now, the very same person was his first opponent.

No wonder he was so frightened.

「It's certainly been a while, isn't it!? T-today won't be like last time!」

『Fran, just reply with a nod for now』

「Nn」

It would be a pity if Fran were to reply with a "Who?" when Dufour is courageously putting up a brave front after all.

『Now, here we go! It's that time of year again! The Ulmut Martial Arts Tournament! Starting with the first round, here come the seeded participants!』

It's been a year since I've heard this kind of commentary. He spoke as fast as ever, introducing the participants to the audience without pausing.

『Last year, she beat all the other strong competitors and came in an impressive third place! The incredible beastman girl who set the record for the youngest winner! She's not a dark horse this year, she's the number one seed and the favorite to win! The Black Lightning Princess, Fraaan!』

Immediately after the introduction, an explosion of cheers rained down on Fran. It was as if an idol or the like had just appeared on the stage, and the cheers were even mixed with shrill voices.

It seemed that Fran was much more well known and popular than I had imagined.

Well, it has only been a year since last year's martial arts tournament in which Fran performed well. I'm sure many people still remember Fran.

The cheers showed support and encouragement for the participants.

『I can't wait to see what kind of amazing fights we'll see this year!』

Fran stood calmly as she was used to, but Dufour was visibly dismayed. He seemed to have remembered that he was being watched by a lot of people.

『On the other side, making his first appearance in the main tournament this year! The D-Ranked adventurer, Dufour! He may be young, but don't underestimate him! He's a formidable participant who made it through the preliminary round unscathed with his skillful swordsmanship!』

The audience roared at the commentary. However, the cheers were far less than at Fran's, as a clear indication of the popularity of the two.

The spectators are being too obvious! It's good manners to applaud for both sides, you know!?



But it seems that DuFour is so nervous that he is completely unaware of such things. With a slightly awkward movement, he draws his sword and readied it.

Well, it was his first time in this tournament. It also seems that the crowd were much bigger than he had expected. And his opponent was the terrifying Black Lightning Princess. I have to admit that I felt sorry for him.

Even so, I appreciate the fact that he doesn't lose his will to fight. Well, Fran doesn't seem to be aware of it at all though.

「? What's wrong?」

「I-it's nothing!」

「Mmm」

Fran, which has no word called "nervous" in her dictionary, couldn't understand why his movement was bad.

Fran followed Dufour's lead and drew me out. Seeing this, his eyes twitched slightly. He's clearly afraid of me.

The calm face of Fran and the pale face of Dufour face each other in the center of the arena. Just from the contrast between them, it is easy to see who has the upper hand.

And then, it's finally time for the battle to begin.

『Well then——Let's begin!』

「Ooohh!」

Immediately after the signal was given, Dufour rushed in at once. What he unleashed was a horizontal strike with all his might. And as expected, he hid the blade with his skill, the phantom sword.

He wanted to strike before Fran did. But his opponent was simply too skilled. Fran could see the invisible trajectory of the sword by the sound,

and she bent down to pass under it.

「Impossible——gha!」

Fran's fist went straight into his belly, and digs into his guts. With that one shot, Dufour's legs lost their footing and his body collapsed.

「You've grown a lot. But you're not close enough to get to me yet」

「...Damn, it...」

「Your opponent could read your movements if you don't mask your gaze. Also, there's still problem with your movement too」

「...」

It seemed that seeing his phantom sword had finally reminded her of Dufour.

But I don't think Dufour is listening. Because he's already completely unconscious.

『What a stunning performance! It's all over in just five seconds! Many of you seemed to have missed it! Well, it looks like we'll have to keep our eyes on the Black Lighting Princess this year too!』

# Chapter 700

『We won the first round!』

「Nn!」

After winning against Dufour, Fran went straight to the spectator seats.

The fight was over in an instant, but Fran looked satisfied. Though the same happens in last year's tournament too, I guess winning is always a happy thing.

『Let's celebrate our first-round victory. We're going to have a big party tonight!』

「Curry?」

『Ou. Let's also add menchi katsu (ground meat cutlet) and an extra-large fried egg』

「Tonkatsu (pork cutlet) too!」

『All right. I'll put a pile of tonkatsu too』

「Ooh!」

「Woof woof!」

At Fran's feet, Urushi pokes his head out of the shadows to show that he's there too. It is like having a wolf's head between Fran's legs.

『I'll make plenty for you too, so just keep your head down!』

「Woof」

As we walked, I saw a man standing across the corridor, a disheveled man in his forties.

Immediately after seeing Fran, he opens his mouth and speaks in an arrogant tone.

「You're, the Black Lightning Princess?」

「Nn」

「Hmph. You really are a child, aren't you——」

Fran nodded in response to the man's question, but walked straight past him without stopping at all. For some reason, the man seemed to have assumed that Fran would stop, and he called out to her in a panic.

「W-wait!」

「I won't, the next match is starting」

Well, the next match between Mordred and Naria was the match to decide who would be our next opponent after all. She really wanted to watch the match to get some information about them.

Of course, there was no time to talk to a suspicious person who would not even identify himself.

Fran would have been distracted by him if he had been a strong person. But the man was just a small fry with little fighting ability.

I've appraised him, and he's quite weak. He has some fighting skills, but his status was so low.

But he has a type of skills for threats and negotiation, so he is probably good at intimidating others with words and negotiating in a threatening manner.

Well, that kind of skill won't work on Fran though.

「Hey, wait! I am——」

The man was about to say something, but Fran accelerated quickly and left him behind. She didn't slow down at all as she kicked the wall at the turn, slipped past the surprised passersby, and arrived at the special viewing area in no time.

『Fran, you've gone too far』

「？」

『Ha~h. Anyway, what was that guy doing back there?』

I think he was intentionally waiting for Fran. Was he a messenger from somewhere?

「Doesn't matter. More importantly, the match」

『Can't be helped then』

We can't pretend that we didn't ignore him, but his attitude and timing was quite bad. Well, we'll just say that if someone were to complain.

『The match is starting』

「Nn. Just in time」

When Fran appeared, the people in the special viewing area made a slight noise. This was supposed to be the officials' seats, but it seemed that many of them had never seen Fran up close before.

However, no one was trying to force Fran to talk to them. I guess they know their manners.

On the contrary, people even try to give up their seats for her.

「You can sit here. You want to see your opponent, don't you?」

「You sure?」

「Ah, well, My daughter is a fan of yours. She'll be jealous when I tell her I gave up my seat for you」

「Thanks」

It seems the bard's influence was evident even in this place.

We took him up on his offer and sat down, just in time. On the field below, Mordred was just about to make his move.

His opponent was Naria, a girl who uses a bow. She fires her bow in rapid succession while retreating from Mordred, who is approaching at high speed.

The fact that she had gained rapid-fire skill, which she did not have before, showed that she had improved her bow skills a lot.

The bow, which is powerful enough to instantly kill a goblin, accurately struck Mordred in the face.

She was already holding several arrows in her hand as she pulled the string, and then fired them at high speed. Moreover, the aura arrows created by the archery technique are attacked with a slightly different trajectory from the main body of the arrow.

This rapid-fire and archery skills must have helped her get through the battle royal in the preliminary round.

Fran nodded admiringly as she watched Naria, who had been her student for a short time, grow.

「Naria is doing her best」

『Yeah』

She must have continued her painstaking training after arriving in the beastman country. The results are clearly evident.

But even so, she could not reach Mordred.

「Spear Technique · Spiral Guard」

「Wha! You can do that!?!」

He spun his spear around in his hand and flicked all the arrows away without any difficulty. In addition, he immediately approached Naria without delay. She was already at Mordred's range.

Naria and Mordred, they had been together on the ship to the beastman kingdom, and he was a famous B-Ranked adventurer to begin with.

She knows that she was no match for him in close combat.

But Naria stepped in from where she was. She made it look like she was going to retreat even further, but instead, she leaned forward and lunged at Mordred as if she were going to attack.

「Haaa!」

「Hou!?!」

She threw her bow at Mordred and stopped his spear movement.

Mordred seemed to have been caught off-guard as well. Naria had stepped over the distance that is generally considered to be the range of a spear, and had entered within his bosom.

She held a dagger in her hand. She must have continued to train the dagger as Fran had instructed her on the ship.

「Haaa!」

Naria's dagger was thrust into Mordred's stomach. The blade is buried in Mordred, all the way to the base—or so it seems.

But Naria looks vexed.

「Molten Iron Magic....」

Mordred had used his molten iron magic to melt the blade of Naria's dagger.

「That was a good fight」

「Guh...」

Mordred then struck his spear on Naria's head, and reaped her consciousness.

『As I expected, Mordred would be our next opponent』

「Nn. He's skillful」

『Yeah, I didn't even realize when he chanted his molten iron spell』

He must have been chanting molten iron magic beforehand in preparation for close combat. His caution and his ability to hide his chanting from the others. And the skill to delay the magic even during a fierce battle.

Skillful is exactly the right word to describe this guy.



# Chapter 701

「It was a good fight」

「Sensei! You're here?」

「Nn」

After witnessing Mordred's victory, Fran went straight to the waiting room where Naria was waiting.

I think it's not usually this easy to get this kind of information, but when Fran asked the officials, they promptly told her where Naria is. The promptness of their response made me worry that their information management might be a little too sloppy.

Well, I guess it's because Fran is a celebrity. This would be impossible on earth, but here, depending on one's rank, popularity, and status, even black can become white.

Well, at the very least, we have no plan to abuse this privilege.

Familiar faces were gathered in Naria's waiting room.

Miguel, the great sword user, and Riddick, the spear user, who had received Fran's training on the ship with Naria, are comforting Naria. They apparently lost in the preliminary round.

「The main battle was just like a monster's den...」

「The tournament is a place where skilled people from all over the country gather after all. In addition to the famous ones, there are also those unknown strong participants」

「The female swordsman who beat me was just like that. She was sleeping outside the venue when I first saw her. With her conspicuous red hair, I can't believe she's a nobody...」

The three of them slumped their shoulders while letting out a sigh. But, a female swordsman with conspicuous red hair, huh?

「What was the name of the one who defeated Miguel?」

「Eh? Umm, I can't quite remember. What I remember is that she's a red-haired swordsman with an oddly imposing air about her」

It's probably Sibylla. So, her choice of weapon is a sword, huh?

Fran likes to fight strong opponents, but she tends to get more fired up when she is up against a swordsman, which is just like her. She was probably thrilled to find out that Sibylla's weapon of choice was a sword.

In fact, a faint smile has appeared on her face.

「Okay, I'm going back to the spectator area」

「Ah, Thank you for coming!」

「Nn. What are you guys going to do now?」

「I think I'll be joining with Dufour and the others and go to the dungeon... I'll have to train more for next year's tournament」

「Nn. Do your best」

「Yes!」

Naria was depressed, but she doesn't seem to be discouraged.

I think she realizes that, even if only for a moment, her strategy worked against someone stronger than her like Mordred. Even from my point of view, it was a good fight.

For instance, what if her dagger was a magic sword? It might have withstood Mordred's molten iron magic. If that had happened, the battle would have been prolonged a little longer.

Or at the very least, it would have given her time to pull out of the bad situation.

To the ordinary observer, it may only add a few more seconds for her to lose. It would look like a lower-ranked person struggling in vain.

But it's a great chance for Naria. What if she had grown more and gotten some sort of special move? Those few seconds could make a big difference in determining the outcome of the battle.

I'm sure it made her realize that her training was not in vain.

When I looked at her face as we left, I saw that she was already smiling. It looked just like Fran's face when she said she wanted to train.

『Do your best』

「？」

『Ah, it's nothing. I just thought that Fran's students would work harder next time』

「Nn. Naria's doing her best. She'll do better next time」

『Yeah』

When we were about to return to the spectator area, we saw a familiar man approaching us with an angry look on his face.

「Oi! You!」

He approaches us with an angry voice and an annoyed look on his face. Well, it was the ill-mannered fat guy from earlier.

「How rude of you to ignore me! But in the first place, there is no way that this kid is strong. I knew I couldn't rely on those adventurers' gossip!」

「...」

「Well, whatever. You shall rejoice!」

「?」

「The king of my country is going to make you a knight and use you! It is unheard of for an adventurer to become a knight of our glorious country!」

Is this a solicitation from some country? Well, I don't know if I can call this a solicitation though. After all, I don't think they really want Fran to be a knight, and this guy is just deliberately trying to be rude and piss us off.

I wonder what's his reason for doing this.

「But since we're going to make a knight out of a mere adventurer, we'll have to give you a test! First, we'll have you complete a mission from us, and if you succeed, we'll make you a knight of our country, and then——」

「I decline. I don't have any intention of becoming a knight」

「W-what? Did I hear you wrong? Oi, I'm offering to make you a knight, you know? You should be grateful and kneel before me!」

「Are you stupid? Becoming a knight of a country with people like you? I'd rather die」

「F-for a mere beastman adventurer like you to say that...!」

This guy... I don't know what he's after, but he's made an enemy of Fran in an instant. Fran, who had been mocked for her identity as an adventurer and a beastman at the same time, glared at the man with an angry expression.

Then the man who had been hit by the unrestrained anger fell into panic.

He seemed to be the type of person who talks more when he feels fear. I guess this is what they mean with "the weaker the dog, the more it barks".

He began to scream in an unpleasant voice, wetting his pants and the floor with his leak.

「W-wh-what's with that attitude of yours! I am a member of the royal family of the glorious Kingdom of Shallus! I am Viscount Emmert! You animal! You've been acting all high and mighty for a while now! Get down! Get down on your knees and lick my feet or I'll kill you! I'll definitely kill you!」

『Let's shut him up for now』

「Nn」

I used wind magic to block out the sound. He seems to have lost his composure, so I don't think he will run away.

The only problem is, there's no lie in his words... So, it looks like he really is a viscount of the Kingdom of Shallus.

While I was wondering what to do with this leaking Viscount, I saw a figure running from across the hallway, he looked to be in his thirties. And when he saw Viscount Emmert, he had a desperate look on his face.

「V-Viscount Emmert...!」

Damn, he's with one of his men? We're in a lot of trouble for making a scene here... I braced myself with caution, but what he did next was something that I didn't expect.

「B-Black Lighting Princess-sama!? We're really sorry!」

The man, who seemed to be one of the Viscount's men, quickly got down on his knees in front of Fran.

# Chapter 702

「We're really sorry!」

The man who seemed to be a nobleman, rubbed his head on the floor and begged for forgiveness next to Viscount Emmert, who had lashed out at Fran and leaked his pants at the mere intimidation

「My name is Lerian Chart. I am a Count of the Kingdom of Shallus!」

『So he really is a nobleman... However, the Kingdom of Shallus?』

《It is a small country located on the coast of the southern part of the Kingdom of Kranzel. It produces several kinds of ore, but most of it is exported to other countries and used to import food》

Ooh, as expected of Announcer-san!

『So, it's a typical weak country with low national power huh?』

《Yes. Due to the small amount of flat land and the damage caused by salt, the country's self-sufficiency in food is low and food imports are putting a lot of pressure on their national budget》

Well, their ore was inedible after all. It seems that food-producing countries are taking advantage of this too.

『Do you think he may be plotting something?』

《Not enough information to answer that》

While I was exchanging information with Announcer-san, Count Chart continued to apologize, or should I say, making excuses.

「I apologize for the rudeness of this dimwit from my country. I don't know what he had said, but my country has nothing to do with what this man said! It's all just his nonsense and his own responsibility!」

『Uwaah... He ditched Emmert in one breath』

「What does this man have to do with your country?」

「H-he is not a man who should have the authority to be in a place like this. Even in my country, he is considered to be a scum, or should I say, trash...」

「Then, how can someone like him become a messenger?」

「W-well... It might be because of a slight blunder on His Majesty the new King's part... After all, this me doesn't need an adjutant like him either...」

In other words, he's not usually the kind of man to be given such important positions, but for some reason, this time he was given the role of a messenger to Fran? Did he bribe the king or something?

He did mention a new king before, so there's a possibility that it was because their country's policy has suddenly changed.

Count Chart must have known how stupid Emmert was. That must be the reason why he decided to put all the blame on the Viscount for causing problems outside the country.

Or perhaps, the reason why a piece of shit like Emmert is kept alive is to make him a sort of sacrifice to put the blame on when something goes wrong.

After all, this guy is clearly lusting over something. Maybe they deliberately let him do this to make it easier to push the blame on him.

He can't pretend that his remarks didn't happen, but he can at least save his neck by putting all the blame on Emmert.

But I guess, he never expected the situation to go out of control like this.

「He said he was going to make me a knight. He even claimed that it was the word of the King」

「I-it must be a figure of speech」

「？」

「It is true that our king has taken an interest in you! And I'm sure he wants to make you a knight! But I was going to give up if you refused, and I have no intention of forcing you to be a knight!」

The last part, the part where he said that he would give up if Fran refused was a lie. But he's not lying about the part where he said that they won't force Fran to be a knight.

Originally, he must have planned to contact us again and again to have further discussions.

But it seems that Viscount Emmert, who was still sitting on his leak, got ahead of him and ruined it.

It seems they're not plotting on some conspiracies or something and this was just a forceful solicitation...

This is exactly when we have to use "that".

『Fran, show them "that"』

("That"?)

『I mean the medal we got from the Beastman Country』

(Ooh, I see)

We've been told that we can use this medal in this kind of situation. This is exactly when we have to make full use of it!

Fran then took out a golden medal from her dimensional storage and held it up high just like when lord Mito's escort shows up his family emblem.



(TLN: Ref. Mito Komon, see TLN in ch593 for more detail)

I even give Fran a line to say.

「Can't you see this medal!?!」

「T-that's...」

Umu, I'm satisfied.

Nevertheless, it seemed that Count Chart knew about the Golden Beast Fang Medal. The moment he saw the medal, he looked even paler than before.

「You know what's this?」

「Y-yes—!」

He was already on his knees, so he couldn't lower his head any further, but he was still desperately rubbing his head on the floor.

But isn't he overreacting? It's not like we're some sort of important figure in the Beastman Country...

Well, for a weak country like their, a large country like the Beastman country is not something to be made enemy of. Besides, they've just made a blunder. No matter what we say, he's still trying to get down on his knees.

This should be enough to scare them off.

「Can I go now?」

「Yes! We're really sorry for the trouble we've caused!」

Count Chart stayed in a kneeling position until the end, and then he sent Fran off. I also lifted the wind barrier to silence Viscount Emmert from earlier, and an ugly scream could be heard along the hallway, but I'm sure Count Chart would do something about him. Or rather, he should!

『Well, they won't be coming back with this』

「Nn」

『We should report this to the adventurer's guild though. I'm sure they'll do something to prevent something like this』

After all, for someone as popular as Fran, this kind of thing might continue to happen in the future...

It has been a bit of a mess, but we made it back to our seats in time for the match we wanted to see.

『Next up is the match between Biscot and Dimitris' disciple. And there's Sibylla match today too』

「Nn. I'm looking forward to it」

# Chapter 703

The man who was with Sibylla, Biscot, was also quite a warrior himself.

From his tall, heavily muscled body, he must be quite a power fighter.

I appraised Biscot, which had appeared in the arena. However, the appraisal did not work properly. It seemed that he was still using a device to disguise his true status.

「That's quite a large shield」

『Is he a shield user? I can sense a lot of magic power from it』

「Nn. It looks sturdy too」

Biscot's most conspicuous equipment is his tower shield. It was so huge that it could completely hide his huge body if he bent down slightly. It was probably quite thick as well.

His weapon was a long-handled sledgehammer. At the end of the nearly two-meter long handle is a huge iron head that looks like it weighs hundreds of pounds.

Protection with a shield and a killing blow with a hammer. In a sense, it's the basic equipment for a shield user. Well, both the shield and the hammer are of a non-standard size though.

No ordinary person would even be able to lift either of them. The strength of his muscles must have been tremendous, because he could carry such heavy equipment with one hand.

I think, only high ranked adventurers should be able to achieve the same feat.

His equipment would certainly be useful against magic beast, but would it be effective against human? Human opponents are nimble and much quicker after all.

『We'll see how he handles this』

「Nn」

『On the other hand, Dimitris' disciple is... he's only wearing a hand armor?』

「He looks strong」

『Well, he's someone that had Dimitris' approval to participate after all』

His name was Zelt, a young man with short black hair and a stern face. To be frank, he looks like a gorilla.

That said, I'm sure he's strong. I also heard that he has mastered the Dimitris style up to the sixth stage.

Well then, I wonder what kind of battle we'll see. They bowed gracefully to each other, and the match began.

Fran and I were both excited to see it, and the match was as intense and fast-paced as we had anticipated.

Zelt was the one who make the first move.

「Here I come, Shield user-dono!」

「So fast!」

Just as we had predicted, Zelt used his agility to his advantage and toyed with Biscot. He ducked into a blind spot and tried to break Biscot's stance with a swift move.

However, Biscot's defense was more solid than I had imagined. He could turn around incredibly quickly and block all of Zelt's attacks with his shield. Even so, I think he had been hit a few times too, but his stance did not waver at all.

On the contrary, Zelt soon showed signs of change. The frequency of his attacks had dropped slightly. And when I paid closer attention, I saw that bright red liquid was flowing down from the gap of his hand armor.

It seems that Biscot was not only blocking him, but also dealing damage to his fist by lightly hitting it with his shield. It seems that the damage was done to the extent that the inside of his hand armor was damaged.

Zelt's expression twisted in frustration. I think it's because almost all of his attacks had been seen through. Moreover, it was through a shield.

This was more of a power difference than I thought. In the end, Biscot's well-aimed counterattack on Zelt, who had little room to attack, ended the match in an anticlimactic ending.

It was a big comeback from what seemed to be a one-sided victory for Zelt in the first minutes. Witnessing this, the crowd cheered loudly.

『That solid defense is really troublesome』

「Nn!」

Fran is looking at Biscot with a motivated face. I think she's imagining how she would fight against an opponent like him.

After that, we waited for Sibylla's turn, but it didn't give us any useful information at all because she defeated her opponent in an instant.

『At least we have confirmed that she uses a sword』

「And she's a speed-focused fighter」

『You're right, she's only wearing light armor and no shield after all』

Let's look forward to the next match. It's Sibylla Vs. Colbert next. Whoever wins, this will definitely be a good fight.

After that, we headed to the adventurer's guild. We were going to report about the messenger from the Kingdom of Shallus.

Diaz and Elsa didn't seem to be around, so Fran explained to the receptionist. But to our surprise, we got a surprising response about the matter.

「It's Kingdom of Shallus again, huh...?」

「Again?」

「Yes. Actually, the people from the Kingdom of Shallus have been causing problems for quite a while now」

What a surprise, it seems that the other top participants have been contacted by people from the Kingdom of Shallus as well. They seem to be recruiting famous participants without any proper procedures.

The receptionist then sighed with a tired look on her face.

「They've been causing a lot of problems for several people now...」

「Why don't we just decline the Kingdom of Shallus?」

「It's no use. It's not like what they're doing is illegal. Every country has been recruiting strong adventurers to their country after all」

It seems that, at best, they could only tell them not to bother the tournament's participants.

「Still, they're a bit weird, aren't they?」

「Weird?」

「Yes. Their messengers' attitude was so bad that I can't help but think that they don't want to succeed in recruiting the participants」

It seems that Viscount Emmert is not a special case, but all the messengers of the Kingdom of Shallus are like that. And when the adventurer gets angry, the next person or his cohorts will get down on their knees and apologize exaggeratedly.

Having a nobleman from another country to get down on their knees, the adventurers would certainly find it difficult to remain angry any longer. Moreover, their ridiculous appearance would certainly make anyone feel bad.

In the end, the talks ended in a stalemate, and the adventurers were left in anger.

「In the first place, the caliber of the people who claim to be messengers of the country is too low. How can it be that all the people officially sent by a country are idiots, right?」

「So, they are not actually from the Kingdom of Shallus?」

Are they trying to ruin their reputation by pretending to be their messengers? However, when I checked them with my lie detection skill before, I was able to confirm that they are really the messengers of the Kingdom of Shallus.

「...Is this some kind of conspiracy?」

「We don't know. We don't see their point in doing this either, but... This matter has been overwhelming us. We also have to increase the number of security personnel. It would become a big mess if the participants attacked the nobles after all... Fran-sama too, please ignore them if they tried to contact you again」

「Nn」

The Kingdom of Shallus, I wonder what they're after?

NOTE:

Really sorry for the delay. My editor has been very slow, he's only done 5 tenken chapters in this 3 months in fact (ch 682-ch 686), that's why I decided to simply publish it unedited. What my editor edit was usually about grammatical error, bad wording, or inconsistency. So, what's your opinion after reading these 16 unedited chapters?

This chapter also marks my 300th translated tenken chapters!